

*Our Mission: To interpret aviation, particularly that related to New York State, with exhibits and programs that educate, entertain and excite the public*

Volume 34, Issue 4

Winter 2025-26

## “FONZ” DIBLASIO RECEIVES ALEX AWARD

At ESAM’s Annual Meeting on November 1, 2025, Alfonzo “Fonz” DeBlasio received the “Alex” Award, the museum’s highest volunteer recognition. It is named for Roland Alexander, who epitomized the qualities of volunteer excellence.

Fonz has made many major contributions to the success of ESAM. He is an active member of the Restoration Work Group and serves as Vice President of the museum’s Board of Trustees. He played a major role in numerous restoration projects, including the Vin Fiz, the Harrier, and most recently restoration of the F-14 cockpit, which is most prominently used at outreach events. Fonz is currently developing an exhibit on the C-130 interior wing section. In addition, he actively participates in all ESAM events.

Congratulations to Fonz on a well-deserved recognition.



(Above) Kevin Millington (left) presents the 2025 “Alex” Award to “Fonz” DiBlasio (right)

## DAVE ROE RECOGNIZED

Also at ESAM’s Annual Meeting, **Trustee Dave Roe** was recognized for his successful efforts to bring an F-15 Eagle to ESAM.

The F-15 came from the **104th Fighter Wing** at Westover Air Reserve Base in Massachusetts. Its fly in was a highlight of 2025 at ESAM. Dave is pictured (at right) receiving an F-15 book and a model of the aircraft from Kevin Millington.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

With the holidays and season of giving not far behind us, many of us may wonder how a contribution to ESAM can make an impact. I offer this example of how your support can make a lasting difference in our community:

**My name is Michael Lape. I have been volunteering with the Empire State Aerosciences Museum since 2022. The impacts that decision has had on my life are hard to keep track of, and I likely will be realizing more as I graduate High School and enter a career. As a resident of Scotia, NY, some of the earliest memories I have are hearing and seeing the arctic LC-130 cargo planes soar above me, which were all from the Air National Guard Base just a few minutes from me. Naturally, the air museum right next to that base drew me in as I grew older, and I found myself beginning my work there when I was thirteen. Although I was the youngest volunteer there by a number of years, there was never a time I felt out of place. The wonderful team of volunteers there instantly knew how to make me feel included, and useful, even though I lacked the expertise and ability that nearly everyone there possessed. During the time I was able to consistently visit nearly every weekend, I often aided in the upkeep and maintenance of display aircraft, aiding in rearrangements of their positions throughout the hangar, staffing their monthly breakfasts, and spearheading internal research projects to better understand the history and value of aircraft on display. As I grew older, and began work and gained other responsibilities, ESAM remained just as flexible as I needed them to be. I joined the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) just before I turned fifteen, in part with the connections I developed from ESAM. I continue my service to ESAM through CAP, where I lead a group of people around my age to provide manpower to the museum's largest events when they need it. Although I may not enter aviation as a career in my future, I will be forever grateful for the museum's ability to support huge interests of mine, despite my young age. I hope that young individuals who seek exposure to the world of airplanes, military, and volunteer service do not hesitate to consider volunteering at ESAM. No matter your schedule, or your knowledge, there will always be a place for you to fill at the Empire State Aerosciences Museum.**



**Rich Bievenue**

Please consider making an annual donation to ESAM. Whether it is monetary or a gift of your time and expertise, your support may help inspire a young person's mind to a career in science.

Sincerely,  
Rich Bievenue  
President – Empire State Aerosciences Museum

## STATE OF THE MUSEUM REPORT

At the museum's Annual Meeting, **Board President Rich Bievenue** provided a status report on the museum. He once again thanked all of the many volunteers who work to make ESAM what it is today. He also thanked the Gift Shop staff for their good work increasing admissions revenue.

