Several months ago the town board met with Chris Bilow, Penfield’s Recreation Director, and asked that PenRec look into offering more organized winter and spring break week programs. The board’s interest was to provide more programs for families that may not be traveling during school break weeks and give parents peace of mind that their children are safe and being watched over while engaged in entertaining activities. Programs during breaks would also allow parents to reserve vacation time for future family activities. I’m happy to share that PenRec has come up with several options for upcoming breaks. Children can pursue an interest, develop a skill, or just have fun! Sessions will be filled with a variety of activities including arts and crafts, special events, and physical and recreational activities. You may register for the entire week or individual days based on your family’s needs. Learn more at www.penfieldrec.org.

The Fire Marshal’s Office would like to share some thoughts on the safe use of space heaters and fireplaces. While these heating devices may help you feel cozy and warm, they can become extremely dangerous if not used properly. On average, research shows that heating equipment is involved in an estimated 60,420 reported U.S. home fires per year. These fires resulted in 488 civilian deaths, 1,621 civilian injuries, and $913 million in direct property damage per year.

Home heating fires are largely preventable when you know the rules. The Town of Penfield’s goal is to reduce the number of home-heating fires in our community; however, we need your help. We are urging Penfield families to use extra caution this winter when heating homes. Four out of five heating fire deaths (81 percent), more than two-thirds of the injuries (70 percent), and half of the property damage (51 percent) involve stationary or portable space heaters, including wood stoves.

To help keep our community safe and warm this season, the Fire Marshal’s Office recommends the following guidelines:

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home. For the best protection interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home. When one alarm sounds, they all sound. Test smoke alarms at least once a month. Be sure your home has both photoelectric and ionization smoke alarms, or combination ionization and photoelectric alarms also known as dual sensor smoke alarms.

- Remember that space heaters need space. Keep all things that can burn, such as paper, bedding or furniture, at least three feet away from heating equipment. Turn portable heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room. Plug power cords only into outlets with sufficient capacity, and never into an extension cord. Inspect for cracked or broken plugs or loose connections and replace before using.

- If you have a fireplace, have your chimney inspected each year by a qualified professional and cleaned if necessary. Use a sturdy fireplace screen. Allow ashes to cool before disposing, and placed those cooled ashes in a metal container.

- Install and maintain a carbon monoxide alarm in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. Never use an oven to heat your home. With these simple and easy precautions, help us meet our goal of decreasing home-heating fires this winter.

I would like to recognize and thank Rabbi Yitzi Hein, Co-director, Chabad of Pittsford, for organizing the purchase and placement of the Menorah located in Schaufelberger Park. The town board looks forward to this Menorah being lit annually as part of our holiday celebration.

Until next week, may all of you and your families have a happy, healthy and joyous New Year!