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ALZAPELLA PERFORMS AT JERSEY HARMONY EXPLOSION

Submitted by William Alzaher

On Saturday, February 2, 2019, Green Brook Middle School's acapella group, Alzapella, participated in an acapella festival called Jersey Harmony Explosion. The full day event focused on acapella music with a special attention on the barbershop style. From 8 a.m. - 10 p.m. students took part in workshops, masterclasses, and rehearsals. The night ended with an amazing concert featuring High School, Collegiate, and Professional acapella groups, and of course Green Brook's very own Alzapella.

Amongst the professional groups were GQ, Newfangled Four, and Gimme Four. All of these groups are incredible, internationally recognized quartets and they spent the day teaching the young singers about acapella, barbershop, and performing in general. The head clinician of the festival was Deke Sharon. Deke is referred to as the Godfather of acapella and has arranged for and music directed projects like the "Pitch Perfect" movies, "The Sing Off", "Pitch Slapped", and the Broadway musical "In Transit" to name a few. Green Brook vocalists have been



(above) Alzapella, Green Brook Middle School's acapella group, at the acapella festival Jersey Harmony Explosion.

fortunate enough to sing for Deke twice now over the last three years. The first time was at the Highlands Acapella Festival with Green Brook's select women's choir Green Brook Singers. After they sang an acapella arrangement of "Bring Me Little Wayer Silvy" with body percussion, Deke was so impressed with their performance that he live streamed them to his Facebook page. Within a few days the video had almost 40 thousand of views!

The whole experience inspired Mr. Alzaher (the 4th year director of choirs and orchestra at GBMS) and the Green Brook singers to start a contemporary acapella group of their own. The group has already received many awards and accolades including being select to go to the State Teen Arts festival every year they've participated, being the featured middle school group at multiple festivals and events, and being honored by the Green Brook Board of Education for their dedication and commitment to excellence in their craft.

At Saturday's festival, students were once again honored to workshop with Deke who was really the inspiration for the creation of Alzapella in the first place! He once again was blown away by the group and decided to live stream them again! The video already has over 22 thousand views between Instagram and Facebook. To hear Alzapella sing What About Us by Pink! search for Deke Sharon on Facebook or instagram and like/share the video!

If you want to hear Alzapella live, they'll be performing at the Highlands Festival and the GBMS spring concert in May. You can also search up Alzapella on YouTube.

GREEN BROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL TO PRESENT THIS YEAR'S SPRING MUSICAL, SHREK JR!

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IEF STUDENTS COMPETE IN MATH, SPELLING BEES AND FITNESS CHALLENGE

On February 8, 2019, the second, third, and fourth graders at the Irene E. Feldkirchner Elementary School participated in a Facts Fluency assembly to earn the title of IEF's Master Mathematician. Finalists in each grade demonstrated their mastery of mathematics.

In second grade, Shruti Vijay was the winner, and the runner-up was Justin Yin. The third grade winner was Shruthi Sridhar, with Grace Schroeder as runner-up. For fourth grade, Aarav Patel won the competition.

This year, the Irene E. Feldkirchner School is participating in the Scripps National Spelling Bee, one of the nation's oldest and most iconic competitions.

After classroom-level competitions, third and fourth grade finalists competed in a schoolwide assembly on January 17.

Third-grader Neil Nikhil will represent the IEF School at the county-level competition in Somerset on March 16.

On Friday, January 25, 2019, the students of the Irene E. Feldkirchner Elementary School participated in Boosterthon's HeroFit challenge. Boosterthon is a character-based program that teaches students how to solve problems and how to be valued members of society. The children enjoyed themselves while completing 35 fitness exercises. The funds raised will benefit IEF as well as the Green Brook Middle School. The Green Brook PTO is thrilled to bring exciting activities and playground equipment to our students. The Green Brook PTO would like to thank the friends and families who sponsored IEF students during this year's HeroFit challenge!



(above) Irene E. Feldkirchner Elementary students having fun during the Boosterthon's HeroFit challenge.