The meeting program listed the museum's accomplishments over the last year, which we should all be very proud of...but there's more to do! He also listed three major priorities for ESAM in the coming year:

- Leadership needs to look seriously at succession planning for some of the major roles at the museum. This was identified as a recommendation in the MAPS (Museum Assessment Program) report we received last year.
- We need to address safety issues at the museum, both for the public and for the staff and volunteers. We've recently received two Automated External Defibrillators (AED) units, which require some training for staff and volunteers. One of the AEDs came with a County safety audit that has identified several things to address around the facility. They so that will be addressed during the next year.
- Museum membership is making some progress, but we need to do more to grow our primary base of support to levels that will make a real difference in support for ESAM.

## ESAM'S 2025-2026 BOARD IS CONSTITUTED

At ESAM's November 1, 2025 Annual Meeting, **Tim Burke, Chair of the Nominations Committee**, presented a slate of three new trustees and three returning trustees to be elected to the ESAM Board of Trustees for three-year terms of office. All nominees were elected unanimously.

The new Board members are: **Joe Hathaway, Bill O'Brien, and John Panoski Jr.** The returning Board members are: **John Kolwaite, Fred Lee, and Dave Roe.**

Tim and the museum thank all of the newly elected and reelected board members for stepping up to serve in a leadership role for ESAM. Tim also acknowledged the service of the two trustees that were coming off the ESAM Board, **Mike Collins and Ray Legere.**

After the Annual Meeting, the new board elected its 2025-26 officers. The officers are:

**President: RICHARD BIEVENUE**  
**Vice President: ALFONZO DIBLASIO**  
**Secretary: TIMOTHY BURKE**  
**Treasurer: JOYCE NEWKIRK**

Congratulations to all.

## EX-THUNDERBIRD SPEAKS AT THE ESAM ANNUAL MEETING

ESAM was excited to have retired U.S. Air Force Thunderbird pilot **Joseph Bulmer** speak at the museum's Annual Meeting on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Joe's topic was "Changes in Aviation over the Last 50 Years from a Pilot's Point of View". Joe's background includes: USAF/ANG 27 years flying the T-38, A-10, and F-16; USAF Thunderbirds pilot - 1987-1988; and United Airlines pilot 29 years flying the Boeing 727 and 777. ESAM thanks Joe for an entertaining and enlightening presentation.



US Air Force Thunderbirds



Just prior to the ESAM Annual Meeting, members were treated to an enjoyable (indoor) volunteer picnic.

### STATE SENATOR PATRICIA FAHY OBTAINS \$30,000 GRANT FOR ESAM

On July 8, 2025, Chair of the Schenectady County Legislature Gary Hughes, Glenville Town Supervisor Robert J. Kirkham Jr., and members of the Schenectady County Legislature participated in announcing that the Empire State Aerosciences Museum (ESAM) will receive \$30,000 for youth programming through a legislative grant secured by State Senator Patricia Fahy.

This funding will allow ESAM to devote more of its limited operating resources to supporting and expanding its education programs, STEM camp activities, and other important work done at ESAM to educate, entertain, and excite the community about the important history of aviation in the Empire State. ESAM began in 1984 when four aircraft and flying enthusiasts, Carl Battaglia, Ernie Tetrault, James Delmonico and Steven Israel, banded together in their desire to create a museum with the purpose of inspiring and educating the public about the wonders of flight.

“I’m thrilled to be able to secure \$30,000 for the Empire State Aerosciences Museum,” said Senator Fahy. “This funding will expand the Museum’s ability to offer youth programming and educational programs that enrich our community and remind people about the importance of aerospace in Upstate New York. I couldn’t be more excited to see this grant get put to use in serving our community and visitors alike.”

“The Empire State Aerosciences Museum sincerely appreciates Senator Fahy’s generous support. This grant award and her ongoing engagement in our activities demonstrates that she understands and appreciates the important educational and economic impact that cultural institutions like ESAM have in our community,” said **Tim Burke, ESAM Trustee.**



**Local Dignitaries and ESAM leaders gather in ESAM’s Main Hangar to celebrate receipt of a \$30,000 grant provided through the auspices of State Senator Patricia Fahy**

## ESAM'S FLY IN/DRIVE IN BREAKFAST SPEAKERS PROGRAM WRAPS UP FOR 2025

Thanks yet again to **Trustee Mike Collins** for arranging interesting educational presentations in association with ESAM's monthly breakfasts on the third Saturdays of the month. In October **Chris Hunter, the Director of MiSci**, spoke about the Museum of Innovation and Science in Schenectady. In November, **Historian Jim Coulthart** spoke about the History of **Mohawk Airlines**.

