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Tina Renna: 908-418-5586

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Joe Renna: 908-447-1295

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HANUKAH: A CELEBRATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

By Rabbi Paul David Kerbel Temple Beth El Mekor Chayim, Cranford



Hanukkah is one of the Jewish religion's most popular holidays. No doubt, part of Hanukkah's popularity derives from its proximity to Christmas and the bundling of a variety of religious, ethnic and cultural holidays that occur at this time of year creating a festive holiday season.

You might be surprised to know however, that unlike Christmas, Hanukkah is not one of Judaism's major holidays. That billing goes to Rosh HaShanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Fasting and Atonement) and the Pilgrimage Festivals of Passover, Sukkot and Shavuot that are explained and discussed in The Book of Leviticus (Chapter 23).

But Hanukkah is important for many reasons. In the first place, next to the Passover Seder, more Jews celebrate Hanukkah than any other Jewish ritual or holiday observance. We celebrate two miracles on Hanukkah: the military victory of a small, outmanned Jewish army winning out over a superior Syrian-Greek King Antiochus Epiphanes, who forbade the Jewish people to study their scriptures, keep their calendar, observe their holidays or offer sacrifices in the Temple. The King wanted the Jews to sacrifice to the Greek Gods and study the best of Greek culture. King Antiochus was jealous of the God of Israel and sought to eradicate distinctive Jewish practices and culture.

The second miracle of Hanukkah is the story in Rabbinic tradition, that when the revolt ended and the Jewish people sought to rededicate and purify the Holy Temple in Jerusalem that had been defiled by the decree of King Antiochus by lighting the Menorah, the religious candelabrum that served as a major symbol of religious Jewish life in the Temple, that there was only enough purified olive oil to last for one day, but the lamp remained burning for eight days!

But I also think the story of Hanukkah teaches and shares important lessons for our friends and neighbors of other faiths about religious faith and belief. To me, Hanukkah represents the first victory in human history of religious freedom. In a certain sense, Hanukkah is a universal holiday of religious freedom. If the Jewish people had lost this physical and spiritual war in 164 BCE (before the common era) and 164 years before the birth of Jesus, Judaism would have died out and since Christianity and Islam emanate out of and are connected to Judaism, there would not be today any adherents of these great faiths. Judaism, Christianity and Islam exist today because of the religious faith of these defenders of Judaism to stand up for their beliefs and rights.

Hanukkah also teaches religious tolerance and the celebration of pluralism. Hanukkah reinforces the rights of a minority to stand up for its beliefs while living in a larger secular or religious culture of other religious faiths. Our country was built on

the idea of freedom of religion and the freedom to live by and practice the customs, rituals and commandments of our respective religions. Hanukkah teaches me that sometimes miracles happen in the quiet constancy of our everyday practice of our respective customs, prayers and traditions and our interaction and bonds of friendship and community responsibility with our neighbors of all religions and ethnic groups.

The most enduring symbol of both Hanukkah and Christmas is the celebration of light. We light a Menorah to symbolize the miracles of our survival and the dedication of our people - for over four-thousand years even in the midst of persecution or the attempt to suppress our faith and practice - to practice our customs and traditions with hope and confidence in the future as a monotheistic ethical religion and culture.

For our Christian friends, the lights of the

Christmas season represent essential religious beliefs including joy, peace, kindness and service to our fellow human beings. Even with the challenges the Covid-19 pandemic has caused, among the most difficult in our lifetimes, may the lights of our respective traditions strengthen our commitment to our respective faiths and our obligation and opportunity to make a difference in our community and in the world at large. As one great rabbi wrote: "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness." Wishing all of us a meaningful holiday season!

Rabbi Paul David Kerbel is the rabbi of Temple Beth El Mekor Chayim in Cranford. He is active in the Cranford Clergy Association, the Union County Board of Rabbis, the Rabbinic Roundtable of the Jewish Federation of MetroWest, NJ and on the New Jersey Advisory Board of The Anti-Defamation League.

