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HIGH SCHOOL GROUPS RAISE \$3K TO FIGHT BREAST CANCER



Photos by Lindén Public Schools

(above) Lindén High School Navy Junior ROTC cadets present a check for \$1,500 to Tina Jacobs, the director of community health for Susan G. Komen New Jersey. At center of front row are instructor Chief Petty Officer Mark Velez; Regimental Commanding Officer Mario Rodriguez; Regimental Executive Officer Licxi Cardoso; Tina Jacobs; LHS Principal Yelena Horr ; and Commander Boyd Decker, senior Naval Science instructor.

Submitted by Gary Miller

Two Lindén High School groups combined to raise nearly \$3,000 to fight breast cancer.

The Lindén High School girls volleyball team raised over \$1,400 through its seventh annual "Pink Out" match. Proceeds are being donated to the Rutgers Cancer Institute to fund research to find a cure.

The school's Navy Junior ROTC donated \$1,500 to Susan G. Komen New Jersey, which will use the money to provide cancer screenings for women who would otherwise not be able to afford it.

The volleyball team sold T-shirts and baked goods beforehand and collected donations during its October 28 match against Elizabeth High School.

"I am extremely proud of my team," said head coach Marissa Dello Russo. "They do a great job with all aspects of the event, such as raising funds prior to the event, setting

up, conducting themselves in a respectful manner, and cleaning up after the event. They are a wonderful group of young women, and as always I am very proud to be their coach."

The girls played before a packed house of fans, many dressed in pink to support the cause. Before the varsity match, the team held a ceremony to honor breast cancer survivors and those still battling the disease. The players gave each survivor in attendance a pink rose.

"We did something a little differently this year and had a meet-and-greet with the breast cancer survivors before the match," Dello Russo said. "We served light refreshments in the teachers' cafeteria before the match to the breast cancer survivors and their families."

She said that having the team members meet the survivors helped make the event even more special.

(continued on page 2)

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LIFE in LINDEN

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HIGH SCHOOL GROUPS (continued)

“The survivors were able to share their stories, and the team was better able to understand the significance of why we host this event each year,” Dello Russo said. “The breast cancer survivors were extremely appreciative of the team’s efforts and it made for a truly memorable night for all.”

The NJROTC cadets met with Tina Jacobs, the director of community health for Susan G. Komen New Jersey, when she visited the school on October 23 to accept their donation. She told

them the funds would pay for about eight potentially lifesaving cancer screenings for uninsured women.

The cadet leading the charge with the fundraising effort was Regimental Executive Officer Cadet Commander Licxi Cardoso, an LHS senior. The cadets who raised the money for the donation attended a special recognition ceremony and were awarded a pink aiguillette to be worn on their uniform throughout Breast Cancer Awareness Month.



(above) Members of the Linden High School girls volleyball team stand with breast cancer survivors at their annual Pink Out match on October 28. The event raised more than \$1,400 for the Rutgers Cancer Institute.

Photos by Linden Public Schools

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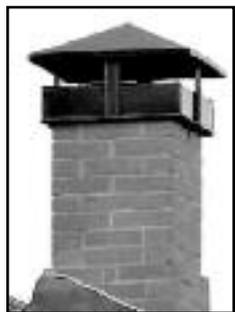
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CAR DONATION PROGRAM GIVES WHEELS TO REAL PEOPLE



(above) Brian Shapiro shows off his Volvo Cross Country.

What does it mean to have your own car? For longtime Community Access Unlimited (CAU) member Brian Shapiro, it means both stability and freedom. Before he had a car, Brian had to get a ride from a friend or take an Uber to his job driving a cab in Bloomfield.

“It’s a lot easier,” Brian said, thanks to the Volvo he received as a donation through Community Access Unlimited this fall. “I go to work and take my son places.”

CAU started the vehicle donation program as a way to aid youth and individuals with disabilities who wished to complete their drivers test and gain the independence that comes with owning a vehicle. Now Brian can easily travel to the job he has had for nearly 20 years. Many have already benefited from the donation of reliable cars to get them where they need to go- from work and school to social functions.

“I’ve known about it for a while and it finally worked out,” Brian said.

Unlike other car donation programs, CAU does not sell or scrap donated cars, receiving only a percentage of their value. By donating a vehicle to CAU, 100% of your donation will go to a person with transportation needs.

Those interested in donating a car should contact Mercedes Pagan, fundraising and event

director, at 908-354-3040 x4376 or mpagan@caunj.org.

Vehicles that may qualify for donation include those that are new, gently used, or vehicles needing minor body or mechanical work. The owner of the car must have the title at the time of donation. Car donors will receive a donation letter which can serve as a charitable donation, which is tax deductible.

Learn more about donating to or volunteering with CAU at caunj.org/support-us.

