

# WARREN MONTHLY<sub>NJ</sub>

WARREN'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

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## TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS WELCOME BACK STUDENTS AND STAFF

There were smiling faces as Warren Township Schools welcomed back students and staff for the start of the new school year. Students disembarked buses on September 7 greeting friends and teachers, after staff members had met for two days on September 5 and 6 for a series of department meetings, curriculum reviews and other key professional development.

"Welcome to the 2017-2018 school year," said superintendent Dr. Matthew Mingle who opened a district wide staff meeting on September 5, outlining his vision for the coming school year and paying tribute to the district's hardworking summer staff.

On hand as staff members arrived for the opening day sessions were 7th graders Emma and Ronald Leung who serenaded the group on the harp and keyboard, respectively.

"What a wonderful way to start our day and our school year," said Mingle about the young musicians.

Mingle also welcomed staff new to the district - 20 teachers, 3 paraprofessionals, three central office staff, 1 driver, and 1 custodian. He also recognized the district's five recipients of last June's "Excellence in Education" award: Hildegard Jackson, Central School Spanish teacher; Elena Marinello, Grade 1 teacher at Angelo L. Tomaso School; Lauren Regal, Grade 8 Guidance Counselor; Jennifer Ronkiewicz, Woodland art teacher (who moves to Warren Middle School this year); and Kristen Stoyanov, who taught Grade 3 at Mt. Horeb last year before becoming one of two K-5 instructional specialists.

Board president Tia Allocco discussed the changes she has seen as board member and parent over the past 7 years including schedules, leadership, security upgrades and Chromebooks.

"What hasn't changed over the years is the professionalism and the passion in this room," Allocco told the gathering of educators and district staff. "When you marry together that professionalism and teaching experience with the compassion and the kindness, you get the Warren Township School District."

More than 1,700 students, kindergarten through eighth grade, will attend Warren Township's four elementary schools and one middle school this year.



(left, l-r)  
Central School  
fifth graders  
Grace Prayias,  
Bree Kleinberg,  
Isaac Seubert  
and Brayden Kelly  
are all smiles  
as their bus arrives  
for the first day  
of school.

Photo Credit:  
Warren Township Schools.

(above) Seventh grade twins, Emma and Ronald Leung, serenade Warren Township Schools staff members as they arrive for the opening day session on Sept. 5.



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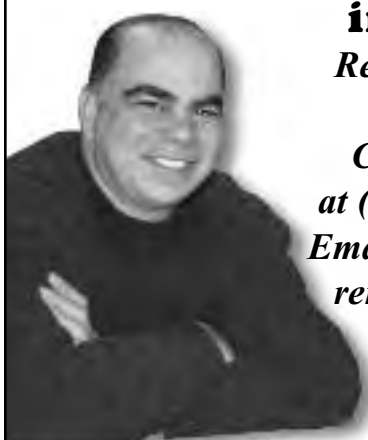
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## CHELSEA AT WARREN FUNDRAISER FOR BABY WITH RARE GENETIC ILLNESS

The Chelsea at Warren senior residence, located at 274 King George Road, raised \$2,000 to benefit a local baby with Prader-Willi Syndrome, a genetic disorder caused by an incomplete chromosome.

The "Pasta for a Purpose" fundraiser, held Thursday, September 14 at the Chelsea's new Independent Living community, offered a choice of three different pastas and side dishes for \$15 a person. Donors were invited to enjoy their dinners in the Chelsea's bistro or have it packed to go. There was also live entertainment.

Benefitting from the event is the family of four-month old Domenica Scalzo of Green Brook. Domenica requires special feedings on a strict schedule and other forms of therapy. "The

funds will go directly towards Domenica's clinical needs as her family strives to provide the best quality of life for her on her journey living with Prader-Willi Syndrome," said Ashley Scalzo, Executive Director of The Chelsea and Domenica's aunt. "This tied in so perfectly with our theme for Assisted Living Week, 'Family is Forever'."

The food was prepared by chef Christine Struniewski and served by Chelsea staffers.

More information about Prader-Willi Syndrome may be found at [www.fpwr.org](http://www.fpwr.org).



