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WALTER SCHWEIKARDT NAMED NJ EXEMPLARY EDUCATOR

Submitted by Gary Miller

Versatile Linden teacher Walter Schweikardt has been selected as an Exemplary Educator by the New Jersey Department of Education.

He is one of just 93 teachers across the state who are being honored for 2020. He joins Linden School No. 1 fifth-grade teacher Amy Maloney in being honored.

“Congratulations to Mr. Schweikardt for this wonderful honor,” said Superintendent Dr. Marnie Hazelton. “This program recognizes the best of the best from around New Jersey, and Mr. Schweikardt has shown himself to be a dedicated and skilled educator in many different roles. For Linden to have two teachers honored as Exemplary Educators is indicative of the outstanding commitment of our faculty and staff.”

Schweikardt just started a position as technology teacher at Soehl Middle School, but has filled several different roles during his 23 years in the district. He spent 18 years as a third-grade teacher at School No. 2, before becoming an elementary math coach, which he called his “dream job.” He worked primarily at Schools No. 5 and 9, but also filled in at Schools No. 1 and 2. He spent the first part of the 2020-2021 school year filling in as a third-grade at School No. 9.

“Throughout my years in Linden, and in the many schools I have worked, I have enjoyed building lasting friendships and strong bonds with staff members, administrators, students, and families,” Schweikardt said. “Those relationships and bonds have been the greatest rewards of my career.”

School No. 9 Principal Dr. Larry Plummer said Schweikardt’s dedication goes far beyond his assigned duties, including volunteering at concerts and other extracurricular events, and acting as a mentor and counselor to other teachers.

“Mr. Schweikardt is a true teacher-leader in the broadest sense,” Plummer said. “He dedicates himself to the success of our teachers and the school. This new honor envisions the



(above) Linden teacher Walter Schweikardt brought his dog Buster, a retired therapy dog, into School No. 9 in 2019 when classes were learning about therapy dogs.

Photo by Linden Public Schools

work of more than just instructing; it presumes an expansive role in the school. It implies a go-to educator for teachers, staff, administrators and students. Mr. Schweikardt is the epitome of pedagogy, and education in Linden is enhanced because of him.”

The students Schweikardt is leaving behind at School No. 9 wanted him to know how much he meant to them. Parents and students held a drive-by parade past his house on February 24, then stopped to give him balloons and a class photo collage, and to show him posters that they made thanking him for his love and dedication.

“I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of kindness and generosity from my third-grade students and their families,” Schweikardt said. “I could not be more appreciative or thankful!”

Each year, the New Jersey Department of Education invites public school districts to participate in the Exemplary Educator Recognition Program. The goal of this program is to identify outstanding educators for special recognition. Exemplary Educators exhibit strong knowledge and skills, an inspiring presence, and a positive impact on students, colleagues, and the school community.

Schweikardt turns that positive impact into a lifelong commitment to his students.

“My motto has always been, and will always be, ‘Once you are my student, you are my student for life,’” Schweikardt said. “Therefore, you can always visit me and seek out any help that you may need.”

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NEW NOVEL SET IN LINDEN, WINS AWARD

Through A Broken Window, a new novel by Gary Turchin (Linden High School Class of '70) is set on the sandlot softball fields of Linden's elementary schools. The novel won first prize in the Best Indie Book Awards competition (BIBA), mainstream novel category.

"The story is part family drama, part disorganized crime thriller, part civil rights tale, and at the center of which is the constant of a youth softball tournament between Linden's schools. Ultimately, it's a coming of age saga of its 12-year-old protagonist, Jerry Epstein," described Turchin. "Generally, it's a period piece about Linden's culture, circa 1964."

Turchin was surprised by the award, which is for small presses and independently published books. "I entered the competition on a lark, hoping, at best, for an honorable mention. But I won the first prize."

Turchin grew up in the Sunnyside district of Linden. His dad owned a luncheonette in East Orange, where part of the story is set as well.

"There's a lot of autobiography in the novel, but it is ultimately fiction, and should be read as such. I made up the story completely."

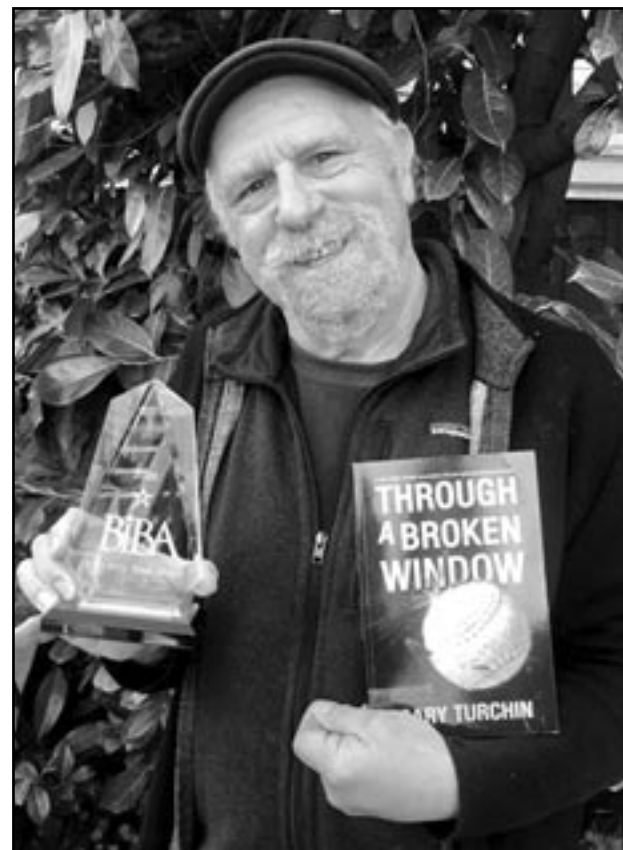
Turchin is a well-established poet currently living in Berkeley, California.

