

# Berkeley Heights

## COMMUNITY NEWS NJ

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### RESCUE SQUAD OFFICERS TAKE A VIRTUAL OATH OF OFFICE

*Submitted by the BHVRS*

In an installation like no other, the incoming officers at the Berkeley Heights Volunteer Rescue Squad (BHVRS) were sworn in during a Zoom gathering on Monday, February 8. Mayor Angie Devanney, who was the guest of honor at the monthly business meeting, read the oath of office to the 2021 Line Officers and Executive Branch members as they held up a sea of virtual hands, promising to uphold the duties of their elected position. The annual BHVRS dinner dance and installation event that is traditionally held each winter was postponed due to the pandemic.

“I want to take this opportunity to thank the volunteer rescue squad members for their heroic service during the 2020 global pandemic. In the early days of the spread of coronavirus, you were on the front lines serving our community when there was great uncertainty and fear about this deadly disease,” said Mayor Angie Devanney. “The gratitude the community and I have for you all is beyond what words can convey. So it is with great honor that I swear in your 2021 officers.”

The pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges for the BHVRS this past year. The rescue squad had to develop new protocols to treat and transport patients with COVID-19, stock tremendous supplies of PPE, and institute decontamination procedures to disinfect the ambulances and equipment.

“This past year, 2020, was one of the most challenging periods of time the squad has ever faced, but every riding member of this organization stepped up to the challenge without missing a beat. “We are all volunteers. We choose to do this. We don’t have to do this,” says Marc Schnitzer, MHA, EMT, who was sworn in as the new Chief of the BHVRS. “Berkeley Heights is incredibly lucky to have such committed volunteers caring for our residents during some of their most vulnerable times.”

There have been highs and lows throughout the pandemic. Members balanced tremendous schedules—working from home, helping children with remote schooling, and attending online classes themselves. They were concerned about becoming infected with the virus or



(above) The incoming officers at the Berkeley Heights Volunteer Rescue Squad were sworn in during a Zoom gathering on Monday, February 8.

bringing it home to a family member. Makeshift spaces were set up in garages where members could change and wash up before reentering their houses, and double or triple shifts were graciously picked up when a member had to fall off the schedule due to a potential exposure. But fueled with an unwavering commitment to help their fellow neighbors, the BHVRS remained one of the most successful volunteer EMS agencies in the area.

Last year, Chief Schnitzer reported, the rescue squad covered Berkeley Heights emergency services 99.95 percent of the time—a feat very few volunteer squads can attest to. Members responded to 709 calls, which included 99 falls, more than 50 breathing emergencies, and 49 motor vehicle accidents.

“I am exceedingly proud of each and every one of our members and personally feel very privileged to have the opportunity to ride alongside them. The BHVRS is truly a special place to be a part of,” added Joe Savino, EMT, President of the BHVRS. “Please join me in extending your gratitude and thanks to all of our members.”

#### DID YOU KNOW?

The BHVRS is staffed entirely by volunteers. Our dedicated members are all ages and come from all walks of life and professional backgrounds. We never charge for any of our services and are funded nearly entirely by donations.

We are always looking for volunteers! To learn more about how you can help, please visit our website or email [membership@bhvrs.org](mailto:membership@bhvrs.org).



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## VENTURE CREW 28 ON WINTER HIKE

Members of Chatham's Venture Crew 28 hiked Pyramid Mountain on January 23. A cold winter day did not take away from their enjoyment of the outdoors. Crew 28 is an all-female crew that focuses on outdoor adventures,

leadership, personal growth and service projects. The crew recently passed its four year anniversary.

For information about Crew 28, visit [venturecrew28.com](http://venturecrew28.com).



(above) Crew members in this picture live in Summit, Chatham, New Providence, Berkeley Heights and Millburn.

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## VALENTINES FOR TROOPS

Third grade students at Mountain Park Elementary School learned two important lessons when they recently participated in a "Valentines for Troops" activity.

In Social Studies, students are currently learning about the branches and levels of government and the importance of the United States Armed Forces. So when students made

special Valentines for troops stationed around the world they included messages of support and appreciation for their service. This fun and feel-good activity tied in with the current curriculum and helped the students understand the importance of what their act of kindness was all about.

