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STORM SPLITS GRADUATION CEREMONY IN TWO

Submitted by Mary Ann McGann

The Westfield High School Class of 2020 officially received their diplomas on Thursday, July 9 after a thunderstorm cut short the initial commencement ceremony the day before.

With folding chairs set six feet apart on the field at Gary Kehler Stadium, 477 high school seniors progressed in a single file line on Wednesday, July 8. Principal Mary Asfendis welcomed the graduates, beginning the ceremony with a moment of silence to remember three members of the high school community who have died - students Carter Uziel and Terry DiFalco and former principal Dr. Derrick Nelson.

Asfendis recognized educators, parents, and guardians who, due to social distancing restrictions, could not attend. She asked the students to stand and applaud these "significant adults" in their lives, many of whom were watching the livestreamed ceremony remotely.

Asfendis also paid tribute to student achievements including 4 National Merit Finalists, 20 National Merit Commended Students, 211 graduates elected into the National Honor Society, 283 recipients of the President's Education Award and more than 100 students who were honored with a variety of scholarships and awards from nearly 140 different organizations.

Senior Class President Alexis Hammer, a sprinter on the high school track and field team, compared high school to a 400-meter dash, adding that "perspective plus positivity equals perseverance." She urged her fellow graduates to use their voices to stand up for what they believe in, predicting that the "Class of 2020 will do incredible things."

In his address to his fellow graduates, Student Government President John Czarnecki said he wanted to focus on "the time before you had to wear a mask to graduation." He noted that every moment "spent daydreaming about the future" means missing something in the present, as he held up a plaque that said "Don't forget to enjoy the journey."

The ceremony came to a close on Wednesday when a thunderstorm forced the gathering off the





(above) Senior Class President Alexis Hammer, a sprinter on the high school track and field team, compared high school to a 400-meter dash, adding that "perspective plus positivity equals perseverance." She urged her fellow graduates to use their voices to stand up for what they believe in, predicting that the "Class of 2020 will do incredible things."

field just as students were prepared to cross the stage to receive their diplomas.

The next day, before diplomas were handed out, Asfendis spoke to the Class of 2020 about expressing and sharing gratitude and finding silver linings in the midst of a pandemic. Her silver linings, she said, include increased time with family, witnessing students stepping up and speaking out, athletes continuing to work out despite a cancelled season, and senior class officers who made sure student voices were represented in graduation decisions.

"And there is Alexis Hammer, who wrote the letter that brought us here today," Asfendis said about Hammer's Instagram posting to New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy in May that questioned why beaches were being opened but graduations were not allowed.

As she concludes her first year as principal of Westfield High School, Asfendis expressed her own gratitude to the Class of 2020 for their strength, resilience, community, caring, and determination.

An online photo album of the Class of 2020 graduation can be found at www.westfieldnjk12.org under "District Information" and "Photos."

Photos by Westfield Public Schools.

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WESTFIELD ROTARY FEED THE HUNGRY CAMPAIGN

Chair and Liz Ensslin, Rotary Club President, recently accepted a \$1,500 check from Rotarian, Marta Alexandre on behalf of Spencer Savings Bank.

The donation is in support of Rotary's Feed the Hungry fundraising campaign to fight food

Bill Bonsall, Westfield Rotary Foundation insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The donation brought the total donations to \$10,399.

> Rotary is matching up to \$15,000. Fundraising is ongoing.

> A GoFundMe page has been set up for the public to donate visit https://gf.me/u/x4xjrk.



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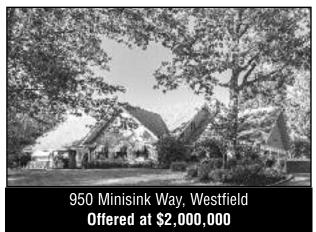
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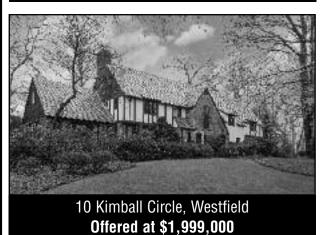
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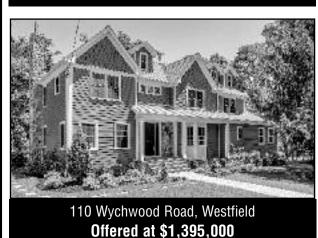






















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GIRL SCOUTS EARN SILVER AWARD

Submitted by Colby Sheppard

Westfield Girl Scout Troop 40490 would like to congratulate Betheny Swartz, Cate Durocher, Isabella Giacobbe, and Olivia Paulino for earning their Silver Awards. The Girl Scout Silver Award is the highest award a Girl Scout Cadette can earn and gives girls the chance to do big things and make their community better in the process.