"You can take the boy out of Linden, but you can't take Linden out of the boy," he noted.

Turchin is particularly proud of accomplishing this novel while his body has been ravaged by Parkinson's Disease.

"I'm living proof the creative journey doesn't end with a diagnosis," he said.

The book is available directly from Turchin's website, www.garyturchin.net, or from Amazon, <https://rb.gy/pgk8ma>.



(above) Turchin with his book and BIBA winner statue

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LINDEN RESIDENTS GRADUATE THE TRINITAS SCHOOL OF NURSING

One hundred and six students received their nursing diplomas from the Trinitas School of Nursing on January 21st, including Linden residents Domenica Gonzalez-Robalin, Jackelyn Justiniano, Andreza Catalonia, Diane Kathryn Degracia, and Shamise Y. Edwards-Johnson.

“Trinitas School of Nursing is a National League for Nursing Center of Excellence in Nursing Education for the fourth time,” said Dr. Roseminda Santee, Dean of the Trinitas School of Nursing, which is affiliated with Union County College, and also awards Associates in Science Degrees to the graduates. “I have data to show that the enrollment and applications to the School of Nursing have increased. And during the pandemic, it did not falter. It continued increasing. You would think that people would no longer be interested. Instead, they go forward. We are very proud of our class of January 2021, and our faculty and staff, for doing this professional work during a very challenging situation and practicing all precautions including screening, social distancing, handwashing, and masking.”

Trinitas School of Nursing, operated jointly by Trinitas Regional Medical Center and Union County College, currently holds full accreditation from the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), and the New Jersey State Board of Nursing. The National League for Nursing has awarded the School of

Nursing a fourth designation as a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education status for the years 2015 - 2024 for Creating Environments that Enhance Student Learning and Professional Development. The School also holds a 20-year,

40-class national licensing examination (NCLEX) passage rate of 86.30% on first writing.

For more information about Trinitas School of Nursing, visit www.trinitasschoolofnursing.org.



Individual photos were taken by Grace Photography and edited to create the class photo.

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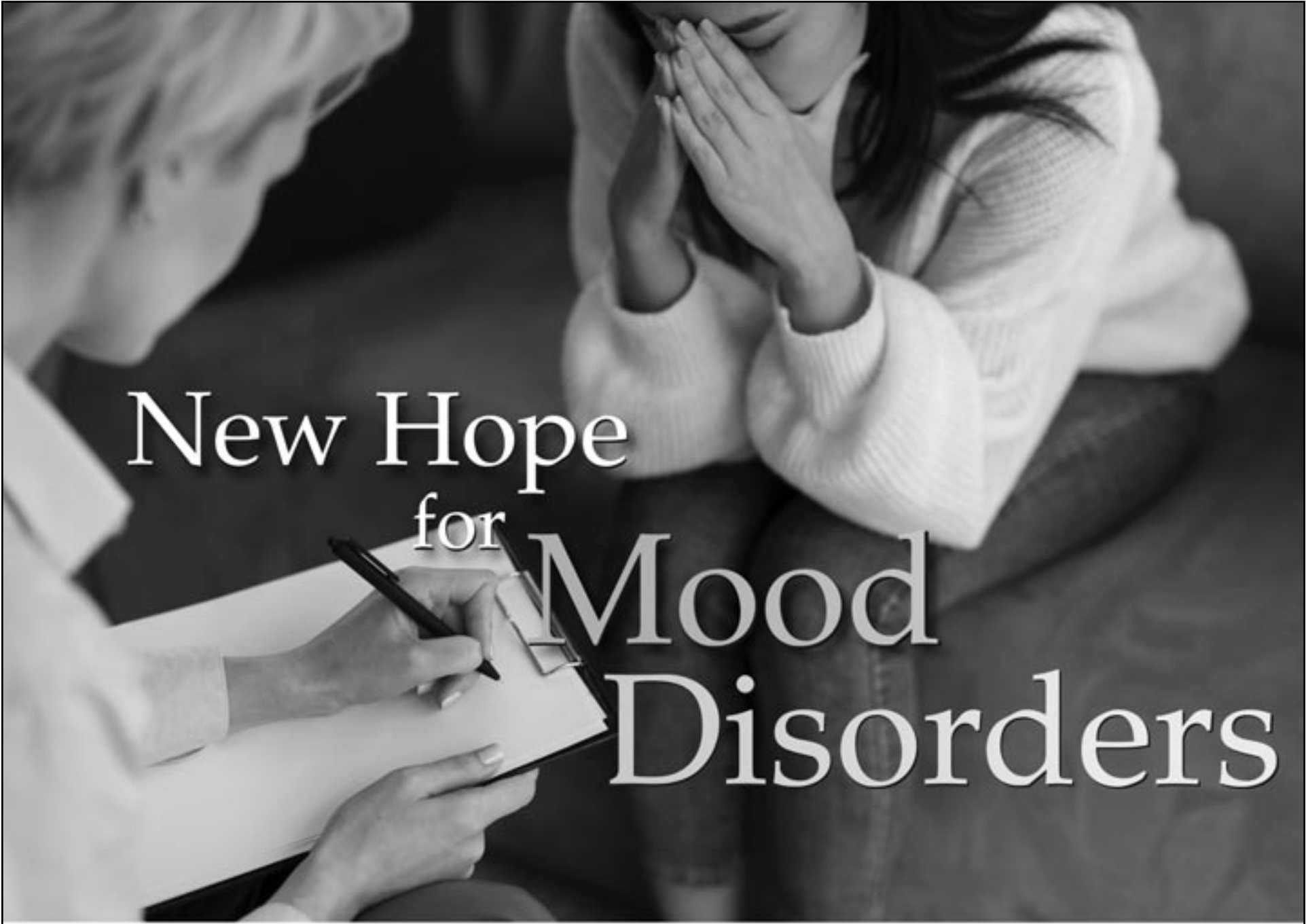
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LINDEN POLICE OFFICER RECOGNIZED BY MADD NEW JERSEY

Submitted by Lt. Christopher Guenther

Mothers Against Drunk Driving® (MADD) New Jersey held its 2020 Annual New Jersey State Law Enforcement Recognition Event in February.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the normally in-person event was held virtually on Facebook and YouTube. The event recognized the work of 250 law enforcement professionals and agencies from across New Jersey who showed outstanding dedication to DWI enforcement, prosecution and education during the 2019 calendar year.

