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# **HIGH SCHOOL RETIRES TAMECKA DIXON'S NUMBER 33**

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Submitted by Gary Miller

Linden High School retired the No. 33 of legendary girls basketball star Tamecka Dixon on Monday, February 24, 2020, at an emotional ceremony held in the school's gym.

Dixon entered through lines of student athletes to great applause and fanfare, into the gym where she dominated opponents as a star for the Lady Tigers in the early 1990s. Dixon, Class of 1993, was twice selected to First Team All-State and her career total of 2,092 points remains a school record among both girls and boys, and went on to star in college and as a professional.

"Wherever I went and played around the world, I always made sure people knew I was from here," Dixon said in remarks to the crowd of hundreds of family, friends, fans, and students who packed the gym to honor her. "Coming back to this gym brings back amazing memories. I couldn't do anything without the village I come from."

Director of Athletics Steven Viana, who acted as master of ceremonies, praised Dixon for what she has meant to Linden Athletics.

"Tamecka, you and the No. 33 will eternally be part of the Linden family," he said after reading off a long list of Dixon's accomplishments in high school, as well as at the University of Kansas and in the WNBA.

In fact, Viana joked from the podium that he couldn't find the paper with Dixon's stats and asked LHS senior basketball player Faith Reddick for help. Reddick then pulled out a sheet of paper that kept going and going, stretching about 20 feet from the podium, to a round of laughter and applause from the crowd.

Photos by Linden Public Schools



(above) Former Linden High School basketball star Tamecka Dixon, third from left, with her former teammates as they prepare to unveil her retired-number sign. From left are Simone Gilliam, Jessica Sheehy, Dixon, Lauren Wigfall, Ty Gaines, and Raqia Johnson.



(above) Former Linden High School basketball star Tamecka Dixon with her retired No. 33 jersey, which was retired at a ceremony on February 24.

The high school accomplishments Viana read off included state championships in 1991, 1992 and 1993; 28.1 points per game and 13.6 rebounds per game in her senior year; and a team record of 28-2 as a senior.

In college, Dixon was Big 8 Player of the Year in 1996 and Big 12 Player of the Year in 1997, and second team All-American in 1997. She averaged 20.6 points per game and 5.6 rebounds per game at Kansas.

Dixon was chosen 14th overall in the first ever WNBA draft by the Los Angeles Sparks in 1997, and went on to win two championships and was selected to three All-Star Games.

Dixon was also praised during the ceremony by Interim Superintendent Denise Cleary, Board of Education President Gregory R. Martucci, and Linden Mayor Derek Armstead.

"As a school district, we are always proud of the accomplishments and successes of all of our students," said Cleary, who was a science teacher at LHS when Dixon was starring on the court. "But there are certain times when some stand out *(continued on page 2)* 



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#### LIFE in LINDEN • Page 2 • April 2020



Life in Linden is published by Renna Media in cooperation with the Linden Chamber of Commerce, an affiliate of the Gateway Regional Chamber of Commerce.

17,400 newspapers are printed monthly. and are mailed to every postal patron in Linden.

Although great care has been taken to ensure the information contained within is accurate, Linden Chamber of Commerce assumes no liability for errors or omissions.

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### **TAMECKA DIXON** (continued from page 1)

Tamecka is our most accomplished student athlete, and the retirement of her jersey symbolizes the admiration, respect and pride that we have for her."

Armstead spoke to the LHS girls basketball team that sat in front of the podium during the ceremony. He told them he hopes they would get a chance to see old films of Dixon playing to see "basketball at its finest."

"They say Linden means basketball," he said. "Linden means basketball because of people like Tamecka Dixon."

Martucci praised Dixon's perseverance and determination.

"Your career is rooted right here in Linden, and your achievements are nationally renowned," he said. "Thank you for modeling the way, not only for our young women, but for all of our athletes."

Viana presented Dixon with a framed No. 33 jersey, then directed her to uncover a sign that will hang in the gym honoring her. But instead of uncovering the sign herself, Dixon grabbed former teammates out of the crowd to join her in the ceremonial unveiling.