Beginning in November of 2018, the four Scouts formed an idea inspired by the Kindness Rocks Project on Instagram. The mission is to spread small messages of kindness to the public in an anonymous way. The group met weekly to paint various rocks with messages of hope and happiness. They then distributed the artistic rocks

in an anonymous way. The group met weekly to paint various rocks with messages of hope and happiness. They then distributed the artistic rocks

(above) Girl Scouts Betheny Swartz, Cate Durocher, Isabella Giacobbe, and Olivia Paulino earned their Silver Awards from their work on their #kindnessrockswestfield project.

all over Downtown Westfield, NJ in the hopes of spreading cheer, inducing a smile, and inspiring others to be kind. The rocks have been noticed by everyone from kids, moms, and the local shops and restaurants in town.

They started an Instagram page, #kindnessrockswestfield. Follow it, find a rock, and help to spread some kindness today in your hometown of Westfield, NJ.

Betheny, Cate, Isabella, and Olivia have put in collectively over 200 hours in over 2 years, and along with all of the Westfield Girl Scouts earning the Highest Awards, will be honored during a special scout ceremony.



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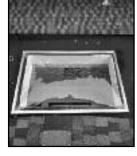
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ST. JOSEPH'S EXPRESSES THANKS FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Submitted by Bernadette Murphy Dear friends,

We are more grateful than ever for your support of St. Joseph's and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Your assistance since the pandemic began has been incredible. People have stepped up to help in so many ways.

Your generous contributions of food and funds have had a tremendous impact. With your help, we have distributed over 5,000 bags of food to families since the end of March. We have also shared thousands of sandwiches, toiletries, and



(above) Food distribution line at St. Joseph Social Service Center

personal protective equipment.

We would like to extend a special thank you to the many people in Westfield, Cranford, Mountainside, Berkeley Heights, Providence, Roselle Park, Union, Elizabeth, Warren, and Edison, among other towns, for your overwhelming response to our appeal for emergency food bags. So many people have

contributed that we can't possibly list them all.

We hope you will stay with us as the economic fallout from the pandemic is just beginning, and together we can help our community survive and thrive. If you would like to donate food or funds, please visit our website at sjeliz.org for details.

With heartfelt thanks and appreciation,

The Team at St. Joseph Social Service Center



(above) Food being distributed at St. Joseph Social Service Center.



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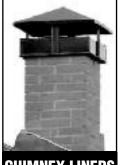












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Mobile Meals of Westfield continues to provide lunches and dinners for those unable to provide meals for themselves. The organization serves the communities of Clark, Cranford, Fanwood, Garwood, Mountainside, Scotch Plains and Westfield.

All state and CDC protocols are in place to ensure the safety of clients, staff and volunteers. Delivery will be to coolers at client homes rather than face-to-face.



For questions, or to receive the service or to volunteer, email mobilemealswestfield@hotmail.com, or call 908-233-6146, or visit the website at mobilemealsofwestfield.org where donations are accepted online.

ABOUT OUR MEALS

Our meals are reasonably priced, and unlike other meal delivery services, Mobile Meals has no financial need requirements. Our customers come from all walks of life and financial situations. If you know of anyone who could benefit from receiving daily meals and personal contact, or if you have any interest in volunteering, please contact Mobile Meals of Westfield at (908) 233-6146.

We operate 5 days a week, Monday through Friday. All our meals are prepared by a trained cook and packaged and delivered by volunteers. Our well-balanced menus change daily.

Mobile Meals serves a hot meal and an optional cold meal. The hot meal consists of soup

and crackers, an entree of meat or fish, a vegetable and a starch, bread and butter, a dessert and a beverage (milk or juice). The cold meals consist of a sandwich, a dessert and a beverage.