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SOUNDS OF THE SEASON - FREE LIVE HOLIDAY CONCERT

Townley Presbyterian Church and Salem Roadhouse Café proudly present a free holiday concert on Saturday, December 4, 2021. This special concert will feature multiple performers in several musical genres, from rock, to classical, to jazz, pop — and, of course, those familiar, traditional holiday songs. To allow for audience spacing, the concert will be held in the church sanctuary. Masks are required, even with vaccination.

Noted performers include classical organ by Townley's resident organist, Bill Jensen. Piano/organ duets with Jeff Manno and Bill Jensen; jazz/pop with Michaela McClain and Meredith Forman; piano and vocals with Cynthia and Jeff Manno; jazz with Carrie Jackson and Radam Schwartz; Blues with Robert and Paulina Hill; rock/pop and original holiday tunes by Michael Zuko with Erica Cohn, Jeff Philips and Jenn Starr; classical with Erica Cohn, Cynthia Manno and Jenn Starr. Instrumentals and several mix/match performances with the performers are planned. There will be time for audience participation with sing-alongs featuring well known holiday classics.

The holiday extravaganza will feature special lighting and Christmas decorations.

You won't want to miss this live, up-front, and personal show.

All ages are welcome. It's a wholesome show, so bring the entire family! Doors open 7:30 p.m.. The show starts at 8:00 p.m. Admission is free.

A free-will offering will be accepted for the benefit of Union County Family Promise. Proceeds will help Family Promises program which helps to end family homelessness.

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2021
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All programs are on Zoom. To register for all events go to: <https://uplnj.org/events/list/>. Take a look.

Hand Lettering Holiday Cards (Zoom)

Fri., Dec. 3 at 7:00 p.m.

Swetha Swenoy returns to UPL to teach you how to add some flair to your holiday cards!

Learn the basics of hand lettering and make your own hand-lettered holiday cards! No need for any fancy tools - start with what you have!

Registration is limited.

Off the Shelf Book Club (Zoom)

Thursday, 12/16 @ 7:00 p.m.

This month the group reads *The Art Forger* by

B.A. Shapiro. New members are always welcome. This title is available on Hoopla with your Union Public Library card.

Meditation (Zoom)

Thursdays at 11:30 a.m.

Join Bindu Bhatt for a virtual meditation session. No experience necessary. Bindu has practiced meditation for over 30 years and would like to share her insight with you.

Beginners Flow Yoga (Zoom)

Thursdays at 6:00 p.m.

This class will lead you through the foundations of yoga postures, body awareness and alignment, relaxation of the mind, and a connection with the breath. Learn to improve muscle strength, promote flexibility, and build your own yoga program specifically for your mind and body.

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IMAGINE IS SEEKING VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS

Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss offers free peer grief support groups for grieving families that are facilitated by a wonderful group of trained volunteers. Imagine's volunteers are an essential part of Imagine's programs and they're looking to grow their community of facilitators. Are you interested in joining Imagine's team of volunteers? If so, we'd like to tell you more about Imagine's programs.

Imagine offers free peer support groups for children ages 3-18 who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling or close family member. Groups are also available for young adults ages 18-30, and for the parents and guardians of the children in the program. Groups for Spanish speaking bereaved adults are also available. All groups are currently being held virtually, with some set to transition to in-person as soon as it is safe to do so. Other groups will remain virtual.

Support groups are facilitated by trained adult volunteers who attend a three-day training totaling 24 hours, as well as regular continuing education. Volunteers come from all walks of life and no special background is required other than a willingness to listen, a heart inclined to serve, and the ability to be with children and adults in grief without trying to fix, solve or give advice. No prior experience is necessary. Volunteers must be 21 years or older. Bilingual (Spanish speaking) volunteers are needed as well. Volunteers serve

as companions and loving listeners for those who are grieving and help create a space where participants can share tears and embrace the joys of life.

"In order to continue to grow our English and Spanish speaking programs, we need to constantly recruit and train new volunteer facilitators," said Veronica Ortiz, Imagine Program Manager. "Our programs are growing because of the great need in this community, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 220 children and adults have been participating in our virtual support groups this year. We have recently launched a new program year, but there is more demand for our programs than we're able to meet with our current number of facilitators. Doing this additional training will ensure that no child will ever have to wait to get the support they need."