Photos by Berkeley Heights Public Schools



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Edward Anthony Somma, MD  
Internal Medicine

After graduating from medical school, Dr Somma served his internship in Internal Medicine at Trinitas Regional Medical Center. He then completed his residency in Internal Medicine at Seton Hall Post Graduate School of Medicine, where he was elected Chief Resident of Internal Medicine in his final year.

Dr. Somma has been in practice in Union and Middlesex counties for over 20 years, with an emphasis on excellence and compassion for his patients. He has served as the physician for the Elizabeth Fire Department, the Board of Health of Hillside and has served the Board of Education for Woodbridge NJ. He was granted the Humanitarian of the Year Award by Trinitas Health Foundation in May 2014, for his dedication to the community and his outstanding service to the goals of the Foundation.

Dr. Somma has special interests in various fields of Internal Medicine, including diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases and arthritis/rheumatology. He has represented to major pharmaceutical companies, such as Schering-Plough and Pfizer, in a consulting and educational role for his peers. Dr. Somma has been a clinical educator for Seton Hall's Physician Assistant Program as an Associate Professor of Medicine for their Internal Medicine program.

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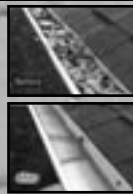
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## SAGE'S MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAM DELIVERS RECORD NUMBER OF MEALS DURING COVID-19



Submitted by Cindy Potters

As the pandemic forced businesses and services to close in 2020, the demand for SAGE's Meals on Wheels kept increasing. By the end of the year, the nonprofit delivered a record breaking 50,000 meals, an increase of 7,000 over the previous year. Family members who were unable to visit and offer support to their older adult relatives called on Meals on Wheels for help. The meal service became an increasingly important resource for food and a means for having someone check in on loved ones.

According to Marianne Kranz, Director of Meals on Wheels, she, her staff and many volunteers continued to go to the SAGE building at 290 Broad Street in Summit every day during the pandemic to pack and deliver meals. Community organizations and area residents pitched in by donating what was needed. Along with frozen meals and nonperishable food items, people dropped off toilet paper and paper towels,

*(left) Meals on Wheels Coordinator, Robin Handwerger sorts through donations from community organizations and area residents made during COVID-19. If you are in need of Meals on Wheels or would like to make a donation, please call 908-273-5554.*

masks, baked goods and made monetary donations. "Our goal was to provide our clients with extra food so they wouldn't have to worry about leaving the house to get to a grocery store," said Kranz. "There were also people coming home from the hospital alone, scared and food insecure."

Meals on Wheels was there to help and continues to be a vital support to those in the community who need it. The average age of someone receiving meals is 83. Half of these clients live alone and 65% rarely see anyone other than the volunteer who brings them their meal.

If you or a family member is in need of meal assistance, call 908-273-5554. Meals on Wheels delivers to: Berkeley Heights, Chatham, New Providence, Millburn/ Short Hills, Mountainside, Summit and Springfield.

Since 1954, SAGE Eldercare has been helping make the communities it serves amazing places to age. The non-profit organization provides a wide array of information, support, and services designed to help individuals lead the most independent and active lives possible. If you are in need of Meals on Wheels or would like to make a donation, please call 908-273-5550 or visit [sageeldercare.org](http://sageeldercare.org).

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**Nathan Weiser**  
★★★★★

Spring Grove is by far the best rehab center I have ever been to. The staff are kind and caring and have gone above and beyond my expectations. The building is kept extremely clean and the new renovations are very nice.

Thank you Spring Grove for a wonderful and pleasant stay.

**Charles Sherrick**  
★★★★★

I have been at Spring Grove for a few weeks now, they have exceptional service and excellent staff. All the nurses have been professional and attentive to all my needs. I never thought a rehab center can have such a beautiful layout and well put together. The newly renovated room I have stayed in, is up to date and extremely clean. The therapy staff have gone above my expectations with their expertise and getting me to where I am today. Alyssa the social worker has gone above and beyond with all her assignments.

Thank you Spring Grove.

**Chrissy Sloan**  
★★★★★

The nursing staff and administration is professional, patient, attentive and understanding. The facilities are very clean and well maintained. My parents room is always clean and tidy. Although it was a difficult decision to make relocating my folks from a home environment to a senior living facility, Spring Grove made my decision easy.

