

# Scotch Plains NJ

## WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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### LOCAL STUDENTS IN A CELEBRATION OF DANCE EVENT

*Submitted by Maria Daniel*

The National Dance Foundation and iDance Ministry will host their 6th Annual Celebration of Dance Event to promote National Dance Week. Two SPF High School students, 10th grader Ananda, and 12th grader Valdón, and one SPF Alumna, Aliyah, will be participating this year in the National Dance Week celebration.

National Dance Foundation Ambassador Maria Daniel invites everyone to attend the first ever "Virtual" Celebration of Dance event. This free event is an opportunity to acknowledge our commitment to the local dance community while highlighting the benefits of dance. The event will take place Friday, April 16, 2021 from 6:00-7:30 p.m. and will be streamed on YouTube (iDance Ministry, Inc. Channel) due to COVID-19.

The event includes a variety of dance styles such as West Coast Swing Dance, Lyrical Jazz, Hip Hop, Stepping, Acro Dance, Broadway Jazz, Clogging, Breaking, Liturgical Dance, Tap, Bollywood, Graham-based dance and more.

This year will feature three local SPF High School students performing a Hip Hop Dance. The program will also include national and international dance companies such as the Syncopated Ladies from Los Angeles, CA and Shereen Ladha, a Canadian Professional Bollywood Dancer.



*(above) Two SPF High School students, 10th grader Ananda, and 12th grader Valdón, and one SPF Alumna, Aliyah, will be participating this year in the National Dance Week celebration as part of a Hip Hop group.*

*For more information, contact Maria Daniel, National Dance Foundation Ambassador, at [idanceministry@gmail.com](mailto:idanceministry@gmail.com)*

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**EGRWSS**

### FANWOOD REC ANNOUNCES SPRING & SUMMER PROGRAMS

Registration is now open for these Fanwood Recreation spring programs for children: Skateboarding Lessons, TGA Premier Junior Golf Lessons, Babysitting Certification Class, Karate Beginner Class in the Park, Design the Peasant Top, Design the Paper Bag Shorts, T-Ball Squirts, Parent & Me T-Ball Squirts, Soccer Squirts, Squirts Multi-Sports, Parent & Me Soccer, Parent & Me Sport Squirts, and Junior Tennis Lessons.

#### FOR ADULTS AND TEENS

Karate Beginner Class in the Park, Group Personal Training (online).

Registration is also open for these summer programs for children: Summer Park Program (day camp), TGA Premier Junior Golf Lessons, Junior Tennis Lessons, Babysitting Certification Class, Skateboarding Camp, Basketball Camp,

Golf Camp, Golf Squirts Camp, Soccer Squirts Camp, Parent & Me Soccer Squirts Camp, Multi-Sports Camp, Squirts Multi-Sports Camp, Parent & Me Multi-Sports Squirts Camp, and T-Ball Squirts Camp. More programs are still being added.

Registration is now open for these Spring 2021 (April-June) Fanwood Recreation programs for Seniors: Zumba Gold, Gentle Yoga, Aerobics and Meditation. All programs will be offered via Zoom. Each program will run for approximately 12 weeks and cost only \$15 for the entire program (Meditation is free). For more information and to register, please visit [fanwoodrecreation.org](http://fanwoodrecreation.org).

All these programs will be held outdoors, unless otherwise noted, and will adhere to health safety guidelines. For more information about these programs and to register, please go to [fanwoodrecreation.org](http://fanwoodrecreation.org).

\*\*\*\*\*EGRWSSDDM\*\*\*\*\*  
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# Scotch Plains NJ

WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

Scotch Plains Monthly is published by Renna Media. 9,500 newspapers are printed monthly and mailed to every business and resident in Scotch Plains.

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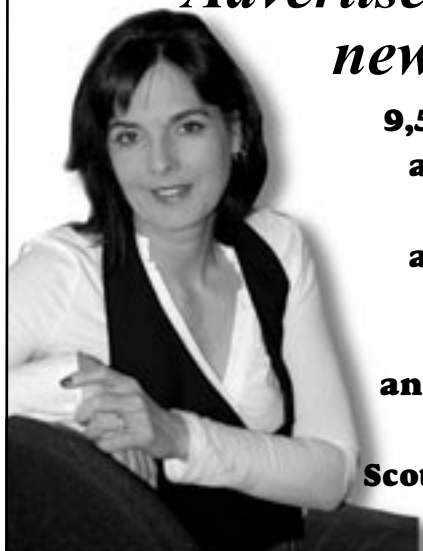
## PROMOTE YOUR COMMUNITY EVENT

Community service organizations, schools and sports teams are encouraged to submit news of upcoming events or highlights and photos from recent events.

**Organizations who are interested in submitting content, please email editor@rennamedia.com or call 908-858-4012**

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## FANWOOD-SCOTCH PLAINS COLLEGE CLUB

Submitted by Bernadette Hoyer

The Fanwood- Scotch Plains College Club continues to come together to face the challenges that impact not only its membership but also the needs of our entire community. Each month Pat Goldberg, Cathy Hirschhorn and Connie Salisbury, the co-chairs of the club's Outreach Committee, plan and organize a project and invite membership participation.

Club members recently donated personal and household items that will fill two backpacks for

previously homeless men to help them transition into affordable housing.

