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BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS ANNOUNCE 2020 YOUTH OF THE YEAR

Submitted by Lisa Sepetjian

Boys & Girls Club of Union County is pleased to announce our 2020 Youth of the Year winner, Masara S. Masara was chosen from seven finalists from our Union, Elizabeth and Plainfield Clubs. Masara is a 17-year-old senior at Union High School and plans to attend Norfolk State University to study child psychology. She has been a member of the Union Club for 12 years and was a member of Teen Leadership Camp, Torch Club, and currently serves as President of the Keystone Club (Teen Leadership). Under her leadership, the Keystone Club has participated in numerous service initiatives such as food drives for the Community Food Bank, Breast Cancer Walk, and fundraising for the Children's Specialized Hospital. Masara now moves on to the Boys & Girls Clubs State Youth of the Year, where she will compete against other Youth of the Year winners in New Jersey.

"Youth of the Year is our premier recognition program for Club members. We always look forward to celebrating the accomplishments of our members," said Russell Triolo, CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Union County. "It's great to see our members receive recognition for all that they do."

Masara, along with other winners in the Buddie, Spirit and Junior of the Year categories were honored on Thursday, March 5, at our Youth of the Year awards dinner at Galloping Hill Caterers. Friends and family of all the winners enjoyed a wonderful evening celebrating Club members. This year's competition was very intense between the seven finalists. Head Judge, Kelly Webber believed that all seven finalists were winners. Our Plainfield Club had three finalists: Brianna C, Brittany C, and Divine S; our Elizabeth Club had three finalists; Sherline J, Reynaldo C, and Rashah Z, and our Union Club had one finalist; Masara S. Judging took place on Tuesday February 25, and was hosted by our partner, Bausch Health, where our Head Judge, Kelly Webber, is SVP and Chief Human Resources Officer. Other judges were Yasmine Fisher, Business Development Director at Greater Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce; Christie McMullen, President & COO of Elizabethtown Gas; Kimberly Smith, Director, Community



(above, l-r) Sal Dovi, COO Boys & Girls Clubs of Union County; Masara S., 2020 Youth of the Year; Russell Triolo, CEO Boys & Girls Clubs of Union County

Investment at Comcast; and Mark Kaminski, Superintendent of East Coast Operations at Phillips 66.

Summer Program registration is now open online or by visiting our Union, Plainfield and Elizabeth Clubs. Boys & Girls Clubs of Union County offers youth programs in four communities during the school year in Union County: Plainfield, Elizabeth, Union and Roselle. Teen leadership programs for ages 14-18 are available in Union, Elizabeth and Plainfield. Members participate in character, leadership, career preparation and community service activities throughout the year. Aquatics is available at our Union Club.

For information on our clubs and programs, please visit our website bgcuc.org or contact us 908-687-2697.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF UNION COUNTY

Boys & Girls Clubs of Union County seek to inspire and enable young people, who need them most, to realize their full potential and have provided opportunity for youth since 1955. They are part of a national network of some 4,000 neighborhood-based facilities, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, which serves more than 4.6 million young people annually, in all 50 states and on U.S. military bases worldwide. Clubs provide guidance-oriented character development programs on a daily basis for children 6-18 years old, conducted by a full-time professional staff. Key Boys & Girls Club programs emphasize leadership development, education, digital literacy and career exploration, financial literacy, health and life skills, the arts, sports, fitness and recreation, and family outreach.



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JOSHUA LAUBE OF UNION COMPETES IN ANNUAL SCOUT CHESS TOURNAMENT

Union boy scout Joshua Laube recently competed in the 7th annual Munsee District Boy Scout Chess Tournament. This year's tournament was held at the Cranford Community Center on Saturday, February 22, 2020.

The First place winner of the tournament was Joshua McDonald from Whitehouse Station. Second place was awarded to Alexander Beke from Berkeley Heights, and third place went to Anderson Lee from Summit. Trophies in the form of traveling chess sets were awarded to first, second, and third place finishers.

Thirty-one contestants participated in the annual tournament that was organized by Joe Renna of Renna Media, and Tournament Director John Moldovan of Garwood. This

Union boy scout Joshua Laube recently tournament also met part of the requirements for mpeted in the 7th annual Munsee District Boy earning a Chess merit badge.



(above) Joshua Laube, of Union



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



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UNION FIREFIGHTERS COMPETE IN COOKED AND UNCORKED FESTIVAL

On Monday, February 24, 2020, Union 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.