That ends the 2025 Breakfast Speaker's Series.

Mike's tenure as Trustee is ending. The museum thanks him for the enrichment he has brought to the museum through the Speakers Series. We are looking for someone else to step up and carry out this valuable function.

## CHRISTMAS WAS IN THE AIR AGAIN

Ho! Ho! Ho!

This year's **Christmas is in the Air** program took place on a wintery December 13th. **Santa, Mrs. Claus** and a lot of Santa's elves were there to greet more than 500 guests. Santa and Mrs. Claus arrived by airplane, greeted the kids as a group, and proceeded to the ESAM hangar to hear from the children individually.

Each child received a passport that included five stations: Santa Claus, Crafts, Coloring/Letters to Santa, Snacks, and the Candy Bomber Story. Those who visited Santa received a small gift. Those who attended the Candy Bomber Story received a parachute with candy attached, dropped through the air. And those who went to all five stations received a small model airplane.

It was a great event thanks to the many, many ESAM volunteers who decorated the museum for Christmas and supervised the event. The volunteers were led by **ESAM President Rich Bievenue** and event coordinators **Gary Davis** and **Erin Beulac**.



Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive by airplane (left) and set up to meet the children in the hangar (right)

## JACK 'O LANTERNS AND JETS WAS A SCARY GOOD TIME

On Saturday October 25th, ESAM was alive (dead?) with skeletons, spiders, black cats, bats, ghosts, and even a dancing gorilla as the museum held its second annual Jack 'O Lanterns and Jets Halloween event. Nearly 800 Trick-or-Treaters and their adult entourage snaked their way through the eerily decorated planes in the Main Hangar, listening to The Monster Mash and other Halloween tunes, and stopping along the way to receive treats. Snacks were also available in the Community Room.

Thank you to all the amazing volunteers who contributed to making ESAM's second annual Jack-O'-Lanterns & Jets event such a big success! We greatly appreciate everyone who gave up part of their weekend to help, with more than 30 volunteers involved in everything from pumpkin carving and decorating to working the event itself.

We would also like to thank our generous sponsors: **All Seasons Equipment, Discover Schenectady, 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank of Scotia, Armory Studios, Buhrmaster Farms, and Dunkin'** for their donations and participation this year. Please support our sponsors. A special thank you to **Miguel Teixeira** and the dancing gorilla for once again supplying donuts and entertainment - both were crowd favorites enjoyed by all.



**A Group of Friendly Halloween Pumpkins**

## SAAB JAS-39 GRIPEN

by Kevin Millington

The Saab JAS-39 Gripen is a highly advanced multi-role fighter currently in service with the Swedish Air Force, as well as several other countries. The Gripen was developed during the late 1990's as a replacement for Sweden's aging Saab J-35 Draken and JA-37 Viggen. Like its predecessors, the Gripen was designed for high performance, flexibility, and the ability to operate from short runways, including highways, and can get airborne with a takeoff run of only 800 meters. The Gripen owes its high performance and multi-role capability to its advanced design and avionics, and a fly-by-wire flight control system. Its delta wing and canard configuration provide the fighter with exceptional maneuverability, high speed, and a heavy weapons payload. In addition, its advanced pulse-doppler radar allows it to detect both aerial and ground targets and employ precision-guided missiles and bombs. The Gripen is powered by one Volvo RM12 turbofan engine and boasts a top speed of Mach 2 and can carry out both air supremacy and ground attack missions. First flown in 1988 and employed operationally in the mid-1990's, over 280 are in service with the Swedish Air Force and the air forces of the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of South Africa, Thailand, and Brazil. With its advanced design and multi-role capability, the Gripen is one of the most capable fighters currently in service. With a maximum takeoff weight of 30,000 lbs., it is also one of the smallest fighters in the world.