When Dixon spoke to the crowd, she praised those teammates.

"If I thank everybody individually, I'd be here all night," she said. "But I do want to give a special shout-out to all the players I played with

a little more than others. There is no doubt that here in Linden. When we stepped on this court, we wanted to represent this city and we gave it our all. I came in with so much pride for how we put on for our city. I could not have done anything here without my teammates. They were everything to me. Really, they should be standing here behind this podium with me."

> Dixon is the third Linden student-athlete to have their number retired. Football star Muhammad Wilkerson, Class of 2007, had his number retired in 2017. Dixon's name hangs in the gym opposite boys basketball star Desmond Wade, Class of 2008, who was in attendance at the ceremony.

> "I thank everyone for coming out," Dixon said. "You could have done anything else tonight, but you chose to come and spend it with me, so thank you."



(above) Tamecka Dixon



(above) Former Linden High School basketball star Tamecka Dixon with the LHS girls basketball team at her jersey-retirement ceremony.

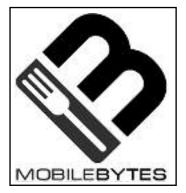


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# **GOT KIDS AT HOME? LET THEM SEW, CRAFT & QUILT!**

increasing number of work-from-home parents and guardians due to the COVID-19 situation, planning daily activities for your favorite little people will obviously be key for the well-being of all involved!

Once their online schoolwork is complete, try using your own interest in sewing and quilting to



(above) AfriCrafts fabric activity kits feature supplies and instructions for fun and easy projects for kids (no-sew and low-sew) – they're available through Cultured Expressions. Call 866-683-2568 or email info@CulturedExpressions.com.



With schools closed indefinitely and an keep them occupied. Depending on the age group, they could be happy gluing colorful scraps to cardstock to create collage artwork. Older kids might want to stitch together fabrics in their favorite color (by hand or machine) to make a simple pillow or tote bag.

Whether they've expressed an interest in learning more about the needle arts, or the suggestion is yours, we've gathered a few tips for quilting with children to make the process both fun and successful!

- Keep it simple begin with quick fabric crafts like bookmarks, sachets, fabric pendants, pouches or a fabric collage that can also become a simple art piece suitable for framing.
- Mending is Trendy! Show them how to creatively mend their clothes and/or add



(above) Sewers and quilters interested in making their own fabric face masks will also find CE's FREE face mask video tutorial on Instagram @culturedexpressions.

