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KENILWORTH LITTLE LEAGUE PARADE 2018

The Kenilworth Little League Parade was held April 7, 2018. The parade began in St. Theresa's school parking lot, then the kids proudly marched down Monroe to 14th on their

way to the Kenilworth Little League Field where there was opening ceremonies and food. Visit the Kenilworth Little League on [facebook.com/KTOWNBASEBALL](https://www.facebook.com/KTOWNBASEBALL)



Photos from this
and other events
can be found online at
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and on the
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Photos by Maryanne Christiano-Mistretta



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BUSINESS + LIFE KENILWORTH

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MEMO FROM THE MAYOR

Kenilworthians, it looks like the warmer weather is hopefully here to stay and after April's winter-like cold all I have to say is good riddance! Keep in mind, with the nicer weather, more people will be out and about in the borough. Keep a sharp eye when driving and remember when people are crossing the Boulevard, pedestrians have the right of way. To everyone out there walking, biking, and enjoying the outside please remember just because you see a driver, doesn't mean they see you! Always look both ways and cross at the designated cross walks.

This year's 2018 municipal budget is going to see an increase of \$69.31 more than last year for the average residential property assessed at \$180,948. This is a 2.7 percent increase (or 3.8 tax points) more in the tax rate. This large increase is mostly due to the Rahway Valley Sewer Authority hitting us with a 28.46 percent increase this year. That comes to \$44.61 or 2.5 tax points of the \$69.31 increase. Without the increase the municipal portion of property taxes would have been \$24.70 or just a one percent increase (1.3 tax points) this year. While the RVSA has given us an explanation, the council and I are just not satisfied with the answers given. Call me crazy but I cannot fathom how a town of roughly 8000 people are flushing toilets more than some of the larger towns that have done much more development in recent years. We are currently disputing the assessment and are requesting an investigation into the metering and calibration process.

Here are some important events and dates for Kenilworth on the Calendar for the Month of May;

May 9: Every 15 minutes. David Brearley has two-day program focusing on high school juniors and seniors, which challenges them to think about drinking, driving, personal safety, and the responsibility of making mature decisions.

May 12: The United States Postal Service is having a coast Stamp Out Hunger National Food Drive. They are requesting a donation of non-perishable foods to be left by your mail box and the local carrier's will pick up. Last year's drive resulted in carrier's collecting over 75.3 million pounds of food.

May 13: Mother's Day. If you're looking for flowers make sure you check out Especially Yours Florist, or A&A Landscaping for some nice selections.

May 20: The Kenilworth Car Show and Street Fair from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine.

May 29: Memorial Day is observed. A day of remembrance of our fallen serving in the armed services. The freedoms you enjoy today were paid for with their lives. When you see a Vet take the time to thank them for their service.

While this is next month I would like to get this out there,

Starting June 19 and every Tuesday until November 15 I am excited to announce Kenilworth will have its own Farmer's Market from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. located in the parking lot across from the VFW at 33 South 21st Street. Thank you to Darlene Candarella and Justin Panzarella for getting this off the ground.

As always visit our website at kenilworthborough.org for more about these events and more.

In closing, please stay safe out there, thank you to all the Kenilworthians who continue to work hard to make this a great town to live and work in.

Please stay safe Kenilworth! God Bless you all and God Bless America.

Mayor Anthony P. DeLuca Jr.



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PRINCESS PARADE

July 9th - July 13th / 9:00am - 12:00pm

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AGES 3 - 8

Cost: \$250

DISNEY ADVENTURES

June 25th - June 29th / 9:00am - 12:00pm

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AGES 3 - 8

Cost: \$250

Hip Hop Fun-damentals

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AGES 4 - 7

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Commercial Hip Hop

July 30th - August 3rd / 9:00am - 12:00pm

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AGES 7 & UP

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VETERAN GRAVE FLAG PLANTING MAY 26TH

The public is invited to join Veterans from VFW Post 2230 and Scout troops for an annual tradition of walking through Graceland Memorial Park Cemetery in Kenilworth, NJ to find headstones of veterans and plant a flag at the grave to commemorate Memorial Day. This very touching event begins with a breakfast served at the Kenilworth VFW Hall at 8 a.m. on Saturday May 26th. Light refreshments are served at the VFW afterwards for all workers. No preregistration is required. The VFW organizes the event along with the American Legion, Sons of the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary.