Since September, the club members have also supported local food pantries, purchased baby products for Hearts for Humanity, made a Thanksgiving meal basket for a local family, and donated to the Tiny Tim Fund.

To learn more about the College Club, its monthly programs or membership send an email message to [collegeclub.fsp@gmail.com](mailto:collegeclub.fsp@gmail.com) or visit the club's website: [fspcollegeclub.org](http://fspcollegeclub.org).



(above) F-SP College Club members, Joanne Sheffield, Pat Goldberg, Ellen Harrison and Jean Naugle prepare to pack up items donated by club members for the Urban League of Union County.

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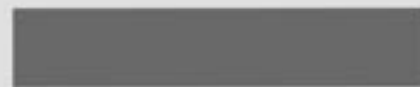
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## SHILOH VERRICO STARS IN COUNTRY COMFORT



(above) Scotch Plains Native Shiloh Verrico stars in Netflix's Country Comfort

Photo by Ballerina Biker Photography

Ten-year-old up and coming actress, and Scotch Plains local, Shiloh Verrico, can be seen in a starring role as 'Cassidy' in Netflix's new original comedy series "Country Comfort." The 10-episode first season started streaming on March 19.

"Country Comfort" follows a down-on-her-luck, aspiring country singer 'Bailey' (Katharine McPhee) who takes a job as a nanny for a rugged, widowed cowboy (Eddie Cibrian) and his musically inclined children. Shiloh portrays the emotional center of the family, 'Cassidy,' who is having an especially tough time coming to terms with the loss of her mother 2 years prior. Ultimately 'Cassidy' and 'Bailey' (their 9th nanny) bond over the fact that they are both suffering from losses. "Bailey" has lost her band and boyfriend, and the kids ultimately become her new band. The show is a family friendly series that can be described as "The Nanny" meets "The Sound of Music."

Shiloh began acting in the theater at the age of five and has since performed in a number of features and short films such as "Crown Vic."

Musically inclined in real life, she has always found joy in singing wherever she goes, and she has fun playing her ukulele and guitar, which she was able to use on "Country Comfort."

When she's not singing or acting, Shiloh loves to play football and spend time with her rescue pups. A huge animal lover, she fosters dogs in NJ with her family for an organization called Traveling 4 Paws, and they currently have a one-year-old dog who they are teaching how to live indoors in a home and to not be fearful of people. Shiloh's dream is to become financially successful enough that she can purchase a large piece of land to have a shelter/ sanctuary for animals, including farm animals.

Follow along on her adventures on Instagram @shilolovestosing.

## RELIEF FROM CHRONIC KNEE PAIN FDA Approved Treatment to Avoid Surgery

### DON'T BLAME THE ARROW FOR MISSING THE TARGET

Just like tens of millions of other Americans, you were looking for relief from your chronic knee pain. You thought Viscosupplementation injections might be the answer, but the results were disappointing and painful. Don't assume the treatment wasn't right. That could very well be like blaming the arrow for its path to the target when the problem might be the archer. If you didn't get the pain relief you were hoping for, chances are your injection treatment was off target. Unlike blind injections or even ultrasound targeted treatments found elsewhere, **Northeast Spine & Wellness Center** uses diagnostic fluoroscopy to make sure the area that needs treated is the exact area where the injection goes. This is the most advanced method of delivering this pain relieving treatment with 95% accuracy to give you the results you're looking for. The use of Fluoroscopy guided injections sets **Northeast Spine & Wellness Center** apart. The end result is you living pain free from your chronic knee pain. You can avoid the lengthy and painful road of knee replacement surgery. You can avoid the endless trial and error assortment of potentially addictive prescription medications. This treatment, using fluoroscopy guided injections has seen a success rate of above 85% in those suffering from knee pain related to osteoarthritis, and that includes people with bone on bone involvement. You've suffered from chronic knee pain long enough. Call **Northeast Spine & Wellness Center** now for a RISK FREE consultation.



### If Knee Surgery Sounds Scary, It Should

Have you have been told you are facing knee replacement surgery? Have you been told about all the downsides you could be facing? First and foremost, there are NO guarantees that knee replacement surgery will be the answer to your pain, but let's look further:

- Surgery is costly, regardless of the percentage of services covered by insurance.
- Surgery requires lost time from work and typically requires a regimen of rehabilitation and medications.
- With surgery, there is always a risk for unwelcomed complications. And you could be back to where you started, or worse.
- Medications will be required for relief from surgery and you have been down that road before. Addictions to these pain medications can cause potential side effects, something you do not want to experience.
- Rehabilitation can take years.

### Consider This Alternative To Surgery

**Northeast Spine & Wellness Center** offers you a real opportunity and a painless way to say goodbye to your knee pain without any surgery. Here are just a few of the important benefits you should consider?

- Diagnostic fluoroscopy accurately targets the pain, unlike blind injections.
- Guided fluoroscopic injections are virtually pain free, unlike blind injections.
- No lost time from work or family.
- No expensive or time consuming rehabilitation.
- No potentially addictive prescription medications.
- Recovery time is almost instant, not months or years.