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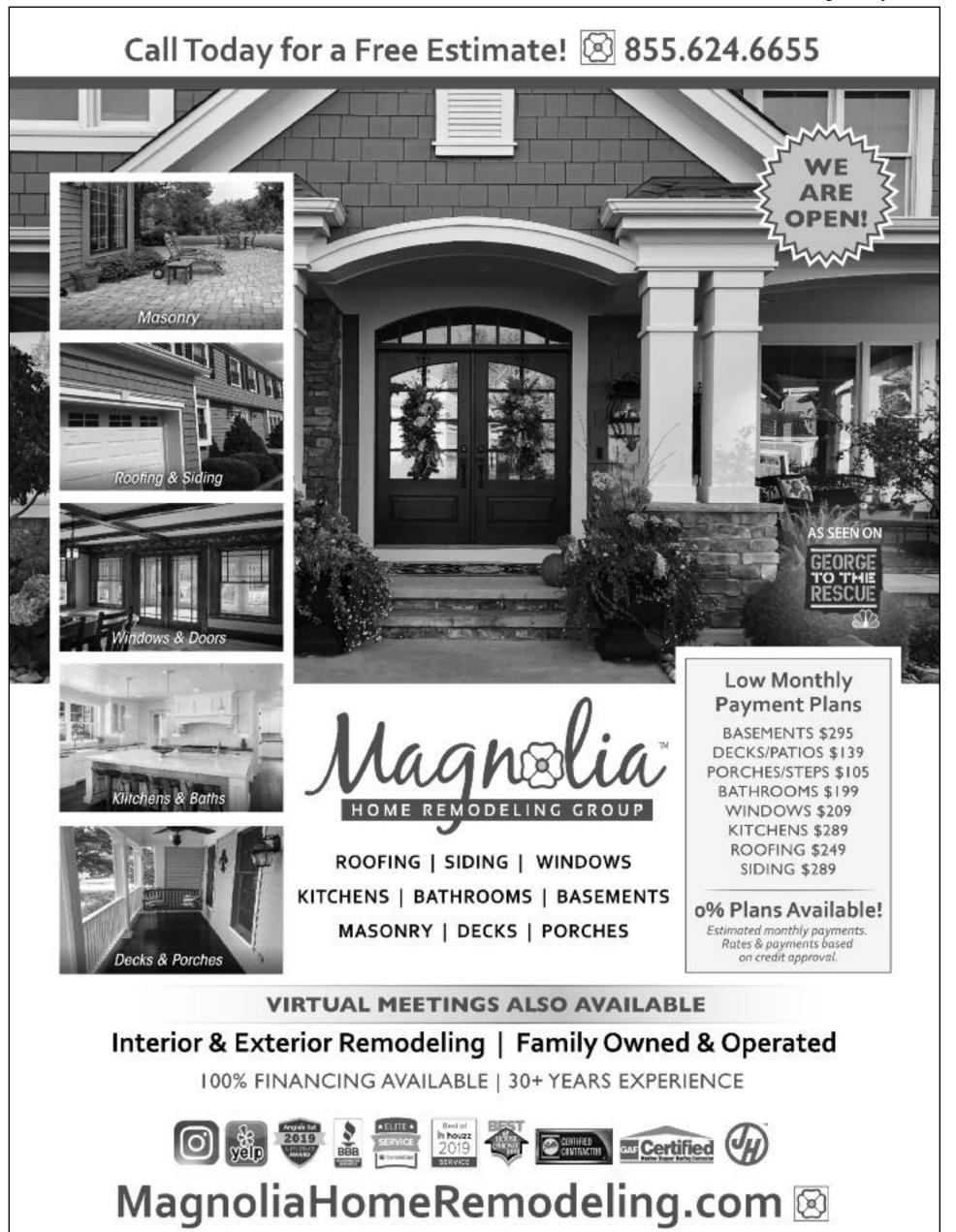
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decorative patches and pockets with hand stitching and easy embroidery stitches.

- Take into account the child's personality when planning your quilting session. For younger kids, keep it fun (and safe) by avoiding projects that require precise measuring and cutting. Instead, pull out some precuts from your stash, focusing on the fun of design and the creativity of blending colors and patterns.
- For older kids, or those who are naturally inclined to math and geometry might be open to the more precision-based aspects of quilting, where templates & rulers are used.
- Remember that children's taste levels are more sophisticated than ever; have a variety of fabrics and embellishments available for experimentation. Provide the opportunity to work with batiks and other cool "adult" fabrics that aren't strictly juvenile in design and coloration.
- Let the child work with scraps of one of your own current projects, to create a small "featured block" you can use as the back label for your quilt. The label can include both of your signatures.
- Remember, creative expression can help to relieve some of the stress of the situation for people of any age - with any luck, you might also create a budding new fiber artist in the process! Have a follow-up project in mind to keep up the momentum and encourage their efforts as they work. The follow-ups can introduce new techniques to gradually increase their quilting skills. Stay safe, and keep creating!



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#### LIFE in LINDEN • Page 6 • April 2020

# HICKORY TREE CHORUS ANNOUNCES ANNUAL \$1,000 MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

Are you a high school senior woman who has applied for a college music program? Hickory Tree Chorus, a chapter of Sweet Adelines International, is pleased to offer the \$1,000 Diane Cecala Memorial Scholarship to a musically talented high school senior woman interested in pursuing a career in vocal music. Rehearsing in Stirling, New

Jersey, we are dedicated to teaching, singing, and performing four-part, acappella harmony. Hickory Tree Chorus has awarded an annual scholarship for over 20 years to students from areas in which its members reside.