Thank God for them!

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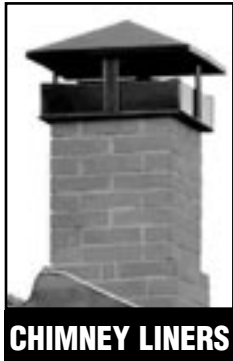


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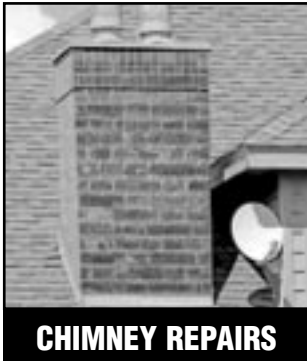
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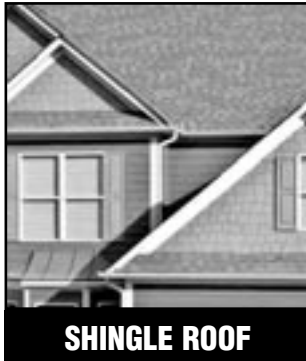
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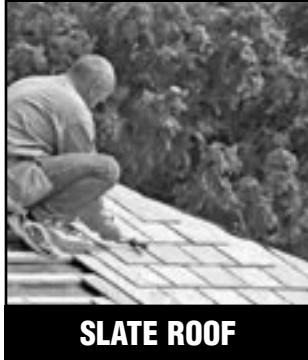
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## LOCAL GYM GETS CRUSHED BY PANDEMIC

In 2007, Gabriele Fitness founder, Vince Gabriele, started a Sports Performance training business out of the back of his pick-up truck. Over the past 13 years, the Berkeley Heights based gym has worked with thousands of youth athletes between the ages of 6-18.

When the pandemic struck in March of 2020, the Sports Performance program at Gabriele Fitness was hit hard. They tried to move it on-line but had little success.

Since Covid-19 was too much they decided to put the program on the back burner. They focused on their adult personal training program which held strong due to a very loyal core membership.

It's been close to a year since they shut the Sports Performance program down, but a huge announcement was recently made.

### THE HUGE ANNOUNCEMENT

Founder, Vince Gabriele, announced they are bringing the Sports Performance program back and have been behind the scenes working on a full-fledged re-brand.

The new program will be called Grit Athlete Performance. It will serve local youth athletes ages 6-18 who want to perform better at their respective sports.

Founder, Vince Gabriele, was asked why he decided to bring the program back and his answer was very inspiring.

### THE STORY THAT IGNITED THE FIRE

Gabriele was sitting at his normal table at the Prestige Diner when a young man in his 20's came up to him, looked him in the eye and shook his hand.

The young man was a student in their Sports Performance program close to a decade ago. He went on to tell Gabriele how much he had learned and still uses the nutrition, fitness and life lessons today.

He entered the program as a slow, shy and awkward kid but transformed himself into a strong, confident healthy adult.

"This was the moment", Gabriele said.

"The moment I knew we needed to bring the Sports Performance program back so we could continue to help create stories like this."

### A HAND-SELECTED TEAM OF TRAINERS

Gabriele went out and hand-picked a brand-new team to transform this into the premier Sports Performance training program in the area.

The full-time job of this new team will be to help athletes ages 6-18 get strong, fast and confident so they can build a bigger and better future.

Grit Athlete Performance will help kids get stronger and faster so they can perform better at their sports. The true goal is bigger than that and goes beyond their athletic career.

Grit is not something you need just in sports. Grit is a character quality that every successful human being has had in their life. When you have grit you continue to have the power. When you have grit, anything is possible.

That'll be the take home message when they launch this new program on March 15th. Grit will have 3 programs that serve the following age groups:

- 6-8 years old
- 9-13 years old
- 14+

### A VIRAL RESPONSE FROM LOCAL PARENTS

Gabriele recently put a message out to his local list and on the community forum sites with the announcement. The response was overwhelming.

Well over 100 people responded with strong interest to reserve spots in the new program. The first block of training will go from March 15-June 15th. They have stated they will only be taking 50 athletes for the first run. They expect to be fully sold out by March 1st.