### How Does This New Treatment Work?

Relief begins almost as fast as it takes to pronounce the treatment. It's called Viscosupplementation Therapy. To begin with, it starts with **Northeast Spine & Wellness Center** investing in the use of diagnostic fluoroscopy. This enables them to target the exact location of your knee pain with pinpoint accuracy. What follows is a simple injection that causes little to no pain, especially when compared to what you may be living with daily. That explains what you will see on the surface of this revolutionary treatment. What's taking place below the surface is how and where the natural healing process takes place. The injection of a Hyaluronic acid called Hyalgan. This gel-like substance was approved by the FDA in 1996. Hyalgan is a natural substance that mimics the synovial fluid that is already produced by your body in your joints. Osteoarthritis sufferers in particular see a reduction in this much needed synovial fluid in their knee joints. Without that cushioning layer of protection, the cartilage in your knee can begin to wear away leading to the rubbing of bone on bone. Through Viscosupplementation Therapy, this natural substance immediately goes to work reducing the swelling and inflammation in the joint and adding a coating layer of protection. Think about Dorothy taking the oil can to The Tin Man. You'll begin to feel that same kind of relief and quite possibly feel like you're ready for a dance down the yellow brick road to recovery yourself. And with a success rate of over 85% in alleviating pain associated with osteoarthritis, it's easy to see why this treatment is so readily covered by Medicare and by most major insurance providers. Diagnostic fluoroscopy to target the pain, Viscosupplementation Therapy to relieve the pain. Simple, fast and no surgery!

### Do you Suffer from any of these Symptoms?

There are a number of reasons why you developed Osteoarthritis pain. It can develop with age or because of heredity. It could be from repetitive stress from a job or some glory days in athletics. Of course your concern is with the symptoms you face daily and how to make them end, hopefully without surgery or the use of potentially addictive medications. **Northeast Spine & Wellness Center** understands the symptoms you have been living with and can help. If you have any of the symptoms below, please call us today. Relief is a phone call away.

- **Pain** - Whether it's a sharp aching or maybe a burning sensation, the pain can range from irritating to debilitating.
- **Swelling** - This can cause tenderness and soreness to the entire knee area, making walking or going up and down stairs painful, getting in and out of bed or bathtubs difficult and dangerous just name a few activities affected by swelling.
- **Stiffness** - Getting up out of bed or after sitting for a period of time gets more and more difficult. This loss of mobility can be more than a hindrance. It can be dangerous if you need to move quickly.
- **Loss of muscle strength** - This can lead to balance issues and the strong possibility of falling.
- **Joint deformity** - Not just unsightly, but painful as well.
- **Creaking Joints** - Can be painful and a sign of more discomfort to come.
- **Sleepless nights** - Losing sleep over your suffering is not just irritating, but potentially dangerous because of so many other health concerns that can be affected by loss of sound sleep.

### Let Me Show You Targeted Relief From Your Knee Pain

Every day, I see patients suffering from knee pain due to arthritis, osteoarthritis, sports injuries or other conditions. Many have been told that they are in need of knee replacement surgery. Other patients say they have been prescribed various prescription medications to deal with the pain.

Something else I see almost every day, are patients that have tried viscosupplementation knee injections elsewhere and found it to be a painful and ineffective experience because the injections were not administered using fluoroscopic guidance. Instead of using the incredibly accurate diagnostic fluoroscopy we use at **Northeast Spine & Wellness Center** these patients experienced a blind injection technique, which can be as inaccurate as playing pin the tail on the donkey.

Once I am able to explain to my patients about the pin point accuracy of using diagnostic fluoroscopy and the amazing results viscosupplementation can provide, they are thrilled to get started. They are even more thrilled when they feel the relief. Please contact **Northeast Spine & Wellness Center** today to schedule your RISK FREE consultation.

Call 732-827-0800

Scot Paris MD, FACS



### Here's what our patients have to say

"I'm dancing without pain. I can move with no problem whatsoever. I can go up and down steps with no pain." - Patricia G.

"Over 85% relief for the first time in 15 years, suffering with knee pain. My life is getting back to normal." - Perry O.

"After only four visits, I have absolutely no pain! The staff is "top-notch." - Quenton L.

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The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club's first online Trivia Night will be held on Friday, April 9, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20 per login and include four rounds of fun trivia. To purchase a ticket, go to [fsprotary.org](http://fsprotary.org). You'll have an opportunity to purchase up to three mulligans – this will give you the option to correct one wrong answer per round, for a maximum of three rounds. Each mulligan costs \$10. Finally, there will be great prizes, including gift cards.

A professional game organizer will keep things fun by asking all levels of questions on a variety of topics, including entertainment, sports, news and general fun. This is sure to be an exciting night.

Sponsorship opportunities are also available. These include the following: Event Sponsors (unlimited number available, and will be displayed during and after the event) \$50; Round Sponsors (4 total, will have their logos displayed during the round and will be mentioned several times during the round and the event): \$250; Round Sponsor add-on (includes a 2-minute presentation during the event): additional \$50; Prize Sponsor: \$350 (will be featured in all advertising, promotion and during the event, including doing a live presentation during the event).

For additional information about sponsorships, go to [fsprotary.org](http://fsprotary.org) or send an email to

[fsprotary@gmail.com](mailto:fsprotary@gmail.com).

All proceeds from the event will support the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club's various local and international projects.

FEELING SMART?