The JAS-39 is equipped with an internally-mounted 27 mm. cannon and can carry the latest air-to-air and air-to-ground ordinance on under-wing and fuselage pylons.



SAAB JAS-39 Gripen

**AeroNotes**

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**Empire State  
Aerosciences Museum**

250 Rudy Chase Drive  
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**Phone:** 518 377-2191

**Fax:** 518 377-1959

E-mail: [esam.office@gmail.com](mailto:esam.office@gmail.com)

Web site: [www.esam.org](http://www.esam.org)

**Editor**

Lawrence McArthur

ESAM is a registered  
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**GLEN PREECE RECEIVES FIVE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP**

At ESAM's Annual Meeting, volunteer **Glen Preece** was awarded a five-year membership to ESAM for his many contributions to the museum. Of particular note is his willingness to travel far and wide to obtain exhibit material for the museum.

Thank you Glen!



**Dave Roe (left) congratulates Glen Preece (right) on Glen's receipt of an extended membership to ESAM**

**YOU CAN STILL DONATE  
TO THE ESAM ANNUAL APPEAL**

To donate to ESAM's Annual Appeal, please send your check to ESAM, 250 Rudy Chase Drive, Glenville, NY 12302, with a notation that the donation is for the Annual Appeal. Thank you for your support of ESAM.

## THE AIR PARK IS FILLING UP AGAIN

ESAM's landlord, the **County of Schenectady**, has finished its work in the ESAM Air Park, including repaving the area. The completion of this work has triggered another round of plane movements. Some of the planes that were previously in the Air Park have been relocated to the Main Hangar while others are being returned to the Air Park. Also moving to the Air Park are ESAM's C-130s. Moving all of these planes is the most extensive movement of planes ever done by the museum. Kudos go to the Restoration volunteers who are making it happen!



**A C-130 and Other Planes are back in the Air Park**

## FLIGHTS FOR VETERANS EVENT RETURNS TO ESAM

The Flights for Veterans Tasting Event returned to ESAM for its second year on Friday, November 7th. The event was coordinated by the **Glenville Rotary**, and was held in ESAM's main hangar.

The tasting event featured local breweries, wineries, and distilleries presenting their products to event patrons. This popular event supports both the **Capital Region Veterans Memorial-Legacy Project** and ESAM.

## A LITTLE DIFFERENT LOOK

You may have noticed that this newsletter has a little different look. That is because, for the first time, it was developed using **Canva** software. The newsletter had been developed in Microsoft Publisher for many years, but Microsoft is phasing out Publisher. The transition to Canva is still a work in progress for your newsletter editor. Thanks to **Anne Marie Kitchen**, **Cheryl Lavicska** and **Bob Vore** for their help during the transition.

LETTERS, POSTS AND EMAILS LIKE THESE WE LIKE TO RECEIVE

From: linda sweet  
Date: Mon, Oct 6, 2025 at 1:28 PM  
Subject: Re: Empire State Aerosciences Museum Fall Newsletter

I'm not sure if it was two or three years ago, but my grandson and I were there for our normal weekly visit. And as I was talking to the young man that was checking us in, Dan Wilson came out to chat with us. You had just gotten the new plane in the back, so he asked Liam if he would like to go out and see it. We proceeded to spend the next hour chatting with Dan and walking around the plane and in the plane..... I will always remember what a special gentleman he was and how happy he made my grandbaby that day. We continued to speak off and on and I am so thankful to have gotten to know this wonderful gentleman.

August 20, 2025

To: Empire State  
Aerosciences Museum

From: Thomas Corners Fire  
Dept, TCFD

Thank you once again for  
your donation to the T.C.F.D.  
Open House. Your donation  
of a family membership will  
be a valuable prize to our  
door prizes.

We hope to increase the  
number of new recruits to  
our all-volunteer fire dept.

We appreciate your  
community support!

Patricia Nolan Bertino  
T.C.F.D.