ABOUT COMMUNITY ACCESS UNLIMITED

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating its 40th year in 2019, supports people with special needs in achieving real lives in the community. CAU gives a voice to adults and youth who traditionally have little power in society, assisting its members with housing, life skills, employment, money management, socialization and civic activities. CAU also supports opportunities for advocacy through training in assertiveness, decision-making and civil rights. Currently serving more than 5,000 individuals and families, CAU continues to grow each year. For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908-354-3040, info@caunj.org or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202.



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STUDENT-VETERAN RECEIVES K-9 SERVICE DOG FROM REBUILDING WARRIORS

A special Veterans Day ceremony was held on Kean University's Union campus as senior Jason Pryor, a U.S. Army veteran, introduced the K-9 service dog that he received through an on-campus fundraiser.

Pryor, a senior from Elizabeth majoring in exercise science, did tours in Iraq and Honduras and suffers from PTSD. He received the K-9, named Keen, at the start of the Fall semester as a gift from the Kean Office of Student Government.

"Being with Keen has taught me to be more patient," said Pryor, whose dog accompanies him to class. "Keen is used as a measure to help prevent me from going through the symptoms and effects of spiraling down, by me tending to his needs and having him tend to me."

Kean is ranked first in the nation among large public schools for its programs supporting student-veterans, according to the Military Friendly Schools survey.

Student Government raised nearly \$20,000 to

support service dogs through Rebuilding Warriors, a volunteer non-profit organization whose mission is to provide trained service dogs to veterans. The bulk of the funds raised went toward training Pryor's dog, and the rest was donated to Rebuilding Warriors to help train other K-9 dogs.

At the ceremony held outside Miron Student Center, Vito Zajda, director of Veteran Student Services at Kean and a U.S. Coast Guard veteran, called Pryor a remarkable student.

"He has been a big support and influential person in our program," Zajda said. "He has helped open our eyes about how the University can best support its vets."

Vice President of Rebuilding Warriors Jeff Mullins, also a veteran, said post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a condition that can't be seen by others. "It's invisible, stays with you your entire life, and it's not easy sometimes," he said. "Our goal is to provide veterans and first responders with a service dog to help them achieve their new normal."

The University's Veterans Day event included a color guard, a performance of the national anthem by the Kean Gospel Choir, and the presentation of other honors.

Juan Leon Torres, a senior from Spotswood also studying exercise science and a U.S. Navy veteran, received the 2019 Kean Veteran's Award for Outstanding Mentor. He develops transition



(above) K-9 Keen, the service dog accompanying student-veteran Jason Pryor (left of center), is part of the Kean University community. The Kean Office of Student Government raised funds to donate the dog.

(continued on page 7)

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K-9 SERVICE DOG (continued)

opportunities and initiatives, and mentors a student-veteran each semester.

“Being a veteran and going back to school is super hard because you go from one community to a different lifestyle,” Torres said.

Zajda noted that it is important to support veterans at all times. “The importance of Veterans Day is to recognize that it’s 365 days a year, as veterans go through different highs and lows in their lives,” he said.



(above) K-9 Keen, the service dog accompanying student-veteran Jason Pryor (left of center, in red shirt), is part of the Kean University community. The Kean Office of Student Government raised funds to donate the dog.

ABOUT REBUILDING WARRIORS

A 501(c)3 Non-Profit Providing Service Dogs to Veterans

Rebuilding Warriors provides highly trained and socialized Service/Companion Dogs to Veterans diagnosed as Amputees as well as those with PTSD, (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). Most of our dogs are bred especially for this mission and have a highly sought after demeanor. We provide these dogs to Honorably Discharged Veterans from any branch of the Armed Forces or from any service era meeting our eligibility standards as well as First Responders.

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HOMELESSNESS KNOWS NO SEASON IN UNION COUNTY

What do the world's religions tell us about the homeless and the needy?

Leaders of different faiths shared prevailing teachings on charity, generosity and poverty at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rahway on December 19. The memorial vigil honored the lives of people who have died due to homelessness in Union County.

The 4th annual vigil was held just before the longest night of the year, the winter solstice, to symbolize the struggle of those who are homeless and who often live out their lives on cold streets or in dangerous abandoned buildings. The Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council organized the event with local agencies involved in the fight against homelessness: Community Access Unlimited (CAU) and The Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless. CAU is a Union County-based, statewide nonprofit that strives to integrate people with disabilities and at-risk youth into the general community through comprehensive supports.

The city of Elizabeth is losing federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding in 2020 for homelessness-related services under the Emergency Solutions Grant initiative.

"The fact that we have lost this money in Elizabeth will increase demand for county funds that will be spread thinner," said Carolee Marano, assistant executive director of development at CAU, which will lose \$40,000 in grant funding. "The cuts in HUD funding decrease our budget for homeless prevention programs and we are concerned about a rise in homelessness in the county. We are also concerned about a rise in homelessness among youth."