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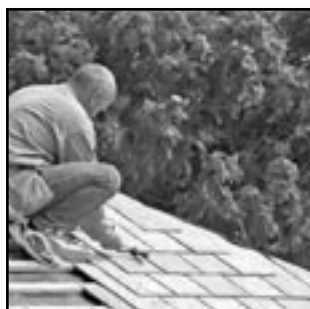
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## TAI CHI VIA ZOOM ON APRIL 19

The College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains will host Christine Hoyer, a Tai Chi/Qigong practitioner and teacher, who will present an introduction to Tai Chi/Qigong philosophy and provide an opportunity for participants to sample some easy, gentle, guided movements. The program will take place on April 19 at 7:30 p.m. via zoom.

Christine, a native of Fanwood and a graduate of SP-F High School currently resides in TN. She is an avid practitioner and teacher of the arts of Tai Chi and Qigong and while she learned them from the martial aspects, she now focuses her own practice and her teaching on the meditative side. She describes it as “meditation in slow motion that allows you to move out of your head, into your body and connect you to your own breath and energy. This non-impact exercise offers many benefits including building strength, balance, flexibility and coordination. It is beneficial for your heart, breathing and immune function.”

Anyone interested in giving Tai Chi/Qigong a try can receive a link for the program by sending a request to [tishisack17@gmail.com](mailto:tishisack17@gmail.com).

To learn more about the College Club, its monthly meetings or membership email the club at [collegeclub.fsp@gmail.com](mailto:collegeclub.fsp@gmail.com) or visit the club’s website: [fspcollegeclub.org](http://fspcollegeclub.org).



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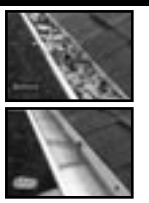
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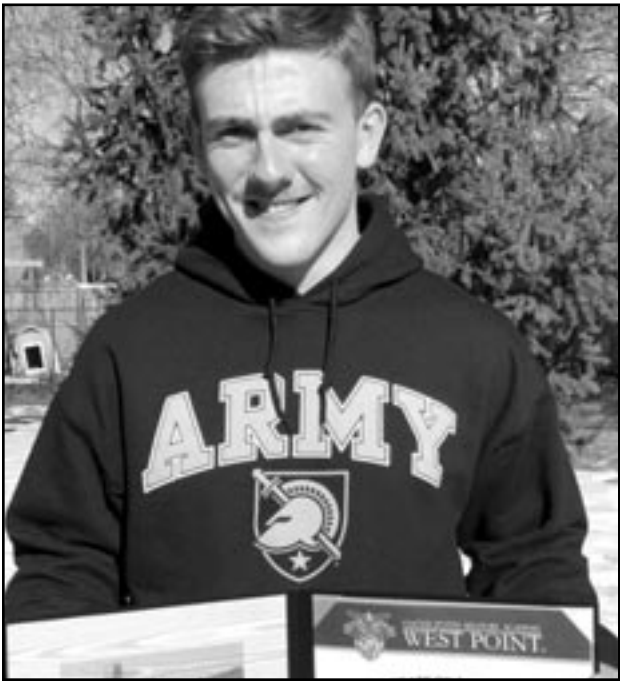
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## JACK PEDERSEN HEADS TO WEST POINT



Jack Pedersen is a 2019 graduate of Scotch Plains High School and has been appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point for the Class of 2025. He will report to West Point for Cadet Basic Training "Beast Barracks" on June 28. West Point is very selective, they receive approximately 15,000 applications each year for 1,200 spots in the Corps of Cadets. Jack's brother, Steven graduated from West Point in 2017.

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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).

## NAMI UNION COUNTY APRIL PROGRAMS

*Submitted by Julie Donohue*  
**Tuesday, April 27 at 7:30 p.m.**

Dr. James McCreath, Ph.D., Vice President, Behavioral Health & Psychiatry at Trinitas Regional Medical Center

Join us to hear Dr. McCreath explain how this program can alleviate decades old challenges by assisting individuals to receive the fully integrated care.

You must register in advance for this program. Email [namiunioncounty@yahoo.com](mailto:namiunioncounty@yahoo.com) or visit online at [naminj.org/affiliates/union](http://naminj.org/affiliates/union) or on Facebook at [facebook.com/NAMI.UnionCounty](https://facebook.com/NAMI.UnionCounty).

**Tuesday, April 20 at 7 p.m.**  
**Family Support Zoom Group**

This group is for family members and caregivers of persons with mental illness. Are you feeling stressed and alone in trying to cope with the effects of a loved one's mental illness? Join this peer led group meetings and gain insight from others facing the same challenges. This group meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Next meeting is April 20, 2021.

To register: email Denise at [namiunioncounty@yahoo.com](mailto:namiunioncounty@yahoo.com) with your name, town, and phone number

# HEARING LOSS CAN SNEAK UP ON YOU



*(above) 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@casaofunioncounty.org](mailto:wworrill@casaofunioncounty.org).*

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The Scotch Plains Public Library has a full calendar of programs for adults in April! These programs are all virtual, and registration is required to receive the Zoom link.

**Bagels & Books Roundtable**

Monday, April 5 at 10 a.m.

Join our Bagels & Books roundtable for an informal discussion of the books participants have been reading.

**Coffee and the Process of Brewing a Good Cup**

Thursday, April 8 at 7 p.m.