### HOW TO REGISTER YOUR CHILD

If you have a child that is in these age groups and have interest in signing your child up for their March 15th-June 15th program, please visit:

**WWW.GRITATHLETES.COM**  
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## This program is for your child if:

- They want to get better at sports but struggle because of **lack of speed, strength or stamina.**
- They **eat more junk food than healthy food** and you need another voice to help them understand how important a healthy diet is during these developmental years.
- They **need to improve their confidence** and you want them to start to get better at recovering from their mistakes.
- They're doing pretty good right now but want to take their performance in their sport to a **higher level.**



## Here's what parents can expect to happen:



- **They will get stronger** which means when they show up to their sport they'll be able to perform better than ever.
- **They will run faster and jump higher** so they can show up to their next season and people will start asking what the heck have they been doing.
- They'll become **more coordinated and improve agility** which means they'll pick up new skills their coaches teach them faster.
- **Your children will start to eat better** because we'll be educating them daily on what's good and what they should avoid...don't be surprised if they start asking you to buy more vegetables.
- **Confidence will skyrocket.** When kids get stronger, faster and more fit ...their confidence will rise...so will their self-esteem which means their performance in every aspect of life will get better.
- **Their mindset will improve.** We're going equip your child with very specific mindset skills that'll help them learn how to transform how they think about mistakes and failures.

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- **9-13(SPACES REMAINING: 9)**
- **14+(SPACES REMAINING: 14)**

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 (Located inside Gabriele Fitness in Berkeley Heights)

**Sign up before March 15th and redeem founders club pricing.**



**About Grit Athlete Performance** (A Gabriele Fitness Company)  
 GRIT helps kids ages 6-18 get strong, fast and confident so they can build a bigger and better future. They are located in Berkeley Heights inside Gabriele Fitness. All Grit coaches have been handpicked via a very lengthy interview process by Gabriele Fitness founder, Vince Gabriele.

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS MARCH MEETING

### SENIOR CITIZEN HOTLINE

If you are a Berkeley Heights senior citizen and lack internet access there is a senior hotline you can join.

Seniors will receive at least one weekly call with COVID updates, as well as other town news updates.

To join, please call 908-464-2700, x 2229, and leave your name and phone number.

If you have aging parents or a relative who lives in Berkeley Heights who would like to be on the list, you can call or email seniors@bhtwp.com, and provide their name and phone number and they will be added to the list.

March is Women's History Month. The League of Women Voters of Berkeley Heights, New Providence and Summit will be hosting Patricia Teffenhart, Executive Director of the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault at its March meeting.

On March 16, Ms. Teffenhart will speak about the "State of Sexual Violence in New Jersey: where we are and where we need to be." This will be a virtual meeting. To receive the link, please email LWVBHNPS@yahoo.com.

*(right) Patricia Teffenhart, Executive Director of the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault, will speak at the League of Women Voters of Berkeley Heights, New Providence and Summit's March meeting.*



### HELP WANTED

#### ASSOCIATES

**Associate-Business Analysis** needed to elicit requirements by conducting studies and evaluations of Axtria's customer business needs and translate them into application and operational requirements, using strong retailing analytics. Collaborate with developers and subject matter experts to establish the technical vision and analyze tradeoffs between usability and performance needs. Be the liaison between the business units, technology teams and support teams. Conduct work optimization and measurement studies, and prepare operations and procedures manuals using skills in Project Management, Marketing Metrics, Six Sigma and Quality Management, & ERP in the Supply Chain.

**Associate-Applications Development** needed to analyze business requirements, functionality and define project needs. Translate user needs to technical documentation and support & provide strategic software systems solutions. Under guidance from Manager, design and develop software applications with the aim of optimizing operational efficiency. All of the above duties will be performed using Qlikview/QlikSense, Cognos, and Tableau. Not all positions require all skills. Work location for all positions will include Berkeley Heights, NJ and also at various unanticipated locations throughout the U.S. as assigned which may require relocation. Multiple positions available. Applicants must specifically identify all post-secondary education and all mentioned skills and tools in which applicant has education, training or experience.

Applicants should identify clearly which position they are applying for in their cover letter.