Are you interested in joining Imagine's incredible community of volunteers and help us eliminate a wait list for our groups? Imagine is planning to offer a virtual facilitator training from Friday, November 5 through Sunday, November 7 from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. each day. An interview is required prior to the training, so please contact Imagine Training Manager, Jamie Saltamachia at jamie@imagineinjenj.org to arrange a convenient interview time. If you have questions regarding the training, please call 908-264-3100.

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UNITY DAY AT BATTLE HILL SCHOOL

Union Public Schools

The fourth-grade students and staff at Battle Hill School recently recognized Unity Day. The purpose of Unity day is to wear or share orange and unite for kindness, acceptance, and inclusion to prevent students from being bullied. The fourth-grade team gathered on the playground and participated in a variety of events to recognize the day. These events included a photo booth with positive messages, an orange bracelet

station where students wrote their own messages of kindness and acceptance, and a team-building event to encourage collaboration. The orange bracelets were linked together and will be displayed in the hallway. Students also had an opportunity to place their orange painted handprint inside a giant U painted on the playground. This legacy piece will always remind the Battle Hill class of 2022 of their stand against bullying. A great time was had by all participants!



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GRIEF SUPPORT FACILITATORS NEEDED

Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for children's grief support programs has never been greater. Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss, a non-profit organization based in Mountainside and Newark, exists to support children in New Jersey who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling, or close family member. Imagine offers free peer support groups for children ages 3-18, young adults 19-30, and the parents and guardians of the children in the program. Groups for Spanish-speaking bereaved adults are also available. Currently, all groups are being held virtually, however, there are plans to transition some groups to in-person as soon as it feels safe to do so.

Imagine's support groups are only possible because of our amazing team of volunteers who facilitate the groups. Imagine currently has a wait list of families looking to join our support groups. We are unable to offer them support at this time because we do not have enough volunteers to begin another Night of Support. We need your help!

Imagine's volunteer facilitators come from all

walks of life and no special background is required, other than, a willingness to listen, a heart inclined to serve, and the ability to be with children and adults in grief without trying to fix, solve, or give advice. No prior experience is necessary, but volunteers must be 18 years or older. Bilingual (Spanish-speaking) volunteers are needed as well. Volunteers serve as companions and caring listeners for those who are grieving to help create a safe space where participants can share tears and embrace the joys of life.

We are hoping to fill our upcoming training with lots of wonderful new volunteers! We are planning to offer virtual facilitator training December

10-12th from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. For information on joining Imagine's team of volunteers, please contact Imagine's Program Manager, Veronica Ortiz, by emailing veronica@imagine-nj.org, or by calling 908-264-3100. Please help us address the growing need for children's grief support and ensure that no grieving child is required to wait to receive the support they need.

FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP — DEC. 21

Are you feeling stressed and alone in trying to cope with the effects of a loved one's mental illness? NAMI Union County's Family Support Group is for family members and caregivers of people with mental illnesses. The group is led by NAMI-trained facilitators and is a peer support group that allows participants to gain insight

from others facing the same challenges.

Free Zoom sessions are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month from 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