Melody DeGaetano of Black Drop Coffee in Scotch Plains will share her knowledge about coffee and the process of brewing a good cup. Coffee bean samples and a special take & make craft will be available to a limited number of registered participants.

**Evening Book Club**

Monday, April 12 at 7 p.m.,

The Evening Book Club will discuss The Splendid and the Vile by Erik Larson.

**COVID-19 Discussion**

Tuesday, April 13 at 7 p.m.

A representative from the NJ Citizen Action Education Fund will discuss the state's COVID-19 Special Enrollment Period for health insurance.

**Cookbook Club**

Thursday, April 15 at 7:30 p.m.

The library's Cookbook Club will individually prepare recipes with spring vegetables and then discuss the results when they meet.

**Songs of the Suffragists**

Monday, April 19 at 7 p.m.

The League of Women Voters will show and discuss Songs of the Suffragists, which explores the intersection of music and politics in the Women's Movement.

**Afternoon Book Club**

Tuesday, April 20 at 1 p.m.

The Afternoon Book Club will meet to discuss All the Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation by Rebecca Traister.

**Our Sense of Smell**

Thursday, April 22 at 7 p.m.

Dr. Robert Pellegrino of the Monell Chemical Senses Center will talk about Our Sense of Smell and the surprising insights researchers have learned about it during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Moving with Awareness**

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## LEARN TO MOVE WITH AWARENESS FOR BETTER BALANCE AND FITNESS

Try a different approach to fitness - one where using your brain is as important as moving your body!

Through funds provided by the All of Us Research Program, the Scotch Plains Public Library is offering a series of weekly classes in "Moving with Awareness for Better Balance and Fitness." Taught live via Zoom by instructor Yasmin Ofek, the classes are held on Friday mornings at 10 a.m. and will continue through April. No prior attendance is needed and you may join at any point during the series.

While gently challenging your muscles and joints, you won't be asked to push beyond your comfort or move too quickly. By paying attention, your brain can learn new options for movement that may be better than those you habitually and unconsciously choose.

Older adults in particular are encouraged to

join these classes, which are intended to address the loss of balance and strength that can occur as we age. All you'll need are a chair and sneakers to begin this gentle but effective approach to moving confidently throughout the lifespan. Live closed captioning is available for these classes. Registration is required: please sign up at [scotlib.org/events](http://scotlib.org/events) or call the Library at 908-322-5007, x204. You will be sent the Zoom link prior to the class.

Developed resources reported in this project are supported by the National Library of Medicine (NLM), National Institutes of Health (NIH) under cooperative agreement number UG4LM012342 with the University of Pittsburgh, Health Sciences Library System. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

## SAVE THE WORLD – PLANT A TREE!


Scotch Plains Fanwood High School Go Green Initiative is collaborating with Tree-Plenish to offset the paper usage at our school. SPFHS consumed over 2.4 million sheets of paper in the 2018-2019 school year, so our goal is to sell and plant 240 trees in our community.

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For more information, visit [tree-plenish-events.org/spf](http://tree-plenish-events.org/spf).

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## PILOTS TO THE RESCUE

### Home For Good Dog Rescue

On Saturday, February 20, a very special delivery was made from Aiken, South Carolina by volunteer pilots from “Pilots to the Rescue.” Home for Good Dog Rescue (HFGDR), a 100% foster-based non-profit organization located in Berkeley Heights, NJ, accepted an offer from PTTR to transport 15 dogs from high kill shelters in the South. The precious cargo arrived at Caldwell Airport at 5:30 p.m. The dogs were then placed into loving foster families, where they await adoption into their forever homes.

Prior to their departure from the South, the dogs were filmed for a special “Meet-the-Pawsengers.” Broadcasted on the live-streaming Internet service Twitch, viewers tuned in live to interact virtually and get to know the pups. They also met the crew: pilot and PTTR founder Michael Schneider, co-pilot Daniel Baumel, and social media influencer Savannah Vinson.

Toni Ann Turco, co-founder of Home for Good Dog Rescue, said of the mission, “This is a partnership a long time in the making. We are extremely grateful to Pilots to the Rescue for coordinating and executing this maiden voyage.”

Pilots to the Rescue is a non-profit 501c3 aviation organization, whose mission is to transport animals at high risk of euthanasia. They rely on their trusted network of volunteer pilots, who fund their own rescue flights.

### ABOUT HOME FOR GOOD DOG RESCUE

Home for Good Dog Rescue (HFGDR) is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization in Berkeley Heights, NJ. We rescue dogs from high-kill shelters in the South, transport them to our rescue and give them a second chance at life. As a 100% foster-based rescue, each dog is placed in a loving foster home until adoption. Since our inception in 2010, we have rescued more than 9,000 dogs and given them a loving home for good. To inquire about fostering, adopting or making a donation to help the HFGDR organization, visit our website at [HomeforGoodDogs.org](http://HomeforGoodDogs.org) and on Facebook [facebook.com/HomeForGoodDogRescue](https://facebook.com/HomeForGoodDogRescue)

### ABOUT PILOTS TO THE RESCUE

Pilots to the Rescue (PTTR) is a non-profit, volunteer-driven, 501c3 public benefit aviation organization. PTTR’s mission is to transport animals and people at risk. PTTR supports its network of trained volunteer pilots so they can focus on their missions and do greater good.



