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JOHNSON FOOTBALL VISITS FIRST CHILDREN'S SCHOOL

Submitted by Gus Kalikas

Members of the Arthur L. Johnson High School Crusader Football Team recently participated in a visit to the First Children's School, located in Fanwood, New Jersey.

The First Children's School in Fanwood is a stepping off point for children who need highly specialized educational services for some period of time in their lives. First Children's services extend into the home districts of students with special needs where they are invited to work with faculty and administration to assure that children with special needs get cutting-edge services in their home schools. The dedicated staff, including teachers, aides, and therapists, are prepared to deliver their services in the schools and homes of the children they serve.

First Children partners with districts and other providers like Children's Specialized Hospital and Eden Autism

Services to make sure that the children receive the very best services possible.

Members of the Crusader Football Team went into various classrooms and participated in a multitude of activities relating to the school's curriculum.

Anthony DelConte, Head Football Coach, had this to say about the event: "The football program was thrilled to be able to assist with the daily routines and to participate in activities held at the First Children's School. It was fun watching the High School Student Athletes as they interacted with the children, and I think both groups not only enjoyed the experience, but learned a lot while doing it."

The Arthur L. Johnson High School Crusader Football Team would like to thank everyone associated with the First Children's School for welcoming us and allowing us to be a part of a fabulous day.



(above) The 2019 ALJ Crusader Football Team visits the First Children's School on Thursday, August 12, 2019.

Photo by Clark Public Schools

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To submit content email: editor@rennamedia.com

FIRE PREVENTION OPEN HOUSE SUN., OCTOBER 6

The Garwood Volunteer Fire Department will be holding its annual open house on Sunday, October 6 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. This is to celebrate the beginning of Fire Prevention week. Come join us for light refreshments, fire prevention tips and safety tips. Bring your camera to take tons of pictures with the kids and our firefighters. Hope to see you there!



GARWOOD JOINS FOODSTOCK 2019

As part of FoodStock 2019, the Borough of Garwood is collecting food to donate to food banks here in our own community. We are challenging the Borough of Fanwood to see which town can collect the most food. Residents can drop off bags of non-perishable food items to Garwood Borough Hall or the Garwood Library any time up until Halloween.

The following is list of ideas: rice, juice, canned tuna, boxed cereal, mac 'n' cheese, salad dressing, taco dinner kits, pasta side dishes, peanut butter and jelly, Hamburger Helper dinner kits, instant mashed potato boxes/bags, non-refrigerated parmesan cheese, jarred (or already prepared) tomato sauce, pretzels, cheez-It's, crackers, cookies, condiments, paper goods, and personal hygiene items.

FoodStock is an annual food drive committed to the needs of community members struggling to put food on their tables. Visit FoodStockNJ.org for more information on the organization. Let's get this #FoodStockChallenge started!

As part of FoodStock 2019, the Borough of Garwood is collecting food to donate to food banks here in our own community. We are

challenging the Borough of Fanwood to see which town can collect the most food. Residents can drop off bags of non-perishable food items to Garwood Borough Hall or the Garwood Library any time up until Halloween.

THE FOLLOWING IS LIST OF DONATION IDEAS:

Rice • Juice • Canned tuna • Boxed cereal • Mac 'n' cheese • Salad dressing • Taco dinner kits • Pasta side dishes • Peanut butter and jelly • Hamburger Helper Dinner kits • Instant mashed potato boxes/bags • Non-refrigerated parmesan cheese • Jarred (or already prepared) tomato sauce • Snacks such as: pretzels, Cheez-It's, crackers, and cookies • Condiments such as: ketchup, mustard, mayo, and barbecue sauce • Paper goods such as: individually wrapped toilet paper, paper towels, napkins, and tissues • Personal hygiene items such as: shampoo, soap or body wash, toothpaste, and toothbrushes.

FoodStock is an annual food drive committed to the needs of community members struggling to put food on their tables.

Visit FoodStockNJ.org for more information on the organization. Let's get this #FoodStockChallenge started!