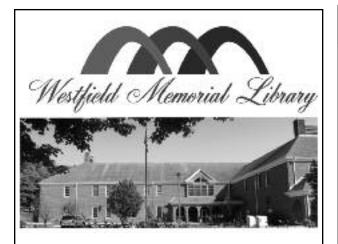
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ROTARY PRESENTS \$99,000 TO COLLEGE-BOUND SCHOLARS



This Week in Westfield Rotary

Westfield Rotarians Mary Ellen O'Boyle and Burim Regjaj delivered sneakers and socks to the veterans housed at Community Hope Shelter at the Lyons VA. Rotary Clubs of Westfield and Morristown also provided pizzas from Outta Hand Pizza in Westfield."My feet THANK YOU" said John, veteran resident of VA, Lyons.

If you'd like to learn more about how you can contribute and join the Rotary Club of Westfield please go to www.westfieldrotary.com or Email Blake Width at bwidth@lindabury.com for information on membership.



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Once again the Westfield Rotary Club is helping college bound Westfield seniors with scholarships adding up to \$99,000 this year. Each year the club accepts applications from seniors and distributes funds based on meeting certain criteria that has been set in place by both the club and The Westfield Foundations..

Carl Peer, Chairman of the Westfield Rotary Foundation's scholarship committee, presided over the scholarship applications in collaboration with the selection committee comprised of Rotarians Chung Kun Shih, Mary Ellen O'Boyle, Tony LaPorta, Deirde Gelinne, and Lou DaCosta.. Criteria for consideration, according to Liz Ensslin, President of the Westfield Rotary Club are based on academic achievement, service to the community and financial need. Recipients must be residents of the town who are graduating seniors enrolled in accredited high schools. "The committee members are to be congratulated on their diligence," Peer observes. "The applications and supporting detail are carefully reviewed and every candidate received a personal interview. As we come to know the applicants pretty well through the process, it is especially gratifying to present them with their scholarships."

Clark Lageman, who is chairman of the Rotary foundation board, states that nearly\$3 million has been awarded to Westfield scholars since the inception of club's scholarship fund in 1923. He explains, "Rotary's group of scholarships are financed by proceeds from the club's yearly Pancake Breakfast, Grand Raffle and a fund managed by the Westfield Foundation comprised of donations and bequests by Rotarians, their families and friends.

On behalf of The Westfield Foundation, two top scholarships were awarded in memory of Charles and Florence Wallace cumulatively totaling \$30,000 to be paid over the course of four years. They went to Jeremy Kronheimer

who will attend Carneigie Mellon University at St. Louis, and Debarah Obiajulu who will attend Harvard University.

A scholarship totaling \$10,000 in memory of Linda Read for Studies in the Health Sciences was awarded to John Czarnecki who will attend Penn State University.

Four Scholarships cumulatively totally \$15,000 in Memory of Rotarian Harry Sturcke were awarded to

Kevin Vricella-Stokes and Alexis Hammer who will both attend University of Pittsburgh, Karen Abaya who will attend University of Rhode Island and Giavanna Schifando who will attend Ohio State University.

Three scholarships of varying amounts cumulatively totaling \$15,000 were awarded from the Robert & Winifred Reed Law Scholarship were presented to Emily Ensslin for Northeastern University, Theresa Lizzo for George Washington University and Anabella Cerria fro University of St. Andrews.

Casimir Malak who will attend Mason Gross School in Rutgers University was awarded a \$5,000 Scholarship in Memory of Charles and Florence Wallace.

Emma Karp was presented with \$5,000 from the Estate of Georgianna Pollack for studies at Indiana University.

William Litchholt was presented with \$5,000 as the Chester A. Gerdes Scholar and will attend University of Pittsburgh.

This year's Bob Maxwell Rotary Scholar is Olivia Bergman who will receive \$2,000 and will attend University of Massachusetts at Amhert.

\$12,000 from the fund honoring Rotarians Living and Deceased was awarded to 4 students. Andrew Principato will attend Indiana University, Erin Harris will attend University of Vermont, Katherine Troutman will attend North Carolina State University and Abbey Zidel will attend Washington University at St. Louis.