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

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](mailto:rivercleanup@comcast.net).

(above) 2020 Rahway River Clean Up.

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## ADVOCATES TAKE OATH TO SERVE LOCAL FOSTER YOUTH

*Submitted by Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan*

Nine Union County residents 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.

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 siblings 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. 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, Lydia Pernia of

Linden, and Jackie Rodriguez of Clark.

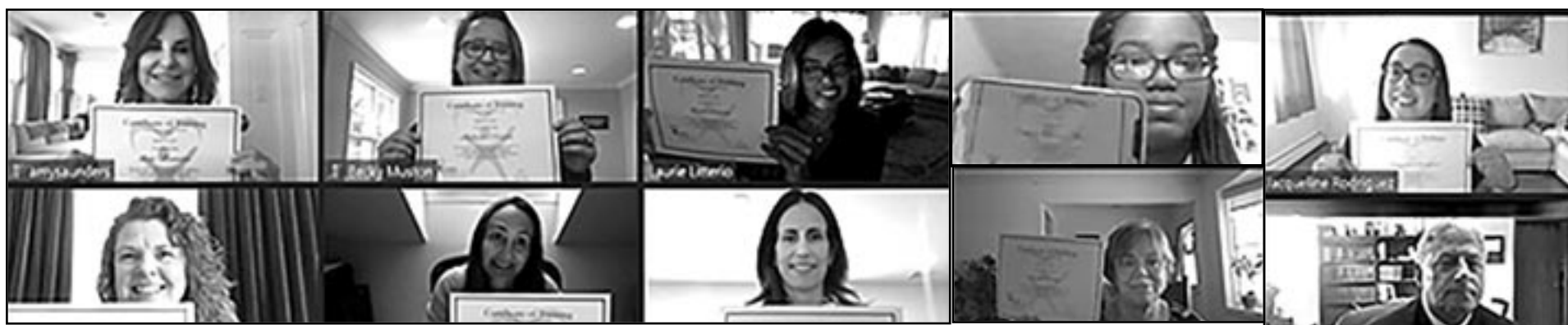
Prior to administering the oath, the judge shared, "I find the value of CASA volunteers immeasurable. Although I practiced family law for decades, it involved pieces related to a family, like divorce. In these cases, everything we do is attuned to the entire family and it's the most rewarding in my career. I didn't previously realize the extent of need out there – from poverty, substance use, mental health, and the guidance needed, all of it. 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.

Upon being court-ordered to a case, CASA volunteers have access to the youth as well as foster parents, doctors, caseworkers, therapists and teachers in order to identify concerns and unmet needs, and protect best interests.

For details on upcoming trainings and how you can Change a Child's Story, contact Walia at [wworrill@casafunioncounty.org](mailto:wworrill@casafunioncounty.org).



(above) 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@casafunioncounty.org](mailto:wworrill@casafunioncounty.org).

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## UGGLA, THE GREAT HORNED OWL, PASSES

On January 9, 2021, The Raptor Trust announced one of their very dearest ambassador birds, Uggla, the Great Horned Owl, had passed on at age 40. Chris Soucy, director of the organization, wrote a tribute to Uggla on their Facebook page and asked the public to share their memories of Uggla. At this writing the post received 1.1 K likes, 135 comments, and 187 shares.

The Raptor Trust is a 501c 3 non-profit organization located in Millington, NJ that provides free medical care to thousands of injured and orphaned wild birds each year. In addition, they provide educational programs to individuals, clubs, and schools about New Jersey's native raptors. Learn more at [theraptortrust.org](http://theraptortrust.org).

Chris Soucy, Director, The Raptor Trust, Facebook homage to Uggla reprinted below, reveals the history, and passion of the organization.

Uggla was an almost unimaginable 40 years old. In the research I have done, I believe he may have been the second-oldest Great Horned Owl that ever lived, and he lived almost every day of those 40 years right here at 1390 White Bridge Rd, Millington, NJ.

In the early spring of 1980, I was a freshman in high-school. The backyard wildlife rehab facility that my parents ran on our property had not yet become The Raptor Trust. It was still The New Jersey Raptor Association at that point: not yet incorporated and without the 501(c)3 nonprofit status that would follow. A "fledgling" organization, one might say. But Len and Diane knew their birds. Even though The Raptor Trust wasn't hatched until a few years later, they had been caring for wild birds – often in the laundry room or bathroom of the house – since the mid-1960's.

It was in that setting that someone dropped off a young floof of an owl. Just a few weeks old, the owl had been found by some well-intentioned local folks who attempted to raise it on their own. There are few things cuter than a baby owl, I'll give you that. But raising a wild baby owl is not

easy to do. It is also against state and federal law. The owl wasn't being fed a proper diet, did not have proper housing and it wasn't thriving.

Worse, even though it had been with the folks who found it for only a few weeks, it was already completely imprinted and dependent on humans, having been hand-fed and socialized to people. This youngster, still fluffy, had already lost his chance to survive in the wild. Since he was so young, and already so accustomed to people, Len and Diane made the decision to keep him as an education and ambassador bird.

