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Watchung's Hometown Newspaper

NJ

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WATCHUNG EARNS PRESTIGIOUS CERTIFICATION

Sustainable Jersey

Sustainable Jersey representatives announced that the Borough of Watchung has met the rigorous requirements to achieve Sustainable Jersey certification. Watchung is one of 52 municipalities that have attained certification in 2021 and was honored at the Sustainable Jersey Annual Luncheon on November 16, 2021 in Atlantic City at the New Jersey State League of Municipalities Conference. Sustainable Jersey's participating communities represent over 81% of the state's municipalities.

Watchung's Mayor, Keith Balla, stated, "It is a tremendous honor to represent Watchung in receiving an award for the many joint efforts of our Borough, residents, and businesses to make New Jersey environmentally sustainable as well as improve and maintain the quality of life for all."

To become Sustainable Jersey certified, Watchung submitted documentation to show it had completed a balance of the required sustainability actions, meeting a minimum of 150 action points. In addition to reaching 150 points, each certified community had to create a green team and select at least two out of thirteen priority action options. Council President and Green Team Liaison, Wendy Robinson, noted that Watchung actually achieved 200 points and accomplished two of the thirteen priority actions by completing the Energy Tracking and Management, and Prescription Drug Safety and Disposal actions. She gives credit to the hard work of the Green Team Chair, Charlie Neiss, and the rest of the Green Team members. "They really stepped up to get us across the finish line in a shortened time frame. And we couldn't have done it without the significant contributions of our Chief Financial Officer and Green Team member, Bill Hance," she remarked.

"The certified towns exemplify the commitment we need to accelerate the transition to a sustainable world. As New Jersey faces issues such as the climate crisis, a growing equity divide and environmental pollution, it is essential that we support municipalities as they do the hard work to meet these challenges at the local level," said Randall Solomon, Executive Director of Sustainable Jersey. "These communities are helping New Jersey build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic and it is our honor to work with them as we strive for a better tomorrow!" Certified towns excelled in areas such as improving energy efficiency, health and wellness, reducing waste, sustaining local economies, protecting natural resources, and advancing the arts.

Watchung is a borough at the eastern end of Somerset County, comprising primarily suburban neighborhoods, with



(above) Council President, Wendy Robinson, and Mayor, Keith S. Balla, receiving Sustainable Jersey certification plaque from Randal Solomon, Executive Director of Sustainable Jersey. Photo by Sustainable Jersey

a robust retail district located along US Route 22. Most of the residential parts of the town are situated in wooded areas between the first and second Watchung mountains. The name for Watchung, along with the surrounding mountains, comes from the Lenni-Lenape people who called the area Wach Unk, which roughly translates to High Hills. The town was incorporated in 1926 and is home to just over 6,000 people and a fair number of deer.

ABOUT SUSTAINABLE JERSEY

Sustainable Jersey provides tools, training, and financial incentives to support communities as they pursue sustainability programs. As New Jersey faces issues such as the climate crisis, a growing equity divide, and environmental pollution, municipalities want to be a part of the solution to these challenges. Sustainable Jersey participants (municipalities and schools) have successfully implemented and documented over 20,826 sustainability actions. Sustainable Jersey has provided over \$6.7 million in grants to municipalities, school districts, and schools for community-based projects that create healthy and sustainable communities in New Jersey. Sustainable Jersey is administered by The Sustainability Institute at The College of New Jersey.



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Watchung Post

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Do you have a community service that you need help publicizing? Did you or someone you know accomplish something amazing? We are interested in hearing about your latest achievement (accomplishment, honor, award, etc.). Then send us your news!

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Watchung Post

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GRIEF FACILITATOR VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

Imagine, A Center For Coping With Loss

Recent studies have found that more than 140,000 children nationwide lost a primary caregiver due to COVID-19, driving a 15% increase in orphaned children. However, these numbers don't include children who lost a parent or primary caregiver due to other causes. The need for grief support programs for children has never been greater.

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, as well as for 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, though we hope 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 families waiting to join our support groups. We're unable to offer them support at this time because we don't 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. Volunteers must be 18 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.