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### HELP WANTED

#### DECISION ANALYTICS

**Associate-Decision Analytics** needed to elicit requirements by conducting studies and evaluations of Axtria's customer business needs and translate them into application and operational requirements, using strong quantitative and analytical skills. Conduct work simplification and measurement studies, responsible for delivery of assigned analyses for a project. Develop Statistical Models for client's data analysis and prepare operations and procedures manuals using Data Management, Data Mining I&II, and Text Mining with Python to assist management in operating more efficiently and effectively.

**Manager-Decision Analytics-** responsible for estimation, planning, and execution of Axtria's projects. Develop analytics solutions to business problems using simulations, predictive modeling, regression analysis or other quantitative methods. Provide business and technical guidance to the team during project implementation and execution. Serve as a liaison between business and technical aspects of the project. All the above duties will be performed using R Programming, Python Programming, & Linear Regression. Not all positions require all skills. Work location for all positions will include Berkeley Heights, NJ and also at various unanticipated locations throughout the U.S. as assigned which may require relocation. Multiple positions available. Applicants must specifically identify all post-secondary education and all mentioned skills and tools in which applicant has education, training or experience.

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### HELP WANTED

#### ASSOCIATES & MANAGERS

**Associate-Decision Analytics** needed to elicit requirements by conducting studies and evaluations of Axtria's customer business needs and translate them into application and operational requirements, using strong quantitative and analytical skills. Conduct work simplification and measurement studies, responsible for delivery of assigned analyses for a project. Develop Statistical Models for client's data analysis and prepare operations and procedures manuals using SAS, SQL, and MS-Excel to assist management in operating more efficiently and effectively.

**Manager - Applications Development** needed to analyze business requirements, functionality and define project needs. Translate user needs to technical documentation and provide strategic software systems solutions. Design and develop software applications with the aim of optimizing operational efficiency. Define project delivery plan along with quality control parameters. Oversee project delivery and ongoing support to ensure application is built and functioning as per customer specification. All of the above duties will be performed using Business Intelligence, Data Warehousing & Migration, and ETL Development, OR using Big Data Technologies, Cloud Computing, & Informatica, OR using Informatica, AWS Big Data, Python, & Microsoft SQL Server. Multiple positions available. Not all positions require all skills. Work location for all positions will include Berkeley Heights, NJ and also at various unanticipated locations throughout the U.S. as assigned which may require relocation. Applicants must specifically identify all post-secondary education and all mentioned skills and tools in which applicant has education, training or experience. Applicants should identify clearly which position they are applying for in their cover letter.

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# FAITH LUTHERAN, NOT A BUILDING, BUT PERSONS HELPING THOSE IN NEED

*Submitted by Larry Holt*

Since the surge of the pandemic in March 2020, Faith Lutheran in New Providence has again demonstrated that it is not a church building but a servant community. Because of the contagion of COVID 19, social ministry programs have not been able to occur physically. Nonetheless, the members of Faith have overcome obstacles and continued to conduct their ministries.

Managing this persistent and tenacious initiative is Faith's pastor, Rev. Jane McCready.

The following describes the ministries, adjustments that have been required and the names of Faith's members who lead the ministries.

## ST. JOHN'S SOUP KITCHEN IN NEWARK

Since March 2020; members, co-workers and friends of Faith have prepared over 36,000 sandwiches for the homeless persons served by St. John's. The sandwiches, an average of 775 per week, are delivered by Faith each Thursday morning to St. John's. Included with this delivery are fresh fruit, baked goods, snacks and toiletries. Prior to the pandemic, on the second Saturday of every month, for the past thirty-six years, Faith has prepared and served a comprehensive hot meal to the clients of St. John's.

This ministry is led by Joanne and Mike Warin of New Providence and Désirée Bouchat of Springfield.

## FAMILY PROMISE

Family Promise is an organization of churches which hosts families and individuals who are temporarily homeless, with each church providing care for a week at a time. Faith has participated in this program about four times a year for the past three decades. The ministry changed dramatically with COVID 19. In place of hosting, Faith has made generous financial gifts, given three pre-owned cars, grocery store gift cards and clothing to Family Promise, for the people it serves.

This program is led by Kim Delatour of Berkeley Heights.

## BROADWAY HOUSE FOR CONTINUING CARE

Broadway House for Continuing Care is a facility in Newark where about eighty persons suffering from HIV/AIDS live. The patients receive care from doctors, nurses, therapists and counselors. Twice a month, a small group from Faith have gone to Broadway House to do crafts and visit with the residents. In response to COVID 19, Broadway House was closed to visitors.