Qualified high school senior girls with good academic records and exceptional

talent in vocal music are encouraged to apply. Students should also have applied for acceptance into a music program at a college or university. Completed applications and recordings of at least two vocal performances must be received by April 30, 2020.

Details and applications are available on the chorus web site at hickorytreechorus.org.



(above) The Hickory Tree Chorus, a chapter of Sweet Adelines International, is now accepting applications for their annual \$1,000 music scholarship.

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## LINDEN FIREFIGHTERS COMPETE IN GARDEN STATE COOKED AND UNCORKED – FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL



(above) Linden Firefighter/Chefs Matt Pribish, Tyler Scoles, Rick Bornstad and Justin Brose won the People's Choice Award in the Desert Category for their "Pinto Pie" Snickers Cheesecake with Oreo Crust.

On Monday, February 24, 2020, Linden firefighters joined with firefighters from around New Jersey to compete at the Cooked and Uncorked Food and Wine Festival, at the Pines Manor in Edison. Proceeds from the event were donated to the New Jersey State Firefighter's Mutual Benevolent Association (FMBA), and The Burn Center at Saint Barnabas Medical Center.

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

The competition is part of the culinary extravaganza where participants were 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.

The Food and Wine Festival, which draws people from throughout New Jersey, is an amazing event for a great cause.

Photos from this and other events can be found online at rennamedia.com and on Life in Linden page on facebook.com Feel free to "Like," "Tag," and "Share."



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# LINDEN HIGH SCHOOL ALUM GIVES STUDENTS A CHANCE TO MODEL ON TV

Some students from Schools No. 1, 9 and 10 recently got a chance to play dress-up like few children do, thanks to some help from a recent Linden High School graduate.

Brianna Armstead, LHS Class of 2015 and an associate producer with the "Tamron Hall" show on ABC, showcased the Linden students during the show's Halloween Legends Ball, which also featured legendary singer Chaka Khan.

Armstead is a 2019 graduate of Rutgers University, having majored in journalism and digital media. March is Youth Art Month, celebrating art education nationwide.

Ethan Buchanan, a fourth-grader at School



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Some students from Schools No. 1, 9 and 10 No. 9, was one of those featured on the awardcently got a chance to play dress-up like few nominated "Tamron Hall" show.

> "Ethan is a natural performer," said his mother, Erika Morales. "The opportunity to become Mohammed Ali on national television inspired him on so many levels. This was an enjoyable and unforgettable moment for Ethan, and I am thankful to Brianna Armstead for inspiring and giving our son this wonderful opportunity."

> Leah Pershaud, also a School No. 9 fourthgrader, portrayed TV host and actress Whoopi Goldberg on the show.

> "Appearing on national television can be nerve-racking, but Ms. Armstead's special kind way of motivating each youngster in her care gave each child the confidence needed to walk on stage and perform," said her mother, Tina Persaud. "This was a memorable and a great time for Leah."

Ashley DeSa Mooney said Armstead inspired her daughter, School No. 1 first-grader Lily Mooney, to become Madonna.

"What an amazing experience," she said. "Lily had a blast. Linden Public Schools' talents were definitely in the house! My daughter immediately connected with Brianna and stayed by her side for the entire time. I am truly grateful for this opportunity of a lifetime."

Marvin Davis, 8, and Aliyana Davis, 10, of School No. 1 became Elvis Presley and Tina Turner on the show.

"I am beyond thankful for the opportunity afforded to my two children by Brianna Armstead, a beautiful professional young lady," said their mother, Yolanda Casey-Davis. "It's nice to see that she has not forgotten where she came from by giving back to her community. They both had a wonderful time filming the show and spending time in New York City."



(above) Brianna Armstead, LHS Class of 2015 and an associate producer with the "Tamron Hall" show on ABC, brought Linden Students from Schools No. 1, 9 dressed as celebrities. Photos by Linden Public Schools



## **KIWANIS CLUB SEEKING NEW MEMBERS**

The Kiwanis Club of Linden will be hosting upcoming luncheons at Primavera's Café-Ristorante-Pizzeria, located at 1111 West St. Georges Avenue, in Linden, NJ.