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NJ VETERAN COMMUNITY FIGHTS BACK DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Submitted by Jesus MiroQuesada and Angie Abbot, NJVN

A group of veterans and veterans' organizations are making a huge difference during New Jersey's Covid-19 pandemic. The New Jersey Veterans Networks' "Operation: Helping Heroes" project has two objectives including providing meals and groceries to veterans, and protective equipment to first responders. Food and PPE have been delivered to first responders, hospital workers, and activated National Guardsmen throughout the

They have distributed almost 3,000 hot meals and groceries to veterans, National Guardsmen and essential frontline workers at 61 different drop-off locations. The NJVN also provided personal protective equipment and helped distribute over 10,000 gallons of hand sanitizer to hospitals, EMS squads and police departments, and provided over 2,000 protective masks. This all happened during a crucial time when things like food, masks and hand sanitizer were very much needed, but hard to find.

The New Jersey Veteran Network has truly lived up to its name and partnered with a rich network of almost a dozen other organizations in order to fulfill their mission. Non-profits like the Samaritan Outreach Services, Operation Jersey Cares, the CSM Robert Gallagher Charitable Foundation, and Milltown VFW 2319, worked tirelessly to contribute to the Helping Heroes effort by either supporting heroes and first responders working through the crisis, or helping veterans whose health and finances were affected by the pandemic.

Doc Schupp who created the Helping Heroes program had this to say "We were only able to reach and help as many people as we did because we are working with some of the best and most passionate organizations and people in the state. People like James Ludolph, would drive for hours dropping off food to sick and quarantined vets only to ask me what the next mission to help was, or 2319 VFW Commander Bob Kolesare, who would personally go out to help fill veterans' pantries."

NJVN Outreach Director, Frank "Doc" Schupp organized the hot meal and groceries portion of the program in collaboration with VFW 2319, Operation: Jersey Cares and Samaritan Outreach Services. Food was donated by restaurants including Jim Dandy of East Rutherford, Marinelli's and 55 Main both of Flemington, Amici's of Linden, Burnett BBQ of Union, and Applebee's of Garfield. Donations were delivered to National Guard units, hospital workers and veteran shelters such as Operation Valor in Newark and Vet Haven North.

Home deliveries of food as well as social service assistance, in coordination with Catholic Charities and PACO agency, were also provided to assist veterans who were quarantined at home due the COVID-19 crisis.

The protective equipment distribution was managed by NJVN President Michael Boll in collaboration with Ashland Chemical who sponsored the hand sanitizer, and Backpacks for

Life - a veterans' organization who has created a full-scale operation to create masks to give to first responders and hospital staff. Protective equipment was given to hospitals including Holy Name of Teaneck, the East Orange and Lyons VA Hospitals, Jersey City and New Bridge Medical Centers, and police departments including New Providence and Florham Park.

Both the food distribution and PPE could not have been made possible without the volunteers who took the time to pick up and distribute the goods. Great people like James Ludolph, Robert Bouthille, Dana Black, Juan Peris, Jamel Dobbins and Michael Salermo (with the team Mascots Shadow and Mush) and many others made this project happen! Many good people came together and were able to make a positive impact on the community during a difficult time. All of this was done by strong partnerships, unpaid volunteers, and sponsored through donations.

Perhaps, VFW 2319s Commander Bob

Kolesare said it best, "VFW 2319 really enjoyed taking care of our vets. We hope that we were able to brighten their days just a little bit during this crisis."

ABOUT NEW JERSEY VETERANS NETWORK

We are a group of veterans and volunteers dedicated to helping our veterans and their families live better lives. Our team is raising awareness of our veterans needs by organizing public speaking engagements, meeting with business and political leaders across the state and sponsoring fundraising events. Our mission is to identify veterans and connect them with resources and programs designed to meet their unique set of needs. To ensure that EVERY single one of our veterans, who have sacrificed so much for this great country, receives the resources that they require and deserve. If you are interested in joining our team, would like us to speak at your event, or contributing to our mission, call 973-332-1556 or email mdbollio@optonline.net. To learn more visit njvn.org.



