

Catskill Mountain range in the distance And again, for those on a budget, the rates are far less than a fast food lunch!

THEATER/DINING

I raved about the *Shadowland Theatre* in my December article on shopping for holiday gifts. Their ticket prices are amazingly reasonable, the performances exceptional, and the theatre an intimate setting in a beautiful art deco building. These are professional actors, and the five-play season generally offers something for everyone's taste.

Couple a performance with dinner at the newly-opened *Aroma Thyme Bistro* and you have a date to remember. In the winter months, remember the *Ellenville Central School's Performing Arts Academy*, where you may well see a future *Shadowland* actor or hear a not-yet-famous musician, right here in our backyard!

Another local spot for an intimate evening is the *Gold Mountain Chalet Resort*. Their restaurant is open to the public on weekends, and there is live music on Saturday nights. The atmosphere is leisurely, and patrons are encouraged to enjoy the food as well as the ambience. (When I worked in Middletown, one of my cohorts would bring his wife there for their wedding anniversary every year. A 20-minute drive is easier than the 3 – 4 hours most folks travel on a weekend getaway, and they always looked content and refreshed come Monday morning).

HEALTH CLUBS

The *Hudson Valley Resort's* health club is open to the public, and there's no membership fee, but rather a nominal daily charge. They offer a Jacuzzi, steam rooms, showers, swimming and a gym, the pool and gym being coed. Massages are available to the public.

STREET FAIRS – PARADES - FIREWORKS

Ellenville is best known for its annual *Fourth of July Celebration*. In my home, it starts on the Third with a house party that has become a family tradition. (An aside: the first two years I hosted my "Third of July celebration," we'd hurry through dinner to go to the *Shadowland* for amateur night. This event would draw talent from the tri-county area; I suppose you could call it our version of "Showtime at the Apollo." It was a fun way to end the evening, and start the Fourth.)

July 4th brings a street fair pre-parade; choose your viewing spot early if you want to be anyplace close to the reviewing stand. After the parade, I suggest a swim if you're so inclined, or a nap (my choice). In the evening, garner an invite to a barbecue, or pack a picnic and stake your claim for a viewing spot for the fireworks.

A smaller but none-the-less fun gathering is *Run Like the Wind*, a 5 & 10K road race traditionally held in May. It has historically served as a fundraiser for local agencies, my favorite being the *Ellenville Cooperative Nursery School*, which benefits from the *Run Like the Breeze* children's races held after the main events.

The *Blueberry/Huckleberry Harvest Festival* is a bittersweet reminder that summer in the 'Gunks won't last forever. Last year's event offered live music, a pie-baking contest, dunking booth, falconer, and a number of booths showing the works of area artists, and wares of vendors.

New York State Special Olympics Winter Games are often held at the *Nevele Grande*, and will be in 2004; in past years they've sought local volunteers, and graciously welcomed the public. Their Opening Parade has near

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