Wendy Naratil of Warren, the leader of the ministry, continues to send to each resident a 3D or music birthday card from Faith. Broadway House says Mrs. Naratil's card is often the only birthday greeting that a resident receives.

## NEW PROVIDENCE FALL FOOD DRIVE

Each November, Faith partners with the New Providence Community Service Association (CSA) and the New Providence Cub and Boy Scouts to collect food for needy families. The food is donated to Star Fish Pantry in Plainfield and the CSA. A major part of the Drive is about 130 people gathering on a Saturday in November

to sort and pack the food. This collection of close working people could not occur in November 2020.

To substitute, members of Faith generously gave checks and gift cards to Starfish Pantry and CSA.

The chairperson for Faith is Cheryl Bock of Summit.

## CROP WALK TO STOP HUNGER

The CROP Walk to Stop Hunger is a three mile walk through New Providence on a fall Sunday afternoon by members of Faith and other local churches. The purpose of the Walk is to raise money to help eradicate hunger in the United States and around the world. The members of the churches walk as a group, with many carrying signs to publicize this social issue.

In the fall of 2020, a group walk of about 100 persons could not occur. Mike Warin of Faith and New Providence, the chairperson planned and managed a group walk. Participants could choose the time, route and length of their walks. The virtual walkers achieved \$3,120 in contributions toward the reduction of hunger.

## SHARING TREE

Through this ministry, members of Faith buy Christmas gifts for persons who live in social agency homes or face economic stress. COVID 19 changed past procedures. While the Sharing Tree was virtual, the gifts for recipients were real. They could choose from a warm hat/scarf/gloves set or a cozy sweatshirt sized to fit.

The leader of the Sharing Tree ministry is Joanne Berryman of Madison.

## KNIT, PURL AND PRAY GROUP

The members faced a new experience in 2020. They were unable to meet together and share fellowship while doing their knitting and crocheting. Nevertheless, the group, working individually at home, made 110 hats and scarves for St. John's Soup Kitchen, 337 baby hats for University Hospital in Newark, 60 hats and scarves for St. Stephen's Grace Church in Newark, whose members are largely immigrants, five prayer shawls and four comfort hearts.

The group is led by Theresa Adamson of Warren and Joyce Brandt of Sterling.

## PREVIOUSLY OWNED BIKES

In August of 2020, Faith collected 170 used bikes, repaired them and arranged for their shipment to rural Thailand. The bikes are being used by persons to travel to work, go to market and receive medical care. The bikes were collected on behalf of Pedals for Progress, an organization that recycles bikes for persons in developing countries. Faith contributed \$1,700 for the shipment of the bikes.

Casey Walsh of Bridgewater is the leader of the ministry.

## TUTORING IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

Once a month about fifteen members of Faith have been tutoring Guatemalan children in English and math at St. Stephen's Grace Church in the Ironbound section of Newark. The members work with adults as well who want to improve their English. At the end of the tutoring, the entire group always plays bingo.

March 2020 changed everything. While

members of Faith could no longer go to Newark to teach the children, Faith did not forget them. Faith gave a check to Pastor Moacir of St. Stephen's Grace to help the immigrant children and their families buy food. At Christmas, the tutors gave thirty-seven sweatshirts to the children and their fathers and money for food. The above mentioned, Knit, Purl and Pray group, made hats and scarf sets for the children and their fathers.

Kim Delatour of Berkeley Heights is the leader of the tutoring program.

Each Sunday morning, Faith's 10 a.m., liturgical service, led by Pastor Jane McCready, can be seen at:

[facebook.com/FaithLutheranNewProvidence/live](https://facebook.com/FaithLutheranNewProvidence/live).

The two associate pastors of Faith are Rev. Robert Kriesat of Convent Station and Rev. Lucas Vaga of Millington.

Faith is located at 524 South Street in New Providence. Visit online at [famfaith.org](http://famfaith.org) or reach by phone at 908-464-5177.