My grandparents and my 95-year-old great-grandmother joined us for dinner one night that spring, shortly after the owl's arrival. Great-grandma Alma Gustavson, a first-generation immigrant from Sweden, saw the bird and proclaimed, "Uggla!" She explained: "Uggla" means "owl" in Swedish. And so, his journey as "Uggla" began.

For 40 years Uggla delighted visitors here. He was talkative. Children would inevitably "hoot" at him – he was an owl after all – and he would often return the favor.

He was inquisitive. Having been imprinted, he had no fear of humans and would often sit out during the day, right up at the front of his enclosure, engaging passers-by with his big, yellow eyes and that kind of funny way he always tilted his head to one side. He really seemed to enjoy it.

He was photogenic. He has graced many of our gift shop cards, mugs and other items, including a holiday card we sent out last month.

Not long ago, some of my young second cousins came to visit – little guys two generations further down the family tree than me. While passing by Uggla's enclosure, it occurred to me that SIX generations of my family knew this one amazing bird. That's hard to wrap my head around, but there it is. SIX.

Later in his life, Uggla's voice changed and began to make this kind of scratchy, crackly-sounding call. Len used to say that he had "lost his hooter." He was still as talkative as ever; he just sounded like a grumpy, little old man

mumbling under his breath. In owl-culture, perhaps that's exactly what he was.

There would be no way to even begin to count the number of people this one wonderful bird met, delighted, hooted at, taught. Tens of thousands for sure. Possibly hundreds of thousands.

While it would have been better in every way for him to have lived a natural life in the wild, he did live an amazing and meaningful life as an ambassador for his species and for all wildlife. Godspeed, old man.

If you have your own story about this wonderful owl, please do share. We know that many of you loved Uggla just as much as we did. Visit us on Facebook at The Raptor Trust.

### **RAPTOR TRUST VIRTUAL EVENTS THIS SPRING**

The Raptor Trust is a 501© 3 non-profit organization located in Millington, NJ that provides free medical care to thousands of injured and orphaned wild birds each year. In addition, they provide educational programs to individuals, clubs, and schools about New Jersey's native raptors.

The Raptor Trust is offering the following virtual program options this spring:

### **RAPTOR CONFERENCE CALL**

\$30 for two screens/households. 20 minutes with a TRT educator and one of our ambassador birds.

### **SMALL GROUP PROGRAM**

\$60 for up to 12 participants. 40-minute program led by one of the TRT educators and an ambassador bird. Program topics vary.

### **LARGE GROUP ADULT PROGRAM**

\$80 for up to 50 participants. 45-minute program led by one of the TRT educators and an ambassador bird. Program topics vary.

### **TEACHER-MODERATED CLASSROOM PROGRAMS**

\$80 for 45-minute program. Maximum 35 students and 2 teachers. Choose from a variety of lesson plans that can be integrated into your existing curriculum.

For more information and to book a program please visit [theraptortrust.org/education/programs](http://theraptortrust.org/education/programs)



(above) Uggla, the Great Horned Owl

Photo by The Raptor Trust

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## THE IMPACT OF COVID - A LOOK BACK WITH GRATITUDE

On January 24, Home for Good Dog Rescue (HFGDR) achieved a milestone of the 9,000th dog adoption in just ten years since our founding. This new year is full of hope and thus, we look back to 2020 with gratitude to our friends, supporters, and community partners who lifted us up in the midst of the COVID pandemic.

Like so many others, the effects of the pandemic certainly presented challenges to the rescue. The immediate objective was to ensure the safety of our staff, volunteers, foster and adoptive families while continuing to carry out our mission of saving the lives of thousands of dogs living in squalid conditions, abusive

situations, or on death row at high-kill shelters in the South.

From the pandemic, two trends emerged. First, changes in household routines and more time spent at home increased the community's interest in dog fostering and adoption. Second, the financial hardship of some households in the South exacerbated the need for dog rescue and respite in already severely life-threatening conditions.

"A year of quarantine and isolation has provided an opportunity for all of us to take stock of what is important in our lives," says Bernie Cicirelli, HFGDR Board Member and Director

of Operations. "At the top of that list are our families, of which our dogs are an integral part."

The local community rallied around our mission and offered support in so many ways and for that, we are grateful. An emergency aid grant from the Berkeley Heights Business and Civic Association was a lifeline for the rescue. Other resources came in the way of supply and gift card donations and an increased participation in fostering and adoption.

The heart and generosity of our community continues to be a beacon of hope and light to pave the way to an even greater impact in 2021. On behalf of the dogs we save, and the families who have been enriched through fostering and adoption, we extend our deepest appreciation for the support of our community.

Sincerely,

*The Home for Good Dog Rescue Team*



(above) Home for Good Dog Rescue extends a "thank you" to the community and celebrates their 9,000th dog adoption.

### WHO WE ARE:

Home for Good Dog Rescue is a 100% foster-based, non-profit 501(c)(3) dog rescue established in 2010 in Summit, New Jersey, with offices in Berkeley Heights. We socialize, care for, and provide rescue dogs with life-saving medical care at our Wellness Center in Aiken, South Carolina, transport them to New Jersey, and nurture them in our network of foster families while they await adoption into loving homes - giving them a second chance at life.