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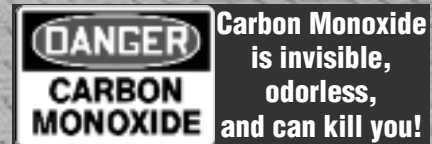
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THREE YMCA EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM STAFF MEMBERS ACHIEVE 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Submitted by Marla Itzkin

Three Westfield Area YMCA early learning program staff members were recently recognized for 25 years of service: Maria Nierstedt, Preschool Site Director; Catherine Wendel, Preschool Teacher; and Lorraine Wolski, Preschool Teacher Assistant. They join Cathie Brief, Karen McCutcheon, Nancy Redlund, Maryann Renfree and Eileen Rooney. Twenty-nine staff members have been at Westfield Area YMCA child care education programs for ten years or more.

“Our experienced staff are great for the program because of the consistency, experience and familiarity. They stay for the love of the children and know they are part of the process of them learning and growing” says Maria Nierstedt. “The new teachers are drawn to the Y when they hear about the longevity of our staff.

They will have the same opportunities to grow professionally through workshops and seminars and be able to express their creativity within the curriculum.”

Westfield Area YMCA Early Learning Programs are located at the Bauer Branch, 422 E. Broad St., Westfield (preschool and full-day Kindergarten), Early Learning Center, YMCA 170 Elm St., Westfield (full-day child care) and the Garwood Family Center YMCA, 500 East St., Garwood (full-day child care and preschool).

The Y is the nation’s leading nonprofit committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Financial assistance is available for those who qualify. Learn more about Westfield Area YMCA programs at westfieldynj.org.

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(above, l-r) Three Westfield Area YMCA staff members recently reached 25 years of service: Maria Nierstedt, Catherine Wendel, and Lorraine Wolski. Not pictured but also with 25+ years of service are: Cathie Brief, Karen McCutcheon, Nancy Redlund, Maryann Renfree and Eileen Rooney. 29 staff members have been at Westfield Area YMCA child care education programs for 10 years or more.



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PAULETTE DROGON RETIRES

After 15 years, working for the Borough of Garwood as Senior Director, I wish to inform you that I have retired. It has been an honor to serve Garwood seniors. Paulette Drogon C.S.W.



(above) Paulette Drogon dancing with the DJ at a senior picnic.

GARWOOD MAYORS WELLNESS CAMPAIGN 3K WALK – OCT. 26

Garwood residents of all ability levels are invited to join the Garwood Mayors Wellness Campaign's 3K Walk on Saturday, October 26th, 2019, at the Garwood Recreation Complex at the eastern end of Myrtle Avenue. This 3K walk will highlight Garwood resident, Paul Nieves, as our Featured Walker. Paul has lived in Garwood for 17 years, and has recently retired from the US Army with the rank of Colonel. Walkers of all ages are welcome to participate in this family-friendly walk, and parents with strollers are encouraged to join in. Take your active life style to a new level and join the Committee for a fun walk at the Garwood Recreation Complex. This 3K Walk will be held on Saturday, October 26th, 2019, starting at 10 a.m. and will circumnavigate the Rec Center.

Through public-private partnerships, the Garwood Mayors Wellness Campaign will establish and continue to provide structure and resources for healthy community initiatives. The Wellness Committee works together to increase opportunities for Garwood residents to participate in many activities, with a long-term goal of creating better health which in turn will reduce personal health care cost.

Interested residents are advised to contact the Garwood Mayors Wellness Campaign via email at MWC@garwood.org for more details or to get involved with the Mayors Wellness programs.

The Mayors Wellness Committee meets on the 2nd Monday of every month at 7 p.m. in Garwood Borough Hall.

30 ALJ STUDENTS RECOGNIZED BY COLLEGE BOARD AS AP SCHOLARS

Arthur L. Johnson is excited to announce that 30 of its students have been recognized as Advanced Placement School Scholars by The College Board. The awards recognize high school students who have demonstrated college-level achievement through AP courses and exams.