Photo by Green Brook Public Schools

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SCLSNJ PARTNERS WITH FRONTLINE ARTS TO ENRICH COMMUNITY

Submitted by Carolann DeMatos

Frontline Arts chose to add some of the amazing art from their talented veteran artists to the Somerset County Library System of New Jersey's (SCLSNJ) National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant-funded digital collection. The Library System is currently progressing through an 18-month initiative to enhance Somerset County's collective memory by digitizing the most treasured possessions of our residents.

SCLSNJ will make these collective memories available for research and use for future generations by contributing digitized items to Rutgers University's New Jersey Digital Highway, by making them available in our library's online catalog, and by submitting them to the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA).

The Somerset County Library System of New Jersey Common Heritage initiative has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the Human Endeavor. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in these Library programs do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ABOUT SOMERSET COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM OF NEW JERSEY

Somerset County Library System of New Jersey (SCLSNJ) partners with you to connect, to explore, to share and to discover. Together we enrich lives, expand knowledge and strengthen communities. SCLSNJ branches can be found in Bridgewater, Bound Brook, Hillsborough, Manville, North Plainfield, Peapack & Gladstone, Rocky Hill at Mary Jacobs Memorial Library, Somerville, Warren Township, and Watchung. Additionally, there are two SCLSNJ reading stations in Branchburg and Washington Valley. Visit SCLSNJ.org.

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(above) SCLSNJ's Director of Human Resources Deanna Rivera; SCLSNJ's Technical Services Manager and Grant Coordinator Rebecca Sandoval Sloat; Artist Tara Krause of Sparta and Wolpe, her 9 year old German Shepard companion from Semper Fido; SCLSNJ's Adult Services Librarian Ken Kaufman; Artist Jim Fallon of Hoboken; and Frontline Paper Studio Manager Walt Nygard of Teaneck; pose with some of the art being adding to the Library's growing digital history collection.

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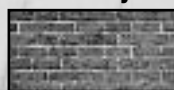
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WELLNESS DAY HEALTH FAIR AT WHRHS

Submitted by Denis Kelly

Faculty, administration and staff at Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS) were offered a range of information and health screenings during the lunchtime Wellness Day Health Fair, sponsored by the Healthy Edge Initiative, on Friday, January 11, 2019.

Gathered in Room 107, adjacent to the North Cafeteria, were representatives from health insurance companies, dental services, pharmacies, and even a local full-service supermarket, which was represented by a registered dietitian.

There was also a naturopathic physician, who answered questions about naturopathic approaches to health. The Warren Township Rescue Squad (WTRS) was represented by a group of Emergency Medical Technicians, many of whom were graduates of WHRHS. They were offering blood pressure readings, as well as other health information, and information about how to volunteer with the rescue squad.

A masseuse provided mini massages in a private room off the Media Center, and representatives from the Optical Academy of Clifton offered screenings in a nearby classroom.

The Wellness Day Health Fair was organized by the team of volunteers on the WHRHS Healthy Edge Wellness Committee, organized by WHRHS Health and Physical Education Teacher Jill Gleeson. Others behind the planning were Director of Human Resources and Professional Development Beth Scheiderman, Executive Administrative Assistant for Human Resources and Professional Development Donna Dinson, Health and Physical Education Teacher Caitlin Brennan, WHRHS Instructional Aide Marla Heath, and volunteer benefits advisor who helped line up the vendors from the community, Brooke Frapwell.

Gleeson said the idea of holding Wellness programs for students, staff and parents grew out of the multi-year effort to provide nurturing and nourishment for the mental health and well-being of students, parents, teachers and staff. This ongoing effort rose out of the work of the Wellness Committee and the Teen Action Group, two of the many committees and subcommittees developed with input from a broad group of WHRHS Board of Education members, administrators, teachers, students, parents and community leaders and volunteers, back in 2014. They were then, and many still are now, working to identify and implement the goals and objectives of the WHRHS Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

The Strategic Plan's three goals are:

- Create and expand programs and services that enhance the social and emotional wellness of all students within a compassionate learning community.
- Build and strengthen support structures that engage students in developing their individual potential, enable students to experience success in high school, and empower students to plan and prepare well for post-secondary learning.