MASS AT ST. THERESA CHURCH, SUNDAY, MAY 27TH

The public is invited to attend mass at 9 a.m. in honor of all veterans at St. Theresa Church, 541 Washington Ave, Kenilworth, NJ.

MEMORIAL DAY SERVICES, MONDAY, 28TH

The public is invited to attend a ceremony honoring all veterans at 11 a.m. at the Kenilworth Veterans' Center, S. 21st Street., Kenilworth, NJ. Refreshments will be served afterwards. There is no registration required for these events.

For more information please call the Kenilworth Veterans Center at 908- 276-9769.



2018 ± MAY 31 - JUNE 3

THURSDAY 5 - 10 PM	FRIDAY 5 - 11 PM	SATURDAY NOON - 11 PM	SUNDAY NOON - 6 PM
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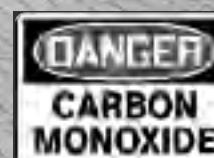
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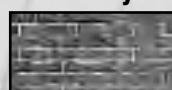
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KENILWORTH CARRIERS EARN NSC MILLION MILE SAFE DRIVING AWARDS

Submitted by George Flood

Senior postal managers, community leaders, and representatives from the Letter Carriers Union recently recognized three Kenilworth New Jersey letter carriers for their superior on-the-job 30+ year safe driving performance. The highlight of the recognition ceremony held at the Kenilworth Post Office was the presentation of the National Safety Council's (NSC) Million Mile award plaques to letter carriers William Cooper, Joseph Crown, and Patrick Crown for driving one million miles on the job without a preventable accident.

In addition to Kenilworth Postmaster Barbara Sevek-Stoll, on hand to recognize the three safety conscious carriers were: Mayor Anthony DeLuca, U.S. Postal Service Northern NJ District Manager Scott Hooper, U.S. Postal Service Northern NJ District Post Office Operations Manager Mark Hernandez, National Association of Letter Carriers Branch #38 President Michael O'Neill, and

National Association of Letter Carriers Branch #38 Area Representative Christine Strasser.

The National Safety Council's Million Mile award is an extraordinary milestone for professional drivers. As perspective, you would have to drive more than 40.1 times around the earth to reach one million miles.

The ceremony also featured the presentation of a 30-year service pin to clerk Glenn Gallo and safe driving certificates and pins to letter carriers working toward the Million Mile milestone including:

Maria Janet (17 years),
Edgar Reyes (16 years),
Michael Silva (16 years),
Linda Murphy (15 years),
and Wieslaw Kozak (11 years).

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.



(above, l-r): Kenilworth letter carriers Joseph Crown, Patrick Crown, and William Cooper were recognized with the National Safety Council's prestigious Million Mile Award for 30+ years of accident free driving on the job.

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(above) Employees from the Kenilworth Post office joined with Kenilworth Mayor Anthony DeLuca, Post Master Barbara Sevek-Stoll, Post Office Operations Manager Mark Hernandez and Area District Manager Scott Hooper, in honoring Kenilworth postal workers Joseph and Patrick Crown and William Cooper, on receiving their '30 Years of Service' and 'Safe Driving' awards.

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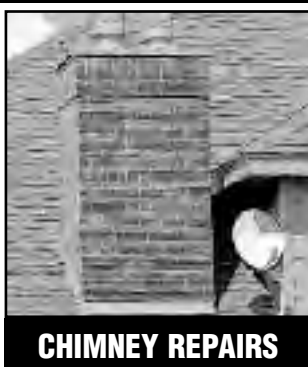
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BLOOD DRIVE MAY 14

New Jersey Blood Services would like to announce that it is conducting a blood drive on Monday, May 14, 2018 at David Brearley High School, 401 Monroe Ave, Kenilworth, New Jersey, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Walk ins are welcome.

'SOUP'S ON' FUNDRAISER

Eleven local businesses contributed favorite soups to be enjoyed by attendees at the Kenilworth Historical Society's annual soup-tasting event, "Soup's On," which took place recently at the Kenilworth Seniors' Center. Proceeds from the fundraiser helped defray the cost of an elevator that makes all levels of the Oswald J. Nitschke House "living history" museum and cultural arts center accessible to everyone. Participants in "Soup's On" and their delicious soups included Boulevard Five72 (cream of cauliflower), Downtown Family Restaurant of Cranford (chicken bowtie), Elaine's Souper Soups (chicken rice), Kenilworth Diner (barley; cream of mushroom), Lenny and John's Subs (New England clam chowder), Michigan Deli (tomato bisque), Mike's Place (baked potato), Riberto's Italian Seafood Bistro and Steak House (escarole and bean), The Blackthorn (potato leek), The LAB Restaurant (spicy black bean) and Westfield Diner (chicken chili).