CAU operates the only youth-only shelter in Union County and runs services to support their health and future independence. In addition to the County youth shelter, CAU also operates 3 federal programs under the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act: one shelter, a transitional living program for females, and one for males. CAU also provides rent assistance to prevent homelessness.

Linda Flores-Tober, executive director of the Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless, reflected on circumstances that can push a person or family into homelessness.

"There's more to the story than 'I couldn't find a job,'" Flores-Tober said. "What we see are a lot of people who didn't get engaged in the Division of Developmental Disabilities system and now the parents are not able to take care of them."

Flores-Tober attributed 5 deaths in Elizabeth to homelessness in 2019.

Faith speakers quoted teachings that the faithful are called by God to relieve the less fortunate of their trials or difficulties. Father Sebastian Obando of St. Michael's Church in Cranford acknowledged that Jesus Christ would fit the modern description of homelessness.

"It's really a service of remembrance, because frankly if we didn't remember them, nobody would," said Rev. Carmine Pernini of Zion Church.

Parishioners at his church took people in this winter as part of Operation Warm Heart – an

emergency winter sheltering program run by the Elizabeth Coalition.

"It's lifesaving work – not very many people are willing to open their doors, so people of faith come together to do it," Pernini said.

Attendees sang and lit candles for 45 people who have died due to homelessness.

Pernini and Flores-Tober acknowledged a strong correlation between funding for homelessness services and saving people from the cold.

On the night of January 22, 2019, a total of 438 people were experiencing homelessness in Union County, according to the 2019 Point-In-Time Count. A total of 39 persons were unsheltered on the night of the count, and 375 of the total homeless persons were in Elizabeth.

Rev. Ron Thompson of Townley Presbyterian Church in Union spoke about the universal responsibility to care for people in need.

"All faiths agree on the dignity of people," he said.

ABOUT COMMUNITY ACCESS UNLIMITED

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating its 40th year in 2019, supports people with special needs in achieving real lives in the community. CAU provides support and gives voice to adults and youth who traditionally have little power in society.

For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908-354-3040, online at caunj.org or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202.



(above) Attendees hold candles in memory of people who have died who were homeless at a vigil at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rahway on December 19, 2019.

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CARING CONTACT CRISIS LINE NEXT TRAINING TO BEGIN MARCH 17

Submitted by Mary Claire Givelber

Six area residents completed training in December 2019 to become volunteers on the Caring Contact crisis hotline. During the 52 hours of training the graduates developed the ability to listen actively, assess the needs of someone in crisis and provide empathy and support. The training included dynamic and interactive presentations by guest experts in active listening,

grief recovery, mental health issues and suicide intervention. Volunteer Listener Training is taught by trainers who are long-time listeners and nationally certified instructors in Mental Health First Aid and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training.

“I trained to become a caring contact listener in an effort to connect with those that need to feel human connection in order to cope with whatever

struggles they are going through whether it be mental health, family crisis, chronic physical pain or economic hardship,” stated Bisrat Mekbeb of Scotch Plains. “I am fortunate to be in a position to give back to my community through Caring Contact in this way.”

When asked why he was drawn to this work, Ryan Hinderliter of Westfield said, “I wanted to channel my love for psychology and my passion for making a difference in the community into something meaningful.”

Caring Contact is an award-winning, volunteer-staffed crisis hotline and listening community that supports the Nation Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Located in Westfield, NJ, they provide active listening support and best-in-class education to central and northern New Jersey.

The next volunteer training will begin on March 17, 2020. For more information about this training call 908-301-1899 or visit caringcontact.org.



(above, l-r) Back row: Ryan Hinderliter, Amit Trivedi, Michael Coleman, Shailesh Lal, Carolyn Paznek, Derek Cooke, Marc Julius, David Burman, Charles Christophel. Middle row: Laurie Feinberg, Sarah Lindell, Sasha Singh, Ananya Jain, Kaelin Stoll, Kacie Neilson, Jaimie Radakovich, Larry Kornreich, Arlene Klemow. Front row: Bisrat Mekbeb, Jasmine Dursun, Michelle Mendoza, Pam Webb, Kate Gorelick, Payl Patel.

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FIVE-SPORT LINDEN HIGH SCHOOL COACH RETIRES AFTER 50 YEARS

Submitted by Gary Miller

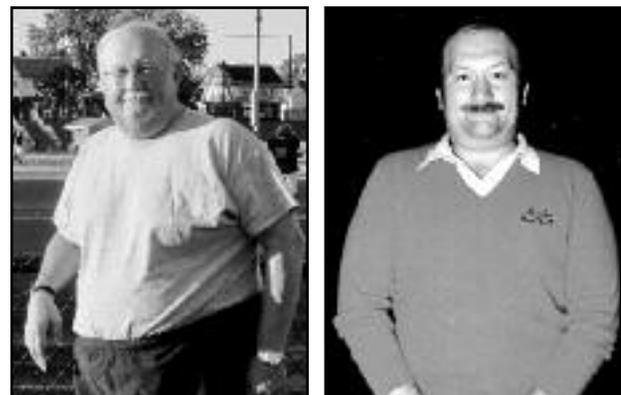
After 28 seasons of coaching Linden High School (LHS) girls soccer, it would be understandable to forget some of your players' names. But Wayne Mehalick made sure that wouldn't be the case. He keeps a handwritten list of every girl who has ever played for him.