19 students have been noted as AP Scholars receiving a score of 3 or higher on three or more AP exams. 4 students have been recognized as AP Scholars with Honor receiving an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams. ALJ has 7 AP Scholars with Distinction

receiving an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams. Three of these scholars with Distinction also earned the title of National AP Scholar receiving an average score of at least 4 on all AP Exams taken and scores of 4 or higher on eight or more of these exams.

“These students are to be applauded for their immense success with postsecondary studies while still at ALJ. They will have a strong head-start on their college studies and are a source of great pride for our high school and district as a whole,” stated Superintendent Edward Grande.

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WESTFIELD VVA LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

The Vietnam Veterans of America's Chapter #688 of Westfield is fully immersed in the community, working to promote and support issues important to Vietnam-era veterans.

The service organization invites those who served in Vietnam between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975, or were in any duty location between August 5, 1964, and May 7, 1975, to join them in creating a new identity for this generation of veterans and to change the public perception of Vietnam Veterans.

Some of the activities the Westfield VVA chapter takes part in include making visits to veterans hospitals, supporting veterans memorials and observances, assisting disabled and needy veterans and their families, sponsoring programs for homeless veterans, and presenting patriotic and historical projects in schools.

The VVA also offers Veteran Services, including medical and benefit claims assistance and financial management. Joining VVA allows veterans to connect with other veterans and stay up with the latest news and special events. You will also receive a free subscription to the VVA Veteran newspaper.

Meetings are scheduled for the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. in the VFW Post 2230, 33 S. 21st.St., Kenilworth, NJ. The Westfield chapter can be reached by calling 908-416-5930 or emailing rickvva688@aol.com.

CELEBRATING EMPOWERMENT: 99 YEARS ON A MISSION

Submitted by Shannon Myre

The YWCA Union County announces our Fall Cocktail Reception, Celebrating Empowerment: 99 Years on a Mission. This is our signature event celebrating nearly a century of serving our community and empowering survivors of domestic violence. This event will be held Thursday, October 10, 2019, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Westwood in Garwood and is a major fundraiser for our domestic violence programs.

The 2019 Honorees are Kean University, The Housing Authority of the City of Elizabeth, and Westfield United Fund.

The YWCA's Mission is eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. In 1978, our organization dedicated its mission to an urgent need in our communities – domestic violence. YWCA Union County is on a mission to empower survivors of domestic violence to become safe and free from abuse through comprehensive, client-centered services, and through education, collaboration and advocacy that builds safe, informed and supportive communities.

Domestic violence crosses all barriers of race,

ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender and socioeconomic status and it is a crime that impacts our entire community. It is estimated that 1 in every 3 women and 1 in 7 men will be affected by domestic violence in their life - more than breast cancer, lung cancer, and ovarian cancer combined. The monetary cost of domestic violence in the United States in dollars has been estimated to exceed 9.3 billion dollars a year in medical and mental health services, loss of productivity, and loss of paid earnings. An average of 3 women per day in the United States are killed as a result of domestic violence.

The YWCA's Celebrating Empowerment: 99 Years on a Mission will be held during Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The program will include delicious food, refreshments, an online silent auction, a 50/50 raffle, and much more. Proceeds of the event will benefit the YWCA Union County's Domestic Violence Programs. For more information or tickets, contact Shannon Myre by email at smyre@ywcaunioncounty.org.

If you or anyone you know is experiencing domestic violence, call the 24-Hour Hotline at 908-355-HELP (4357).

OCTOBER EVENTS AT THE GARWOOD PUBLIC

411 Third Avenue, Garwood, New Jersey 07027

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Library hours are Monday, to Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.,

Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Sunday, Closed

Knitting Club

Mondays and Thursdays at 10:30 a.m.

No registration required.

Learn how to knit or show others how it's done while enjoying fun conversation. Needles and yarn provided to newcomers.

Kid's Chess

Mondays at 3:00 p.m.

No registration required. Limit 12;

Informal chess game for children of all ages.

This is a non-instructional program.

Six boards provided.

Adult Craft

Tuesday, October 8 at 6:00 p.m.

