

# Chamber president to attend Oslo Freedom Forum

BY NICOLE ALLEGREZZA

Patchogue Village's very own James Skidmore, president of the Greater Patchogue Chamber of Commerce and general manager of Toast Coffeehouse, has been invited to attend the international Oslo Freedom Forum.

This year's forum will be held in Oslo, Norway from May 28-30 and will mark the 10th anniversary of the unique gathering of the world's "bravest" human rights activists including entrepreneurs, reporters, technologists and artists.

"It's movers and shakers and influencers trying to yield justice on a global level all coordinated by the Human Rights Organization," Skidmore explained. "These people are really working hard to take down tyranny wherever it exists. They want to bring basic human rights globally."

After attending a satellite event in New York City last year, Skidmore said he was intrigued and bit by the international activist bug. Soon, he received an email prompted by a few questions about the event. After later attending another event involving a more grassroots organization, the Bioneers Conference, he decided to reply, suggesting the two join forces, thinking not much of it. But, not even two days later, he received a call from an Oslo Freedom Forum representative planning to include the Bioneers organization next year, thanking him for the connection and inviting him to the forum in Norway. Skidmore immediately jumped on board and decided to pack his bags and garner some community support to attend the forum, representing the chamber and village.

During the five-day trip, Skidmore will

be able to participate in interactive exhibits, panels, talks, workshops and surrounding popup events, including how to use



Chamber president James Skidmore plans to attend the Oslo Freedom Forum in Norway.

Photo courtesy Phil Firetog

technology to advance human rights and democracy and events prior to the forum introducing visitors to the culture.

But the invitation comes with a price — about \$4,000, to be exact. Though Skidmore said he plans to attend despite any potential donations, he hopes he can defer some of the burdening costs.

"Come hell or high water, I am going," he said, excited about attending the forum. "But I am hoping to have some of it subsidized or else I will be paying it off for years."

The Greater Patchogue Chamber of Commerce has also decided to allow any tax-deductible donations to help support Skidmore's trip be made through the not-for-profit arm, the Greater Patchogue

Foundation.

"This is very exciting for James and the chamber," said chamber executive director David Kennedy. "It will be an international connection to our local foundation. It's wonderful exposure."

Those interested should make checks payable to the Greater Patchogue Foundation and write Oslo Freedom Forum in the memo. A fundraiser will also be held at a local restaurant on Main Street in Patchogue Village with a date to be announced.

"I am going to come back to Patchogue inspired with a lot of great things to talk about and continuing my dream of stepping into the global community," Skidmore added. ■



## National Grid cleanup

Over 85 National Grid volunteers celebrated Earth Day in the Village of Patchogue. Volunteers spruced up Foley Square, the YMCA and Great Patchogue Lake, preparing the village for spring. Power to Serve volunteers planted flowers, shrubs and trees in Foley Square, planting three trees — two pear trees and one weeping cherry tree — and hardy plants; volunteers also weeded and spread mulch. Along Patchogue Lake, volunteers cleared debris and four trees were planted along Main Street. "We are very proud to live and work in communities like the Village of Patchogue, one of the fastest growing villages on Long Island, [with] Mayor Pontieri, who has been a strong partner and leader in the community," said John Bruckner, president of National Grid New York. "At National Grid, on Earth Day and every day, we always want to leave communities better than we found them." April is national Safe Digging Month, and National Grid urges the public to call NY811 (by dialing 811) in order to prevent serious personal injury, property damage and service interruptions caused by accidentally digging into electric, gas, telephone, water, sewer or cable facilities. National Grid also asks customers to spread environmental awareness by sharing tips, activities and photos on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter using #Grid-GoesGreen and #EarthDay2018.

Adv/Allegrezza

## Shutdown

FROM PAGE 1

son's shop. This concerned him immensely, and as all the information of the situation began to sink in, Wilson believed that the renter wasn't honest with him about the genre of his records.

"The fliers seem to be anti-Semitic," Wilson said. "On Sunday, I just gave him his money back, because he said he paid for the rent and he paid upfront."

Wilson said that the renter's rebuttal to the accusations of promoting and selling hate speech was that it was blown out of proportion and that the symbols are part of

his Norwegian heritage.

By Monday, all of the social media pages that the renter created had vanished. But it wasn't solely Wilson's request to leave that sparked this. Comment threads on these shared posts went to the extent of forming protests, however, it seems that will not be necessary since the insensitive content was removed.

"I'm more worried about those guys coming back and throwing something through the window," Wilson added. ■



Patchogue antique shop owner kicked out a renter said to be selling anti-Semitic records, T-shirts and other apparel last weekend.

Adv/Waszynski

## PEP projects

The Village of Patchogue's PEP (Protecting the Environment in Patchogue) committee is currently preparing to introduce a new program geared towards helping the village in its continuing efforts to promote a clean, healthy environment. The committee's latest initiative, the Village of Patchogue Green Business Program, is a voluntary program for all businesses within the village designed to showcase

environmentally friendly businesses for becoming leaders in sustainable practices. Any business choosing to participate in the program will receive a sticker for their window to encourage others to add their names to the list of environmentally conscious, ecofriendly establishments. The VOPGB application window will be open from July 1 to Oct. 1. ■