*Scalzo family of Green Brook  
(above l-r): Nick Scalzo, father;  
Danica Scalzo, 4, sister to Domenica;  
Domenica Scalzo; Noelle Scalzo, mother.*

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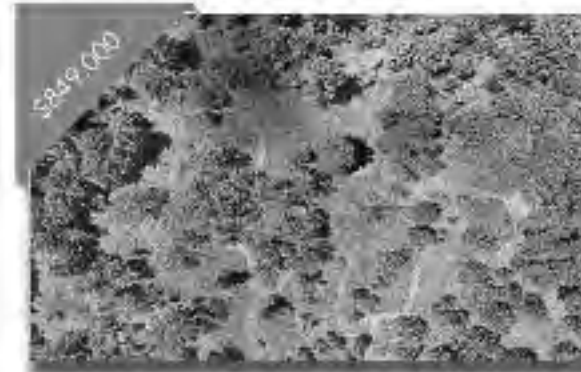
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## MIDDLE SCHOOLERS NY JETS AND OTHERS TO REWARD UPSTANDERS

Each week, Warren Middle School students and staff will nominate one student who has been an Upstander - a person who demonstrates kindness, compassion and caring to another student, especially in standing up for someone who is in danger of being bullied.

"I attended an anti-bullying conference sponsored by the New York Jets this summer," says social studies teacher Lynn Degen. "It was an amazing conference but the best part was the end of the conference when they gave participating teachers a kit with which to reward students who are Upstanders in their community."

Each Jets Upstander of the Week winner receives a t-shirt, bumper sticker and three tickets to a Jets home game. A picture of each Upstander is posted on the district's social media for the chance to win a schoolwide visit from members of the football team.

"It is wonderful to be able to recognize the fine example being set by so many of our students. It

is their leadership that sets the tone that Warren Middle School is a safe and welcoming place for all students," says Superintendent Matthew Mingle.

Winners for weeks one and two of the program were sixth grader Megan Saum and eighth grader Joshua Claxton for their caring and inclusive behavior toward their schoolmates.



*(above) Warren Middle School 6th grader Megan Saum was chosen by her teachers and peers as a Jets Upstander of the Week, a program sponsored by the New York Jets that promotes an anti-bullying message and rewards those who support inclusiveness among their classmates.*



*(above) Joshua Claxton, an 8th grader at Warren Middle School, is the Jets Upstander of the Week for week two of an anti-bullying program sponsored by the New York Jets to reward those who show caring and compassion to others.*

Photo Credit: Warren Township Schools



## ESTABLISHING, REVISING AND ENFORCING TIME-SHARING WITH CHILDREN

By: James McGlew II, Esq.

In all cases of divorce or separation where children are involved, the issue of time-sharing (previously referred to as "visitation") is a significant issue to be addressed. Unless the parents have agreed to an equal shared custodial arrangement, an appropriate schedule of time-sharing is particularly important for all those involved: the custodial parent, the non-custodial parent, and the children.

Determining a schedule of time-sharing with the children is sometimes resolved between the parties. However, in those cases where the parties are unable to do so, the Court will order mediation in an attempt to resolve the issue. If the mediation is unsuccessful, the Court will (and has the authority to) determine the time-sharing schedule which will be binding on all involved.

Traditionally, time-sharing consisted of alternate weekend overnights for the non-custodial parent, a division of legal and religious holidays, extended time during the summer, and perhaps one evening per week for dinner. Recently, time-sharing schedules have become more flexible with non-custodial parents demanding (and receiving) more time with their children. Busy work schedules for the parents and academic and activity schedules for the children demand a more fine-tuned approach to time-sharing.

When discussing this issue it is important for all involved to have an understanding of how it will work in real life. Individuals who use terms that state "time-sharing shall be reasonable and liberal" or "as the parties may agree" find that disputes almost always arise in the future. Specificity as to which days and nights the children will be with which parent, times for pick-up and drop-off, birthdays and holidays all need to be included in the schedule together with an acknowledgment that flexibility in scheduling is in everyone's best interest.

Over the course of time as children become older or as parents

relocate, there may need to be changes to the existing time-sharing schedule. When the parties mutually agree to modify the existing time-sharing schedule, the revised schedule should always be in writing preferably in the form of a Court Order to ensure there are no misunderstandings in the future. If the parties cannot agree to modify the existing time-sharing schedule, the matter is best handled by a Court-approved mediator before resorting to filing papers with the Court.

