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(above) *Interact members at work.*

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## MEET MARYANNE CHRISTIANO-MISTRETTA YOUR CONTACT FOR NEWSPAPER CONTENT



*Maryanne  
Christiano-Mistretta*

Hello Readers!

I'm ecstatic to introduce myself as the new editor for Renna Media. It's such an honor working with Joe and Tina Renna; they are awesome!

Joe has asked me to write a little bit about myself for our readership, which is probably a great idea since I'll often be out

and about in the community.

Residing in Union County with my husband, Dennis, and our beloved cat Nicholas, my interests, besides writing and editing, include animals, music, and living a healthy lifestyle.

Writing professionally since 1995, I'm an award-winning journalist. I received my award from The NJ Society of Professional Journalists for investigative journalism. I'm also an author, public speaker, and poet (recently selected to read at the All About Eve Arts Festival at the West End Theatre in Long Branch, New Jersey).

Having a great passion for music, I've developed a unique library program called "The Learn & Listen Series" which pays homage to legendary musicians.

The two-fold presentation begins as I host, sharing a musician's biography – which I wrote – followed by actual live music from local New Jersey and New York talent. Librarians can choose from a variety of singers such as Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, Sammy Davis Jr., John Lennon, Freddie Mercury, Johnny Cash, Janis Joplin, and David Bowie.

I'm blessed to be able to work with performers like indie recording artist Keith Beck; jazz sensation Stephen Fuller (front man for Amani);

singer/performance artist, Anna Oh; and three-time Grammy winning producer, Rob Fusari.

"Learn & Listen" also includes Jayne DiGregorio and Rich Timberlake, who work behind-the-scenes filming for an upcoming documentary.

In addition to the "Learn & Listen" series, I also lecture on "History of the Newspaper Industry," "Going, Going, Gone: What the Next Generation Won't Remember" (seniors love that one!), and there's also a healthy foodies series, which includes sampling.

Now, if you've read this far, you may be asking yourself – how can this woman work so much and still have time to edit 21 newspapers? As Joe Renna himself says – "It's not work, it's a lifestyle." I somehow get everything done ... and with a big smile on my face.

When you have a grand passion for what you do, it doesn't matter what day it is. It could be a Monday, or a Friday, and you're equally as happy. Sometimes I'm home all day working in my pajamas; other times I'm having a blast taking photos at a Winter Walk. Whether I sleep in or get up super early to attend a town meeting, it's all good. In this line of work, every day is different, and every day is exciting.

In just one month of working for Renna Media, I've attended many fun affairs and met incredible people. It brings a tear to my eye when a child cheers, "I'm gonna be in the newspaper!" after I take his or her photograph. That's what it's all about – the essence of presenting a good story to the community.

So, don't hesitate to send me your community news. We call on the arts, fundraisers, nonprofits, new businesses – anything positive that should be in your local newspaper.

Reach me at 908-858-4012, or email me at: [Editor@RennaMedia.com](mailto:Editor@RennaMedia.com)

I look forward to hearing from you!

*Maryanne Christiano-Mistretta*

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## BERKELEY HEIGHTS NOW SHARES MUNICIPAL COURT SERVICES

The City of Summit announced, at its December 5, 2017 Common Council meeting, the consolidation of its municipal court as part of a shared services agreement with New Providence and Berkeley Heights. The shared municipal court will be housed at 360 Elkwood Avenue, New Providence.

"Reductions in state aid, a broken school funding formula and waste at the county level means it is imperative that local municipalities think creatively about shared services to help keep our communities affordable," stated Summit Common Council President Michael McTernan. "The consolidation of Summit's municipal court with New Providence and Berkeley Heights will save money and directly benefit taxpayers by reducing the number of court facilities and staff size, as well as required court security measures and administrative oversight. This is the latest in a series of shared services implemented by the Common Council over the last several years."

The transition took effect immediately in December 2017 and involved the temporary housing of shared court services in Summit during three to four months of renovation work

at the New Providence court facility to accommodate increased capacity. The city estimates that the consolidation of its municipal court through the shared services agreement will save the municipality more than \$100,000 annually once renovation costs of the New Providence court facility are repaid within three years.