We are hoping to fill our upcoming training with lots of wonderful new volunteers! We're planning to offer a virtual facilitator training that will meet Friday, February 25th from 6 p.m. – 9 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, February 26–27 from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. each day and Monday, February 28th from 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. Participants are required to attend the entire training from Friday to Monday. If you're interested in participating in the training, please contact Imagine Program Manager, Giovanna Peacock, at giovanna@imaginein.org. If you have questions regarding the training, you can call us at 908-264-3100. Please help us ensure that no grieving child is required to wait for the support they need.

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 **Nathan Weiser**
★★★★★

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

Thank you Spring Grove for a wonderful and pleasant stay.

 **Charles Sherrick**
★★★★★

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

Thank you Spring Grove.

 **Chrissy Sloan**
★★★★★


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

Thank God for them!

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WILSON MEMORIAL CALLS 5TH PASTOR TO LEAD HISTORIC CHURCH



(above) Reverend Michael Droege

On December 12, 2021 Reverend Michael Droege was called as the 5th Pastor to lead Wilson Memorial Church of Watchung, NJ into 2022. Reverend Droege, however, is not “new” to the Wilson Church family. He began his time at Wilson as the Director of Youth and Family Ministry over 10 years ago. Since then he has grown in his role at Wilson, recently serving as Acting Pastor after the retirement of Reverend Barbara Peters in early 2021. While Michael’s focus has mainly been on youth during his tenure, he is looking forward to his new role as head Pastor to keep Wilson Church relevant and thriving in our challenging and changing times.

“The church has always been called to adapt itself to meet the challenges and human need wherever we find ourselves. What that meant a century ago, or even pre-pandemic, is different than what it means today. Our core message of love and wholeness remains our rudder, helping us to be adaptable, but keeping our roots in our calling. There is a great need now for a focus on health and well-being. Isolation, fear, and grief have strained the mental health of all ages and we hope to be a center of gravity for human connection and hope in the world,” said Reverend Droege.

“We are in the early stages of developing wellness programs open to all in the community. These will be both in person and online, particularly those for families, so that we can help people access a supportive

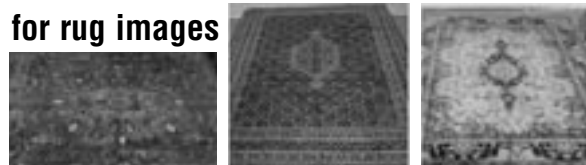
community even if they can’t come to our building. We have a particular interest in serving populations deeply affected by the last couple of years. Those include adolescents, seniors, and those experiencing food insecurity. These will be areas requiring our attention in this new year. With this focus, we look forward to our Sunday worship services remaining vibrant, diverse, and relevant gatherings where all people can connect with God and others, always leaving with something to lift their spirit and help them navigate their life.”

Reverend Droege and his wife Carol live in Watchung. They have 5 adult children. Michael grew up in the St. Louis area before moving to New Jersey in 1997. Since coming to Wilson, he has received his MA from Drew University in Theology and a PhD (pending) in Practical Theology from the University of Pretoria. His door is “always open” and he welcomes anyone who is interested in learning more about Wilson Church or who just needs a listening ear to contact him through the church office or email wilsonchurch@verizon.net.

Wilson Church is an inter-denominational church that extends a warm welcome to anyone who seeks to be strengthened in their walk of faith. We are an inclusive community comprised of members and friends from many church backgrounds. Services are Sundays at 10 a.m. and are offered as in-person or online worship at wilsonchurch.org. The church office is open Monday through Friday 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

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WILSON REFLECTS ON AN UNPRECEDENTED YEAR.

Rev. Michael Droege

As I begin this new year as the 5th pastor of Wilson Memorial Church, I cannot help but take a moment and reflect on the challenges and the grace of 2021. As we entered 2021, having endured what for many of us was the hardest year of our lives, we had much hope. It felt like 2021 would be the year of returning to loved ones and restoring many of the rhythms of life that we had lost in 2020. However, I know for many of us, we emerged into a world that was much different than the world we had left behind.