Family lawyers also confront the situation where there has been a refusal to comply with the existing time-sharing schedule or direct interference with the custodial rights of a parent. Interference can be anything that frustrates the parent's right to spend meaningful time with their children. New Jersey law provides remedies in the event the Court finds that there has been a frustration of, or interference with, the time-sharing schedule. The Court has a great deal of latitude to correct such a situation including, but not limited to: (a) ordering "make-up" parenting time; (b) requiring the parent who has interfered to pay any costs which may have resulted from the interference; (c) modifying the time-sharing schedule temporarily or permanently; (d) changing which parent shall be responsible for transporting the children for the scheduled time-sharing; or (e) requiring the parent who frustrates the time-sharing schedule to perform community service. Judges are firm believers in compelling enforcement of Orders regarding the relationship between parent and child.

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by Jyotsna Thapar, DPM

Performing a self exam on your feet can alert you to any potential signs of skin cancer. Addressing foot melanoma early on may catch the situation in time to tackle and cure it. Detecting melanoma in its early stages is critical. The soles, around or under the toenails, and between the toes are the most common locations of foot melanoma even though they typically do not get much, if any, sun exposure. Foot melanoma usually manifests itself with a freckle, mole, or spot that changes in configuration over a period of time. The resulting change in color, diameter, elevation, or border should be reported to your podiatrist immediately since those four factors are the indicators of foot melanoma.

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## WARREN RESCUE SQUAD RECEIVES DONATION

Chelsea Senior Living's annual golf outing raised over \$20,000 for volunteer first responders in the 13 New Jersey communities which are home to Chelsea assisted living residences. The golf outing, held Wednesday, September 20, attracted 100 golfers from various companies and Chelsea sponsors who played 18 holes at Fiddler's Elbow Golf Club in Bedminster, NJ, then enjoyed lunch and prizes.

"We are so grateful for the volunteers who serve our communities," said Roger Bernier, President and Chief Operating Officer of Chelsea Senior Living, said at the event. "Their timely responses when our residents become sick or need to go to a hospital are reassuring to all of us. Thank you!"

Each volunteer squad will receive \$1,500 from the event.



(above) Warren Fire Police member Ken Phillips with Chelsea at Warren Executive Director Ashley Scalzo, Mt. Bethel Village Executive Director and Warren Mayor Carolann Garafrola, Mt. Bethel Village Marketing Director Kelly Campbell and Chelsea at Warren Director of Community Relations Linda Caminiti.

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## AMERICARE OPENS WARREN OFFICE

AmeriCare Physical Therapy, a professional physical therapy clinic serving various communities throughout New Jersey, announced the launching of their newest clinic at 125 Washington Valley Road, Warren, NJ 07059. The new location began seeing new patients on October 2, and are planning a special ribbon cutting ceremony to be held on October 20th at 6:30 pm. Among the guests are Mayor Garafola and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce.

AmeriCare Physical Therapy wishes to extend an invitation to past and current patients, as well as doctors, other medical experts, and all who reside in the Warren area. Guests will enjoy food, drink and music, as well as comprehensive equipment demonstrations and a meet-and-greet with practice owner Dr. Susan Rele.

Speaking about the recent expansion and the clinic's focus on patient satisfaction, Dr. Rele declared: "It's very exciting to be expanding our practice. We're all about helping people, providing consistent quality care, communicating with our patients and working closely with them and their circle of healthcare providers to get them back to maximizing their function."

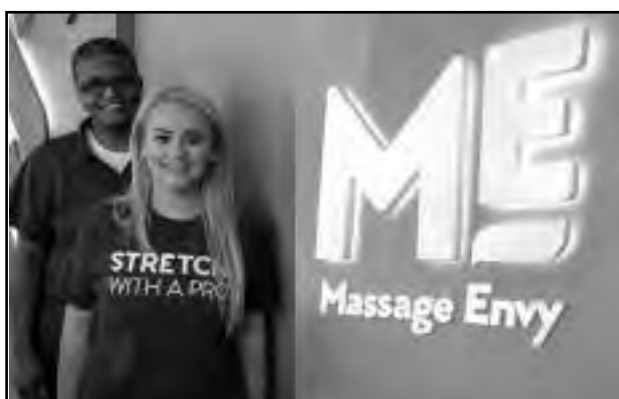
Dr. Rele also highlighted the important role AmeriCare places on constant staff training: "Our therapists are highly competent and compassionate and believe in providing a clear plan of care for those that need to get back on the road to recovery. This gives us the chance to help that many more people from Union and Somerset counties."