"MADD's Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving endorses and encourages high-visibility law enforcement and continuing diligence on the part of our police, prosecutors and probation professionals," says Richard C. Mallow, MADD New Jersey State Executive Director.

"This event is our way of saying thank you to the officers who dedicate their lives to keeping our roads and highways safe."

Among those honored was Linden Police Officer Ariel Franjul. Officer Franjul, who has served as a Patrol Officer since 2017, was recognized as a Department leader in DUI enforcement.

"Over the past several years we have been very aggressive in our efforts to stop impaired driving," said Linden Police Chief David Hart. "Ofc. Franjul has demonstrated incredible commitment and leadership in this area, and we are very proud of the work he has done to keep our roadways safe."

ABOUT MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING

Founded by a mother whose daughter was killed by a drunk driver, Mothers Against Drunk Driving® (MADD) is creating a future of "No More Victims". MADD is the nation's largest nonprofit working to end drunk driving, help fight drugged driving, support the victims of these crimes and prevent underage drinking. MADD supports drunk and drugged driving victims and survivors at no charge, serving one

person every ten minutes through local MADD victim advocates and at 1-877-MADD-HELP. MADD's Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving® will end drunk driving through increased law enforcement, all offender ignition interlock laws and advanced vehicle technology.

Learn more by visiting MADD New Jersey's website at madd.org/nj or by calling 609-409-1220.



(above, l-r) Captain Joe Cacioppo, Lt. Chris Guenther, Ofc. Ariel Franjul, Sgt. Monika Oliveira, and Police Chief Dave Hart.

Photo by City of Linden



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I recently had the opportunity to work with Cynthia Goodman on the marketing and sale of a commercial building I had owned for 15 years in Rahway New Jersey.

Based on my experience with Cynthia and this transaction, I can clearly state that Cynthia is the best real estate professional I've ever worked with. Cynthia took on this difficult assignment at a time when the environment in Rahway was quite challenging. From the beginning, Cynthia demonstrated confidence and along with her charismatic persona was able to draw, disarm and persuade potential buyers. She took charge from the very start which was particularly exhibited in her communication ability with all parties to the transaction, not only keeping me fully up to date but more importantly coordinating issues with city hall, attorneys on both sides as well as handling my tenants through out the entire process.

Cynthia made the difficult task of selling a commercial building during a pandemic, look easy. Cynthia is a winner. - Scarperi

Dear Cynthia,
I'm very happy that we chose you as our real estate agent. Your knowledge and professionalism was outstanding. - G.R.

Thank you Cynthia for going over and beyond in helping me sell my home. - S. L.

My husband and I are very grateful for all of your assistance in helping us sell our home. We'll definitely recommend you. Thank you - Mr. & Mrs. Johnson

Cynthia,
I knew from the moment you answered your office phone and we spoke a few minutes, that you were going to be the agent to list my home. You were very polite, professional and enthusiastic. You were just as pleasant when we met. I also want to thank you for keeping me up to date throughout the entire transaction. I will definitely recommend you to someone who needs a good realtor.

- T.C.

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Thank you - I. T.




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2021 BLACK HISTORY MONTH POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

In celebration of Black History Month Mayor Derek Armstead, the City of Linden, and the Department of Parks and Recreation challenged students to put their best foot forward and push their creativity to the max by hosting the 2021 Black History Month Poster Contest. In these unprecedented times it was imperative to create a fun and inclusive activity for our youth. The theme of the contest was Black American Astronauts and was offered to students in grades

6 through 12. The submission deadline was February 19, 2021. Posters were judged on Wednesday, February 24, 2021
 The winners are: Janvi Patel, 9th grade (her beautiful artwork displays a picture of Mae C. Jamison); Bryan Figueroa, 10th grade (his beautiful artwork displays a picture of Ronald McNair); Anai Carpio, 11th grade (her beautiful artwork displays a picture of Ronald McNair); and Dior Weaver, 12th grade (her beautiful

artwork displays a picture that represents all Black American astronauts)
 All four winners represented Linden High School. Each was awarded with a \$25 Visa gift card donated by Mary Phillips, the Community Relations Coordinator at the Bayway Refinery-Phillips 66. The Linden Recreation Department would like to thank each and every participant and hope that you continue to artistically participate in the future.



(above, l-r) Anai Carpio, 11th Grade; Bryan Figueroa, 10h Grade; Janvi Patel, 9th Grade; and Dior Weaver, 12th Grade

Photos by the City of Linden

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TEACHERS’ BLACK HISTORY MONTH VIDEOS HIGHLIGHT LOCAL HEROES

Submitted by Gary Miller

Teacher L.J. McGhee wanted to find a way to make Black History Month feel more personal and relevant to students in Linden Public Schools.

