



# IRVINGTON

— Coming Up This Week —

## Spring Egg Hunt

Saturday, April 4, 10 a.m.  
Memorial Park

For toddlers to 9-year-olds; bring your own basket

## “Twyla Tharp: A Choreographic Genius”

Saturday, April 4, 2 p.m.  
Irvington Public Library

Hybrid presentation by Toni McKeen  
To attend via Zoom, register at [irvingtonlibrary.org](http://irvingtonlibrary.org)

## Tabletop Game Night for Adults and Seniors

Tuesday, April 7, 6:30–8:45 p.m.  
Irvington Public Library

## Planning Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 8, 7 p.m.  
Village Hall

To attend via Zoom, visit [irvingtonny.gov](http://irvingtonny.gov) for the link

## Craft for Teens and Adults: Stamped Tea Towels

Thursday, April 9, 5:30–7:30 p.m.  
Irvington Public Library

Register at [irvingtonlibrary.org](http://irvingtonlibrary.org)

## Stewardship at O’Hara & Irvington Woods Park

Saturdays, April 11 and 18, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.  
Meet at O’Hara Nature Center, 170 Mountain Road

Help with tree planting and maple syrup boiling. Pizza for volunteers at noon  
Register at [irvingtonny.gov](http://irvingtonny.gov)

## “Living Forest” Speaker Series

Saturday, April 11, noon  
O’Hara Nature Center

Cornell ecology professor Bernd Blossey presents “Deer Management: Forest Feedback Loops”

Register at [register.capturepoint.com](http://register.capturepoint.com)

## “Treason of the Blackest Dye”

On view Saturdays and Thursdays, 1–4 p.m., through August  
McVickar House, 131 Main St.

## Got news?

Email staff writer Julian Michael Caldwell at [julian@rivertownsdispatch.com](mailto:julian@rivertownsdispatch.com)



The Sounds of Valor members at the Riverworks Recording Studio

# Vets hit notes of joy with Sounds of Valor

BY JULIAN MICHAEL CALDWELL

Dobbs Ferry resident Tom Mooney, who was a soldier in Vietnam from 1967-68, and has been a drummer, singer, and songwriter for decades, will see his dream of creating a band of U.S. military veterans come to life at the Irvington Theater on Thursday, April 9.

The upcoming Sounds of Valor concert includes six original songs from Mooney and his previous bands, as well as original music from other band members and a handful of covers like “Satisfaction” by The Rolling Stones and “Blowing in the Wind” by Bob Dylan. While the music will be primarily rock ‘n’ roll, there will be a few ballads, blues, and a reggae song.

After putting out the call for musicians via social media and word-of-mouth, Mooney began auditioning 80 musicians for the band in March. He narrowed it down to 10, all of whom served in the military, though not necessarily in combat. Mooney makes it a point not to differentiate between those who have and those who haven’t been on the front lines.

Since their first rehearsal on March 14, the band has had more than a dozen more sessions at Riverworks Recording Studio on Cedar Street in Dobbs Ferry, recording many of them. Some band members have been traveling from as far away as Maryland to make those rehearsals, with others coming from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New Rochelle, and other parts of New York State.

“This show will be the best thing I’ve ever done, because of the people involved, and what it means, and what I hope it means to other people,” Mooney told the Dispatch. “It’s an out-of-body experience. I’m so happy to be able to do this with these people and get this message out there that we’re OK,

and can find ways to be OK and get back to civilian life. If we can do it, you can do it.”

Mooney, who grew up in Brooklyn and moved to Dobbs Ferry from Boston three years ago, began his career as a drummer before being drafted at age 19. After returning home from Vietnam, he spent more than a decade, mostly in the 1970s and ’80s, performing regularly as a front man in blues-rock bands and performing in clubs throughout New York City. During that time, he gained some interest from recording labels but never signed a deal.

“Most of them were musicians before they went in (to the military), and they came back to music to kind of ‘decrut’ ... and become themselves again.”

Tom Mooney

Mooney’s idea to organize a band of veterans began to take shape in November of last year after he shared the idea with his friend of 35 years, documentary filmmaker Michael Campbell. Campbell runs an Emmy-winning nonprofit called Docufilms that produces projects on behalf of charitable organizations or for groups that have a societal benefit. Docufilms believes in Docufilms plans to release a documentary to go along with an album made of recordings from rehearsals and the live concert.

“I sometimes don’t believe it’s really happening,” Mooney said. “Then I go into rehearsal and I realize it’s really happening. I still feel like you need to pinch me.”

The rehearsal process began with conversations about who the band members are, their military experience, and what music means to them. Their common love of music and military experience helped them bond in a way that made Mooney feel like they had known each other for years.

“The common story was, ‘It [music] saved my life.’” Mooney recalled. “When they came out of the military, most of them were musicians before they went in, and they came back to music to kind of ‘decrut’ from being in the military and become themselves again.”