Established in 2006, AmeriCare Physical Therapy has grown from a single-office clinic in Millburn to employing more than 20 medical professionals in three state-of-the-art clinics. Patients can benefit from a variety of physical therapy services, including orthopedic care, sports-related injury treatment, spinal care, joint replacement, ergonomic assessment and various others.

Interested parties can find more information / to RSVP by visiting: [www.AmeriCarePT.com](http://www.AmeriCarePT.com), or email [robert@americarept.com](mailto:robert@americarept.com).

## MESSAGE ENVY HOSTS EVENT IN CELEBRATION OF 10 YEARS

The Massage Envy Warren franchised location will be hosting a grand re-opening event and ribbon cutting at 3pm on Wednesday, October 25th, 2017. Joining us will be the Mayor, Carolann Garafola, as we celebrate 10 years of promoting wellness and total body care. To show our appreciation, guests will receive a complimentary massage or facial enhancement with any 60-minute massage or facial session scheduled on that day. During the event, guests will also enjoy refreshments and service demonstrations including the new Total Body Stretch service featuring the exclusive Streto Method. The first 100 guests will receive a free gift bag. Please join us in our celebration!



\* All sessions include time for hands-on service and up to 10 minutes for consultation and dressing. Prices subject to change. Additional local taxes and fees may apply. Each franchised location is independently owned and operated.

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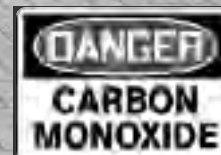


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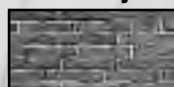
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# WHRHS TEACHERS WELCOMED BACK WITH CONVOCATION AND BBQ

Superintendent Elizabeth Jewett, Principal George Alexis and Director of Human Resources Beth Scheiderman welcomed teachers back on Tuesday, September 5, to the 2017-2018 School Year Opening Day at Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS).

Following opening remarks at a Staff Convocation, the teachers were treated to a Luncheon BBQ in the south cafeteria, with burgers and hot dogs barbecued by members of the WHRHS Football Team and Touchdown Club. The teachers also attended two days of departmental meetings and breakout sessions on Sept. 5, and Wednesday, Sept. 6.

"It is truly a pleasure to be standing here in front of all of you this morning and it is my privilege to welcome you back for the 2017-2018 school year," Jewett said in addressing the school's teachers to start the speaking program at the Staff Convocation. "I truly enjoy getting to share with you all the progress we made over the summer as well as celebrate all of our district accomplishments and the role that you have played."

Highlights from the summer of preparation for this school year, Jewett said, included the kitchen expansion and modernization in the south cafeteria. This construction project was the last major project funded through the 2013 referendum. The voter-approved improvements have covered over the last several summers multiple other physical facility improvements to the WHRHS physical plant, ranging from refurbished parking lots to kitchen and bathroom upgrades and modernizations.

Other improvements this summer included the replacement of a large walk-in refrigerator in the north kitchen, replacement of the aging water boiler in the south building, replacement of ductwork in ceramics and photography rooms, remediation of sinks and fountains that had failed lead testing requirements with new fixtures and filters, and continued exterior work on the Mountain Avenue athletic field.

Jewett also listed the broad and numerous upgrades added over the summer in technology, including a website upgrade, a new 1:1 Chromebook Initiative which has provided more than 500 Chromebooks to the incoming Ninth Grade students, new teacher laptops, 11 new SMART Boards, server upgrades and more.

She also listed the numerous awards, championships, academic honors and community-based accolades earned last year by students, as well as distinctions, and ongoing academic and professional improvements pursued by faculty and staff over the summer and throughout the school year.