Your tour  
was amazing!  
Thank you so much  
for sharing all of your  
knowledge! Nellie Barker  
Noah

Caroline  
Radica

Jaxson

Nora

Rosemary

Rebekah

RIP

Dear Kevin,  
Thank you so much for sharing your  
time and expertise with St. Gregory's  
3<sup>rd</sup> grade class! The children had a  
wonderful day learning at The Empire  
State Aerosciences museum and we  
are so thankful to have such a  
knowledgeable and patient tour guide.  
With gratitude,  
Mrs. Barker's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class

<b>OUR SUPPORTERS</b>
-----------------------

	<b>Friends of ESAM</b>	
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Anna Silburn	Mallory Sleasman	Kristen Smith
Mary Beth Sullivan	Amy Teale	Thomas Urquhart
	<b>Individual</b>	
Peng Chen	Reuben Ginsburg	Sean Luchsinger
Steven Miller	James Tedisco	
	<b>Senior Citizen/Student</b>	
Richard Bingham	Brent Coon	Jean Cramer
Lawrence Cummings	Robert Cummings	John Dupier
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Harry Pellegrin	Patrick Piccirilli	Anthony Russo
Al Staley		
	<b>Library</b>	
Town of Ballston Library	Voorheesville Public Library	

**ADDITIONAL DONATIONS TO THE PRESTON VAN PATTEN MEMORIAL FUND**

ESAM is grateful to the following people who have recently made donations totaling \$220 to the Preston Van Patten Memorial Fund:

**Virginia Newell**

**Jane Oppenlander**

**UNRESTRICTED DONATIONS**

Thank you so much to the following people who recently made unrestricted donations to ESAM:

**William Althammer  
Joseph Sampson, Jr.**

**Carol Borthwick  
Vera Weiss**

The Empire State Aerosciences Museum is supported in part by:

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 Dr. Nancy Fitzroy  
 The Family of Roger Hannay  
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 James Liguori  
 John Panoski  
 Mr. & Mrs. Steven Ruggles  
 Maureen Sauter  
 Howard Schlossberg & Michelle Ostrelch  
 The Family of Jansz Vander Veer\*

\*ESAM Charter

Member



**CHRISTMAS IS IN THE AIR AGAIN AT THE SCHENECTADY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FESTIVAL OF TREES**

Thanks to the efforts of ESAM's traveling elves, the museum again had an ESAM tree in the **Schenectady County Historical Society Festival of Trees**. ESAM's tree sported planes, rockets and a spaceman. Pictured at left, from left to right, are tree decorators **Michael Quinn, Ronnie Quinn, Dorie McArthur and Larry McArthur**.

We hope you had a happy holiday season.

**CREDIBLE SPORT LEAD ENGINEER VISITS ESAM**

ESAM was pleased to have engineer **John Schubert** visit the museum on October 25<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Schubert was intimately involved in engineering the Credible Sport C-130s that ESAM possesses. **Operation Credible Sport** was a project of the U.S. military to prepare for a second rescue attempt of the hostages held in Iran in 1980. The concept included using a Lockheed C-130 Hercules modified with the addition of rocket engines to make it a short take off and landing (STOL) capable aircraft able to land within a soccer stadium in Tehran.

ESAM volunteers **Erin and Dan Beaulac** conducted a video interview of Mr. Schubert. The interview was followed by a reception and presentation in ESAM's Community Room.

Thanks to **Trustee Dave Roe** for arranging this fascinating historical event.

### DANIEL WILSON MEMORIAL FUND

At the request of Dan Wilson’s family, the Empire State Aerosciences Museum has set up the **Daniel Wilson Memorial Fund**. The museum is grateful to Dan’s family for suggesting that people wishing to honor Dan contribute to the Memorial Fund. To date, the fund has received donations valued at \$8,200. In addition to the donors recognized in the last newsletter, the following people have donated to the fund:

**Norman Ditoro**  
**Carl Likinhoker**  
**James Pabis**

**Thomas Flanigan**  
**Larry McArthur**  
**Nancy Szczepanik**

**John Keimer**  
**June McGarry**  
**Vera Weiss**

If you wish to donate to Dan’s Memorial Fund, you may access the opportunity using the QR code below right, or you may send a check to: ESAM Attn: Daniel Wilson Memorial Fund 250 Rudy Chase Drive Glenville, NY 12302.