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PERIODS DO NOT STOP FOR A PANDEMIC

While there have been widespread efforts to tackle PPE shortages and food insecurity during the pandemic, one missing piece of the local and national dialogue has been menstruation. Menstrual equity is the right of every menstruator to have stigma-free access to the period products they need. According to the International Federation Of Gynecology and Obstetrics, 500 million people experience period poverty, which is the inability to afford menstrual products, across the globe. The United States is not immune to this issue. A 2019 study conducted by PERIOD.org and sustainable period underwear company Thinx found that in the U.S., one in five teens struggled to afford period products or have not been able to purchase them at all.

As a result of pervasive job loss, healthcare needs, and the inability for facilities to allocate adequate funds for menstrual products due to unforeseen costs, both homeless shelters and

menstrual products during this time. Tampons and pads are essential health items often overlooked due to their stigma. Diya Khullar, a graduate of Northeastern University from Summit, NJ, and Linzy Rosen, a junior at Colby College from Westfield, NJ, are hoping to change that.

In May, Khullar launched the "Menstrual Products for Jersey" initiative by creating a Facebook page, contacting several organizations to partner with, and calling upon her network to support this effort; Rosen teamed up to collect products in Westfield and garner financial donations from her community. In just the past 3.5 weeks, Khullar and Rosen have collected and ordered a total of 232 panty liners, 6,823 pads, and 662 tampons. 100% of financial donations are used for orders of menstrual products, with bulk orders being placed every other week to minimize environmental impact.

correctional facilities are in grave need of Donations are going to Family Promise Union County, Essex County Correctional Facility, Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless, and GRACE - Giving and Receiving Assistance for our Community's Essentials.

> To support this student-led effort, please Venmo @MenstrualProductsforNJ or inquire about checks directly to one of the four organizations, and email Khullar menstrualproductsfornj@gmail.com to arrange curbside pickup of menstrual products or ask any other questions. Opened and unopened containers of tampons, pads, or liners will be accepted as long as the products are individually wrapped and sealed. Your donations are greatly appreciated and will bolster the profound mission of ending the period stigma and supporting those most impacted by the unprecedented health and financial challenges of COVID-19. Periods do not stop for a pandemic. Thank you for your generosity and support.











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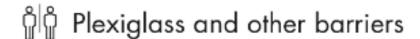
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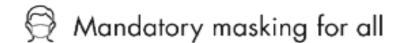
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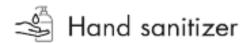
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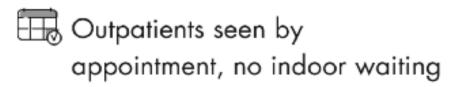


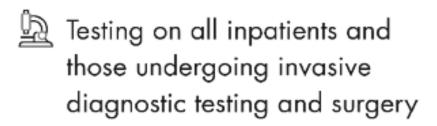


















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WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

As the season brings warmer weather, the Westfield Regional Health Department warns against feeding or interacting with wildlife and stray animals. Westfield residents are advised to take precaution and call the police department non-emergency phone number at (908) 789-4000 when encountering wildlife that appears aggressive or distressed.

Additional information regarding Animal Control and safety recommendations is available at westfieldnj.gov/health.





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Submitted by Annie Albrecht

July 15 marked the halfway point in James Leitner's 900 mile ultra-endurance run to raise funds for his nonprofit, MissionCleanWater.

James, the 27-year-old founder of community-based clean water organization MissionCleanWater, ran 30 miles per day for 30 days during the month of July. His goal: to raise \$30,000 for a clean water system for the St. Elizabeth's All-Girls School in Uganda.

James kicked off his current fundraiser on July 1 at the crack of dawn. For the past month, he's been running 37.5 laps on a .8 mile loop at Tamaques Park in Westfeild, NJ. At his half way point, with 450 miles completed and 450 miles to go, James has had some physical challenges to overcome.

"For the past 13 days, I have been pushing it to beat the heat. With high temperatures and high humidity, each day reaches the triple-digits. I have had good success with running the distance, dealing with the heat, and managing my pain," James said.

"To calm down and relax, I am going to change my game plan for the next few days. I am going to try and start my day close to 5 a.m. and walk more. Slowing down and enjoying the day is only going to bring better success considering

we are almost halfway!"