*(above) Tony of St. John's Soup Kitchen and Rev. Jane McCready with delivery of 800 sandwiches and other items.*

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---

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**Online Holy Week Worship 2021**  
• **Passion/Palm Sunday, March 28** •  
Festival Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.  
• **Holy Thursday, April 1** •  
Special Liturgy at 7:00 p.m.  
• **Good Friday, April 2** •  
Special Liturgy at 7:00 p.m.  
• **Easter Celebration, April 4** •  
Lighting of the Paschal Candle  
Garden Liturgy at 7:00 a.m.  
Festival Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

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ALL SERVICES ARE STREAMED ON FACEBOOK AT  
FAITH LUTHERAN, NEW PROVIDENCE

## POLICE MOVE TO NEW FACILITY

The Berkeley Heights Police Department has officially moved all operations to our new facility, which is located behind the old town hall/police building.

Presently, the new facility is accessible from Berkeley Avenue off of Park Avenue. This will change after the old facility is demolished and we become accessible from the Plainfield Ave/Park Ave area of the old building as well.

Please refer to the blue POLICE signage on Park Avenue if you need to reach the new building. There is a call box at our new main entrance that communicates directly with a Police/Fire/EMS Communications Officer.

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## ROGER, FOR NEW JERSEY VETERAN COMMUNITY TO FIND SUPPORT

ROGER, a search platform for New Jersey veterans, launched on November 9th, just ahead of Veterans Day 2020. The platform was created by Backpacks For Life founders Brett D'Alessandro and Alexa Modero. After serving the Veteran community for 6 years, they found many inefficiencies and convoluted systems that prevented veterans from getting the care they need in a quick and efficient way. From lengthy intake processes to outdated information on organizations' websites, the Backpacks For Life team knew there was a better way to get veterans the care they needed.

ROGER allows veterans and their family members to search for programs, resources and care by a variety of factors such as zip code, branch of service, discharge status and income. With these customizable search features, veterans will see only the programs that they qualify for. This helps mitigate time wasted for not only veterans searching for programs that fit their needs, but also the service providers to

ensure the veteran is a good fit for them.

"Navigating through resources is hard...we get it. As a veteran myself, I was often running around in circles trying to find programs that I was eligible for and that fit my needs. When we're working with veterans, every minute matters and with ROGER we can work more quickly to get veterans what they need. We're excited to bring ROGER to the NJ veteran community." - Sgt. Brett D'Alessandro, Retired US Marine & President of Backpacks For Life

To explore ROGER, visit [roger.vet](http://roger.vet) or contact the ROGER team at [roger@backpacksforlife.org](mailto:roger@backpacksforlife.org)

Backpacks For Life is a 501(C)3 nonprofit organization that serves the homeless and at-risk veteran community. By regularly distributing backpacks filled with essentials to veterans on the streets and providing mentorship to at-risk veterans and their families, Backpacks For Life aims to bridge the gap between veterans and the resources available to them.

## COMMUNITY HOPE CONNECTS VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES WITH HOUSING, SERVICES

### CALL THE REFERRAL HOTLINE FOR ELIGIBILITY

Veterans and their families who are experiencing a housing crisis may be eligible for emergency assistance such as motel/hotel stays, security deposits, rent, rental arrears, groceries and utilities through Community Hope.

Community Hope's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program is currently providing assistance remotely. Urgent community-based services such as critical supplies and veteran wellness-checks are provided in person.

The increase in support services to veterans and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic is possible thanks to funding from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

To make a referral, please call the referral hotline at 1-855-483-8466 or email [SSVF@communityhope-nj.org](mailto:SSVF@communityhope-nj.org), or email Gema Diaz at [gdiaz@communityhope-nj.org](mailto:gdiaz@communityhope-nj.org).

Community Hope is a nonprofit that helps individuals, including veterans, and their families, overcome mental illness, addiction, homelessness and poverty. Learn more at [communityhope-nj.org](http://communityhope-nj.org).



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## GL STUDENTS PERFORM 'TOGETHER, BUT APART'

Music is what brings us together and our Governor Livingston musicians continue to shine (and perform) in spite of any obstacles thrown at them by the pandemic. Since GL was unable to have a winter concert due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first semester Jazz Improvisation class, under the direction of music teacher Josef Ellis, put together a virtual recording to culminate the semester and to share with the community. Throughout the course, students not only learn how to perform, they also learn how to speak the language of Jazz. For the recording, the students followed a 'click track' since they were unable to

record it together as an ensemble.

