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WEEKEND

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PRINT-ONLY SUBSCRIBER-EXCLUSIVE SPECIAL EDITION INSIDE

2026 NFL season preview: Rams look unstoppable



Trust for Public Land needs \$1 million to acquire the 84-acre Murray Farm in Westtown to prevent housing development and changes to the local ecosystem and Appalachian Trail corridor. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ELIZABETH JONES

Honoring ‘Backpack’ Jim

Hikers trying to save beloved Appalachian Trail refuge in Westtown

Vandana Saras
Middletown Times Herald-Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

Murray Farm in Westtown is not a farm in the conventional sense. It is 84 acres of wooded land with a “secret shelter” for thru-hikers located at the border of New York’s Orange County and New Jersey.

The property welcoming strangers belonged for about three decades to Warwick resident James Murray, known to some as “Backpack” Jim, whose life was marked with cycles of extreme adversity and triumph. Murray died in November 2025 at the age of 87.



James Murray at Murray Farm with his pet donkeys, Jake and Jake.

See **REFUGE**, Page 2A

Trump dials up pressure on allies

Francesca Chambers
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump is putting another U.S. ally he says was insufficiently supportive of the Iran war on notice, directing the Pentagon to scale back joint military exercises with South Korea, a country he has pressed to pay more for its defense.

“We can’t go around and protect all of these countries, especially when they’re not there to help us,” Trump said Aug. 17 in the Oval Office.

South Korea is the latest in a string of close U.S. allies Trump has threatened to penalize with reduced military support since the United States and Israel went to war with Iran earlier this year. He has ripped nations such as the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain and said he’s reexamining the U.S. relationship with the NATO alliance, which he has long criticized as a laggard over some members’ lackluster defense spending.

Over the past several days, he has lobbed similar allegations at South Korea and made public overtures to Kim Jong Un, the North Korean leader with whom he tried to negotiate a nuclear deal in his first term. A day before his missive on the joint military exercises, he posted a photo of himself and Kim, standing together inside the Demilitarized Zone, the 160-mile-long barrier that divides the two countries in half.

Retired Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies, called it “befuddling and illogical for the president to be reaching out to North Korea with at least partially the intent being to punish South Korea, who is our ally and partner.”

“He’s not going to be able to convince Kim Jong Un to give up his nuclear weapons. There’s no Nobel Prize waiting at the end of this rainbow. So I don’t know what the president’s up to,” said Montgomery, a coauthor of the

See **PRESSURE**, Page 6A

Panettiere’s Rockland roots remembered

Nancy Cutler
Rockland/Westchester Journal News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Even as a child star, Hayden Panettiere was a Rockland kid, attending local public schools, hanging out at the local swim club, participating in recreational activities that the county has to offer.

The news of her death on Aug. 16, at age 36, left her former hometown in mourning. Many locals remembered

her fondly.

“Hayden Panettiere was part of the Children’s Shakespeare Theatre when she was a child,” read an Aug. 18 Instagram post from Children’s Shakespeare Theatre, a company for kids age 8-18, based in her hometown. “We send our love to her daughter, parents, family and friends. May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”

Panettiere was born in Palisades on Aug. 21, 1989, to Lesley Vogel, a former soap opera actress, and Alan “Skip” Pa-

nettierre, a New York City Fire Department captain. The family lived a while in Congers then moved to a home in Snedens Landing.

Panettiere, in her autobiography, “This is me: A reckoning,” recalled her suburban childhood playing in neighborhood friends’ backyards, going to the local swim club, sometimes visiting the homes of neighbors, like Bill Murray and Björk.

See **ROOTS**, Page 7A



Actress Hayden Panettiere arrives for the world premiere of “Scream VI” at AMC Lincoln Square in New York City on March 6, 2023.

ANGELS WEISS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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