He did so with a little help from his friends. McGhee and Allison Rotola, both Pre-K-disabled teachers at School No. 2 in Linden, came up with the idea of creating a video highlighting success stories of former Linden Public Schools students who went on to be successful adults. Most of the subjects to contribute to the video are McGhee’s former

school friends. “The video came about because I grew up in Linden and most of my friends are successful products of the Linden Public School system,” he said. “We all are still actively involved in either the school community or community outside of the school. I thought it would be cool to have real life people that you can see daily making an impact in your community that once were sitting in the same exact seats these students are sitting in now.”

The “Mr. McGhee and Friends” video is relevant to students throughout Linden, not just from School No. 2. Participants went to schools throughout the district, including Linden High School, McManus and Soehl middle schools, and various elementary schools.

McGhee and Rotola brainstormed the idea, then got the support of Principal Peter Fingerlin and acting Vice Principal Antoinette Modrak.

“They did an amazing job,” Fingerlin said. “Very powerful! School No. 2 and the Linden Public School District continue to inspire students, of all backgrounds, to challenge themselves and exceed their own expectations. This video is proof of that.”

Modrak added: “The work they put together created such a personal connection that has made this Black History Month celebration even more inspirational.”

Next McGhee enlisted his friends to be

subjects of the video. “When I asked the question about participating, my friends did not hesitate,” he said. “They sent me short videos about them and which school they attended and provided positive messages for the students.”

The response was so overwhelming that the video actually turned into two videos.

McGhee and Rotola also enlisted School No. 2 paraprofessional Sardou Sainvil to be in the video, as well as to use his extraordinary video editing skills to put the video together.

“Mr. Sardou did an amazing job of putting all the pieces together,” McGhee said. “The response was amazing from students, colleagues, and people in the community. Huge credit goes to those that participated and made the video so impactful to our school community.”

Many Black History Month lessons focus on famous African-Americans who made great contributions throughout history, but McGhee and Rotola felt everyday heroes from students’ own hometown may be more accessible to today’s students.

“I think it is very important to recognize the community heroes, and I was just fortunate a lot of them are my close friends of 20-plus years who walked the halls of the elementary school, middle school, and high school together,” McGhee said. “We are proud to be from Linden and want to help in any way possible.”



(above) A scene of Linden teacher L.J. McGhee in a video he created along with colleagues for Black History Month. The video aims to inspire students by showing success stories of alumni.

Photo by Linden Public Schools



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RAHWAY GIRL SCOUT TROOP WELCOMES LINDEN RESIDENTS

Submitted by Robyn Koenig

Girl Scout Troop 41748 is from Rahway, NJ. We are comprised of girls from all over Union and Somerset counties. We have girls ranging from 7th to 12th grade. We are an active troop, even during the pandemic.

We meet about once a month and do many different badges and community service activities. We have also traveled to many places such as Philadelphia, PA and Savannah, GA.

We always are happy to help in our community and look forward to doing the placemats for Rahway Food For Friends each year to put smiles on the faces of the community. Visit gshnj.org to join or learn more.



(above) Charlotte Koenig, Cadette, Lily Ternay, Senior, and Momyka Koenig, Ambassador.

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LYDIA PERNIA TAKES OATH AS ADVOCATE FOR LOCAL FOSTER YOUTH

CASA of Union County

Nine community members ranging from age 22 to 63 make up the newest class of volunteer child advocates for CASA of Union County, the only nonprofit advocating for the best interests of Union County youth removed from home due to abuse or neglect, and placed in foster care. Linden's Lydia Pernia is among them.

Superior Court Judge Marc R. Brown presided over the recent swearing-in ceremony via Zoom; advocates will now be matched to a foster youth or sibling set and begin putting their 30 hours of training into practice. The class includes both non-parents and parents, and such backgrounds as teaching, freelance, law and homemaking. In addition to Pernia, they are Jacqui Lenner and Nicole Sandstedt of Westfield, Laurie Litterio of Cranford, Rebecca Muston and Amy Saunders of Summit, Sue Pangis of Berkeley Heights, Tamara Parraga-Sez of Newark, and Jackie Rodriguez of Clark.

Prior to administering the oath, the judge shared, "I find the value of CASA volunteers immeasurable. ... CASA is so significant; I always make a point of hearing from the CASA volunteer during the hearing." Acknowledging that COVID-19 requires the swearing-in and court hearings remain virtual for now, he added, "I so look forward to being able to shake your hand and congratulate you. The assistance you will provide is, again, immeasurable. Thank you for doing this."

Currently, the organization serves just over 80 percent of all Union County foster youth in care. With a goal to provide an advocate for every youth that needs one, the organization has remained steadfast – despite the pandemic – in efforts to ensure its work continues. To that end, a fully online training and recruiting infrastructure was put into place, and protocols implemented to ensure advocates remained both connected to their youth and able to report to judges, and staff continued recruiting and training volunteers to help meet the need for youth still awaiting an advocate.

Said Executive Director Mariel S. Hufnagel, "In the face of the challenging life circumstances we are all facing due to the COVID-19 global health pandemic, this tremendous group of women still made a decision to give of their time and energy, and train virtually to become advocates. I am so proud to welcome them to the CASA family and can't wait to see all of the ways in which they positively impact the youth to whom they will be assigned."

Upon being court-ordered to a case, the CASA volunteer has access to the youth as well as foster parents, doctors, caseworkers, therapists and teachers in order to identify concerns and unmet needs, report to the judge and protect the youth's

best interests.

Contact Walia

at wworrill@casaoofunioncounty.org for details on upcoming classes and how to Change a Child's Story.



(above) Linden's Lydia Pernia was among nine CASA volunteers for foster youth who were recently sworn in during a ceremony held via Zoom. For details on upcoming classes and how you can Change a Child's Story, contact Walia at wworrill@casaoofunioncounty.org.