The first semester of Jazz Improvisation, an elective course offered at GL, consisted of 14 students from across all the grade levels and all at different points in their musical journeys. Throughout the course students work on many different jazz standards and the theory/history behind each tune. According to Mr. Ellis, "We chose 'Blue Bossa' for our final performance since it seemed to be a class favorite. I sent the students a 'play-along track' that outlined the layout of the tune. The students then had a few days to make a solid recording for the project.

Once they were satisfied with their recording, they sent it over to me. I then compiled the individual videos to make it into a virtual ensemble recording. The whole process from beginning to end took a few days to complete and resulted in the video that we have shared."

Mr. Ellis added, "Working with students during the ever changing pandemic can be difficult at times, but this group of kids was always up for a challenge. Whether we were in person or with each other via zoom, the students always put their best foot forward to create music together. Music is a universal language that binds us all together."

Thank you Mr. Ellis and all of your students for this wonderful and creative performance and for sharing it with all of us.

You can view the performance on the YouTube channel Governor Livingston High School.



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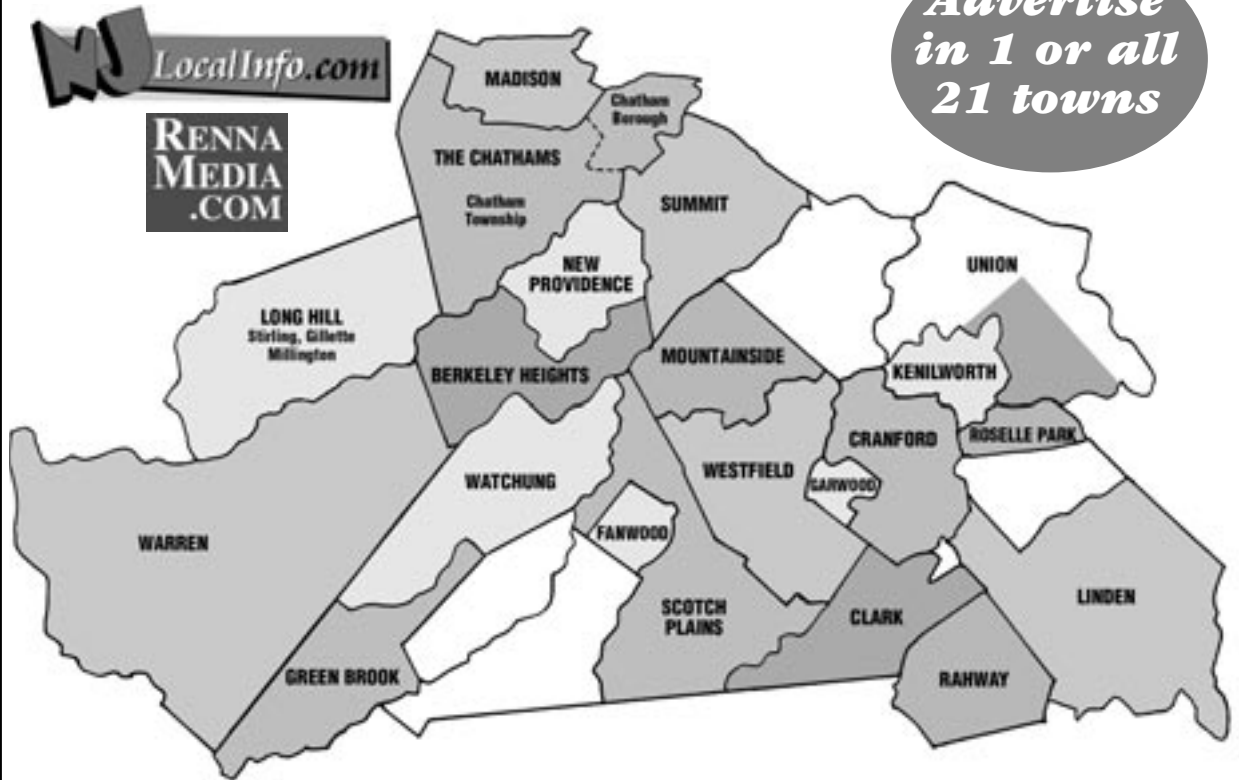
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