Despite the challenges, James isn't giving up. "With all of the ups and downs, emotional highs and lows, sleepless nights, and mental exhaustion, once you see your work benefiting someone or a community, it's all worth it. It was not until I saw clean water flow from the taps, and not until I saw the community managing the system on their own, that I felt overwhelmed with emotion and teary eyed with happiness."

James' 900 mile run is the most recent in a series of ultra-endurance fundraising events.

In 2017, James walked 3,250 miles from New Jersey to California while pulling 10 gallons of water to raise money for a clean water system in Tanzania. The walk, which took him 143 days, symbolized the distance that women and girls in Africa walk every year fetching water for their families. In fall 2019, James ran 100 miles in 24 hours, all on a .8 mile loop (that's over 130 laps!). For another ultra-endurance fundraiser, James ran a marathon a month for 12 straight months, all while carrying 45 lbs of water over his head.

James' endurance fundraisers have funded water systems that have helped 4,500 people and 1,500 students gain access to clean drinking water. Learn more and follow James in his journey at missioncleanwater.org/30miles.



(above) James Leitner ran 30 miles a day in July to raise money for a clean water system for the St. Elizabeth's All-Girls School in Uganda.





OFFICERS RECEIVE COVID-19 SERVICE MEDALS Westfield MONTHLY • Page 17 • August 2020

Each member of the Westfield Police Pandemic in 2020." Chief Battiloro stated, "This Department recently received a COVID-19 service medal issued by Chief Christopher Battiloro for "exceptional service performed during the "State of Emergency" and "Public Health Crisis" caused by the COVID-19

service medal represents the dedication and commitment of each WPD officer and civilian employee to the Westfield community during these difficult times."

Photos by Westfield Police Department







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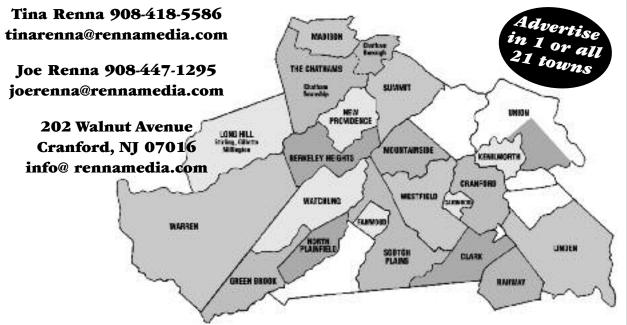
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WESTFIELD RESIDENTS TO ADVOCATE FOR LOCAL FOSTER YOUTH

Submitted by Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan

Shortly before Covid-19 emerged, took hold and shelter-in-place orders were ordered, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Union County trained 18 volunteers to serve as child advocates for youth removed from home due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. It is the only organization serving as extra eyes and ears for family law judges in an effort to protect best interests of youth in foster care.

While gathered inside a courtroom at Union County's Family Courthouse, class members simultaneously raised their right hand as Judge Thomas K. Isenhour administered their oath before thanking them for committing to our community's vulnerable youth and emphasizing

Among the new advocates are Westfield residents Bob Bridgeman and Karen Lange. Bridgeman noted, "I've been involved in and supported a number of nonprofits, but CASA of Union County offered a unique opportunity to

work at a level where I can truly touch lives. I'm excited!"

the value of volunteerism.

After a final step of court observation, advocates are assigned to foster youth by court order, which provides access to the youth, foster parents, doctors, caseworkers, therapists and teachers to determine outstanding needs or concerns. Advocates regularly report and make recommendations to the judge.

Volunteers with varied backgrounds make successful advocates and this class, ranging from their 20s to 70s, is no exception. Each brings diverse experiences, including having been a foster youth themselves, immigrants, nonparents and parents, retirees, homemakers, full- and part-time employees. Professional backgrounds include education, business owners, law and academia. Most had no prior knowledge of the foster system.

There are approximately 500 Union County youth from birth to age 21 in foster care, and more than 200 still need a CASA volunteer. Is that you? Contact Courtney at cgreen@casaofunioncounty.org to learn more.



(above) Judges swear in 26 new child advocates via Zoom, including 7 from Westfield.













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