SCHOOL DISTRICT ANNOUNCES RE-REGISTRATION

The Kenilworth Board of Education will be conducting a re-registration of all students presently enrolled in odd-numbered grades at Harding Elementary and David Brearley Middle-High Schools. Parents with children currently enrolled in any of the following grades, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, or 11, must re-register their children at the Harding School Gymnasium on Monday, June 4, 2018 from 2 to 6 p.m. and Tuesday, June 5, 2018 from 4 to 7 p.m.

This is a mandatory re-registration. If a student is not re-registered, he or she will not be permitted to attend school in September.

This re-registration process will provide parents with the opportunity to update all student information for accuracy and ensure all children

presently enrolled in the school district are legal residents of Kenilworth and entitled to a free public education. With the rising costs of educating a child today, the Board of Education wants to ensure that Kenilworth taxpayers are paying for residents' children only. Students not re-registered in June will not be permitted to attend school in September until re-registration is completed.

The following documents must be brought to the Harding School Gymnasium on the day of re-registration.

The original document and a copy from each category below must be provided. All documents from Categories I, II, and III must be dated from April/May of 2018.

Category I - Must have one of the following:

- 1 Current Property Tax Bill
- 2 Current Mortgage Statement
- 3 Current Lease Agreement

Category III - Must have one of the following:

- 1 Current Financial Account Statement
- 2 Current Pay Stub with Address
- 3 Current State Agency Document

Category II - Must have one of the following:

- 1 Current Utility Bill of Residence Gas/ Phone/ Electric/ Cable/ Internet

Category IV - If applicable, bring the following:

- 1 Proof of Guardianship
 - a. Court Order
 - b. State Agency Placement Form

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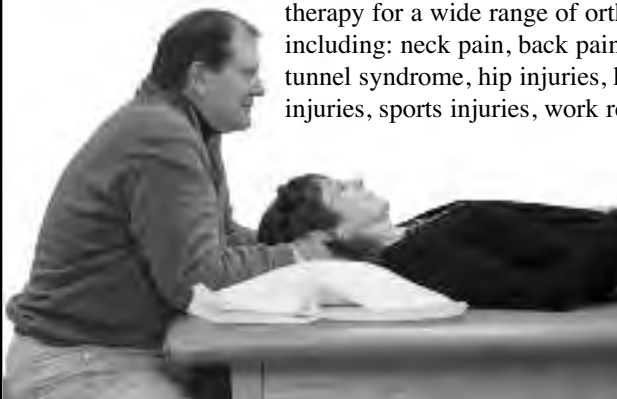
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26TH ANNUAL LETTER CARRIERS' STAMP OUT HUNGER FOOD DRIVE IS MAY 12

The Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive is happening on Saturday, May 12, 2018. On this day, you can set out your non-perishable food before your letter carrier's regular pick up time. The top requested non-perishable food items are: cereal, pasta, pasta sauce, rice, canned fruits and vegetables, canned meals (such as soups, chili, and/or pasta), 100 percent juice, peanut butter, macaroni & cheese, canned protein (tuna, chicken, and/or turkey), beans (canned or dry). You can also donate healthy, low-sodium, low-sugar items such as beans, oatmeal, and other whole grains, and canola or olive oil.

Please do not donate frozen food, homemade food, or home-canned items. Please do not donate items that have expired or are in glass containers. In keeping with good food-handling and food-safety procedures, food that is opened, damaged, out of code or does not have the official ingredients will be discarded by the food bank in the sorting process.

The Food Drive is primarily a people food drive, but if you also want to give pet food in addition to your regular donation, food banks may be able to distribute or direct it to pet shelters and organizations in the area that have a need.

Please do not donate any form of individual baby food products, including formula, jarred vegetables and fruits, meals, snacks, infant cereal. Baby food may be donated by the case or pallet, but single item donations present potential contamination risks and special handling requirements.

The Food Drive is primarily a food drive, but if you also want to give personal care items (such as diapers, laundry detergent, soap, toilet paper,


and household cleaning items) in addition to your regular donation, food banks may be able to distribute or put them to good use with organizations that also provide help to those in need. Please note that not all food banks will be able to accept these items.