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WAVE OF HIRES, PROMOTIONS, AND RETIREMENTS IN LINDEN PD

Submitted by Lt. Christopher Guenther

There has been a lot of movement in the Linden Police Department as of late. Three veteran Officers, including two Supervisors, have retired since the beginning of this year. Sgt. Andrew Perrella and Ofc. Jeffrey Searles retired on February 1st after 31 and 25 years of service respectively. On March 1st, Sgt. William Bizub retired, also with 25 years of service. Each of these Officer have had distinguished careers, and while we wish them well during the next phase of their lives, we will certainly miss them.

Following these retirements, Detective Leon Paster was promoted to the rank of Sergeant on February 4th. Paster was previously assigned to the Juvenile Aid Bureau, where he was instrumental in the development and administration of the Department's Youth Academy. Additionally, Officer John Vasquez was promoted to the rank of Sergeant on March 2nd. Vasquez, who served as a Patrol Officer

before his promotion, also actively serves as a Master Sergeant in the NJ Army National Guard. Paster and Vasquez will both serve as a Field Sergeants in the Patrol Division.

The Department also added several new Officers to the ranks, including Recruits Pawel Kepa, Yokanis Tavarez, & Jesse Colon, who were sworn in on January 26th. These Officers went on to graduate from the John H. Stamler Police Academy on January 28th.

Ofc. Daniel Hernandez and Ofc. Katarzyna Dziadosz were sworn in on February 16th. Because they have already completed Police Academy training, Hernandez, who previously served as a Special Class II Officer in Avon by the Sea, and Dziadosz, who previously served as a Police Officer at Rutgers University Police Department, can bypass much of the standard recruit training and "hit the streets" almost immediately.



(above l, r) Recruits Pawel Kepa, Yokanis Tavarez, & Jesse Colon.



(above l, r) Ofc. Jeffrey Searles and Sgt. Andrew Perrella



(above l, r) Sgt. John Vasquez is sworn in by City Clerk Joseph Bodek.



(above l, r) Sgt. Leon Paster is sworn in by City Clerk Joseph Bodek.



(above l, r) Sgt. William Bizub and Police Chief David Hart



(above l, r) Police Chief David Hart, Ofc. Daniel Hernandez, Ofc. Katarzyna Dziadosz, and Mayor Derek Armstead

Photos by City of Linden

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BLOOD DONORS URGENTLY NEEDED CHRONIC SHORTAGES THREATEN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM AS POTENTIAL SECOND WAVE LOOMS

New Jersey Blood Services, a division of New York Blood Center (NYBC), wants to increase blood donations for area hospitals. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a chronic shortage across the country that shows no sign of improving. This is particularly dangerous given the looming uncertainty surrounding the pandemic's trajectory over the course of the next few months.

Blood is urgently needed. The region's healthcare system requires 1,500 donations each day to treat patients ranging from trauma victims and cancer patients to newborn babies and their mothers. Prior to the pandemic, blood drives were held at businesses, high schools, colleges and community groups. Most of those groups have had to cancel their blood drives due to COVID-19. Donations are at just 65% of pre-pandemic levels - well below what is needed by hospitals and patients in our area.

"This is an incredibly challenging time for our communities. We are now relying on people seeking out a place to donate. So far, that is not happening at the level we need," said Andrea H. Cefarelli, Senior Executive Director of Recruitment & Marketing for New York Blood Center.

We are asking our community to visit our donor centers or to find a convenient community blood drive to donate. "The Covid-19 pandemic has created blood shortages for all New Jersey

and NY hospital systems, said Cefarelli. Donated blood is essential for trauma and surgery patients in need. We encourage healthy New Jersey residents, aged 16 to 75, to donate blood at NJBS blood drives and donation sites now. Visit NYBC.org or Call 1-800-933-BLOOD (2566) to make an appointment today."

HOW NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS CAN HELP:

To make an appointment to donate blood, visit donate.nybc.org/donor/schedules/zip.

NYBC also needs more partners to step up and help host drives in large venues. If you have a space available and would like to host a blood drive, please sign up at nybloodcenter.org/support-us/host-blood-drive/apply-host-drive.

For information on the extra precautions being taken to help prevent the person-to-person spread of COVID-19, visit our website.

ABOUT NEW YORK BLOOD CENTER

Founded in 1964, New York Blood Center (NYBC) is a nonprofit organization that is one of the largest independent, community-based blood centers in the world. NYBC, along with its operating divisions Community Blood Center of Kansas City, Missouri (CBC), Innovative Blood Resources (IBR), Blood Bank of Delmarva (BBD), and Rhode Island Blood Center (RIBC), collect approximately 4,000 units of blood products each day and serve local communities of more than 75 million people

in the Tri-State area (NY, NJ, CT), Mid Atlantic area (PA, DE, MD, VA), Missouri and Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Rhode Island, and Southern New England. NYBC and its operating divisions also provide a wide array of transfusion-related medical services to over 500 hospitals nationally, including Comprehensive Cell Solutions, the National Center for Blood Group Genomics, the National Cord Blood Program, and the Lindsley F. Kimball Research Institute, which — among other milestones — developed a practical screening method for hepatitis B as well as a safe, effective and affordable vaccine, and a patented solvent detergent plasma process innovating blood-purification technology worldwide.

REGISTER FOR THE COVID-19 VACCINE FOR SENIORS 75 AND OLDER

The NJ State Department of Health has established a dedicated call center line for seniors 75 years and older to assist in registering, scheduling and re-scheduling the COVID-19 vaccine.