Foremost, of course, is the absence of those we lost during that year. Our church bells pealed each week to mourn the losses until those losses became so great that it would have taken the rest of the day to ring out the number. We grieve with each of you that grieve the loss of a loved one. We are still working to help people grieve and heal. Beyond the human loss, the world we re-entered felt more isolating, more vulnerable, and somehow more fearful. New rhythms became hard to establish as we lived with the constant emergence of new variants and seemingly ever-changing rules about what to do about them. In addition, the stress that our country has been bearing became evident as our political, racial, sexual, and gender divides could no longer be ignored. Images of people in pain spilled into the streets and through every media outlet.

Our church's priorities became that which we felt people needed most: a place to breathe and find hope, and a place that practiced the adaptability needed to meet the challenges of this new season. We are so grateful to the team that helped us build an online presence so that each week people can choose how to be a part of our community – in-person or distant. We are grateful we have been able to be a source of hope for hundreds each week.

We were thrilled to welcome families back to our forest on Halloween weekend for the biggest Enchanted Forest event we had ever had – learning how to celebrate our children and keep everyone healthy. Even our early Advent celebrations were rich with relationships, old and newly formed, coming together to thrive in the hope we believe in – even amid the darkness, like the bright trees on our corner. Our worship continues to be diverse and creative even while keeping our roots in tradition. Our church continues to grow despite the challenges. We have learned that hope is not truly hope if it cannot adapt to wherever we find ourselves as a people.

As a church, we look forward to continuing to build and adapt. We will remain committed to our “online campus” as well as helping people connect to one another in person. You can always find how to connect with us on our website, wilsonmemorialchurch.org, or on various social media outlets @wilsonchurch. With all our adaptability, we remain steadfast in our commitment to helping people find connection, community, and hope. I look forward to this new year as pastor at Wilson. Our prayers and our love remain with all in our community and beyond.

2021 – A YEAR OF CELEBRATION AT WILSON MEMORIAL CHURCH

In no particular order...

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 01) Stained glass window restoration | 17) Frillery Thrift Shop |
| 02) Hiring of a Minister of Music and Arts | 18) Memorial Garden beautification |
| 03) Implementation of new and varied music program | 19) Spring Cleanup Team |
| 04) Helping families with food insecurity through the famous Blue Bin | 20) Sunday Club |
| 05) Successful implementation of monthly news articles | 21) Re-Confirm Classes |
| 06) Successful implementation of live streaming services | 22) Our team of talented writers |
| 07) Mother's Day Blanket Drive (Church World Service) | 23) Generosity of members |
| 08) Online Learning thru Wilson U (Vibrant Faith) | 24) New confirmands |
| 09) Continued relationship with cub scouts and boy scouts | 25) Pettet Family Christmas Show |
| 10) Reverend Barbara Peter's retirement celebration | 26) Super Enchanted Forest |
| 11) Funds to Texas, Haiti & Afghan resettlement | 27) Mary Ann's mittens |
| 12) Wilson Advent Kickoff and Tree Lighting | 28) Bell Choir |
| 13) Ongoing relationship with Coptic Church | 29) Mission Study Team |
| 14) Continued relationship with girl scouts | 30) Starfish food pantry donations |
| 15) Ongoing relationship with St. Mary's | 31) Advent Yoga |
| 16) Lentin Season Dinner and a Movie | 32) Increasing membership |



“LOVE STORIES” CELEBRATES DOG ADOPTION EFFORTS

Home for Good Dog Rescue

Petco Love has generously granted Home for Good Dog Rescue \$55,000 towards the mission to leave no dog behind, treating critically ill and abused dogs with medical care at the “Almost Home Wellness Center” in Aiken, South Carolina, and preparing them to be welcomed into a New Jersey family. This show of support will significantly increase the number of dogs saved in 2022.

The mission of Petco Love is to celebrate the positive impact that dog adoption has on families. Home for Good Dog Rescue is honored and proud to have once again been chosen to participate in this year’s Petco Love “Love Stories” campaign.

"Since 2016, Petco Love has supported the mission of Home for Good Dog Rescue. We are honored and humbled for once again being included in the Love Stories initiative, which shares the impactful stories of how adopted pets change the lives of their families," said Rich Errico, co-founder of Home for Good Dogs Rescue. "The organization's generosity makes a huge difference in our ability to save the lives of dogs in need and place them in loving forever homes."