If you would like to volunteer with food distribution and sorting, or in any other capacity, call your local post office and ask to speak to the local food drive person there. Many food banks have a great need for volunteers on Food Drive Day, as well as all throughout the year.

All donations to the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive are tax-deductible because all the food collected on Food Drive Day is given directly to non-profit charity food agencies in the community the food was collected. Though the National Association of Letter Carriers plans the Food Drive's logistics and letter carriers provide the transportation for each donor's generous donation, the National Association of Letter Carriers is not the agency that gets listed on tax forms for claiming deductions. There are more than 10,000 food agencies throughout the country that receive these donations, so if you itemize your taxes and want to provide proper credit for your Food Drive donations, you will need to determine the name of the agency (food pantry or other charity) that received your food, as well as the agency's address and tax I.D. number for proper reporting on your tax-filing forms. The Food Drive Coordinator at your local post office should be able to give you the name of the receiving agency, and that agency will likely have tax information handy.

For more information, visit: nalc.org.

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(above, l-r) Kenilworth Police Sgt. Michael Scanielo and PTL Officer, Ryan Kernan will be honored at the 200 Club Valor Award luncheon on May 11th.

Photo by Maryanne Christiano-Mistretta.

KENILWORTH POLICE WILL BE HONORED AT THE 200 CLUB VALOR AWARD LUNCHEON, MAY 11TH

Submitted by The 200 Club of Union County

The Two Hundred Club of Union County has announced that seventeen police officers and firefighters, including two members of the Kenilworth Police Department, have been selected for this year's Annual Valor Awards Luncheon to be held on Friday, May 11, 2018.

Held at Shackamaxon Country Club in Scotch Plains the recipients will receive the prestigious Two Hundred Club Medal of Valor for actions above and beyond the call of duty. The 200 Club, a non-profit organization founded in 1968, is comprised of 400 business leaders from Union County, NJ, who's core mission is to provide financially for the widows and dependents of Police Officers and Firefighters who are killed in the line of duty. We have grown in mission to now also provide continuing education grants for police officers and firefighters, and a competitive scholarship program for the deserving children of our uniformed protectors in Union County. More information on our organization can be found at www.uc200club.org.

The keynote speaker will be Patricia Ann Norris-McDonald, Mayor of Village of Malverne. Mrs. McDonald is the widow of Steven McDonald, a NYPD officer who was left quadriplegic in 1986 following a shooting in the line of duty. Steven McDonald died age 59 on January 10, 2017. She had been married to Steven for less than year when the shooting took place. At the time the newlywed was pregnant with the couple's only child. Six months after the shooting she gave birth to a son, Conor McDonald. Mrs. McDonald co-authored the book, The Steven McDonald Story, with her husband NYPD Detective Steven McDonald and appeared often with him to speak about faith and forgiveness.

Kenilworth Police Department Sergeant Michael Scanielo and Officer Ryan Kernan will be honored for the following incident.

On February 1, 2017, at approximately 10:25 p.m., Sergeant Michael Scanielo performed a routine traffic stop for a suspect operating an unregistered vehicle and not observing a traffic control device. During the stop, Sergeant Scanielo detected the odor of raw marijuana coming from inside of the vehicle. When questioned about the marijuana, the suspect, who was still inside the vehicle, became nervous and pulled out an object from the vehicles center console. At this point, Sergeant Scanielo verbally commanded to the suspect to comply with his requests, but it was dark outside, and the suspect decided to abruptly exit the vehicle in an attempt to flee. Patrolman Ryan Kernan, who was also on scene as a back-up unit, identified a handgun on the fleeing suspect and tackled him in the middle of Kenilworth Boulevard. While dodging oncoming traffic in the dark of the night, Sergeant Scanielo and Patrolman Ryan Kernan struggled with the suspect and attempted to place him under arrest. A flashlight was the only illumination they had at their disposal, so vehicles traveling on the Boulevard failed to stop and sped and swerved around them. Luckily Sergeant Scanielo and Patrolman Kernan were able to wrestle away the loaded handgun and secure it. Ultimately the suspect was placed under arrest and charged with several offenses.

Thanks to the quick actions and decisions of both Sergeant Scanielo and Officer Kernan, no one was seriously injured in a situation that could have ended very differently. A firearms trace on the weapon revealed that it was reported stolen in Georgia in 2016.