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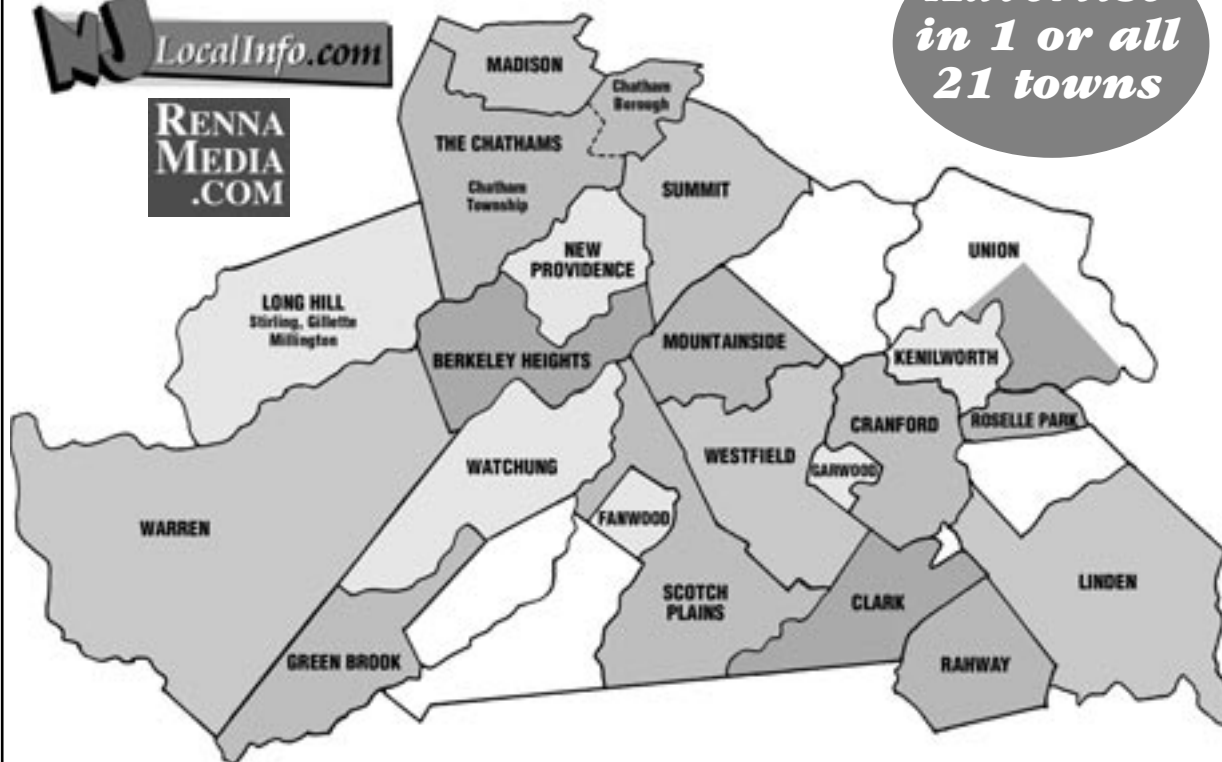
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21 towns*



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NEWSPAPER AD RATES

Rates are per month. Artwork included in price. Newspapers are black on white.

Units	Size	RATE FOR ANY 1 NEWSPAPER	RATE FOR ANY 3 NEWSPAPERS	RATE FOR ANY 6 NEWSPAPERS	RATE FOR ANY 9 NEWSPAPERS	RATE FOR ANY 12 NEWSPAPERS	RATE FOR ANY 15 NEWSPAPERS	RATE FOR ANY 18 NEWSPAPERS	RATE FOR ALL 21 NEWSPAPERS
1 Unit (Business card)	3.25" x 2"	\$60	\$150	\$250	\$350	\$400	\$450	\$500	\$550
2 Units	6.5" x 2" or 3.25" x 4"	\$100	\$250	\$400	\$500	\$600	\$700	\$800	\$900
4 Units	3.25" x 8" or 6.5" x 4"	\$180	\$450	\$700	\$900	\$1100	\$1300	\$1500	\$1700
6 Units	6.5" x 6.25" or 10" x 4"	\$240	\$600	\$900	\$1200	\$1400	\$1600	\$1800	\$2000
9 HALF PAGE	6.5" x 9" or 10" x 7"	\$320	\$800	\$1000	\$1300	\$1600	\$1900	\$2200	\$2400
12 Units	10" x 8"	\$360	\$900	\$1200	\$1500	\$1800	\$2100	\$2400	\$2700
18 FULL PAGE	10" x 14"	\$400	\$1000	\$1400	\$1800	\$2200	\$2500	\$2800	\$3000
2 PAGE SPREAD	21" x 14"	\$700							
BACK PAGE	10" x 14"	\$500							
FRONT PAGE BANNER	8.25" x 2"	\$320							
FRONT PAGE BOX	1.5" x 4.5"	\$240							

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Joe Renna at 908-447-1295
email: JoeRenna@RennaMedia.com



FLYERS

\$35
PER 1,000

MENUS

\$50
PER 1,000

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email: JoeRenna@RennaMedia.com

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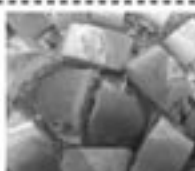
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