Manager, from Children's Specialized Hospital Foundation, will be dining with us to accept donations received from K-Kids Clubs and the Kiwanis Club of Linden.

Our Club supports all of the K-Kids programs in Linden Public Elementary Schools, assisting with their growth as leaders and caring for others. The K-Kids exemplify their pledge: "As a K-Kid, Alexis A. D'Anton, Community Engagement I promise to serve my neighborhood and my school. I will show respect toward my environment, and I will try to make the world a better place in which to live."

The Kiwanis Club of Linden also awards

scholarships and gift cards to deserving youth and supports other community causes.

Please contact June Lazaro,

- Membership Chair, at 908-930-8310, or
- junlazaro@verizon.net, to learn more.

Keep engaged with our club through our Facebook page. Our Club requires an increase in members to continue their positive impact to the community. Thank you!



(above) Linden School No. 4 K-Kids members with Kiwanis Club of Linden representatives. Kiwanis supports the K-Kids Programs in Linden schools.





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## **YOUTH POLICE ACADEMY 2020 APPLICATION DEADLINE - APRIL 30**

The Linden Police Department will host their Medevac Helicopter team. third annual Youth Academy this July, Chief David Hart announced.

The Academy, open to Linden youth graduating grades 6 through 8, will meet daily from 8 a.m. -3 p.m. beginning on Monday, July 20th and conclude with a commencement ceremony on Friday, July 24th.

"We are very proud of this program and how it has developed over the years, said Police Chief David Hart. "It is a great opportunity for us to build meaningful relationships with youth in our community, and a unique chance for participants to experience the behind-the-scenes work that goes on in the Police Department."

The Academy will include a series of lectures and hands-on skills performances given by Linden Police Officers, as well as interactive demonstrations by the Union County Sheriff's Department, the Union County Emergency Response Team, Linden Fire Department, and the NJSP NorthStar

Linden Mayor Derek Armstead praised the unique experience offered by The Academy as an important investment in our future.

"Our goal for the Youth Academy is to help foster a healthier and positive relation between our youth and the police and have a better understanding of law enforcement," said the Mayor. "To break down barriers and build trust and that our youth will come away with values and skills that will remain with them no matter what career path they choose."

Applications for the Youth Academy are available on the department website, lindennj.org beginning April 1st. Completed applications must be mailed to Linden Police Department, 301 N. Wood Ave., Linden, NJ 07036, by Monday, April 30th. Linden students can attend the Academy free of charge, but space is limited so don't delay.

Please contact Detective Leon Paster at (908) 474-8520 for more information.

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# PIA FOY TAKES FIRST PLACE FOR N.J. IN AUDIO ESSAY COMPETITION

"No one truly belongs to this country, and yet that makes us all American. There is no true race or religion, yet I have been standing for the Pledge of Allegiance in homeroom every day since I was 6 years old. The color of my skin and my religion will not interfere with me getting my education because differences are accepted and normalized."

Those are the inspiring words written and spoken by Linden High School senior Pia Foy in her entry into the VFW Voice of Democracy spoken essay contest, which asked contestants to say, "What Makes America Great." Inspired by her own family's history as immigrants from Cameroon and Martinique and her own love for America, Foy delivered a powerful four-minute oratory.

And she was rewarded for it. Foy won first place for all of New Jersey, besting over 1,000 other students from around the state. She also traveled to Washington, D.C., on February 28 for the national competition and came away with a \$2,000 scholarship and a new computer.

"It feels amazing," said Foy. "I didn't know there were going to be so many applicants."

She said she was excited just to be chosen as the winner of Veterans of Foreign Wars District 5, which covers Union County. But then all the district winners were brought together on February 1 in Toms River for a statewide awards dinner. Foy said she was very impressed by the other contestants.

"One thing that definitely surprised me was hearing all the other kids and hearing how amazing they were," she said. "One girl got accepted into Princeton, and one boy researched history in his free time. I was sizing myself up,

"No one truly belongs to this country, and yet at makes us all American. There is no true race religion, yet I have been standing for the edge of Allegiance in homeroom every day Ike, 'Can I really compete with people of such a high caliber?' They were so amazing. So I was definitely extremely surprised when I found out that I won."