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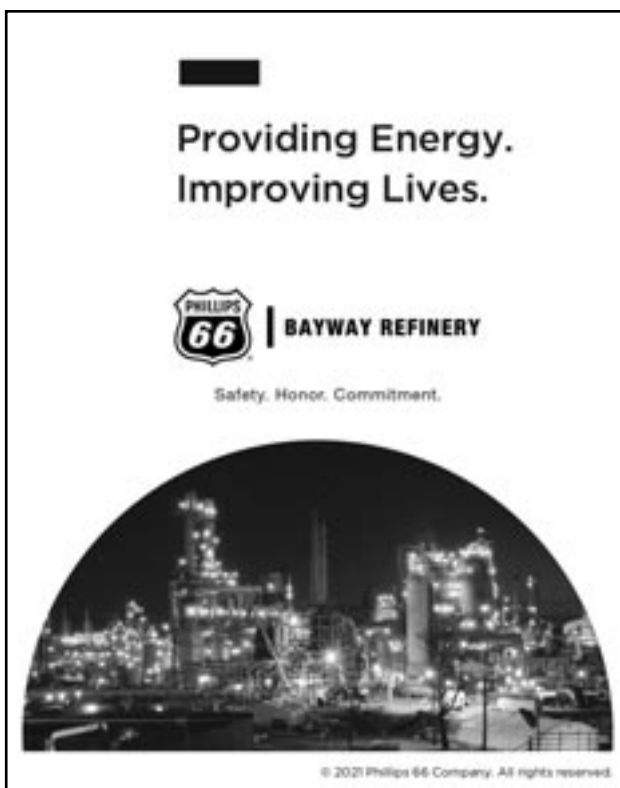
HELP FIGHT VEHICLE BURGLARIES

Submitted by Linden Police Department

Towns across the state have been plagued by burglaries to vehicles, and sadly Linden has not been spared. Help us fight this trend by following these few tips...

1. ALWAYS lock your doors - almost all of vehicles that targeted had their doors unlocked. Cars that were locked were spared.
2. Park work trucks and vans off the street if possible.
3. Make a report - make a report, even if nothing is taken. The information you provide may help identify a suspect or trend.

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PHILLIPS 66 RELEASES INAUGURAL HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT REPORT

Phillips 66 published its inaugural Human Capital Management Report, a comprehensive look at the company's approach to building a high-performing organization, with workforce metrics, details on the employee experience, and insight on the culture that makes Phillips 66 a premier workplace for its 14,300 employees.

"Our people are among the brightest in the industry," said Phillips 66 Chairman and CEO Greg Garland. "Creating an environment where they can thrive helps our company play a pivotal role in solving one of the most important issues of our time: how to meet the world's growing energy needs while achieving a lower-carbon future."

The report chronicles some of the company's responses to the unprecedented challenges of 2020, including the pandemic, a series of natural disasters and social unrest. Garland, noting the company's achievements during the volatile year, said 2020 "revealed in our people a remarkable ability to innovate, solve problems creatively, work together and achieve excellence."

The Phillips 66 report covers, among other

things:

- The key principles that shape the company's human capital management strategy.
- Phillips 66's efforts to build a more inclusive and diverse workforce.
- The benefits that cultivate an environment where all employees can thrive.

The full report can be found at phillips66.com/hcmr.

ABOUT PHILLIPS 66

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The Linden police Department joined the New Jersey Attorney General's "Project Medicine Drop" initiative in 2017, and installed a Project Medicine Drop Box at Police Headquarters. In 2020 254 lbs. of drugs were deposited in the box.

The department's Project Medicine Drop Box is located at 301 North Wood Avenue Linden, NJ. Residents may visit the Linden Police Department at any time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, to dispose of their unused or excess medications. No needles or liquids are accepted.

By giving New Jerseyans a safe and secure method to dispose of unneeded medications, Project Medicine Drop helps prevent the abuse of these drugs. This initiative also protects New

Jersey's environment by keeping these drugs out of the landfills and out of the water supply. More information about Project Medicine Drop, including the full list of Project Medicine Drop locations can be found at NJConsumerAffairs.gov/meddrop.



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BEREAVEMENT SEMINAR

The First Presbyterian Church of Cranford (FPCC) is preparing for its free eight-week seminar, "Journey to Wholeness - Healing the Grieving Heart", taking place every Sunday from April 11 to May 30 from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Everyone across the United States who has experienced loss of any kind, in the past or present, are welcome to attend, as well as those who have previously attended this seminar. This unique seminar will take place via Zoom. Registration is required to attend this event. Call Patti Williams, seminar founder and trained pastoral bereavement counselor, to register at 908-709-1341.

Eight sessions, each designed to lead a person through the process of grief, will help those who have suffered any type of loss better understand the process and learn ways to cope, while also practicing self-care. Patti Williams, R.N. and Certified Pastoral Bereavement Counselor, and Virginia Waters, PhD. Psychologist, have helped almost 3,000 people experience healing, find new purpose for their lives and feel joy once again.

Per Williams, "We are all navigating through especially challenging times due to the ravages of the pandemic, exhaustion from political conflict, depletion of our resources, the loneliness of increased isolation, and the unprecedented chaotic environment in which we currently exist. When you are also grieving a loss in the midst of all these stressors, life can become very dark and every day may seem overwhelming."

The sessions include learning about the stages of grief and understanding the tasks of the

grieving process, coping strategies and tools for the journey, taking good care of ourselves, dealing with changes, decisions, loneliness, holidays, anniversaries, building a support system and more.

Both of the leaders and all of the facilitators have experienced loss within their lives and share from "the inside out." Bring family members and friends. All faiths are welcome.

In the words of a recent participant, name removed for privacy purposes, "I have learned more along this heartbreaking journey than I ever thought possible. I have learned that you will never ever forget your love and that you are changed forever, but you need to give yourself permission to heal... I believe that your loved one only wants the best for you and you will be reunited one day."

The seminar is dedicated to Patti's late husband, the Rev. Dr. Bruce D. Williams who had a vision for this program and a desire to help others deal with their pain and suffering during their time of loss.