(above) WHRHS Special Services English Teacher Amita Lluveres puts a ticket into one of many Tricky Tray bags for one of many fun mini-prize packages from local restaurants, stores and services in the community, who support the Wellness Day Health Fair on January 11. Photos by WHRHS

- Integrate creative, innovative, and interdisciplinary learning throughout the district to empower and inspire students to succeed in a changing global community.

Gleeson said the committee plans to hold other Healthy Edge/Wellness programs later in the school year.

Coming up, Gleeson said, the Wellness initiative is planning a parent/community night on Tuesday, April 2, featuring with nationally acclaimed Prevention Expert, Timothy Shoemaker. He will focus on addiction, raising drug-free teens, detection tips and strategies to learn the most common concealment techniques of teenagers. Shoemaker will also bring an extensive hands-on display. His presentation will unveil dozens of deadly new drugs and drug use techniques that are currently plaguing teens, and he is expected to discuss vaping in depth, Gleeson said.

In addition, Gleeson's team is also planning a community showing of "Angst," a documentary centering around anxiety in teenagers and how to handle and manage stress with positive coping skills. The date has not yet been determined, Gleeson said, but she expects it to be determined soon, and it will likely be during the Spring.

Earlier this year, in November, a program geared primarily for parents called "Vaping: Clear the Air," was organized by the Healthy Edge Committee and the WHRHS PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), Gleeson said.

Contrary to the popular notion that "Vaping" might be the safer alternative to smoking or chewing tobacco, guest speaker Melissa Tasse warned Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS) parents that, in fact, e-cigarettes deliver multiple-times more concentrated dosages of the highly addictive drug, nicotine, than their tobacco alternatives.

Then, on December 4, about 100 students, teachers and community volunteers participated in the annual and dynamic Challenge Day, a nation-wide, self-empowerment and values-affirming program geared for students. Through small group discussions, large group ice-breakers, and time-honored values-clarifying activities, students learned that if they have challenges and excess stress they are not alone; they have both peers and trained staff who can help, and they are valued for who they are as well as who they aspire to become. Challenge Day has been offered annually to students at WHRHS for years.

For more information about the WHRHS Healthy Edge Wellness initiative, visit the school's Web site, and click on "Community" button near the top of the Home Page. Or visit whrhs.org/community/new-page.



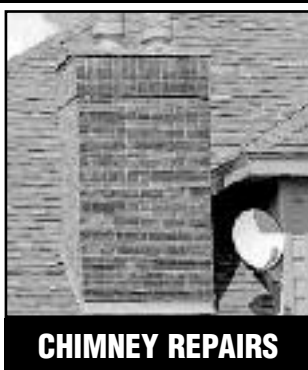
(above, l-r) Stacey Roy, Stephanie Scheiderman, Ward Scheiderman, Jason Ross, Ashley Irving, Brian Nalewajek, Lynn Lin, and Brian Finkel from the Warren Township Rescue Squad.



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CASA SHAW VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT ON ERIKKA FLOYD

Erikka has been a dedicated CASA volunteer advocate who continues to make a difference in the lives of the children she serves. She lives with her family in Hunterdon County, where she works as a substitute teacher. She is also very proud to have two beautiful children of her own, ages 7 and 11.



(above) Erikka Floyd

When discussing her path that led her to CASA SHaW, she said, "about a year ago, I was looking for a volunteer opportunity and found CASA online. The CASA organization stood out above the rest. At the time, there was a lot of media coverage about families going through the opioid crisis and stories of children being taken from their homes. I have also seen the affects and stress on children who have gone through the foster care system throughout my time working in different schools and in speaking to people with this experience. I have always enjoyed working with children and the thought of any child being torn away from their parents, siblings and home and how afraid they must feel, is hurtful to me."

Erikka currently advocates for two siblings ages 4 and 6. They are bright, active, cheerful, loving children who enjoy reading stories, drawing, playing games and dancing around. As their CASA, she is an extra set of eyes and ears on their case to ensure their needs are met and that they are happy, healthy and cared for by their foster parent. Throughout their stay with the foster parent, she has formed relationships with counselors and teachers at the children's school to ensure they continue to do well and don't fall behind. She has also formed a relationship with their biological mother, and has been there for her as she set and accomplished goals for herself so she could be the best mom she could be when the children go back home.