> Aside from the contest, Foy was impressed by the atmosphere at the awards dinner, where she and the other contestant were given a standing ovation as they entered. The room was filled with VFW members, active duty military, and military families. She was especially grateful for all the members of VFW District 5 in attendance.

> "They were all there supporting me," Foy said. "There were a lot of districts there and District 5 was definitely the loudest!"

> Interim Superintendent Denise Cleary said the whole district is proud of Foy's great accomplishment. "Pia's amazing essay, delivered with such passion, truly embodies our district credo of 'Respect for Diversity' by showing that we all come from different backgrounds but are one American family," she said. "She was up against some excellent competition from around New Jersey, so everyone in Linden should feel tremendous pride that she was selected above them all."

> Excerpt of Pia's essay: "America. A country built off bloodshed and the work of man's ancestors. Yet, not bitterness. Rather desire for the future. The United States is a melting pot of people of different colors who are treated equal."

> Foy, who plans to study biochemistry in college, said that a spoken essay presents different challenges from a written essay.

"You have to be mindful of different cadences and different patterns that you put into it," she said. "Some things are better said than written down. I wanted the essay to be powerful, and one





(above) Linden High School senior Pia Foy captured first place for the state of New Jersey in the VFW Voice of Democrac spoken essay contest.

Photo by Linden Public Schools

of the ladies there told me the reason I won is because of the passion in my voice."

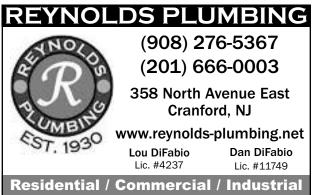
The rules for the Voice of Democracy contest stipulated that the spoken essay be between two and four minutes.

"That was extremely hard," Foy said. "I had to keep rewriting it and revising it. The guidelines were very strict, so it was a little more difficult than writing a regular essay with a word count or page count."

She wanted to thank all the people at LHS who helped her, including her mother, Assumpta Foy, a French teacher at LHS; counselor Laurie Juliano, who told her about the contest and pushed her to enter; Kate Walker, her English teacher who taught her to write "perfect" essays; and Anthony Fischetti, coordinator of the International Baccalaureate program who helped her refine her essay.

"Thank you to everyone who helped me and pushed me to do this," she said.

Excerpt from Pia's essay: "So if someone poses the question, what makes America great, the answer may vary between person to person, because everyone's experience is different. However, what truly makes this country great is the fact that it's called home. United we stand."







# LOCAL COMPANY PARTNERS WITH CITY TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC SAFETY AROUND SCHOOLS

Submitted by Lt. Christopher Guenther

A Linden company is working with Police to get drivers to slow down around a number of local schools.

The Phillips 66 Bayway Refinery donated \$45,000 to the Police Department in October of last year. The money was used to purchase a total of ten radar speed signs that display the speed of approaching vehicles to warn drivers when they are speeding.

"The Phillips 66 company vision is 'providing energy, improving lives'. This project is a great example of living our vision and acting on our Phillips 66 values of safety, honor and commitment. We are very pleased to be able to support this safety initiative and to do our part to help community school areas be safer," stated Nancy Sadlon, Phillips 66 Bayway Refinery Manager of Public Affairs.

This is not the first time the company has partnered with the Police in the interest of improved safety; in 2018 they donated nearly \$10,000 to purchase a radar speed display and flashing signs near a dangerous curve on S. Park Ave. "Phillips 66 continues to demonstrate that not only are they a good corporate neighbor but that they genuinely are concerned for the safety and well-being of our children," said Mayor Derek Armstead.

The first pair of signs were installed on Bower St near School #5 earlier this week, with additional signs scheduled to be installed near Schools #1, 2, 6, and 8 over the next several weeks. Schools were chosen based on a number of factors, including the age of students and traffic conditions in the area.

"Improving safety around our schools just makes sense" said Police Chief David Hart. "Our children are our most valued commodity, and protecting them will always be our most important job."