Donna Foti, a two-time adopter of Clyde and Finn, was chosen for her heartfelt emphasis that her pups not only changed her life, but they actually “made” her life.

“For me, it’s all about giving and receiving love. And the most unconditional love that I have in my life - the love that fills my heart every single day - is the love that I share with my dogs,” says Foti.

The celebration held recently at the Petco in Clark, NJ was an extraordinary opportunity to share more about our Almost Home Wellness Center in Aiken, South Carolina, which is the heart of the rescue journey, where abused and discarded dogs are cared for, convalesce, and receive lots of love and affection until their journey to New Jersey to find their “home for good”. Home for Good Dog Rescue certainly can

expect a long-standing partnership well into the future and are beyond thankful to Petco Love.

ABOUT HOME FOR GOOD DOG RESCUE

We are 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.

We have rescued over 9,500 dogs from deplorable and dangerous environments, including high-kill shelters, hoarding situations, and abusive conditions, such as in-breeding and puppy mills, neglect and abuse. We give hope and purpose to the dogs we save and the families who have been enriched through fostering and adoption.



(above, l-r) Al Lopez, Co-Founder HFGDR; Amy Whitney, Director of Development; Donna Foti, HFGDR adopter; Rich Errico, Co-Founder HFGDR; Clyde and Finn, HFGDR rescues



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FEBRUARY 14 IS NATIONAL ORGAN DONOR DAY

NJ Sharing Network

February 14 is all about sharing some love in New Jersey - and not just because it's Valentine's Day! NJ Sharing Network and its many healthcare partners and volunteers throughout the state are working together to register as many organ and tissue donors as possible in celebration of National Organ Donor Day.

"National Organ Donor Day is about taking action and inspiring others to learn more about how they can save lives through organ and tissue donation," said Joseph S. Roth, president and chief executive officer of NJ Sharing Network. "One organ and tissue donor can save eight lives and restore health to over 75 people. I am confident that everyone's efforts on National Organ Donor Day will go a long way toward bringing hope to those currently waiting for a transplant."

Currently, there are over 110,000 Americans - nearly 4,000 of whom live in New Jersey - waiting for a life-saving transplant. In New Jersey, one person dies every three days waiting for an organ transplant.

However, the generosity of those in the Garden State is providing hope for the future. New Jersey's organ and tissue donor registrations continue to rise thanks to strong community education and outreach efforts as well as simplified ways to register as an organ and tissue donor are also helping to save more lives. It is

easy for New Jerseyans to register in any of the following options:

Online at NJSharingNetwork.org; Through the iPhone Health App; In person at your local Motor Vehicle Agency

Observed every year on February 14, National Organ Donor Day is dedicated to spreading awareness and education about organ and tissue donation. It is also a day to recognize loved ones who have given the gift of life, have received a transplant, are currently waiting or did not receive an organ in time. National Organ Donor Day was started in 1998 by the Saturn Corporation and its United Auto Workers partner with the support of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and many non-profit health organizations.

(right) The late Linda J.S. Finnegan (Smith), 54, of Stirling, NJ, who passed away in 2016, donated both her lungs, both kidneys, her liver, and her other organs through NJ Sharing Network. She also donated her corneas through Eversight. Her gift of life changed the lives of at least 75 people. Linda taught Physical Education at St. Vincent de Paul School in Stirling and was proud to be ACE Gold Certified for Group Aerobic Instruction.

Photo courtesy NJ Sharing Network



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BE AN ADVOCATE FOR FOSTER YOUTH

CASA SHaW

Court Appointed Special Advocates of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties (CASA SHaW) has announced online information sessions for this February and March for individuals who are interested in learning more about becoming a CASA volunteer advocate to help abused and neglected foster children in our region.

"The interest in wanting to become a CASA volunteer continues to grow in our community. However, we need more dedicated individuals who want to help these vulnerable children. Attending an information session is the first step in becoming a CASA volunteer advocate for a foster child who has been abused and neglected," said Tracey Heisler, Executive Director of CASA SHaW. Attending an Information Session is required for anyone interested in applying to become a CASA.