Among the academic achievements that stand out were the ongoing excellence by WHRHS students in Advanced Placement testing and National Merit achievement, Jewett said. The average AP Exam score last year for the 1,169 tests taken was 4.19 out of 5. Out of 68 recognized students in the class of 2018, 15 have been named National Merit Semifinalists, the most ever at Watchung Hills.

The district continues to implement the goals set out in the Board of Education adopted Strategic Plan 2015-2020. Jewett said she is excited to start the 2017-2018 school year. She also announced that WHRHS has been awarded a Bronze Certificate and an accompanying \$2,000 grant by the Sustainable Jersey for Schools program., which has been used to purchase new color-coded recycling bins.

"I look forward to an amazing year with all of you," Jewett told the staff. "Watchung Hills is truly a world-class learning community."

Human Resources Director Scheiderman introduced new staff at the opening convocation. They are: In the English Department, teachers Michelle Germinario, Sarah Sheridan, Michael Stultz, and Alicia Michalitsianos; in Math, Matthew Crawford; in Special Services, Danielle Esteves, Cynthia Sacco, and Douglas Graiver; in Guidance, Lauren Sagat and Patti Lampa; in Buildings and Grounds, Jennifer Zervopolous; in Transportation, Jannette Vega; and three student interns, Caelynn Robinson in Social Studies, Simone Waters in social work, and DeAnna LaSasso with the school psychology staff. Also welcomed back after leaves of absence are:

Nancy Suppin, Kyla Garcia, and Heather Guirguis.

Teachers recognized at the Staff Convocation for 25, 30 and 35 years of service at WHRHS were: 25 years, Bonnie Burgdorf, Laura Goodson, Courtney Griffith, Michele Lettington, and Daniel Root; 30 years, James Carden, Lydia Chu, and Thomas Loeffler; and 35 years, Laurie Shoemaker.

Numerous volunteers, staff, parents and students pitched in to help make the luncheon BBQ a festive return to the school year. Among those volunteering and contributing were members of the Football Team, under the direction of Head Football Coach Rich Seubert, members of the parent Touchdown Club, and numerous businesses in the community.

Local businesses who contributed to the event were: Pomptonian Food Service, Fairfield; Costco, North Plainfield; in Warren Township: Kings, Acme, Dunkin Donuts, Ciro's Pizza and Deli, and the Country Squire Restaurant; in Stirling: ShopRite and Blimpie; in Gillette, Starbucks and Primavera Regency; in Watchung: ShopRite and Dunkin Donuts; in Scotch Plains, Grillestone; and Stop and Shop, Corporate.



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(above l-r) #83 Wide Receiver Jake Riley, #2 Running Back Zahveae Thorns, #5 Wide Receiver/Free Safety Tyler James, Head Football Coach Rich Seubert, #7 Quarterback Connor James, #9 Middle Linebacker Shreyas Sagi, and #44 Defensive Line Frank Kane.



(above, sitting, l-r) Jack Melillo and Anchal Dhir; (standing, l-r) Ben Kosakowski, Sam Sinnott, Kyra Anthony, Ben Allgor, Will Johnson, Francesca Infante-Meehan, and Justin Horowitz.



(above) The 2017-2018 School Year Opening Day Luncheon BBQ in the south cafeteria on Sept. 5 was the place to be for teachers to find out what colleagues did on their summer vacations.

(above) Among the teachers who sat outside courtyard next to the south cafeteria at the Luncheon BBQ are members of the English Department.



(left) Members of the WHRHS Cheerleader Squad joined the Football Team in volunteering at the Luncheon BBQ. With Football Team Defensive Lineman, #44 Frank Kane, center, are Jillian Mastrobattista, left, and Natalie Nitzberg, Cheer Captain.

(right) Among the staff happy to catch up after the summer by sharing a festive BBQ meal as the 2017-2018 School Year began, are, from left: Arts Supervisor Dan Bertelli, English Supervisor James Aquavia, Math Supervisor Dan Twisler, and Principal George Alexis.



(above) Providing musical entertainment at the Luncheon BBQ was guest guitarist and singer Nicholas Stevens, right, who is also the President of the Long Hill Township Board of Education. Joining him on some of the numbers are, from left, WHRHS Board of Education Member Chris Collins of Long Hill Township and WHRHS English teacher Mike Porter.