"Every year I add the names, and it's about five legal-pad pages long," he said. "They tell me, 'Why don't you put them on the computer?' I said, 'What are you crazy?'"

But if you start the story of Mehalick's coaching career when he took over the girls



(above) Linden High School girls soccer coach Wayne Mehalick at his final game, alongside Athletic Director Steven Viana.



(above, left) Wayne Mehalick on his first day of retirement, October 24, after coaching various sports at Linden High School over 50 years.

(above, right) Wayne Mehalick in 1986 as an assistant coach on the Linden High School football team.



(above) Linden High School girls soccer coach Wayne Mehalick was honored on October 23 at the final game of the season after coaching the team for 27 years.

soccer program in 1992, you're coming in halfway through the movie. He has been coaching Tigers of one sport or another since 1970.

This year, Mehalick wraps up a 50-year career on the field and in the classroom, where he taught science at LHS from 1972 to 2007. Mehalick was honored on October 23, 2019 at the final girls soccer game, with his wife and daughter in attendance.

"My wife said, 'You finally left your first wife: Linden,'" he said with a laugh during a recent conversation. "I always loved Linden. I wouldn't trade it for the world. I had a lot of fun. It was a great ride. It went too fast.

"But I knew it was time. I'm going to be 72. It's time to take a break. Play some golf – a lot of golf!"

Athletic Director Steven Viana thanks Mehalick for his unbounded dedication to Linden and especially to his players.

"We're always going to miss him," he said. "It's sad to see someone go from our Linden Athletics family who has been here for 50 years. We thank him. It's tough to say goodbye to someone who was in the district for so long. He was great. A great guy, a great coach."

Mehalick and his wife have a home close to the beach in North Myrtle Beach, S.C., where he plans to spend a lot more time now.

"I play golf two or three times a week," he said. "Afterward we go out for drinks and sandwiches, listen to bands. They have live beach music all over the place. It's really cool, so we enjoy ourselves."

More than anything, Mehalick's memories revolve around relationships he has made with his players. He didn't want to try to name them for fear of leaving someone out.

"There was always a line between coach and athlete. I'm not your friend," he said. "But the camaraderie was there. They still come back to see me. I have players who are 42 years old coming back. It's fantastic. I love every minute of it."

Viana said Mehalick's dedication to building relationships with his players is what set him apart from many coaches.

"You hire a coach and you expect them to know strategy and you expect them to know X's and O's and to manage a game," he said. "But what Coach Mehalick really specialized in was building relationships and a positive culture. He really taught his players things beyond the playing field. We had a little get-together for him at the end of the season, and generations of his kids came back. It was just incredible. It only happened because of the unique feeling that he gave them."

Mehalick is "Linden born and raised," he said, attending the old School No. 3 on Grier Avenue and Soehl Junior High School. He graduated from Linden High School in 1966, where he was a standout player on the football team as a center.

"We were the last team to use the old field house in '65, then they tore it down and built the new one," he recalled.

He went on to play at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, Pa., and had a short semi-pro football career.

But he was destined to return to Linden. He started as a part-time football assistant coach in 1970, before being hired as a teacher in 1972. He stayed on as a football assistant until 1986.

At the start, he assumed he would stick to coaching football, until a well-respected veteran coach gave him some advice.

"Paul Blue is the one who got me involved with girls sports back in 1975," Mehalick recalled. "I told him I didn't want to coach girls sports, but I fell in love with it."

He took over the girls outdoor track team in 1975 and stayed in that position until 1997. He went on to start the girls indoor track program, coaching that from 1988 to 1997. He served as assistant coach for the softball team from 2000 to 2013, then head coach till 2016. And of course, girls soccer.

"I believe I was born to coach women," Mehalick said. "They would do anything. They would run through walls. If you told them to do something, they would do it. It was just marvelous.

"And I always treated women and guys the same, coached them the same. You treat them like athletes. You don't treat them like girls, you don't treat them like guys, you treat them like athletes, because that's what they are. And the best players are going to play."

Looking back on 50 years, Mehalick said, "It's all a blur."

"I've been through a lot of superintendents, a lot of principals, athletic directors," he said. "I've seen them come and go."

But then he quickly rattled off the names of all of his athletic directors: Seymour Kaplowitz, Al Jackuks, Frank Catale, Joe Martino, Steve Yesinko, Pauline Pagoulatos, and now Viana.

Memories on the field stand out, though details may fade with the years.