Sergeant Michael Scanielo and Officer Ryan Kernan put their lives on the line to pursue, wrestle down in oncoming traffic and successfully capture a dangerous criminal yielding a stolen firearm. We recognize them for their heroic efforts and valor.

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KENILWORTH PUBLIC LIBRARY CHILDREN PROGRAMS MAY 2018

Located at 548 Boulevard. Library website is www.kenilworthlibrary.org.

Registration for programs may be done in person or by calling 908 276-2451.

The Spring Reading Program at the Kenilworth Public Library continues through Friday, May 11th. Children who were registered for the Winter 2018 reading club will be preregistered for the Spring session.

Registration is required for the following programs: Mommy, Daddy & Me, a parent and child at-home reading program for children ages 2 to 5.

I Can Read, a reading program for children who are just starting to read on their own from ages 6 to 8.

Club Reads a lot,

a reading program for children ages 9 to 12.

Lap Sit

will be held on

May 8 from 10:30 to 10:50 a.m.

for ages 0 to 23 months

Toddler Time

will be held on

May 9 from 10:30 to 10:50 a.m.

for 2-year-olds

Stories, puppets, and music just right for young listeners will be introduced.

PJ Story Time

will be held on

May 10 from 6:30 to 7 p.m.

for children ages 3 and up

Children are invited to wear their pajamas to this program, and bring along a stuffed animal, too.

Bingo for Young Children

will be held on

May 11 from 3:30 to 4 p.m.

for children ages 3 and up. Games may include A-B-C Bingo, Number Bingo and Color & Shape Bingo. Parents must remain in the library during the program.

To register for programs, or for more information, visit the Kenilworth Public Library at 548 Boulevard,

Kenilworth, New Jersey, or call 908-276-2451. The library's website can be viewed at kenilworthlibrary.org.

The Kenilworth Public Library is fully accessible to all library users.

EXPERIMENTING WITH ELECTRICITY AND MAGNETISM

Liberty Science Center recently presented Experimenting with Electricity and Magnetism at The Kenilworth Public Library. Using lots of hands-on experiments and models, participants learned about the structure of atoms, positive and negative charges, and static electricity. At the conclusion of this program, each participant received an electricity and magnetism science experiment kit to take home. This program was funded by The Ralph Errington Foundation.


The Kenilworth Public Library will continue to present STEAM based programs on Wednesdays from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. for children ages 6- to 12-years-old. Registration is required.

Kenilworth residents may register one week prior to each individual session. Out of town residents may begin to register two days prior to each individual session. For more information or to register for future programs listed below, please call the library at 908-276-2451 or visit 548 Boulevard, Kenilworth, New Jersey. Their

programs are funded by The Ralph Errington Foundation.

The next program will be held on Wednesday, May 9, 2018, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.: Learn About Drones. Participants will learn about the technology related to drones and view a drone in action. This program will be presented by Ken Fink from Wondergy.






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SPRING STEAM 2018 PROGRAMS CONTINUE AT KENILWORTH LIBRARY

Submitted by Robin Koerner

Children recently designed their own quilt squares during the Spring STEAM program at The Kenilworth Public Library. These quilting squares will become part of a permanent story quilt to be displayed in The Kenilworth Public Library. At the conclusion of this workshop, participants received their own artist's notebook to take home so they may continue to explore artistic concepts learned during this workshop. Artist Gabrielle Kanter presented this program. This program was funded by The Ralph Errington Foundation.

Spring STEAM 2018 programs

will continue to be held at

The Kenilworth Public Library

each Wednesday at 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. through May 9 for children ages 6- to 12-years-old.

These programs and workshops will focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Math.

Registration is required for each individual program. Kenilworth residents may register one week prior to each program. Out of town residents may register two days prior to each program.

For more information or to register, please call the library at 908-276-2451 or visit 548 Boulevard, Kenilworth, New Jersey.

These programs have been funded by The Ralph Errington Foundation. A description of each program and workshop are listed below.

Experimenting with Electricity and Magnetism

Wednesday, April 4 (3:30 to 4:30 p.m.)

Using lots of hands on experiments and models, learn about the structure of atoms, positive and negative charges, and static electricity. This program will be presented by a Liberty Science Center representative.

Learning About Adaptations and Environments

Wednesday, April 11 (3:30 to 4:30 p.m.)

Participants will have an opportunity to observe live animals, learn about their natural habitats, identify specific evolved traits in the animals, and discuss unique solutions to challenges in the environments of these animals. This program will be presented by a Liberty Science Center representative.