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## “HOMECOMING” CHIP MERGOTT AND ALAN LEBOEUF

In 1978, singer-songwriter Chip Mergott performed in concert at the Watchung Arts Center. Chip was backed by the members of the local band Bittersweet, including bassist Alan LeBoeuf. Almost 40 years later, the two Watchung Hills Regional High School alumni returned to the Arts Center as a duo, for a performance held on Saturday, September 23. In the intervening years, each of these artists has had a successful career as a musician.



(above, left) Chip Mergott, a former resident of Watchung, was discovered by Bonnie Raitt, and subsequently signed to a major label early in his career. Raitt has described Chip as “one of my favorite songwriters.” He is currently promoting his 18th release for Notebook Records, one of the country’s longest running independent labels, which he founded. His “Mergott Music Minute” is currently heard on WDVR, WPRB (“Music You Can’t Hear on the Radio”), among other stations, and is a weekly feature in *The Bucks County Herald*. He’s been teaching music privately in Hunterdon County, NJ and Bucks County, PA for over 20 years, and has recently authored his first book “How to Play the Guitar in One Hour.”

(above, right) Warren native Alan LeBoeuf was the original “Paul McCartney” in the 1977 Broadway production of *Beatlemania*, a role he performed for two years. Following that show, he was the bass player and vocalist for the Central New Jersey band “Bittersweet”. In the early ‘80’s “Bittersweet” relocated to Nashville as “Baillie and the Boys” where they gained recognition as songwriters and accomplished session players, with clients including Marie Osmond, Dan Seals and Randy Travis, as well as having several Top 10 country singles in their own right. In 1988, Alan left the band to tour with “Legends in Concert” and “Beatlemania”, reuniting with the group ten years later. He continued performing and recording with “Baillie and the Boys”, as well as having a career as a solo artist and backing vocalist.

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*Parent of High School Junior*

"Demystified the college funding process"

*Joseph Mozzella,*  
*Parent of High School Senior*



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## FAMILY FUN DAY AT PILGRIM CHURCH

The second annual Family Fun Day returns to Pilgrim Congregational Church on Sunday, October 15th, 2017 from 2 till 4 p.m. The afternoon will be filled with fun games, crafts, prizes, music, and food, especially for children in our surrounding neighborhoods. New this year will be a petting zoo where children can spend time with a donkey, sheep, goats, and rabbits.

This event is free to all who attend. Favorite games and seasonal activities include bean bag games and football tosses, pumpkin painting, crafts and slime. Popcorn, lemonade and other snacks will be the refreshments.

Last year the Family Fun Day was a success with more than 70 people in attendance. Co-chair Kathy Petricone commented that a former co-worker's grandchild had asked recently if the church would be having another Family Fun Day.

Rev. Virginia Scott said "Pilgrim Church is so happy to be able to invite our community to join us in an afternoon of family fun. We are looking forward to seeing everyone on Sunday, October 15th!"

Pilgrim Congregational Church is located at 105 Mountainview Road in Warren. For further information, please visit the website at <http://www.pilgrimcongregationalchurch.org> or call the church office at 908-903-0929.



(above) Jonathan Moore of Westfield and Graham Schmidt of Warren poke their heads threw a Pumpkin photo display during last year's Family Fun Day.

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## WEEKEND JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAST

The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, in collaboration with twenty-nine local historical organizations and tourism partners, has designated the weekend of October 14 & 15, 2017 "Weekend Journey through the Past." During this two-day period, twenty-nine (29) of the County's significant historic sites will be open from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Saturday and 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM on Sunday. This year's event features two newly participating historic sites: The Griggstown Bridgetender's House in Princeton and the Van Liew-Suydam House in Franklin Twp.

Participating historic sites have been grouped into three convenient tours by location: Northern, Central, and Southern Somerset County. A scenic route plan with driving direction has been prepared for each of the three tours (see link below). Admission to all sites is free.