UPCOMING CASA SHAW INFO SESSIONS:

- Wednesday, February 2 – 5:30 p.m. via Zoom
- Tuesday, February 15 – Noon via Zoom
- Tuesday, March 1 – 5:30 PM via Zoom
- Thursday, March 3 – Noon via Zoom

If you are interested in attending one of these information sessions, registration is required. Please contact our Volunteer Trainer, Karen Cassano, at karen@casashaw.org, or by phone at 908-689-5515 if you plan to attend.

CASA of Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren Counties is part of a statewide network of community-based, non-profit programs that recruit, screen, train and supervise volunteers to "Speak Up for a Child" removed from home due to abuse or neglect. CASA is the only program in New Jersey that uses trained volunteers to work one-on-one with children, ensuring that each one gets the services needed and achieves permanency in a safe, nurturing home. For more information visit casaoenj.org.

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ITALIAN CHICKS' COMEDY & VARIETY SHOW 2/12

The Italian Chicks comedy and Variety Show will be performing at the Brooks Art Center in Bound Brook, NJ,

February 12, 2022 at 8 p.m. Tickets are available at BrooksArts.org.

The two-hour long show is a blend of comedy, music, storytelling, and a little bit of dancing. It takes you back to a time and place when life was simpler, and culture and traditions were respected and honored. You don't have to be Italian to love this show, you just have to have a dysfunctional family.

Who attends the shows? The entire family! From the matriarch down to the third cousin.

Don't make the mistake of thinking this is a "girls' night out" – you just might meet your next husband there!

The show premiered at the Laugh Factory in New York City in January 2010 to a sold out 250-seat room when not one person knew who they were! Now, after 11 years, The Italian Chicks are growing the family!

The Italian Chicks always offer a special promo discount code for all first responders, police, fire and healthcare workers. Email MCMEntertainmentCT@gmail.com to get your promo code. You will be asked to present your ID at the door.

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Feb 24-25: Little Mermaid

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Mar 12 Almost U2 & Pure McCartney

Mar 19-27: CLUE - The Play

Apr 1: The New York Bee Gees

Apr 2: Sugar Mountain Band - Neil Young

Apr 22-24: GUYS and DOLLS

Apr 29-May 1: GUYS and DOLLS

May 7: Comedian Mike Marino

May 21: Starman: A Bowie Tribute

Jul 16: Danny Aiello's Italian Chicks Comedy

Aug 6: Ronstadt Revue

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For tickets visit the Brook Arts Center Website www.BrookArts.org

DEDICATED, DIGITAL LEARNING SOLUTION STATIONS FOR YOUTH

The Somerset County Library System of New Jersey (SCLSNJ) has expanded their digital learning solutions for youth to include AWE's Platinum Early Literacy Stations™ at all 10 Library locations.

"As youth services librarians, we know that many of our caregivers struggle with concerns over when and how to integrate technology into their children's learning and play," said Meredith Hoyer, Youth Services Supervisor. "This is why the Library has invested in devices that allow caregivers to introduce technology using curated learning applications in a safe, digital environment."

The preloaded terminals provide access to over 85 award-winning educational software titles for children that focus on STREAM (science, technology, reading, engineering, the arts, and mathematics) concepts, as well as activities that can help build social and emotional skills in English and Spanish.

"As part of our core services, the AWE Learning Stations are another invaluable resource that help community members connect, explore, share, and discover early learning at the Library," said Lauren Ryan, Manager of Branch Services, Young Minds and Family Resources. "This resource supports our

SOARING (Supportive Opportunities for Achieving Reading in the Next Generation) initiative, which is designed to help caregivers navigate early childhood programming and resources, learn the different strategies used to support early literacy through each developmental stage, and replicate those strategies at home."

The learning stations incorporate educational activities that reinforce SOARING's early literacy practices, including singing along with nursery rhymes, practicing tracing letter shapes, and reading exercises.

"These stations provide youth a fun way to learn foundational skills for school readiness like letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and vocabulary," said Ryan. "Many of the activities and games feature iconic children's characters like Arthur, SpongeBob SquarePants, and Dora the Explorer, which help keep children entertained and engaged while discovering new skills and concepts."

Additionally, SCLSNJ recently expanded the SOARING initiative to include a kindergarten readiness series.