(above) Union Firefighter/Chefs Bill Bower and Gunther Guerra won 3rd Place in the Firehouse Cooking Category. They served Smoked Pork Belly Bruschetta with Sweet Thai Chili Sauce.

Photos from this and other events can be found online at rennamedia.com and on Spirit of Union page on facebook.com - Feel free to "Like," "Tag," and "Share."



UNIONTV34 OPENS ITS DOORS TO KEANTV STUDENTS

Over the years UnionTV34 has welcomed visitors, students, and boy and girl scouts of all ages to tour their studio and control room while getting a look at the current TV technology and view the achievements of the channel over the years. On Thursday, February 27, 2020, for the first time, Kean University students, part of KeanTV, stopped by for a two hour tour with their professor.

"I am so grateful to UnionTV34 for all the support they've given to our students," stated

been provided with an opportunity to give our students a firsthand view of a professional television studio, steps away from their classroom. The feedback and the opportunities to provide weekly programming has been truly invaluable to our students."

During their visit at UnionTV34, they learned the ins and outs of how the channel runs, helped produce the weekly "Spotlight on Union" show hosted by Edess Damis, and tried their hand in Manager, Sal Terrezza.

Kean University Professor Gina Gili. "We have hosting "Union Minute," a weekly one minute spotlight of events throughout town posted on the Township's social media platforms @TWPUnionNJ.

> "I believe this was a great opportunity not only for the Kean students to grasp real-life experiences but for the Township to be able to expand their partnership with Kean University," mentioned Sal Terrezza.

The tour ended with a Q&A with the Station

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(above) Kean University students, part of KeanTV, stopped by the UnionTV34 studio and control room for a two hour tour with their professor.



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

With schools closed indefinitely and an 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 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 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!



(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.



(above) AfriCrafts fabric activity kits feature supplies for fun and easy projects for kids – Call Cultured Expressions.866-683-2568 or email info@CulturedExpressions.com.



LEARN THE RISK FACTORS FOR FALLS AND HOW TO PREVENT THEM

Submitted by Colleen Clayton

The Gateway Family YMCA is joining the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and the Falls Free Coalition to help raise awareness and prevention of falls.

Each year, it's estimated that one out of four Americans aged 65 or older will suffer a fall, leaving many adults with a fear of falling that can cause them to limit physical activities. This leads to reduced mobility and diminished quality of life and can increase their risk of falling. In addition, as the population ages, falls put an immense strain on the health care system, with the



The good news is that many falls are preventable. With a focus on healthy aging, the Y is committed to helping older adults learn their fall risk and provide resources that can help them reduce their risk for falls.

"As a leading community-based organization dedicated to improving the nation's health, the Y is asking older adults, caregivers, family members and health care professionals to raise awareness and prevent falls in the older adult population," said Krystal R. Canady, CEO, The



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joerenna@rennamedia.com Visit RennaMedia.com or NJLocalInfo.com preventable, but many older adults and their families don't know how to safely get active. The good news is that organizations like the Y can help," added Melynda A. Mileski, EVP/COO.

The first step to prevention is understanding risk. Older adults can assess their fall risk by taking a simple test at ymca.net/fallsrisk. Through this assessment, individuals can learn how routine activities and other factors help determine their risk for falls.

Once assessing risk, the next step is to take action; The Gateway Family YMCA is helping to improve the health and well-being of older adults across the country through programs like Enhance®Fitness, Action Against Arthritis, Tai Chi, Water Exercise, SilverSneakers Fitness and Gentle Yoga.

The CDC suggests these basic lifestyle and safety changes to help reduce risk and prevent falls: begin an exercise program to improve your leg strength and balance; ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medicines; get annual eye check-ups and update your eyeglasses; make your home safer by removing clutter and tripping hazards, putting railings on all stairs and adding grab bars in the bathroom, and installing proper lighting, especially on stairs.

The Gateway Family YMCA is a 501(c)(3)non-profit, health and community service organization of caring staff and volunteers dedicated to strengthening the foundations of community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The Gateway Family YMCA impacts the community by providing quality services to people of all ages, races, faith or incomes. The Y does not just strengthen bodies - it strengthens people, families and communities.

To learn more about The Gateway Family YMCA programs, visit tgfymca.org or contact the Elizabeth Branch at 908-355-9622,

Five Points Branch 908-688-9622, Rahway Branch 732-388-0057, Wellness Center Branch 908-349-9622, WISE Center Branch 908-687-2995 or Youth Development Branch 908-355-3061.

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