Erikka said, "I think part of being a CASA is being able to understand where people are

coming from and where they need to go to be successful. It is about being a cheerleader for the parent in helping them overcome obstacles that have prevented them from being with their children. Simply being someone who is there to listen, to bounce ideas off of, or to vent to is often helpful to a parent. It is about being a consistent part of the children's lives. For many foster children, consistency doesn't come easy, as they are moved around and experience a lot of changes. The children need to know they have someone who is on their side and looking out for them."

Erikka continued by saying, "at CASA SHAW, I have a supportive and knowledgeable group of people to reach out to whenever I have questions or concerns. CASA has provided training opportunities to further my understanding of how children in foster care are affected and resources to use throughout my case to better help the family. I have attended family court and gained a new perspective on how DCP&P and the foster system works. I am grateful the children on my case are expected to be reunified with their mother and look forward to helping another family soon."

We thank Erikka for all she has done as a volunteer advocate and her dedication to making a difference in the lives of those children who need a voice at this time in their lives.

Do you or someone you know want to volunteer to help make a difference in the life of a child in need? For more information visit casaofnj.org.

CASA SHAW ANNOUNCES INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR MARCH

Do you or someone you know want to volunteer to help make a difference in the life of a child in need?

Court Appointed Special Advocates of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties (CASA SHaW) has announced Information Sessions in March for individuals in our community who are interested in learning more about becoming a CASA volunteer advocate.

"Every month we hold three to four information sessions for members of our community and individuals who want to learn more about what it takes to become a CASA," said Tracey Heisler, Executive Director of CASA SHaW. "It's a great way to learn more about what we do and how people can help," Heisler said. Attending an Information Session is required for anyone interested in applying to become a CASA.

Sessions usually last approximately 45 minutes. Below is a list of upcoming sessions you, your family and/or friends can attend in March. Registration is required. Please contact our Volunteer Trainer, Karen Cassano, at karen@casashaw.org or by phone at 908-689-5515 if you plan to attend on either date.

- Thursday, March 7 - 5:30 PM at the CASA SHaW office in Washington, NJ (150 Boulevard, Suite 1, Washington, NJ 07882)

- Wednesday, March 20 - 1:00 PM at the Hackettstown Public Library in Hackettstown, NJ (110 Church Street, Hackettstown, NJ 07840)

- Tuesday, March 26 - 5:30 PM at the CASA SHaW office in Washington, NJ (150 Boulevard, Suite 1, Washington, NJ 07882)

CASA of Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren Counties is part of a statewide network of community-based, non-profit programs that recruit, screen, train and supervise volunteers to "Speak Up for a Child" removed from home due to abuse or neglect. CASA is the only program in New Jersey that uses trained volunteers to work one-on-one with children, ensuring that each one gets the services needed and achieves permanency in a safe, nurturing home. To find a local CASA program in your county, visit casaofnj.org.

In 2018, CASA:

- Served 233 children
- Trained 38 new advocates
- Saw 79 children achieve permanency
- Received more than \$52,000 in in-kind donations
- Provided tutors for 12 children who needed academic support
- Had only one child come back into foster care

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WATCHUNG HILLS ELKS SEEKS DONATIONS FOR TROOP CARE PACKAGES

Submitted by Michael Ryder

As U.S. troops continue to deploy and defend our nation overseas, many Americans want to know how to send Care Packages for service members, even if they don't personally know them. Care Packages enhance the morale and well-being of the deployed troops worldwide, which is especially important outside the established holidays.

Our country loves supporting our troops both at home and overseas and Care Packages sent to overseas bases or stateside hospitals are a great way to show that gratitude.

Veterans Services Committee Chair Fran Bellew (PER) of the Watchung Hills Elks set out a collection box on Thursday, January 31, 2019, to collect items that can be sent to personnel deploying with the Army in March.

The box will be available until March 18, 2018; please stop by 1 Elks Trail, Warren, NJ (across the street from the Rescue Squad) any Monday through Saturday, 12 - 9 p.m. or Sunday 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. to drop off items.