McTernan stated, "Although the participating municipalities will share resources and a physical location, Summit residents will still be served by their own court with its own jurisdiction. While we recognize that residents using the court will need to drive a few minutes farther, the cost savings for all our taxpayers should compensate for any inconvenience."

The New Jersey Judiciary estimates that "about one in five New Jersey municipal courts is currently part of a joint or shared services arrangement" with 18 of the state's 21 counties having "at least one merged municipal court."

For more information on the City of Summit consolidation of its municipal courts and shared services agreement, please go to: [cityofsummit.org](http://cityofsummit.org).



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# STIRLING ELKS ANNUAL CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS PARTY

*Submitted by Patricia Mocarski*

The Stirling Elks had their annual Children’s Christmas Party for the special needs children and family and friends of the Stirling Elks last month. There were about 90 in attendance and fun was had by all. There was music, great food, and a visit from Santa Claus. Santa brought many smiles to both young and old at the party.

The Special Children’s Committee sponsors several functions a year for special children and adults. In addition to hosting several annual events for the special needs children each year, the Elks sends special needs children to Elks Camp Moore in the summertime at no cost to the parents.

The Stirling Elks Lodge is made up of men and women from Long Hill Township, Berkeley Heights, and other surrounding towns who are citizens of the United States, at least 21-years-old and who believe in God. There are many Elks programs that benefit special needs children. There are special needs and regular scholarships. The Elks are also involved with scouting, athletic teams, and various youth activities. There are many veterans’ events and patriotic programs. For further information on the Stirling Elks, the Special Children’s Committee, or Elks Camp Moore, please call Pat Mocarski at (908) 647-1437.



*(above, l-r) Jennifer Fetzer and Phil Sapienza, oldest lodge member at 101-years-old, enjoying the party.*



*(above, l-r) Cyndi Barreto, Santa, and Stephanie Ridilla.*



*(above) Santa and the twins Elizabeth and Leah Rusinskaia.*



*(above, front) Eric Miller, (back, l-r) his Mom, Dad, and Santa.*



*(above) Comerford Family picture.*



*(above, l-r) Santa and Jessica Walpow.*

# A WINTER WALK WONDERLAND IN BERKELEY HEIGHTS

Hundreds of families from Berekeley Heights and surrounding towns came out to the Berkeley Heights Winter Walk 2017, on Saturday, December 2, 2017, to experience a night of fun and festivities while visiting downtown businesses.

The night began right after sunset, as the Berkeley Heights Fire Department escorted Santa Claus to the Berkeley Heights Special Events Committees' Christmas Tree Lighting,

followed by fireworks in Peppertown Park. The Winter Walk followed immediately in the downtown area.

Main attractions included an ice rink, the bounce house, horse and carriage rides, game trucks, a life size gingerbread house, mechanical reindeer, a petting zoo, and pony rides, a photo booth, a trackless train, a trolley ride, Walk in Snow Globe – featuring Santa Claus and Rudolph the Red

Nosed Reindeer, food and drink specials, a food truck, shopping, and live entertainment.

The Winter Walk is a way for the businesses of Berkeley Heights to give back to the community. It was presented by: The Connell Company, Grain and Cane, and Embassy Suites by Hilton Berkeley Heights; and organized by The Berkeley Heights Downtown Business Community.



(above l-r) Sophia Xenakis and Mia Legiec help decorate a gingerbread house.



(above l-r) Keira Hackett and Keira Agro, 3-year-old best friends.



(above) Lucinda Hayes, designer of Berkeley Heights Town Ornament 2017.



(above l-r) From My Little Party Place: Dylan Camilo, Lisa-Marie Machieo, Marisa Collazo (owner), Sabrina Debrito, and Jill Landicho.



(above) Third Grade Brownie Troop #40944



(above l-r) Tracy Procaccini, Gail Bradford, Erica Elmi, and Susan Poage of Berkeley Heights Education Association.



(above l-r) Judy Kroneberger, Jim Kwen, Joe Steiner, and Pam Steiner of the Berkeley Heights Rotary Club.