The Sounds of Valor band consists of singers Pat Shannon and Mooney; Velvet Salgado singing and playing piano; lead guitarists Chuck Thomas and Michael Sicola; drummer Chris Hough; bassist William Eggleston Jr.; Felix Montalvo on piano and harmonica; and “Saxy Ric” on saxophone. Vanessa Kurian, a Dobbs Ferry resident who manages Riverworks Recording Studio, was added to the band three weeks in, when it was discovered during rehearsals that she was an operations specialist in the Navy from 2021-23.

“The harmony the people bring is so amazing,” Kurian told the Dispatch. “They have a lot of compassion and I really enjoyed seeing how everyone has a beautiful personality inside, and everyone has a story. Everyone comes together to enjoy each other’s company, and I could feel that there.”

Also included in the band is musical director and multi-instrumentalist Marc Ribler, who Mooney describes as a “ringer” because

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### Festival Disney

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Musically, Munjal emphasized the value of performing for professional adjudicators and receiving detailed feedback that pushed the ensemble beyond what is typically covered in school rehearsals. One key takeaway for the wind ensemble was learning how to create a unified sound.

“If you can figure out how to breathe in

sync, it’s less disjointed and more together,” he said. “We had talked about breathing before, but we never really practiced it like that, and it felt like we were really improving our overall sound quality. Even in such a short time, we learned a lot,” Munjal added.

He also noted that the experience broadened his perspective. “Seeing all these other bands at the awards ceremony made me realize the music world is very big,” he said.

For junior Lea Federman, a soprano,

traveling with her friends was meaningful.

“Getting to spend the time with them just really meant so much, especially in a context where we weren’t bound by school or other responsibilities,” she said. “We all felt a great sense of independence and freedom, but we also knew we were safe with our chaperones’ guidance. I think it brought us much closer together.”

Federman, still hoarse from screaming on Expedition Everest, which she rode three

times, described the feedback her ensemble received as “sophisticated.”

“We were being spoken to in such a grown-up way, and it really resonated with us — we definitely received great tools that we’re going to take back and use in the future,” she said.

She added, “But what I’ll remember most is not the specific rides I went on or our score at the competition, just all the time that I spent with my favorite people.”

### Sounds of Valor

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he’s the only person involved who hasn’t served in the military. Ribler has worked as musical director for rock guitarist Stevie Van Zandt, and with Sounds of Valor he plays a similar role, taking the lead in organizing song arrangements. Ribler, who lives in New Jersey, is a friend of members of the Docufilms production team, and is volunteering his time to work with the band.

Mooney remembers the musicians impressing Ribler from the first rehearsal.

“We played and we took instructions and nobody complained, we all listened,” Mooney recalled. “Marc was so surprised, he said that usually in the first rehearsal no one really listens. And one guy said, ‘We’re soldiers, we listen.’ It’s so true. We make mistakes, but we don’t want to make the same mistake twice.”

Mooney’s original songs in the concert include the up-tempo “Better Days,” about a

man enjoying his life; “Cindy’s Song,” which is named after and dedicated to his wife; and “Never Give It Up,” about two friends meeting up after years apart. Mooney hopes the songs will have audiences standing and singing along, and that the talent on stage helps them realize that veterans are not defined solely by their military experiences.

“It’s not all sad stories,” Mooney said. “Even though they’re [sad stories] there, there’s joy in being a vet and joy in your life afterwards. And I want people to have fun.”

The Sounds of Valor concert is Thursday, April 9 at 7 p.m. at Irvington Theater, 85 Main St. Tickets are \$25 for all ages and can be purchased at [irvingtontheater.com](http://irvingtontheater.com). Proceeds from ticket and album sales will go to De-cruit, an organization that uses exploration of classical theater and narrative writing practice to support military veterans living through trauma, and The Headstrong Project, which provides mental health care for veterans living with PTSD.

### Feng to ISEF

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understanding of the impact of copper on plant development from reading journal articles and research papers by scientists such as his mentor for the Science Research program, Ju-Chen Chia. Chia works in the Olena Vatamaniuk plant research lab at Cornell University. Through Irvington’s Science Research program, students like

Feng seek out mentors based on their chosen field of study.

While Feng is not planning on being a science major, he does want to take science classes in college.

He admitted that he initially was concerned that his lack of lab involvement might put him at a disadvantage in WESEF.

“Something I learned throughout the journey of preparing for and presenting at WESEF is that it’s really all about your

ability to present your research, regardless of the type of research, and the importance of being able to confidently present yourself, because ultimately everyone worked really hard,” Feng said.

Feng’s project will compete at ISEF, in Phoenix, from May 9-15, where prizes across 22 different categories range from \$600 to \$100,000 for the top overall prize.

Feng credits his Science Research program teachers, Amy Ma and Nadia Parikka,

for pushing him to take advantage of this opportunity.

“Qualifying for ISEF development wouldn’t have been possible without my mentor, and my teachers Ms. Parikka and Ms. Ma,” Feng said. “Even though they’re pretty hard on us through the school year, I realized that the reason why they’re hard on us is because they definitely care about us and they want us to prepare enough for us to be recognized for our work at WESEF.”




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M-T-W 5pm-11pm • Th-F 5pm-12pm  
Sat Brunch 12pm-3pm 5pm-12am  
Sun Brunch 12pm-3pm 2pm-10pm



RESERVATIONS