Let those creative juices flow. Make a craft to bring home and impress your friends and family. Limit 10. Registration required.

Toddler Story Time

Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

No registration required. For children from birth to age 4; Stories, songs, bubbles and more. The Pipsqueak Player will join us on

October 16. On October 23,

a special guest from the Westfield Pediatric Dental Group will join us for a children's interactive dental health program.

Library Board Meeting

October's meeting will take place on

Wednesday, October 2 at 8:00 p.m.

The meeting of the Library Board of Trustees is open to the public.

Kid's Craft

Wednesday, October 9, at 3:00 p.m.

Make a fun Halloween craft. Registration required. Children 2nd grade and up, Limit 20

Pipsqueak Players - Reading Reimagined

Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m.

starting October 16

Join us for a reading enrichment program for 4 and 5-year olds. They will enjoy fun activities and games that will boost their abilities.

Registration required. Limit 10.

Thursday Evening Book Club

October 3 at 7 p.m.

No registration required. Check with the Library for their latest book selection.

LEGO Club

Thursday, October 10 and 24 at 3 p.m.

Be inspired by this month's theme and build whatever comes to mind. Then share your creation with others. Some will be displayed in our showcase. Registration required by phone or in person. Limit 15 children ages 4 -12.

Please attend only one club per month.

Aging Services Kiosk (ASK)

Thursday, October 17,

from 10 a.m. till noon

Union County Division of Aging Staff will be on hand to assist seniors (age 60+) or their caregivers with information on services, such as meal delivery, respite care, adult day care and support services for caregivers.

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HELPING HOMELESS VETERANS WITH BACKPACKS FOR LIFE

Submitted by Michael Boll, New Jersey Veterans Network

For the last few years our charity racing team, Operation Rebound, has been sponsored by Backpacks for Life (BFL). This amazing charity is responsible for providing thousands of homeless veterans backpacks full of essential toiletries and personal items. Also, the BFL will seek out veterans in need and help them with housing, food, employment and any other service that will help them live a better life.

The founder of the BFL, Brett D'Alessandro, is a United States Marine Corps veteran and started this outstanding charity shortly after he returned home from his tour of duty in Afghanistan. Brett recalls living out of a backpack during the war and felt a backpack can be a life-saving tool. In just a few years, Brett and the BFL are responsible for making thousands of backpacks for our homeless veterans.

The BFL doesn't just do backpacks, they are committed with helping our disabled veterans with providing them with the necessary resources and life-saving services by participating in various health fairs and PTSD groups. The BFL estimates about 350 disabled veterans have benefited from their resources and outreach. The BFL feels it's easy for a veteran to feel lost in the system. There are amazing resources out there, but it can be overwhelming trying to navigate it alone, so the BFL is there to help and guide the veteran through this agonizing process. What

makes the BFL special is they invite veterans into their home and help with filling out paperwork, draft resumes, apply for housing, or whatever else is needed to help the veteran.

The future looks bright for the BFL. They're excited to expand their backpacks distribution and reach even more homeless veterans. As they connect with more veterans' organizations across the country, they will equip even more communities with backpacks.

Their mentorship and coaching process will soon be accessible online. In this exciting development, veterans from across the country will be able to utilize the organization despite their location. Through this growth, the BFL focus remains on bringing hope back into the lives of veterans.

The BFL is out there every day making a difference and the Operation Rebound Racing Team is lucky to be a part of this incredible charity.

If you are interested with helping the Backpacks for Life please visit their website backpacksforlife.org.

For more information about New Jersey Veterans Network visit njvn.org.

About Operation Rebound

Operation Rebound is a mobile outreach team of mentors who help at-risk veterans and first responders to live a better life. For the last two

years, our team has made huge strides with suicide prevention simply by building trust and cementing friendships with people in need. It's most important to be honest with each person in crisis and follow up with ways to help them regain purpose in life. Setting goals motivates them to stay on a positive track. If you are interested with joining the Operation Rebound Racing Team please feel free to contact Michael Boll at mdbollio@optonline.net or call 973-332-1556.