## SCHOOL DISTRICT PLACED ON COLLEGE BOARD'S AP DISTRICT HONOR ROLL

*Submitted by Thomas Long*

Berkeley Heights is one of 447 school districts in the United States and Canada being honored by the College Board with placement on the 8th Annual AP® District Honor Roll.

To be included on the 8th Annual Honor Roll, Berkeley Heights had to, since 2015, increase the number of Governor Livingston High School students participating in AP while also increasing or maintaining the percentage of students earning AP Exam scores of three or higher. Reaching these goals shows that this district is successfully identifying motivated, academically prepared students who are ready for AP.

"This is an exciting and wonderful recognition for our school district to receive," stated Judith A. Rattner, Berkeley Heights Superintendent of Schools. "I am so proud of our students and educators for their hard work and outstanding achievement."

National data from 2017 show that among American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students with a

high degree of readiness for AP, only about half are participating. The first step to getting more of these students to participate is to give them access. Courses must be made available, gatekeeping must stop, and doors must be equitably opened. Berkeley Heights is committed to expanding the availability of AP courses among prepared and motivated students of all backgrounds.

"Congratulations to all the educators and administrators in this district who have worked to clear a path for more students of all backgrounds to participate and succeed in AP," stated Trevor Packer, Senior Vice President, AP and Instruction, for the College Board. "These educators and administrators are fostering a culture in their schools and classrooms that allows students to face new challenges and build the confidence to succeed."

Helping more students learn at a higher level and earn higher AP scores is an objective of all members of the AP community, from AP teachers to district and school administrators to college professors. Many districts are experimenting with initiatives and strategies to see how they can expand access and improve student performance at the same time.

In 2017, more than 4000 colleges and universities around the world received AP scores for college credit, advanced placement, or both, and/or consideration in the admissions process. Inclusion in the 8th Annual AP District Honor Roll is based on a review of three years of AP data, from 2015 to 2017, looking across 38 AP Exams, including world language and culture.

The following criteria were used.

Districts must:

Increase participation/access to AP by at least four percent in large districts, at least six percent in medium districts, and at least 11 percent in small districts;

Increased or maintained the percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students taking exams and increased or maintained the percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students scoring 3+ on at least one AP Exam; and

Improve or maintain performance levels when comparing the 2017 percentage of students scoring a three or higher to the 2015 percentage, unless the district has already attained a performance level at which more than 70 percent of its AP students earn a three or higher.

When these outcomes have been achieved among an AP student population in which 30 percent or more are underrepresented minority students (American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander) and/or 30 percent or more are low-income students (students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch), a symbol has been affixed to the district name to highlight this work.

The complete 8th Annual AP District Honor Roll can be found online at [apcentral.collegeboard.org/score-reports-data/awards/honor-roll](http://apcentral.collegeboard.org/score-reports-data/awards/honor-roll)

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## TARA OLIVEIRA NAMED “VISIONARY ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR”

Tara Oliveira, Assistant Principal of Governor Livingston High School in Berkeley Heights, has been named as the Visionary Assistant Principal of the Year – Secondary Level by the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA).

Mrs. Oliveira has served as Assistant Principal at Governor Livingston since August 2012. She first joined the faculty at Governor Livingston in September 2011 as a Teacher of English after having taught in Pennsylvania for nearly seven years.

“From our first day as colleagues, it was

### “THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD” FILM TO BE SHOWN JAN 21ST

The League of Women Voters of Berkeley Heights, New Providence, and Summit will co-sponsor the documentary film (1999) “The Underground Railroad” with the Summit College Club. The public is invited to the showing which will be held on Sunday, January 21, 2018, at the New Providence Memorial Library, 377 Elkwood Avenue, New Providence, at 2 p.m. A discussion will follow.

“The Underground Railroad” was produced for the History Channel. It is hosted by the actress Alfre Woodard who traces the journey to freedom taken by countless slaves and the important roles of William Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and William Still among others.

evident that Mrs. Oliveira had that special quality that would endear her to everyone with whom she would come in contact,” stated Robert Nixon, Principal of Governor Livingston High School. “Her skill set features an exceptional blend of intelligence, work ethic, compassion, determination, logic, and competitiveness. Mrs. Oliveira has the ability to administer discipline and counsel staff and students with an understanding smile. She is a relentless worker who not only expects the best, but delivers the best. I cannot imagine an Assistant Principal more deserving of this honor.”