He was the offensive line coach on the football team's first state championship in 1985. That was a surprise team that was picked to finish last but surprised everyone to win North Jersey Section 2 Group 3 in head coach Bucky McDonald's first season.

"When Bucky took over, that's when the football team started winning consistently year after year," Mehalick said.

Whether his teams had winning seasons or not, they always played hard, he said. He recalled what an opposing coach once told him.

"When you play Linden, you better be ready, because you're going to be bleeding when the game is over," he recounted. "There were two ways you could play: You could play with skill or you could play hard. Our motto all these years was: Play hard. We didn't play dirty, but we played hard."



(above) Wayne Mehalick, back row middle, was an assistant coach on the Linden High School football team that won the 1985 North Jersey Section 2 Group 3 championship.

Photos by Linden Public Schools

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OFFICERS MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH STUDENTS

Submitted by Gary Miller

A program to keep Linden Public Schools students and staff safe is expanding with the hiring of retired police officers to provide security at McManus and Soehl middle schools.

Officer Joe Walsh is working at Soehl and Officer George Allard is at McManus. Both started on November 12, 2019 as part of a partnership between Linden Public Schools and the Linden Police Department.

“Nothing is so vitally important to us as the safety of our staff and students,” said Interim Superintendent Denise Cleary. “We are very happy to welcome Officers Allard and Walsh into



(above) George Allard, a retired lieutenant with the Union County Police Department, started in November as a Special Law Enforcement Officer Class III providing security at McManus Middle School in Linden.



(above) Joe Walsh, a retired sergeant with the Jersey City Police Department, started in November as a Special Law Enforcement Officer Class III providing security at Soehl Middle School in Linden.

our Linden Public Schools family. Their experience and training will help assure the security of our schools, while their eagerness to work with students will make them outstanding role models as well.”

Walsh and Allard are part of the Special Law Enforcement Officer Class III program, a shared-services agreement approved in 2018 by the Board of Education and the City Council. New Jersey established the SLEO Class III position in 2016. Only retired law enforcement officers are eligible for the position, which authorizes them, on a part-time basis, to provide security on school premises.

“The SLEO Class III program is an extension of the continual cooperation we have with the Linden Police Department,” Cleary said. “We are grateful for all they do to support Linden Public Schools and treasure that partnership.”

The officers work exclusively in the school during school hours or functions, but are hired by the Police Department with input from the school district, and report to Police Chief David Hart.

“Officers Walsh and Allard were selected from a number of very qualified applicants because of their extensive experience and exemplary records of service,” Hart said. “Their professionalism and compassion make them a natural fit in our schools and we are very pleased to welcome them to our Linden Police Department family.”

Allard and Walsh know security is their primary role, but also want to make a connection with students to help them through tough situations and offer a positive image of police officers.

The SLEO Class III program in Linden now has four officers. Walsh and Allard join Officers Keith Aslin at Linden High School and Ed Chabak at School No. 2, the district’s largest elementary school.

Aslin works closely with Linden High School Resource Officer Detective Leon Paster, who is part of the LPD’s Juvenile Aid Bureau.

Allard grew up in Elizabeth and spent 23 years with the Union County Police Department before retiring as a lieutenant this past August. Before joining the force, he spent four years in the Army, including a tour in Iraq during the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

“I know what this position is and why it was created,” he said. “I’m here to protect them and obviously the staff as well, but I’m also here trying to make a connection with the kids. I want to be friendly, not just be seen as a guy who stands against a wall. Proactive, approachable. If they want to sit down and talk to me for 15 or 20 minutes or whatever.”

On his second day in the job, Allard ran into a situation where a student was upset, and taking a hard line could have made the situation worse.

“She was having a bad day. I get it,” he said. “So I said, ‘Let’s just restart the day. Don’t worry about it. We’ll make it work.’ And she gave me a chance.”

McManus students have been asking Allard a lot of questions since he started.

“A lot of them ask, ‘Why are you here?’” he said. “And that’s a good thing because I get to tell

them, ‘I’m here to protect YOU.’ I’m not here because there are bad kids and they think we need to put a cop here. My first week here, the California shooting happened. I said, ‘That’s why I’m here. I’m here to protect you guys.’ I want them to see that I’m here for them. And that’s the truth.”

Allard tries to get know the students in the hallways, giving out high fives and fist bumps, and using humor to break the ice.

“You have to joke around with them,” he said. “I think that laughing is something that opens that door.”

He also took part in a recent ice cream event, buying tickets to make sure that some of the students he has gotten to know got to take part.

“So I gave them ice cream for the day,” Allard said. “I want this program to be seen as successful. You have to really become part of the environment here.

“It’s not going to work if you’re just a guy who stands against the wall with a gun.”

Walsh grew up in Jersey City and was a Hudson County corrections officer for three years, before joining Jersey City police in 1993. He spent many years as a plainclothes officer and detective, before retiring this past July as sergeant in charge of the Special Investigations Unit.