The improvements are just one of the many measures taken over the past several years to improve traffic safety; Officers have worked closely with school officials to improve traffic patterns during peak hours, and the department is currently participating in a Street Smart pedestrian safety campaign.

Photo by City of Linden



 (left, l-r) Supervisor of Traffic Maintenance Tyrone Givens, Police Chief Dave Hart, Traffic Bureau Commander Lt. Chris Guenther, Phillips 66 Community Relations Coordinator Mary Phillips, Accident Review Committee Chairwoman Councilwoman Lisa Ormon,
Phillips 66 Manager of Public Affairs Nancy Sadlon, 4th Ward Councilman Alfred Mohammed, Mayor Derek Armstead, and Director of Community Services Nick Pantina.

### **JULIENNE CHERRY TAKES HELM AT CHILD ADVOCACY GROUP CASA**

Submitted by Gretchen M. Boger-O'Bryan

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Union County is pleased to announce the selection of Julienne Cherry as its new Executive Director. The organization recruits, trains, supervises and supports community volunteers to advocate for abused, neglected and abandoned Union County youth removed from home and living in foster care.

"Julienne's history in the nonprofit arena, as well as her experience, knowledge and connections within the state, make her ideal to lead CASA of Union County. The board is excited to welcome her to the organization just as it celebrates 15 years of advocacy for our community's foster youth," said Dr. Ron Silver, president of the organization's Board of Trustees.

She joins the Elizabeth-based nonprofit from the Community Food Bank of New Jersey in Hillside, where she was Director of Agency Relations, overseeing more than 1,000 feeding programs in eight New Jersey counties. Among Cherry's community service efforts in Union County are serving on the board of Moms Helping Moms, a diaper and baby supply bank in Plainfield, and remaining active with the local chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Eta Omicron Zeta, including serving as its Health Fair Chair. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Rutgers University and a Master's degree in Public Administration from Kean University.

"I'm very thankful for the wonderful opportunity to join the CASA family," said Cherry. "As a resident of Union County, this new position aligns perfectly with the last 20-plus years I've devoted to advocating for our community's underserved and voiceless. I'm looking forward to meeting with key stakeholders and community members to help move our mission forward. Ensuring the best interests of every Union County youth in foster care through no fault of their own will remain my top priority. As the organization reaches its 15th year of advocacy, the goal continues to be providing an advocate for every fragile youth that needs one. To do this, we need the support of our village. From monthly gives, employer matches and event sponsorships to corporate and business partnerships, every dollar of support for our small-but-mighty nonprofit directly impacts how many waiting foster youth we can reach. Simply, writing a check means writing another chapter. Help us Change a Child's Story."

Through court-ordered access to foster parents, doctors, caseworkers, therapists and teachers, CASA volunteers ensure the best interests of foster youth remain a priority while parties work toward establishing a safe, stable and permanent home. There are nearly 500 Union County youth in foster care and the organization currently serves just over half those. Its goal is to provide an advocate for every youth that needs one. To make a tax-deductible donation, log on to casaofunioncounty.org/donate.

To learn about how to become an advocate for a foster child, contact Courtney at cgreen@casaofunioncounty.org or Call 908-293-8136.



(above) Julienne Cherry has joined Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Union County as its new Executive Director.



# **ROTC STANDS TALL DURING ANNUAL MILITARY INSPECTION**

The Linden High School (LHS) NJROTC is amazing. stood up to the rigors of a full military inspection on February 19 when active-duty personnel visited to give the regiment a meticulous onceover.

The Annual Military Inspection allowed the students to put their best foot forward before service personnel, as well as to a crowd of more than 100 made up of their parents and school and community leaders during a ceremony that followed in the LHS gym. The Navy Junior ROTC unit consists of 425 cadets, about a guarter of the school population.

The inspection was conducted by a team led by Commander Penny Glover, executive officer of Navy Recruiting District New York City.