### SPECIAL RECOGNITION

As we hope you can sense by reading this newsletter, the Empire State Aerosciences Museum survives, and thrives, on the strength of its members, volunteers and supporters. We wish to specially recognize **Carol Borthwick, Vera Weiss, and Mr. & Mrs. Maurice York** for their significant monetary donations to the museum in the Fall of 2025.



## ESAM Membership Application

Please check one: NEW MEMBERSHIP  RENEWAL

**ANNUAL DUES:**  
INDIVIDUAL/ FAMILY

- Senior Citizen \$35
- Student \$35
- Individual \$45
- Family \$75

VIP

- Contributing \$80
- Supporting \$135
- Sustaining \$285
- Galaxy Club \$500
- Friend of ESAM \$1,000

BUSINESS

- Supporter \$285
- Patron \$500
- Benefactor \$1,000
- Library \$75
- Small Business \$100

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone: Home** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

**Work** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make your check payable to ESAM**

**Mail to ESAM, 250 Rudy Chase Drive, Glenville, NY 12302**

If your company offers a matching gift program, please contact them with the amount of your gift.

Matching Gift Company \_\_\_\_\_

Empire State Aerosciences Museum  
250 Rudy Chase Drive  
Glenville, NY 12302



## Happenings at ESAM

### MUSEUM HOURS

**Summer Hours:** (Father's Day through Labor Day)  
Open Tuesday through Sunday 10 AM to 4 PM. Closed Monday

**Winter Hours:** (Labor Day through Father's Day)  
Open Friday through Sunday 10 AM to 4 PM. Closed Monday through Thursday

Closed on New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Easter, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day  
For all other federal holidays or school breaks, contact the museum in advance to confirm.

**General Museum Admission** – \$13 per adult; \$11 per senior and military; \$9 age 6-16;  
under 6 free when accompanied by an adult

**C-130 Tour (when available)** – \$2

**Simulated Reality Vehicle (SRV)** – Ride: \$5

**Jansz Vander Veer Research Center/Library Hours** – Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday  
9 AM to 12 noon, by appointment only

**January 17, Saturday - Pancake Breakfast:** 8:30-10:30 AM. All you can eat: \$12 for ages 15 and older, \$8 for children 6-14, free for children under 6. Menu varies with pancakes, French toast, sausage, eggs, applesauce, juice and coffee/tea. The public is invited to attend.

**Pilots:** Tower Frequency 121.30; Ground 121.90. Land at Schenectady County Airport and taxi to the north parking area. Browse the Museum beginning at 10 AM. Museum Admission: \$13 per adult; \$11 per senior and military; \$9 age 6-16; under 6 free when accompanied by an adult.

**January 17, Saturday - Speaker:** 10 AM. tba

**January 19, Monday - Board of Trustees Meeting:** 7 PM ESAM Community Room

**February 21, Saturday - Pancake Breakfast:** 8:30-10:30 AM. All you can eat: \$12 for ages 15 and older, \$8 for children 6-14, free for children under 6. Menu varies with pancakes, French toast, sausage, eggs, applesauce, juice and coffee/tea. The public is invited to attend.

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**February 21, Saturday - Speaker:** 10 AM. tba

**February 22, Monday - Board of Trustees Meeting:** 7 PM ESAM Community Room

**March 15, Monday - Board of Trustees Meeting:** 7 PM ESAM Community Room

**March 21, Saturday - Pancake Breakfast:** 8:30-10:30 AM. All you can eat: \$12 for ages 15 and older, \$8 for children 6-14, free for children under 6. Menu varies with pancakes, French toast, sausage, eggs, applesauce, juice and coffee/tea. The public is invited to attend.

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**March 21, Saturday - Speaker:** 10 AM. tba