For more information about the program, visit firstprescranford.org

ABOUT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CRANFORD

As the body of Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit, the First Presbyterian Church of Cranford (FPCC), 11 Springfield Ave., Cranford, seeks to live God's Word and inspire others to embrace Jesus' commandment to love one another as the Lord loves us. Learn more at firstprescranford.org

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GRAMMY WINNER LEADS LINDEN EDUCATORS IN COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION ABOUT BIAS

Submitted by Gary Miller

It was the day after Christmas 2020, and Keyon Harrold just wanted to go to breakfast with his 14-year-old son. But as they were walking through their hotel lobby in New York City, Harrold's son was falsely accused by a young woman of stealing her phone.

The incident escalated into a heated confrontation that forever changed the lives of Harrold and his son, and gained worldwide attention as an example of the inequities faced by young African-American men.

Harrold, a Grammy Award-winning jazz trumpeter, recounted this incident and discussed its wider meaning with Linden Public Schools administrators and staff members on March 2 during a special virtual session called "Courageous Conversations: Adultification Bias and Its Impact on Children of Color."

Harrold was invited to speak to Linden educators by Superintendent Dr. Marnie Hazelton to help shed light on inequities in our society, specifically how they affect school-age children.

"Mr. Harrold is a Grammy-award winning trumpeter, but today he is joining us as a father."

The session was moderated by Dr. Nichelle Rivers, an artist, social rights activist, and school administrator from Long Island. She and Harrold discussed with dozens of Linden educators over video conference what is meant by "adultification" of children in the educational and justice systems.

"It treats children as if they were adults," Rivers said. "It really denies them the protections of childhood and excuses or even sanctions harsh punitive reactions to them."

Harrold said adultification is just part of the larger system of inequities facing children of color.

"It is something that has always been for black kids, brown kids," he said. "By the age of 9 or 10, they're no longer cute anymore, so you treat them the same way you treat an adult. Or you try these kids as adults."

Harrold talked about the December incident with his son as a prime example. He said the woman who accused his son had never met him before and had no reason to suspect him. Her phone was later found and returned to her.

"My son was just being himself," Harrold said. "He comes downstairs and he's wrongfully accused just because of the way he looks. There were so many people in the lobby, but he was keyed in as the person who stole her phone. The fact that that happens so often, that you choose the Black person to pick on, you choose him as the target that 'he's a threat to me.'"

"But meanwhile, this is a child. This child plays video games, looks forward to drums, and looks forward to having pizza. That's it. But you're looking at him as the person that's trying to take you out or the person who wants what you have. You look at him differently, and those kinds of things need to stop. And that really takes patience."

"The woman asked to see my son's cellphone, and the manager at the hotel demanded that he show his property," Harrold said. "At this point it's been 300 or 400 years of Black people showing their property, showing who you are, ultimately showing your papers. 'Show me that you belong here, boy.'"

"I tried to show my son at the time that, 'I need to preserve your dignity. You don't know what that is quite yet, but after this scenario you will totally get it.' I have spoken to him since about the fact that he didn't understand what is happening. The implication of someone making you prove yourself, making you prove that you actually belong and what that does to your identity."

* * *

The session featured a strong give-and-take dialogue between Harrold and Linden's educators. Harrold said showing students you have their back is key for educators.

"Instill trust with the children, that you have the best intentions with them," he said. "And also being able to hit them with anecdotes about the good, the bad, and the ugly. 'Trust me, I have your back.' Sometimes kids don't feel like they have somebody that has their back. Communicate with them on their mental wavelength while showing them there's something bigger on why you're saying it."

Courtney Serpone, a vocal music teacher at McManus Middle School, said Harrold hit close to home when he spoke of how he uses music to help repair harm.

"As a music teacher, this was so impactful and validating to hear, especially since I frequently reflect on how the arts have such an incredible power to not just heal but create true systemic and social change," she said. "As a district it is vital

for us to move forward having conversations around equity, specifically ones that are centered around race. By building trusting relationships, talking about our differences in open, honest, and productive ways, examining our belief systems, and continually reflecting on our practices, we will work together to dismantle systems of inequity and allow for all to thrive within our district and community."

Terri Todd, a secretary at Linden High School, said the session was inspiring and thought-provoking, particularly how it shed light on how "adultification" can affect Linden's African-American students.

Rivers, the moderator, said the session reminded her of the stark realities many children of color face when confronted with the presumption of guilt.

"Educators must reflect on their biases and unlearn them," she said. "To that end, he so eloquently charged all of us with the mission of intentionally impacting change to protect the innocence of our children."

In the aftermath of the phone incident with his son, Harrold said he was paid an unusual compliment by a friend.

"They said, 'Out of all the people this could have happened to, I'm glad that it happened to you,'" he said. "The way you handle it, the way you take it and use it to bring about change is important. To me that's the ultimate compliment."

Harrold's conversation with Linden's educators was part of that effort to find a silver lining in a terrible situation, and to turn it into something positive.

"I'm pushing with all of my might and all of my talent in hopes of bringing about some change for the next generation."



(above) Among the dozens of Linden Public Schools educators to take part in the video conference on bias with Grammy winner Keyon Harrold were (clockwise from top left) Board of Education President Doris Johnson, Superintendent Dr. Marnie Hazelton, McManus Middle School teacher Faten Sumrein, and Linden High School teacher Eloy Delgado, who is president of the Linden Education Association.