Marine Fossil Dig

Wednesday, April 18 (3:30 to 4:30 p.m.)

Learn about various fossils and participate in a marine fossil dig at the library. Participants will take home the fossils they locate and identify, including shark teeth and whale bones. This program will be presented by John Miller from Pearl Observatory.

Build A Dinosaur

Wednesday, April 25 (3:30 to 4:30 p.m.)

Participants will engage in interactive learning experiences which will include exploring various dinosaurs and recreating a Megalodon. This program will be presented by John Miller from Pearl Observatory.

Visit Star Lab Portable Planetarium

Wednesday, May 2 (3:30 to 4:30 p.m.)

Participants will enter the Star Lab Portable Planetarium, and explore upcoming astronomical events expected in spring and summer 2018. This program will be presented by John Miller from Pearl Observatory.

Learn About Drones

Wednesday, May 9 (3:30 to 4:30 p.m.)

Participants will learn about the technology related to drones and view a drone in action. This program will be presented by Ken Fink from Wondergy.



(above) Children design their quilting squares.



(above) Professional artist Gabrielle Kanter assists children as they design their quilting squares.

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THE CELEBRATION SINGERS SPRING 2018 CONCERT

Submitted by Christopher Silvestri

The Celebration Singers would like to invite you to our spring concert titled "Music from the Heart, from the Soul" at Union County College, Roy Smith Theater, 1033 Springfield Avenue, Cranford, New Jersey at 8 p.m. on June 1 and June 2, 2018. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for children and seniors. Tickets can be purchased in advance through our website, celebration-singers.org, or at the box office at the night of the

concert. Any questions concerning the performances can be directed to our email at celebrationsingersnewjersey@gmail.com or to our landline at 908-552-4656.

The Celebration Singers are multi-generational ambassadors of song drawing music from a breadth of genres and cultures. The Choir's commitment to artistic excellence and its engaging and dynamic style provide its diverse singers and audiences with a compelling musical

experience. The Choir lends support through music and participates in the cultural life of the community.

Please also visit our Facebook page: facebook.com/Celebrationsingers.

Funding for the Celebration Singers is made possible in part by the New Jersey State Council for the Arts, Department of State, through a grant administered by the Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs.



(above) The Celebration Singers Adult Choir at St Michael's in Cranford New Jersey for their annual winter concert.

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KENILWORTH'S STREET FAIR - MAY 20TH

Thousands of visitors come out for the Annual Kenilworth's Street Fair which will be held on May 20th, 2018, 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. The event is a huge success on a beautiful spring day as the Boulevard gets transformed into a giant block party. This year it's going to be even bigger and better.

SHOPPING

Shop till you drop! with over 100 quality exhibitors and local merchants selling everything from jewelry, clothing, tee shirts, arts & crafts, collectibles, vintage & more.

KIDS ZONE

Kids...you'll be sure to have fun here with the many rides, ponies and petting zoo, tattoo station, face painting, ice cream, hot dogs, mac & cheese, lots of fun stuff to buy too!

COME HUNGRY & ENJOY ALL THE FOOD TRUCKS & LOCAL EATERIES

Many of the local restaurants will be joining the street fair this year. There will also be a big selection of food trucks selling a variety of gourmet savory and sweet of foods.

Here is a list: Carnival Concessions making zeppoles funnel cakes & fried oreos, Cheezen

Truck selling gourmet grill cheese sandwiches, Coastal Flavors selling crab cakes, Dani's Kettle Corn, Empanada Guy, Guac Spot serving Guacamole & Chips, spring rolls, bean burgers, Good Mood Truck serving burgers, tacos, fries, rice balls, mac & cheese, Jersey Barn Fire Hot Sauce selling hot sauces, Jersey Pickles selling Pickles, olives, Magic Mikes Smoked Meats serving Ribs chicken pulled pork mac & cheese, Mamas Catering serving Gyro Shishkabob fries chix tenders Hot dogs, Mr Softee selling ice cream, Nut House selling a wide variety of fresh nuts and candies, Really Good Pretzels, Thai Food Addict, Taste Of Poland, Twin Concessions serving Sausage/peppers, cheesesteaks, hot dogs, zeppoles, funnel cakes and fried oreos.