(above) Brett D'Alessandro, Founder of Backpacks for Life

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TICKETS ON SALE FOR SHINING STARS GALA, CHRISTMAS SHOW

Shining Stars Network, a non profit organization shining the light on the special needs community through the performing arts and other activities, has two exciting events planned over the next few months.

Shining Stars will be hosting their inaugural "Reach for the Stars" Gala on Wednesday, November 6, 2019 at the the elegant Park Savoy Estate in Florham Park, featuring a 5-star dinner and show featuring the Shining Stars special needs cast members.

The night will feature a cocktail hour, dinner and a Venetian hour, all highlighted by a 45-minute performance from the amazing and talented Shining Stars cast, along with a 50/50 raffle and auction items.

"This is a night we've been dreaming of having for quite some time," noted Shining Stars Network co-founder and President Mike Curci. "As we continue to expand our mission of

providing opportunities in the performing arts, we felt a gala would be a wonderful way to introduce our special stars to the corporate community and other donors while raising funds that will allow us to grow our programs."

Shining Stars Network is an expansion of the successful Shining Stars talent shows which began in Cranford more than eight years ago with 15 cast members. That number has grown to 50 and there are new requests each week from those who want to become a part of the Shining Stars family. While the majority of cast members live in Union County, there are cast members from seven different counties who have taken the stage.

"It's an exciting time for our organization and we continue to receive requests from those who want to join our cast," said Curci. "We know there's a need for what we are providing and our goal is to continue our mission of creating even

more opportunities to be on stage in the future."

"Being on stage builds self-confidence and self-esteem, which is something our stars take into their everyday lives," noted Shining Stars Network co-founder and co-director Sally Curci. "Friendships are built between cast members and our volunteer 'buddies' and these long-lasting bonds are just as important as the performing. Our goal is to provide more opportunities as possible for the special needs community."

Tickets for the "Reach for the Stars" gala are available at shiningstars.booktix.com or you can email your ticket request to shiningstarsgala@gmail.com. The cost to attend is \$150.00 per person.

"We are incredibly thankful to our gala committee members for their time and dedication," added Mike Curci. "We could not do this without them. And we cannot say enough thank you's to the local community for their continued support in helping our stars shine over these past eight years."

In addition, Shining Stars Network is also excited to present their second annual "Christmas Spectacular," a not to be missed evening of holiday favorites presented by their incredible cast and filled with sing-a-longs and audience participation, including the return of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," which includes every audience member and instantly became an audience favorite.

Because of the success of last year's show, this year's "Christmas Spectacular" will be presented at the beautiful and historic Union County Performing Arts Center in Rahway on Thursday, December 5, 2019.

"UCPAC has been our home for the past two "Evening of Shining Stars" shows, which drew an audience of more than 1,000 each year," said Curci. "We are thrilled to take our Christmas show to this iconic stage and look forward to presenting another magical night for our audience."

Tickets for the Shining Stars "Christmas Spectacular" are on sale now at UCPAC.org/events. There will be a 10% discount on tickets through November 1 by using the code "holiday stars."

Also, mark you calendars for Friday, May 8, 2020 when the Shining Stars return to the UCPAC main stage for the third straight year. The 9th annual "Evening of Shining Stars" promises to be bigger and better than ever.

"Our stars continue to inspire us every day with their passion, dedication and talents," said co-director Nicole Greene. "We can't wait to see them shine on stage again."

Shining Stars Network, Inc. is a registered 501(c)(3) non profit organization that shines the light on the special needs community by creating opportunities in the performing arts and other events. In addition, our Shining Stars Ambassadors basketball team travels to play local first responders and organizations with the goal of building friendships and understanding in an inclusive environment. The successful Camp Shine — a two-week special needs performing arts summer camp, just concluded their 3rd year.

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6
Homes Currently
on the Market



3
Homes Listed



4
Homes Sold in
the Last 30 Days



53
Average Days
on Market

AVERAGE:

List Price \$448,700
Sale Price \$435,000

Sale Price/List Price:

97%

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