Mrs. Oliveira has played a key role in the implementation of numerous technological advances at Governor Livingston - including the transition to Google Classroom, the 1:1 student iPad initiative, and the establishment of “GL Admin Folder” – all of which have enhanced teaching, learning, and communication at the high school.

“We are so excited that Mrs. Oliveira has been

selected as the New Jersey Assistant Principal Visionary Award winner,” stated Judith A. Rattner, Berkeley Heights Superintendent of Schools. “She is a dynamic administrator who is an integral part of our administrative team and is respected by the students because of her care and concern for them and their experiences.”

Mrs. Oliveira earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from Lehigh University in addition to a Master of Education Degree in Secondary English Teaching and a second Master of Education Degree in Educational Leadership, also from Lehigh University.

“Mrs. Oliveira’s vision has helped drive change not simply for the sake of changing, but for the sake of improving how we operate as a high-achieving school,” added Mr. Nixon. “In an educational culture where many resist change, she has not only embraced it, but she has helped create an environment where the change had a substantial positive impact and was supported by the staff.”

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# FREE TAX RETURN HELP FOR BERKELEY HEIGHTS RESIDENTS

New Providence, Berkeley Heights, and other area residents can obtain free assistance in preparing and filing their individual 2017 tax returns. There are no age or income limitations for participation in the program, but taxpayers with complex returns may be advised to seek paid assistance. Free assistance will be provided at the New Providence Senior Citizens Center (NPSCC), 15 East Fourth Street, New Providence, by volunteer tax counselors under a

program sponsored jointly by the AARP, the Internal Revenue Service, and the New Jersey State Division of Taxation.

Assistance will cover individual federal and NJ state income taxes, the NJ Homestead Property Tax Rebate, and the Property Tax Reimbursement Program (PTR – 1 & 2), as applicable. All returns will be filed electronically, resulting in refunds being received typically in about four weeks after filing. Any taxes due would not be payable until

April 18, 2018. Taxpayers will be provided with vouchers to be submitted by that date with any payments due.

Tax counselors will be available on Mondays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., from Monday, February 5, 2018, through Monday, April 16, 2018. Beginning January 24, 2018, taxpayers seeking assistance in preparing and filing their returns may call the NPSCC at 908-665-0046, between the hours of 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m., Mondays through Fridays, for an appointment, or they may sign up at the center. The Internal Revenue Service is again advising taxpayers to file their returns as early as possible to reduce the potential for identity theft.

Taxpayers must bring government-issued photo identification, social security cards of persons filing the return and of any dependents listed on the return, copies of their 2016 federal and state returns, and any 2017 federal forms W-2, 1099-R, 1099-INT, 1099-DIV, 1099-B, SSA-1099, etc., documentation of the amount of rent or real estate taxes paid in 2017 and of other expenses if the taxpayers wish to itemize deductions; and, if they wish to have any refund directly deposited to their checking account, a check showing their bank's routing number and their account number.

In the case of taxpayers filing joint returns, both taxpayers should be present to authorize the electronic filing.

## SENIORS BUS TRIPS TO RESORTS CASINO

In 2018 the Berkeley Heights Seniors will sponsor monthly bus trips to Resorts Casino in Atlantic City. We schedule them for the third Monday in each month. In January our trip will be held on the 15th. The bus leaves the Parking lot on Roosevelt Avenue at 8:30 a.m. and returns at approximately 7:30 p.m. The cost is \$30.00, which includes bus transportation, a \$25.00 coupon for slot play, and a \$10.00 food voucher. For further information and reservations, call Ramona at 908-647-3295.

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Garwood	2,200	Yes	07027
Green Brook	3,000	Yes	08812
Kenilworth	3,600	Yes	07033
Linden	12,500	Yes	07036
Long Hill	3,600	Yes	07935, 07946, 07960
Madison	6,300	Yes	07940
Mountainside	2,800	Yes	07092
New Providence	4,800	Yes	07974
The Pride of North Plainfield	8,300	Yes	07060, 07062, 07063
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Summit	9,600	Yes	07901
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