EARTH DAY RAHWAY RIVER CLEAN-UP — SAT., APRIL 24, 2021

All volunteers are invited to celebrate Earth Day 2021 with Boy Scout Troop 330 and members of the Rahway River Watershed Association in a clean-up of the Rahway River on Saturday, April 24th (with a rain date of Sunday, April 25th). The clean-up will focus on areas upstream and downstream of the Bloodgoods Pond Dam at Winfield Park, New Jersey. Please plan to stop by the parking area adjacent to the waterfall of the Rahway River by the dam at Winfield Park, NJ at 8:45 a.m. to register, pick up bags, gloves, bottled water and snacks, and receive safety information. Folks should feel free to travel to any part of the river where they would like to perform cleanup activities but we specifically will ask folks to work in small groups for safety purposes with folks socially distanced and wearing masks. The team working registration will provide suggestions on areas with large volumes of floatable debris.

Cleaning up a river and park area is a great way to celebrate Earth Day and if you haven't

participated in an event like this before, you will find it invigorating, and you will feel good about what you have accomplished...it is also fun and educational...especially for scouts and young adults as they always find something interesting.

The clean-up will generally be between 9 a.m. - 12 noon, but any amount of time or effort that folks can volunteer is appreciated. There is always a large volume of floatable debris to pick up. Over the 20+ years this cleanup has occurred thousands of folks have participated, including girl scouts, cub scouts, boy scouts, fishermen, local activists and citizens, and we pulled some amazing things from the river.

All participants should wear jeans, long-sleeved shirts, gloves and boots, and please wear a mask. Waders are welcome for folks who like to get a little wet. Each participant should bring a standard 5-gallon carry bucket with a handle (put your name on the bottom)...this makes for easy carrying of "stuff" for transfer to the large garbage bags. When we complete the event we do a basic inventory of the "big stuff" that we

removed....and within approximately 24 hours Union County Parks removes and disposes of all the trash. There is no RSVP required but if you need more information or think you will attend please let us know by e-mail at rivercleanup@comcast.net.



(above) 2020 Rahway River Clean Up.

PARKS & RECREATION APRIL EVENTS

The City of Linden Department of Parks & Recreation presents 'The Crafting Corner' this April. These are free programs and will be aired on Linden local channels 36 and 42.

Pre-Registration is required in order to provide class supplies to participants in advance. To register, call 908-474-8627 or register online at <https://register.communitypass.net/linden>

CLASSES OFFERED ARE:

Pony Bead bracelets

Wednesday, April 7, 2021 at 6:00pm

Made with colorful pony beads in a variety of colors. Make all 3: single, double and triple row bracelets. For ages 5-12. Kit Curbside Pickup on Monday and Tuesday, April 5th and 6th from 9:00am - 6:30pm.

Worded Bracelets

Wednesday, April 14, 2021 at 10:00am

Worded bracelets using beads and letters to inspire you and those who read it. Words like Love, Peace, Fabulous, Happy and more. For ages 50+. Kit Curbside Pickup/Delivery on Monday, April 12th from 9:00am - 4:00pm.

Chunky Beaded Necklace

Wednesday, April 21, 2021 at 7:00pm

Make a Chunky Beaded Necklace with an assortment of large beads made of wood, acrylics, glass, metal and more without any tools (Earrings included and premade). For ages 13- Adult. Kit Curbside Pickup on Monday and Tuesday, April 19th and 20th from 9:00am - 6:30pm.

Beaded Necklace and Bracelet

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 at 10:00am

Make a Faux Pearl, Fancy Acrylic or Gemstone beaded necklace with matching bracelet and (Pre-Made) earrings. No Jewelry tools needed. For ages 50+. Kit Curbside Pickup/Delivery on Monday, April 26 from 9:00am - 4:00pm.

Adult and Youth Craft kits can be picked up curbside on your programs scheduled pickup date at the John T. Gregorio Center, 330 Helen Street, Linden. *Drop-offs also available for Senior Citizen Crafts Only*

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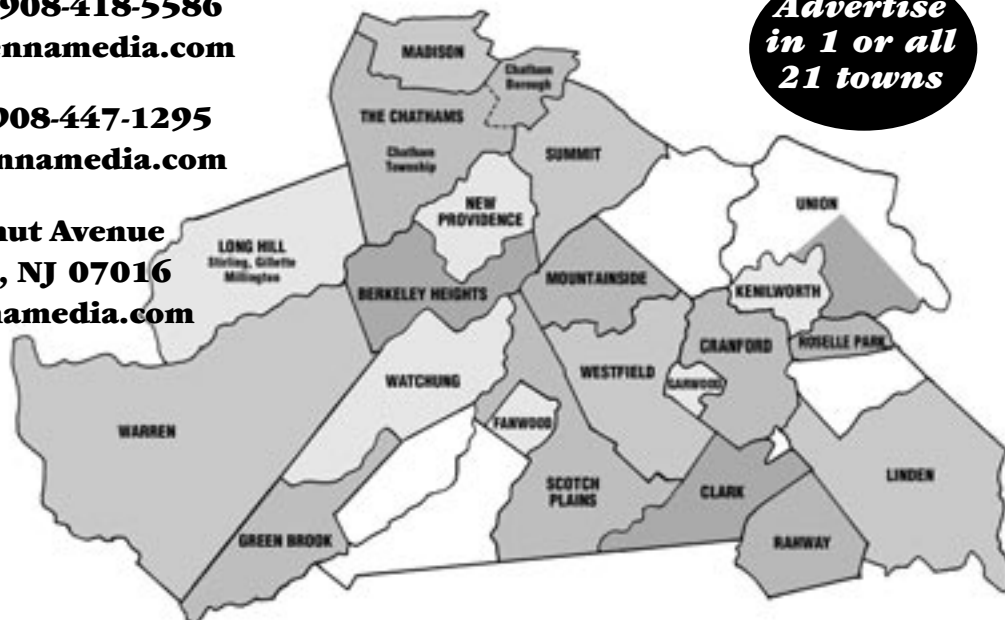
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