

## Around LI

### Babylon bonds for new lights

Babylon Town is bonding for \$100,000 in order to install new LED lights at several facilities.

The Town Board last week voted 5-0 to approve the bonding. The board in January approved \$17.56 million in bonding via 28 resolutions with amounts ranging from \$15,000 for lighting at Wyandanch Plaza to \$10.62 million for road reconstruction.

The bonding for light conversion is for the first year of a three-year project that will cost \$100,000 per year said town spokesman Kevin Bonner. In 2020 the larger facilities slated for LED lights are Venetian Shores Park in Lindenhurst, the Fabio Buttitta Pool facility in Deer Park, Tanner Park in Copiague and Wyandanch Park in Wyandanch, he said.

The town estimates the project's total savings will cut electric costs by at least \$25,000 a year, Bonner said.

— DENISE M. BONILLA

More on next page

## NOW ON NEWSDAY.COM



BRAVO / BARBARA NITKE

Many Long Islanders have made names for themselves on **reality TV** shows, from "The Bachelor" to "Biggest Loser" and more. Find out what other **shows Long Islanders have participated in at** [newsday.com/entertainment](https://newsday.com/entertainment)

Download our app at [newsday.com/app](https://newsday.com/app)

## WADING RIVER

# SPECIAL NEEDS, SPECIAL SKILLS

BY JEAN-PAUL SALAMANCA  
[jeanpaul.salamanca@newsday.com](mailto:jeanpaul.salamanca@newsday.com)

The single mother of two autistic children and owner of a recently opened Wading River home goods shop is using the business to train those diagnosed with special needs for jobs in the workforce.

Owner Stacey Wohl's goal with be(Cause) Lifestyle Boutique, a home goods store that held its grand opening Feb. 12, has been to give individuals with special needs like her children Brittney, 22, and Logan, 20 — both of whom work at the store and are diagnosed with autism — a chance to develop their skills.

"I've been divorced because of [autism]. I lost friends along the way. I lost myself in autism. And so I wanted what happened to my kids to matter," Wohl said.

Wohl, 53, of Shoreham, started by opening a wholesale coffee business, Our Coffee with a Cause, in 2012, where young people with developmental disabilities and special needs worked as volunteers. Looking back, Wohl said she learned the value of helping others from her late mother, Susan Schultz.

"My mother was always involved in her temple, doing charity work and helping people, and I learned how to do that from her," Wohl said.

In 2016, Wohl's parents helped her open Cause Café in Northport, a full-service restaurant with half its employees having developmental disabilities. However, the restaurant was dealt a blow after her father, Gerald Schultz, died of a heart attack in 2018 while the family was on a cruise vacation. The restaurant eventually closed, and Susan Schultz died five months later.

Despite those setbacks, Wohl refused to give up her dream. That led her to open her store



NEWSDAY / JOHN PARASKEVAS

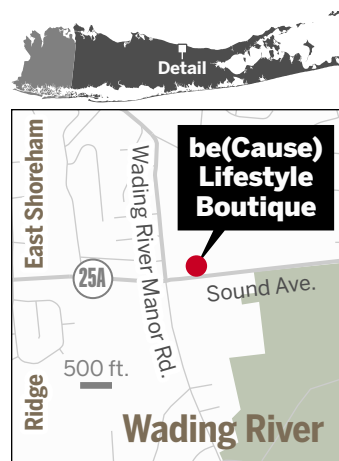
Stacey Wohl works with Courtney Gaines, 28, left, and Tina Amodeo, 51, on gift baskets to be sold.

in Wading River, which sells clothing, jewelry from local artisans, soaps, fragrance candles, baked goods and gift baskets filled with handcrafted food items. Smithtown-based agency Developmental Disabilities Institute sends a small group of volunteers with special needs to the store each week to receive job training skills.

Roughly 15 people in past years have found jobs after training at her stores, Wohl said.

Tina Amodeo, 51, of Port Jefferson Station, who suffers from seizures, volunteers at the store, having been trained in customer service and as an assistant manager. For Amodeo, who wants to own her own store someday, the experience is invaluable.

"In the future, if I want to be



NEWSDAY / GUSTAVO PABÓN

a manager of a store, now I can put down [my experience] on the application," Amodeo said.

Lisa LaRusso, of Melville, said her son John, 26, who was diagnosed with autism, worked with food preparation in the

kitchen while at Cause Café. The experience helped him land a job with Edible Arrangements.

"They kept him busy, and he really enjoyed it. The misconception is that the autistic population can't work because they can't socialize, but when they find something they enjoy, then they work out very well," LaRusso said, adding that she admired Wohl's passion in creating such opportunities for people with special needs.

Wohl is hoping the store becomes profitable and can expand with pop-up locations in other areas, like Southold, attracting people from all walks of life.

"The idea is for everyone to come in there and buy a gift or a muffin or a cup of coffee or a shirt. It's for the whole community," Wohl said.