Questions should be taken up directly with Fran at 908-405-2922 or by email at fatbobs1960@gmail.com.

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 - Foot powder and the like
- Feminine products (unscented whenever possible)
 - Small packs of napkins and tampons
 - Female version of body wash, lotion, razors, face wash, mouth wash, deodorant, Q-tips, hair de-tangler, face moisturizer, shampoo, conditioner
 - Small grooming kits
- Laundry PODS packed in a sturdy plastic or metal container.
- Sunscreen
- Magazines (clean content)
- Fun posters and calendars for dressing the place up

- AA batteries
- AAA batteries
- Movies and music on thumb drives only (CDs, DVDs and tapes are useless)
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- Cards, letters, group photos
- Tobacco (cigarettes, dip, chew and vapes)

You must double-bag individual liquid and gel items. Just imagine what happens in the war zone when they sometimes get dumped out of a hovering chopper.

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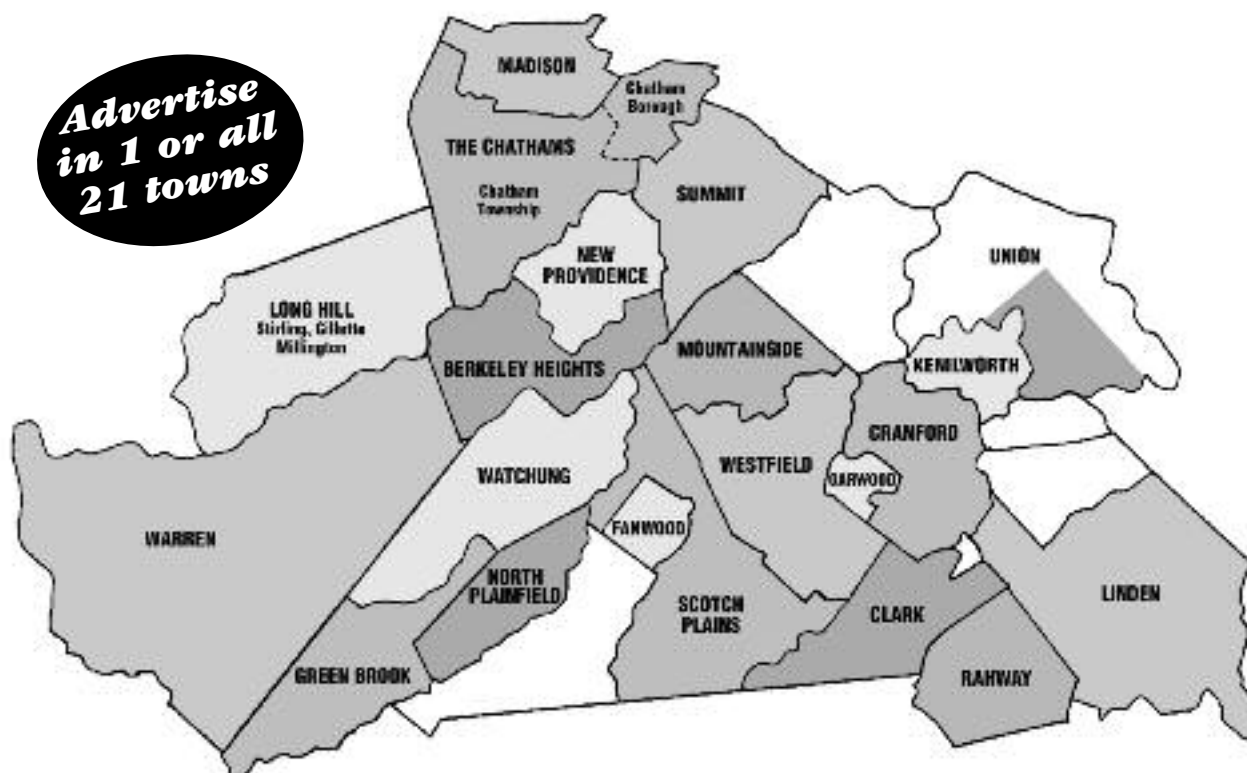
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