His new post at Soehl is a lot different than his years on the street in Jersey City.

“It’s not about locking people up. This is different,” he said. “You get to talk to them, you get fist bumps in the hallway. The first day I was here, a kid needed a pen. When I was in Jersey City, the interaction wasn’t always positive because usually it’s the bad end of policing when we came in contact. But here it’s totally different. You get to hang out and watch them have fun and fool around. It’s fun. It’s enjoyable.”

Walsh has been a youth hockey coach in Jersey City for years, so he’s familiar with working with children at middle school age.

“I love being around the kids,” he said. “They’re at a great age now, where they want to talk to you.”

From the first day, Walsh was welcomed into the Soehl family.

“There’s not one staff member here that I don’t get a hello from,” he said. “‘How are you doing? How was your weekend?’ In the beginning, it was new. I didn’t know the building, and I’m not very familiar with Linden. But they were great from the minute I started. Everything I asked for. The security escorted me around, taught me all the nooks and crannies. It’s a big school when you’re not used to it. But they treated me like gold.”

Students weren’t sure at first what to make of seeing Walsh in uniform around the school.

“They didn’t know what was going on,” he said. “‘The cops are here, is there something bad?’ But now they’re getting used to me. They know I’m here for security for them. I’m not here to stop them from running in the hallway. I’m not here to make sure their hat is off. But they see me and they respect me.

“It’s a different atmosphere than what I’m used to, but I enjoy it.”

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LINDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS GIFT DRIVE BRIGHTENS HOLIDAYS FOR LOCAL FAMILIES



The Linden Public Schools family and community came together to collect and distribute over 1,000 gifts to students and families in need this holiday season.

The gift drive was spearheaded by the district's student services department, which collected gifts from schools through giving trees, as well as from local churches. The gifts were given to families in the district who were identified by school-based social workers.

"It takes an entire community to orchestrate a holiday toy drive as large as ours," said Annabell Louis, supervisor of student services. "Thank you to our staff, parents and local community members who made this possible. There can be no greater joy than knowing you made a difference in the life of a child. We are sincerely grateful to everyone for their generous acts of kindness and wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season."

(above) Linden High School social worker Ryan Devaney and Linden Public Schools Supervisor of Student Services Annabell Louis sorting gifts to be delivered to local families for the district's holiday gift drive.

Photo by Linden Public Schools



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PANCAKE BREAKFAST AT LEGION POST

Come to a Pancake Breakfast, hosted by the American Legion Auxiliary - Unit 102, on Sunday, February 16, 2020 at the American Legion Post 102, located at 112 West Elizabeth Ave., from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Donations: Adults

\$7 / Seniors & Children \$6 / Ages 5 & Under Free.

So come out and enjoy a home cooked breakfast, including this month's special Omelets.

PANCAKE BREAKFAST AT THE VFW #1397

Come one, come all to our Pancake Breakfast hosted by the VFW Auxiliary on Saturday February 22, 2020 at the VFW #1397, located at 20 Pennsylvania Railroad Ave., from 8 a.m. to 12

p.m. Donations: Adults \$7 / Seniors & Children \$6 / Ages 5 & Under Free.

This event is open to the public, so come out and enjoy a home cooked breakfast!

BLOOD DRIVE - FEBRUARY 13

The Linden Public Library is proud to sponsor its first blood drive of 2020. It will be held in the Columbia Bank Room on the third floor of the library on Thursday, February 13 from 12:30 until 6:30 p.m. The blood drive will be conducted by members of the New York Blood Center, which conducts basic health screenings on every donor prior to collection.

exclusively on volunteer blood donors. There is no substitute for human blood. If you have any questions about donating blood or eligibility, please check the NYBC web site: nybloodcenter.org/donate-blood/become-donor/can-i-donate-blood.

Located at 31 East Henry Street, the Linden Public Library has been serving the cultural, educational, reading and artistic interests for the city of Linden since it was founded in 1928. For further information about this event, please call the library at 908-298-3830 or check out the library's web site at lindenpl.org. You can also like the Linden Public Library on Facebook and follow us on Instagram.

KIDS FISHING SEMINAR SET FOR MARCH 3

The Newark Bait and Fly Casting Club was founded in 1907 and remains one of the oldest fishing clubs in the nation. We are listed on Amazon Smile and are a recognized 501(c)3 nonprofit. We provide outings to support veterans, adults and children as well as people with disabilities which focus on environmental education, fishing knowledge and practice. A complete list of our upcoming events can be found at www.nbfcc.org.

Kenilworth VFW, located at 33 S. 21st St., Kenilworth, NJ, on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. (except July and August).

Our Annual Kids Seminar will be held on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 at 7:00 p.m., at the Kenilworth Veterans Center, V.F.W.33 South 21st street Kenilworth, NJ. A Guest speaker to be announced and topics of discussion will be safety while fishing, fish identification, and practice casting. Prizes will be awarded and snacks will be served.