KENILWORTH CAR SHOW

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WE WEREN'T BAD KIDS, WE WERE SAD KIDS: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT IMAGINE SHARES HER STORY

By Mary Robinson, MA, CT

When I was 14 my father died of cancer, reticulum cell sarcoma, still one of the most deadly and difficult cancer to treat. It was 1974 and I was a freshman at Madison High School, my brother Jim was a sophomore. I remember it like it was yesterday and still dream of my dad, and still miss him. The death of a parent changes a child's life forever, as it did mine.

When my father was first diagnosed I was in eighth grade and that's when I first started skipping school. Though not a very helpful way to cope with my distress, it was also not unusual, as grief starts the moment of diagnosis; someone doesn't have to die for us to grieve. And that was certainly true of me and my family.

After our dad died my brother and I acted out in ways typical of grieving children, we were textbook examples of grieving children in fact, but at that time it wasn't understood that children grieve too, not just adults. The adults in our lives saw our changed behavior but didn't know what to do or say, or even to equate it with our dad's death and changed home life.

My mom was extraordinarily resilient all through my dad's illness and after he died. She went from being a stay-at-home mom to being a realtor, seemingly working 24/7 to pay the bills and keep us in our home. She is definitely my hero for how she worked so hard on our behalf, sending me to college and making the life I live today possible. But not all kids are so lucky. Often after a death there is great financial stress along with many secondary losses like having to move to a new neighborhood or even a new town, so a child loses friends, a sense of safety and familiarity and connections to the very people that could have been supportive.

I've now been working and volunteering in the field of children's grief support since 1997, working to ensure other children and teens don't lose years of their lives to unresolved grief like my brother and I did. The death of a parent is a trauma for a child but it doesn't have to leave them traumatized, if they get support. As the founder of two children's grief support centers and currently as Executive Director of Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss in Mountainside, my commitment is to ensure grieving children develop healthy coping skills, grow in their resiliency, emotional health and well-being, and to create communities where children coping with loss get the love and support they need to thrive and live up to their unique potential.

Dr. Gerald Glasser of Westfield was the catalyst for the start of Imagine. He wanted to insure that no child should ever have to grieve alone. He invited me to come to Westfield and open a grief support center providing an initial grant for startup funding through The Glasser Foundation, a philanthropic organization set up in memory of Dr. Glasser's son, Thomas Glasser, who was a victim of the 9/11 attack and who left behind two young children. The Glasser Foundation continues to provide extraordinarily generous annual support to Imagine.

Meeting Dr. Glasser was such a gift in my life.

His generosity and vision provided me with my life's purpose. When my father died there was no awareness back then that children and teens needed support after a loss like the death of a parent or brother or sister. Children truly were 'the forgotten mourners' as Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, author of *On Death and Dying* said over 40 years ago. But fortunately things have gotten better since then with over 500 children's grief support centers like Imagine existing around the country, and with schools bringing us in to provide educational workshops so that they are better equipped to support and understand youth coping with all types of loss. Now when a parent dies, families tell us that they heard about Imagine from multiple sources including their child's school, their funeral home or house of worship, and from multiple friends who scour the internet looking for support.

Childhood bereavement is one of society's more pervasive issues. One out of seven children under the age of 18 will lose a parent or sibling by age 20. And kids in grief are at-risk for unhealthy or destructive ways of coping which is why Imagine and other centers like it exist. Children and teens don't necessarily have the coping skills, life experience, or maturity to process their loss, and they re-grieve their losses during the various stages of their development. Imagine exists as an effective intervention and prevention program and a place for healthy mourning. The key to how well a child or teen or adult will do after a loss is to actively mourn the loss and not keep everything bottled up inside.

The mission of Imagine is to support children and families coping with loss and foster resiliency and emotional well-being for all those who grieve. But our higher purpose is to normalize grief and death and dying in society so that those who are grieving aren't left isolated or made to feel like there is something wrong with them. Our goal is to create "Good Mourning" communities that are grief- and trauma-informed. We do this by partnering with schools, agencies and workplaces to provide support and education on the topic of grief and loss and to hopefully change the lens through which society views grieving youth.

We work with the whole school community including school staff, parents, other agencies, healthcare providers, and first responders to create an environment that wraps around the youth served. The goal is that wherever a child turns in their life, at school, home, after-school programs, etc., there are adults who understand the impact of loss and trauma on youth, how to recognize it and how to support, listen to, and help build resilience in grieving youth.

Adults and peer support programs like Imagine can help children learn healthy ways to cope and grow more resilient. Loss is part of life and if we support children at the time of their loss they will be better able to cope with future life losses.