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## THE PURIM AMAZING RACE

*Submitted by Laura Queller*

Congregation Beth Israel of Scotch Plains and Temple Emanu-El of Westfield, along with area Jewish camps, conducted The Purim Amazing Race on Sunday, February 21, in advance of the Jewish holiday of Purim. The Purim Amazing Race provided a safe and fun way for families to celebrate the festive holiday during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Purim Amazing Race was modeled after the popular television show, The Amazing Race.

The scavenger hunt was open to congregants of all ages and abilities. To enroll, participants contributed items for the local food pantry, fulfilling the Purim commandment of giving gifts to the needy.

Approximately 75 teams of families raced around the towns of Scotch Plains and Westfield in their cars, with the goal of helping Queen Esther save the Jewish people, the way she did in the Biblical Purim story. Participants stopped at places such as the YMCA, the JCC of Central NJ, and Kramer Park in Scotch Plains, and visited sites such as the Westfield Memorial Library, Mindowaskin Park, and McKinley School in Westfield. At each of the 15 outdoor locations, contestants participated in missions that were both educational and enjoyable, such as designing a crown for Queen Esther, or performing a family talent act for the Biblical King Ahasuerus' pageant.

"We needed to replace the traditional Purim carnival held in a crowded indoor space with an alternative activity held outside," said Aviva Tilles, Director of Congregational Learning at Congregation Beth Israel. "We collaborated with Temple Emanu-El because our two synagogues faced the same challenges. And we realized that we could develop and implement something

really great if we joined forces."

Aviva Tilles partnered with Temple Emanu-El's Samara Schwartz, Director of Youth Learning & Engagement, and Samantha Eichert, Assistant Director of Youth Learning & Engagement.

Area Jewish camps also helped with the Purim Amazing Race by creating and running four of the stops along the course. The camps included: Camp Yachad at the JCC of Central NJ; Camp Nah-Jee-Wah; Camp Ramah in the Berkshires; and Camp Harlam. Additionally, One Happy Camper, a non-profit organization, provided additional funding for the Purim Amazing Race because of the camps' participation.

Feedback from parents and children alike was positive; many congregants remarked afterwards that they preferred the scavenger hunt to the usual Purim carnival.

"What an amazing job ... you and your 'leaders' did - 15 stops, all those activities, but moreover, an opportunity to get outside, interact with 'real people', have a few laughs ... and just get silly," wrote Kathi Wolder, a congregant from Temple Emanu-El. "We sang; we danced; we did crafts; we ran; and we learned a little more about Purim. Everyone was so cheery, and embracing, and welcoming."



*(above) Congregation Beth Israel of Scotch Plains and Temple Emanu-El of Westfield, along with area Jewish camps, conducted The Purim Amazing Race on Sunday, February 21, in advance of the Jewish holiday of Purim.*



## 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](http://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](http://firstprescranford.org)

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## BLOOD DONATION REMAINS ESSENTIAL

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For patients in the emergency room, fighting cancer or coping with a life-threatening illness, help can't wait. Their health is reliant on the selfless generosity of blood donors. However, the blood supply continues to face challenges from the ongoing pandemic and extreme winter weather that impacted much of the U.S. last month.

More donors, especially those with type O blood, are needed now to ensure that patients have lifesaving blood products available for emergencies and everyday medical treatments.

Schedule a blood donation appointment by downloading the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org), calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or enabling the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device.

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

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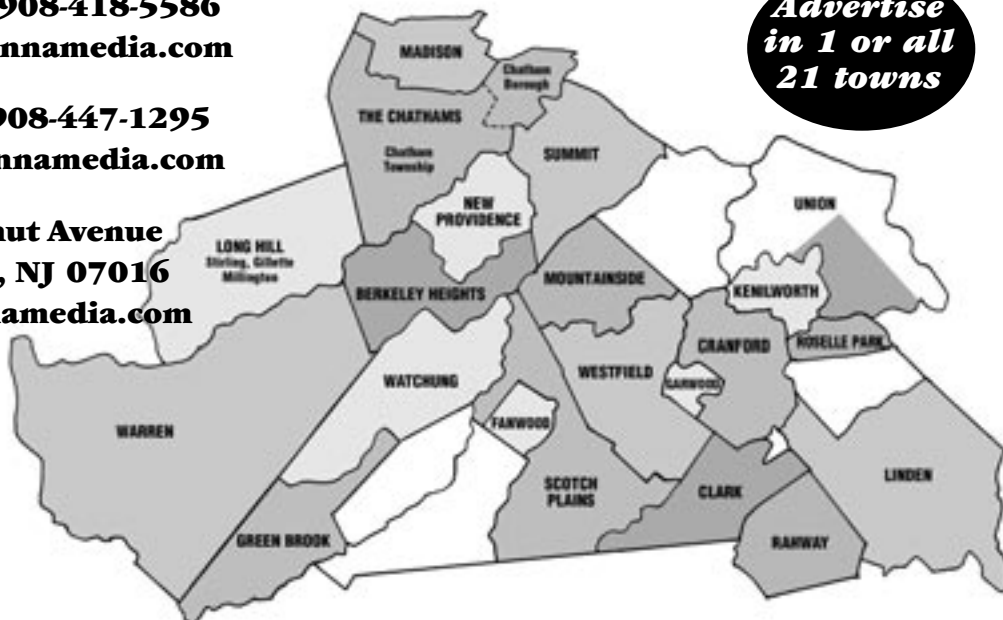
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