We are always looking for new members, donations, and volunteers if anyone would like to get involved.

For more information visit www.nbfcc.org, or contact Bob Jones, BJonesJRNJ@hotmail.com, 908-272-3545

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THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE IS COMING TO CDC THEATRE IN CRANFORD

Running from February 14th through the 22nd and winner of the Tony and the Drama Desk Awards for Best Book, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee has charmed audiences across the country with its effortless wit and humor. Featuring a fast-paced, wildly funny and touching book by Rachel Sheinkin and a truly fresh and vibrant score by William Finn (Falsettos, A New Brain), this bee is one unforgettable experience.

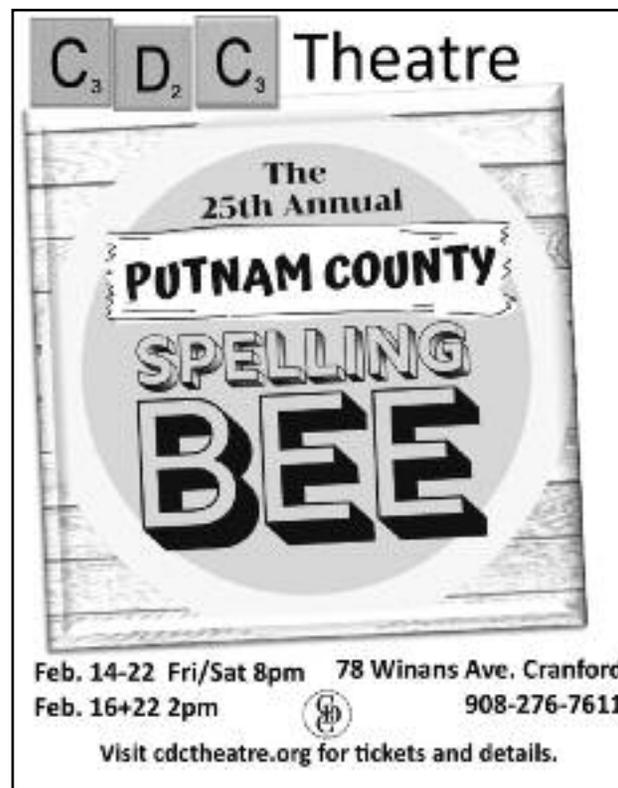
An eclectic group of six mid-pubescent vie for the spelling championship of a lifetime. While candidly disclosing hilarious and touching stories from their home lives, the tweens spell their way through a series of (potentially made-up) words, hoping never to hear the soul-crushing, pout-inducing, life un-affirming "ding" of the bell that signals a spelling mistake. Part of the fun of the show is that no two performances are ever the same. Audience volunteers are selected at each show to participate onstage in scenes, songs and choreography.

The cast features some familiar faces at CDC Theatre and some new ones: Sean Lynch-Littlejohn as Chip Tolentino, E. Rachel Valovcin as Logainne Schwartzandgrubenier, Zach Mazouat as Leaf Coneybear, Zach Love as William Barfee, Mallory Ann Wu as Marcy Parks, Patrina Caruana as Olive Ostrovsky, Alexa Teebo as Rona Lisa Peretti, Ian Federgreen as Vice Principle Panch and Brendan Lynch-

Littlejohn as Mitch Mahoney. The show is directed by Nevil Schwartz with choreography by Michelle Massa and musical direction by John Brzozowski.

Six spellers enter: one speller leaves! They learn that winning or losing isn't everything and at least the losers get a juice box.

Links to tickets and additional information can be found by visiting cdctheatre.org.



CHAIR YOGA FOR SENIORS

The Linden Public Library and The Friends of the Linden Library are proud to co-sponsor a series of weekly programs offering Chair Yoga for Seniors. These hour-long exercise sessions are offered free-of-charge and are held every Friday at 10 a.m. in the Columbia Bank Room of the library. They are scheduled to run every Friday from now through December 2020 and will be

taught by Paulette Rasul of the YMCA staff, who is a registered yoga instructor.

Chair yoga is designed to improve balance, strength and flexibility. It is practiced either while seated or with the aid of a chair. It is a great form of yoga for beginners, people with physical disabilities or those who find typical yoga classes too challenging.

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FEBRUARY FILMS

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Located at 31 East Henry Street, the Linden Public Library has been serving the cultural, educational, reading and artistic interests for the city of Linden since it was founded in 1928. For further information check out the library's web site at lindenpl.org. You can also like the Linden Public Library on Facebook and follow us on Instagram.

Remember the Titans (2000; PG; 113 mins)

February 2 at 2:00 p.m.

Lee Daniels' The Butler

(2013; PG-13; 132 mins)

February 7 at 1:00 p.m.

The Lost Valentine (2011; TV-PG; 87 mins)

February 11 at 2:00 p.m.