"How many people were nervous today coming to this inspection?" she said in remarks to the cadets, many of whom raised their hands. "Me too. That doesn't stop. So you know you have to prepare yourself. And part of that is everything you are doing in this program, and it



(above) Commander Penny Glover, executive officer of Navy Recruiting District New York City, speaks during the NJROTC inspection ceremony at Linden High School. Glover led a team of service personnel who conducted the unit's annual inspection.



"I know this was out of a lot of your comfort zones. I give you props for what you did today, stepping out and doing something different. You guys are learning how to step out and be uncomfortable today. That goes a long way. You'll see."

Three senior cadets were honored at the end of the ceremony for having committed to join the armed forces after graduation. They are Tamera Thorn (Marines), Ruben Rua (Marines), and Patrick Hickey (Army). They were honored with a loud ovation as they stood at midcourt with family members.

Commander Boyd Decker, a retired Navy pilot who is senior Naval Science instructor at LHS, praised the student leadership of the regiment: Commanding Officer Mario Rodriguez, Executive Officer Licxy Cardoso, Command Master Chief Daniel Castillo, and Operations Officer Ganesh Ramcharran.

"I can't say enough about what this team has done in terms of elevating this unit to a level that I haven't seen in my five years here," he said. "What is so special is how hard these kids try in doing what they do for this program."

He also commended students who received promotions during the ceremony.

"What I love is the answer that I get about why these kids want to seek the higher positions in the ROTC unit," Decker said. "Genuinely what I see is that these kids do it for no other reason than what that position will mean in their ability to help others and to help the program. [...] They care about what the program has done for them and they want to give back. I honestly can say it's these kids and what they do that makes the program special."

The crowd also got a chance to see two cadet drill teams - the Unarmed Freshman Drill Team commanded by Cadet Seaman Apprentice Isabella Gonzalez and the Armed Drill Team commanded by Cadet Ensign Julian Oquendo in action, as well as a three-man trick team made up of Jean Saintil, Cristian Ventura, and Youssef Hassanein.

Interim Superintendent Denise Cleary said she has been impressed with the NJROTC since her days as a teacher then principal at Linden High.

"There are so many things to be proud of in the Linden Public Schools, and all of the young men and women standing before me are on top of the list," she said. "This program put Linden High School on the map, put our district on the map, and it's all due to the dedication and commitment that you make. This program is not about streaming students into the military, it's about building leaders."

Other school officials attending the ceremony included Board of Education President Gregory R. Martucci, Vice President Katarzyna Kozak, board member Tracey Birch, Acting Assistant Superintendent Michael Walters, LHS Principal Yelena Horré, and Human Resources Director Michele Dorney.

Many officials from the City of Linden also came out to support the cadets, including Mayor Derek Armstead, Police Chief David Hart, Fire Chief William Hasko Jr., and Councilwoman Gretchen Hickey, who is mother to Cadet Patrick Hickey.

"It is an honor and a privilege to be the mayor of a city that has such an outstanding group of young people representing us," Armstead said during remarks to the crowd. "You represent this town so well."



(above) Three Linden High School NJROTC cadets who have committed to enter military service were honored along with family and supporters after the regiment's annual military inspection. They are Tamera Thorn, far left, who will enter the Marines; Ruben Rua, center, who will enter the Marines; and Patrick Hickey, right, who will enter the Army.



(above) The student leadership of the Linden High School NJROTC took control of a ceremony following their Annual Military Inspection on February 19. From left are Executive Officer Licxy Cardoso, Commanding Officer Mario Rodriguez, and Command Master Chief Daniel Castillo.



(above) The Linden High School NJROTC Armed Drill Team performed during a ceremony following the regiment's Annual Military Inspection on February 19.



(above) Cadets in the Linden High School NJROTC lined up to receive promotions during the unit's Annual Military Inspection ceremony on February 19.







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Submitted by Red Nadolski, 1st Vice Commander

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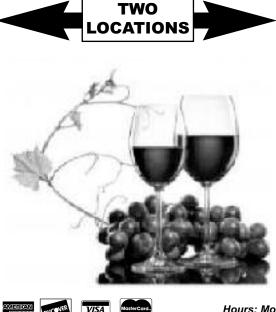


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