Over 40 years later, I am able to say, as I learned from my St. Vincent's School kindergarten friend Chris Harrington whose mom died when he was 11, that "I wouldn't have



(above, l-r) Mary Robinson and her dad, Gerry Robinson.

missed my dad for the world." I had the best dad for 14 years. Good can come from grief, loss, and pain, if we get and give support. As adults it is our job to help children navigate life's painful losses and create loving, supportive communities in which children can mourn their losses in healthy ways. That is the work of Imagine and all the centers like it around the country.

Imagine is a free year-round peer grief support center located in Mountainside, New Jersey serving children age 3 to 18 who have had a parent or sibling die, with concurrent support groups for their parents or guardians. Support for children and teens living with a parent or sibling with a life-altering physical illness is also available. Free year-round support groups are also available for young adults who have had a friend, sibling, parent or other important person in their life die, or who have a parent, sibling or friend living with an illness. Imagine is completely privately funded and completely free to participants for as long as they need. We rely on donations from individuals, companies, local businesses, and foundations to support the close to 300 children and adults currently attending our support groups every two weeks at Imagine. And we rely on volunteers to facilitate those groups. For more information about support, donating, or volunteering, please call 908-264-3100, email me at mary@imagine-nj.org or visit imagine-nj.org.

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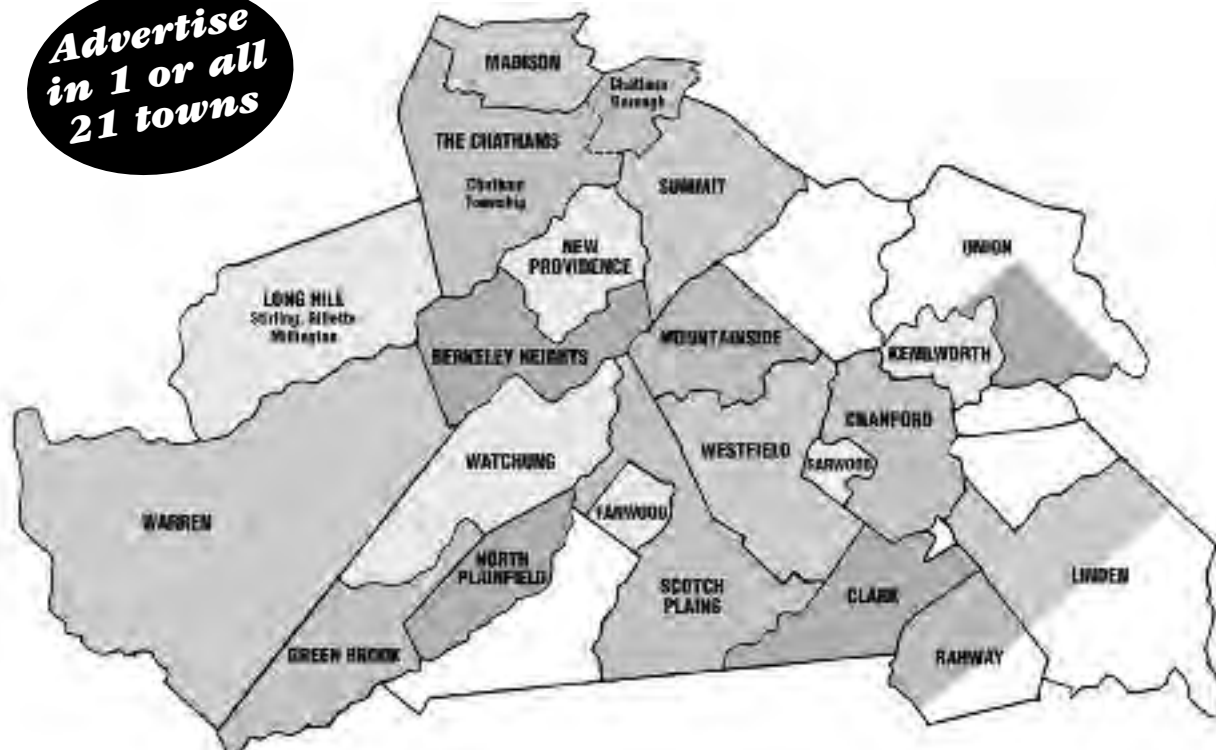
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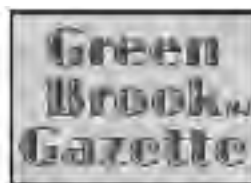
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