Valentine's Day (2010; PG-13; 125 mins)

February 14 at 1:00 p.m.

I Am Ali (2014; PG-13; 111 mins)

February 18 at 2:00 p.m.

Muhammad Ali's Greatest Fight

(2013; NR; 97 mins)

February 18 at 6:00 p.m.

Do the Right Thing (1989; R; 120 mins)

February 21 at 1:00 p.m.

An Officer and a Gentleman

(1982; R; 124 mins)

February 25 at 2:00 p.m.

Bingo Long's Travelling All-Stars

(1976; PG; 110 mins)

February 28 at 1:00 p.m.

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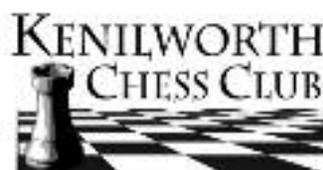
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RULES AND REGULATIONS:

1. Any student in grades K through 5.
2. All entries must have full name, school, teacher, grade, and parent/guardian cell phone number printed on a blank index card taped to the back.
3. All posters must be 9"x12". Posters exceeding this size will be disqualified.
4. The poster can be made from any drawing paper material, ie. construction paper, sketchbook paper, poster board paper, etc.
5. Any drawing material can be used on the poster: chalk, color pencils, crayons, pencils, markers, paint, etc.
6. Theme: Black American Authors.
7. All posters must be submitted to the John T. Gregorio Center, 330 Helen Street on or before February 18, 2020. The John T. Gregorio Center hours: Monday thru Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm.
8. Posters will be judged on Wednesday, February 19, 2020.
9. All posters from each participant will be returned to their schools where their Art teachers will announce the winners on Thursday, February 20, 2020.
10. 1st place winners from each school will be presented with a prize along with a photo taken by Mrs. Martin-Ortiz from Linden Recreation on Friday, February 21, 2020, at their respective schools.
11. Be creative and have fun! Good luck.

For further information please call Mrs. Martin-Ortiz at 908-474-8627.

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The Ultimate Fire Department Cook-off will be an integral part of the evening as firefighters from 25 departments will compete in three different categories: Gourmet, Firehouse and Dessert.

The competition is part of the culinary extravaganza where participants will be able to experience the tastes and flavors of more than 40 of New Jersey's finest restaurants, caterers and dessert shops all in one location.

If you are looking for an entertaining evening of great food and wine, don't miss this event. Tickets are \$60 in advance and \$65 at the door. Visit cookedanduncorked.com to order tickets, view participating restaurants and wine/spirits and for more information.

Tickets can be also be ordered by calling the NJ FMBA at 908-499-9250.



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Call Jason Lombardi at 732-489-4665 or buy online at www.cookedanduncorked.com
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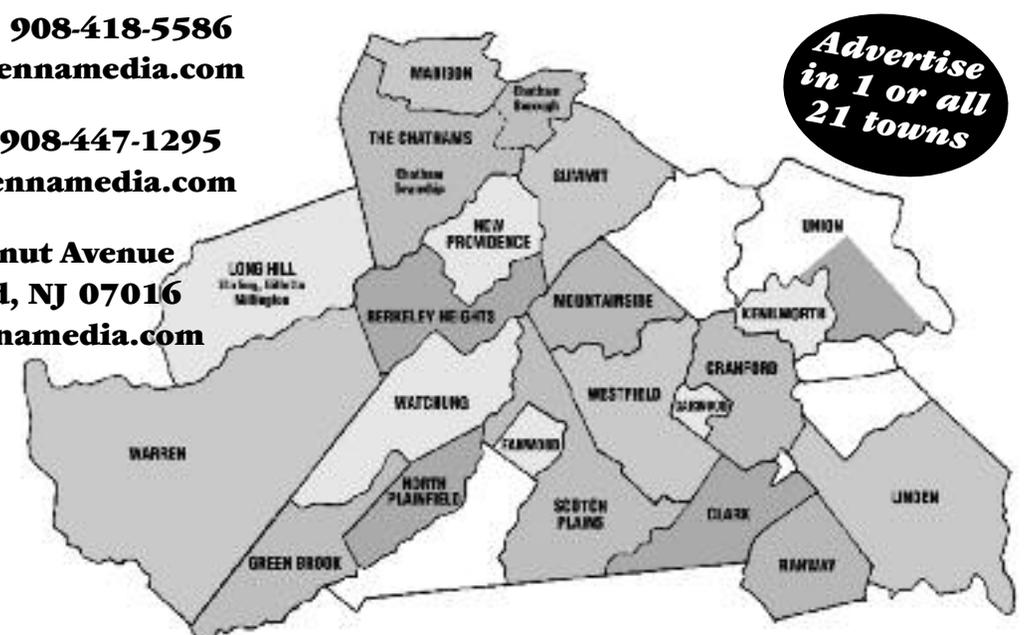
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