For those who enjoy a challenge, a fun and educational detective investigation activity, What in the World is That? created for kids & the entire family, will test your powers of deduction to solve 29 mysteries complementing the various special exhibits, programs, and tours planned at

each historic site (link available late September). This featured activity encourages a multi-generational outing for parents and grandparents alike, sharing stories and experiences about "the old days" with their children and grandchildren as they enjoy traveling from one historic site to the next. One unique item from the past will be displayed and identified, along with its description, at each of the 29 participating historic sites during this year's weekend event.

This annual event is a perfect opportunity for a family outing. A visit to the County's historic sites offers a unique educational experience for all ages..

Many of the sites have significant Revolutionary War histories which have contributed to the area's designation as the "Crossroads of the American Revolution State Heritage Area". Local historians will be on hand to share their knowledge and stories about Somerset County's history.

More information about this event, including a guide book, and map, can be found on the Somerset County website at [www.co.somerset.nj.us](http://www.co.somerset.nj.us).

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# STUDENT SPEAKS ABOUT AUTISM AT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Submitted by Leanna Wellerding and Johannes Wellerding

Johannes is 14 years old, and an incoming 8th grader at Warren Middle School this year. As you will read in his speech he is, among other things, on the autism spectrum.

I, his mother, head up the WTS SEPAG (Warren Township Schools Special Education Parent Advisory Group) and he has been eager to follow in my footsteps regarding advocacy and the development of awareness into acceptance and inclusion.

From the beginning of 6th grade, Johannes was frustrated that students would call each other "Autistic" in classrooms, hallways and the cafeteria. Reports to the school in years past saw no follow through or change. So this summer, Johannes decided to take another approach.

Johannes spent two weeks of his summer vacation drafting, editing and revising his speech and several days practicing it before he spoke at the meeting. He worked carefully to choose the most powerful words he could, in order to insure that his statement would stand alone should his communication delays interfere.

He has asked that his words be shared across as many platforms as possible as he believes action follows where a greater audience is found. Directly after delivering his speech, he shared that he had not realized how globally important his message was until he spoke the words aloud. Of note, the Superintendent came to him directly after the meeting thanking him for his commentary and assuring him that the issue would be followed up on.

Comments by Johannes Wellerding, which was presented to the Warren Township BOE during the public commentary portion of Monday, August 28

Good evening, President Allocco, Superintendent Mingle and the Board of Education. I'm an 8th grader at Warren Middle School. As part of my 9 years of education in the Warren Township School District, I have continuously received services through Special Education as I am on the Autism Spectrum.

Part of your Whole Child initiative concerns the emotional and mental wellbeing and growth of all your students. However, many students have been denying those on the Spectrum the chance to undergo said growth, by using Autism as a slur in the hallways and classrooms. By doing so those students are making a joke and an insult of the term Autism and taking a serious disorder and making it something to be embarrassed about.

As a student who has Autism, it is severely disappointing that the staff who overhear this language don't really do anything about it. It is my belief that developing self-advocacy of special needs students is an important part of both education and the Whole Child initiative. But, due to Autism being used as an insult, it becomes nearly impossible to practice self-advocacy skills because to do so would be dangerous. If I were to disclose my diagnosis, I would risk being a target for bullying.

It affects me less, as I have been able to emotionally distance myself, and tolerate their verbal jabs, but I cannot guarantee the same for others who have Autism. I feel it is important to speak on their behalf as well as mine, because there are those who have special needs and are unable to communicate effectively. But they still recognize harassment and they still feel hurt by cruelty.

There are many effects of this verbal harassment. Students with autism may become fearful of stimming which is a standard physical part of the diagnosis, because that would make it obvious that they are on the Spectrum. Stimming is important because it is one of the ways we who are on the spectrum have to reduce our stress and help us to better focus.

Those students with special needs may fear being singled out and feel that, since students are throwing the term around as an insult, that they are an embarrassment. They may also fear that they are being stereotyped and judged by their peers, and that their peers are unaware that the



(above) Johannes Wellerding.

Spectrum includes all types, low-functioning to high-functioning.

In my opinion, school should be comprised of education, growth, open-mindedness, experience, safe exploration, positive socializing, inclusion, and developing effective communication. Most, if not all, of these aspects are removed when students use the Autism Spectrum as a way to insult one another.

I hope that you will consider the seriousness of what I have shared and act upon this. Thank you for your time.

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