

# Town data goes from cards to computer

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Ledger Staff

## Westchester ARC sends help to Onatru offices

With a little help, town assessor records will be up to date and digital in just a few weeks.

The town formed a partnership with ImageWork and Westchester ARC to make it happen. ImageWork Technologies Corp. is a local company that specializes in "replacing the paper in paperwork" as its slogan says. The company provides government and corporate clients with modern methods of document management and "automated workflow solutions."

Town Clerk Kathy Cory said the town has worked with the company before and was pleased with the results.

"I was very pleased, and other municipalities who have worked with them were pleased, with their efficiency and grasp of our operations and their technical knowledge," Ms. Cory said. For the last project, ImageWork provided a business process analysis to Lewisboro. The company studied all the departments at Onatru Farm in Lewisboro Hamlet and at the police station on Spring

Street to analyze the work flow there.

This time, ImageWork has brought in a team of helpers from Westchester ARC to do the paperwork. Westchester ARC is an organization that aims to provide those with mental retardation and developmental disabilities with employment opportunities while also providing services to towns in Westchester.

"This type of work provides skill levels that can be transplanted to very specific jobs in the community," said Linda Warner, who is heading up the project in Lewisboro. She said the partnership was developed with ImageWork about five years ago. ImageWork provides the technology to transfer data onto the computer and Westchester ARC provides the labor to sort, scan and process the paperwork.

"In the setup of this specific project, there is a computer application that is designed so that all the scan work will provide Lewisboro with exactly what they need," Ms. Warner said. "If you go beyond the issue, it's community service for ImageWorks."

Cecilia Bikkal, vice president and project manager of ImageWork Technologies Corp., said the partnership works well for both groups.

"WARC has the labor but not the technical arm. We have the technical arm," she said. "They are wonderful people."

How they came to Lewisboro was through a grant from the state's Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund. It is a statewide program funded by surcharges collected at county clerks' offices statewide. When people file deeds or mortgages there is a fee that goes to the state for this purpose. That money is collected by the state each year and distributed throughout the state for town governments to use for records management improvements. While this is the first scanning project the town is embarking on, it is not the first records management grant Lewisboro has acquired. Town Clerk Kathleen Cory said she has acquired about 12 of these grants.

This particular project will make all the paper deeds and land records into digital data.

Gordon Washburn, the town assessor, said it will ensure protection of these files.

"Those are the only copies we have," Mr. Washburn said of the paperwork that Westchester ARC employees are sorting right now.

Now that they are being scanned and digitized, the town will be able to re-create any lost records and make them readily available for the public via a computer terminal where homeowners, real estate agents or others may access the information and print it out at the touch of a button for their own use.

Most of the work is being done

in the town offices at Onatru. Ms. Warner said the beauty of Westchester ARC is that it can bring its workers on site to do the work for most of the project. Towns prefer not to have the documents out of the office for very long, she said. Most companies would not be able to provide on-site labor. The process takes about four or five weeks, she said. While at the town offices the property cards are sorted and given a bar code. For about five or six days the property cards are taken out of the town offices and brought to a scanning facility. They are brought back immediately after they are scanned so they don't all come back at once.

"The challenge is really just getting the cards back to the assessor in time," Ms. Bikkal said. "The biggest challenge is always not to disrupt the functioning of the office."

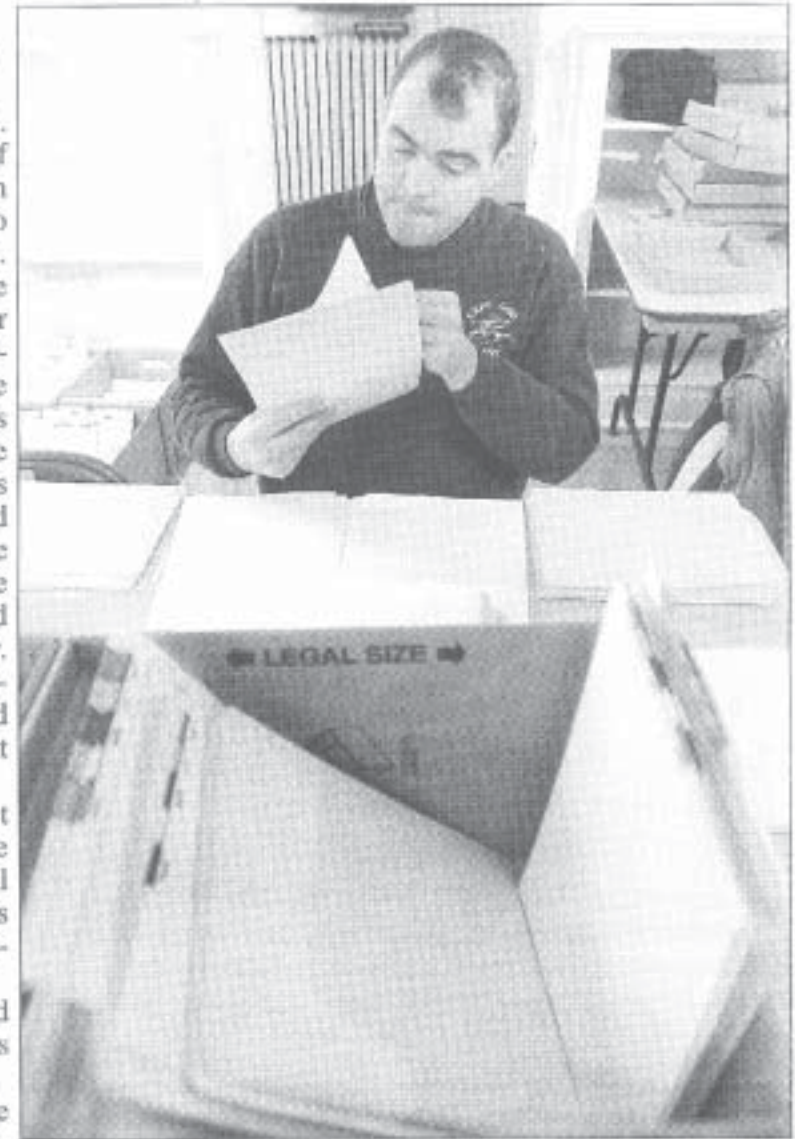
Once the information is merged onto a hard drive the hard copies are returned.

Mr. Washburn said this is the first time town offices are working with Westchester ARC, and employees there are impressed.

"They've just been working away like busy little bees," Mr. Washburn said. He said they seem to be on schedule.

Ms. Warner said the town has been supportive of Westchester ARC's employees. "We have a good work space to work in," she said. "Questions are readily answered. The staff here as a whole has made themselves readily available to make this as efficient a process as possible. It's a true partnership."

A partnership that will result in Lewisboro's land records being a successful first step in modernizing town record-keeping.



Scott Mullen

**Denis, a Westchester ARC worker, sorts land papers at Onatru Farm last Wednesday. The group's mission is to provide needed services to communities while also giving those with developmental disabilities and mental retardation opportunities for employment.**

"This is a new and exciting way for the town to have its database," Ms. Cory said.

The program the town is purchasing from ImageWorks will be able to expand to other departments so they too can take advantage of it. Ms. Cory said she will also be applying for more grants

to purchase equipment and software.

"This provides us with security measures," she said. "Hopefully the other departments will like what they see and want to start converting their documents to the same format."

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