For more information about SCLSNJ's SOARING and SOARING Into Kindergarten offerings, visit: SCLSNJ.org/SOARING.



(above) As part of the Somerset County Library System of New Jersey's (SCLSNJ) SOARING initiative, the Library System has expanded their digital learning solutions for youth to include AWE's Platinum Early Literacy Stations™, preloaded terminals that offer access to over 85 educational software titles for children, at all 10 Library locations. Pictured is 8-year-old Julian Larsen, of Watchung, exploring the learning terminal at the branch. For more information about SOARING, visit: SCLSNJ.org/SOARING.

HOME BORROWING SERVICE DELIVERS LIBRARY TO RESIDENTS

Ninety-four-year-old Bound Brook resident, Vince Liscio, has lived in Somerset County since he was 15. Having spent most of his life in Bound Brook, NJ, visiting the Somerset County Library System of New Jersey's (SCLSNJ) Bound Brook branch had been part of his schedule for decades, particularly since his retirement.

Liscio and his late wife, Matilda, who passed away earlier this year, enjoyed exploring programs at the library and checking out materials from books to DVDs. Due to the pandemic and other factors, leaving home has become challenging for the frequent library customer, who fondly recalls sharing many memories at the Bound Brook branch, including a surprise party that the branch staff hosted for the couple's 65th wedding anniversary.

In order to serve community members like Liscio that have qualifying barriers to access library services, SCLSNJ piloted the Home Borrowing Library Services (HBLS) program in early 2021. Since the launch of the program, HBLS has connected with dozens of customers and shared over 900 materials through the mail.

"HBLS are available to individuals experiencing temporary or permanent health, mobility, transportation, age-related, or other qualifying barriers to in-person library service," said Nicole Pascoe, Civic Services Manager. "Interested home borrowers work together with library staff to determine which facet of the service may best suit their individual circumstances, whether it be exploring digital resources, receiving materials by mail, designating a friend or family member to pick up materials, or connecting with the NJ State Library's Talking Book and Braille Center."

Liscio has been participating in the HBLS

program since the pilot phase. He enjoys connecting with the library staff via phone calls and receiving DVDs as well as other materials via the mail. In addition to mail services, Liscio's designated family and friends occasionally pick up the materials that Liscio has selected at the Bound Brook branch as part of the HBLS program.

"Now that it's more difficult for me to get out and get videos [from the library], I find the service very helpful and very accommodating," said Liscio. "The Home Borrowing [staff] have been great to me."

Library materials arrive via the United States Postal Service in 11x14 inch, water-resistant, zippered mailer bags that are bright red in color, making them highly visible. Outgoing and return postage are paid by SCLSNJ and labels plus instructions are provided in each bag. Liscio's daughter shared that Liscio is "always happy when he sees the red bag on the porch" and that it is "the highlight of his week."

Liscio, a movie enthusiast, selects the movies that he wants to borrow by utilizing the library's online catalog, as well as communicating with HBLS staff via weekly phone calls.

"At least once a week, Vince will call one of us on the Home Borrowing team just to let us know how great the service is, what a wonderful job the team is doing, and that he feels taken care of," said Jen Sulligan, Civic Services Supervisor. "It is the best part of our day! Vince has been with us since the beginning, and he is one of our most active customers."

Sulligan continued, "We send a mailer bag out to him weekly, stuffed to capacity with DVDs of his choosing. He will occasionally, with assistance from a family member, still visit the

Bound Brook branch that he loves so much, to choose a book to read."

For customers like Liscio, who visit the library branch locations whenever possible, staff is always available to assist with material recommendations, navigating services, and general inquiries.

"I appreciate all the services, all the people, and all the help as well as the respect that [the library staff] have treated me with over the years," concluded Liscio.

Interested home borrowers can apply for service online by visiting SCLSNJ.org/homeborrowing, calling 908-458-4938, or emailing homeborrowing@sclibnj.org.

"We are continually working to grow capacity to serve more home borrowers," said Pascoe. "We look forward to bringing the library to many more homes in the coming months and into 2022."

Explore more about HBLS on SCLSNJ's YouTube Channel, SCLSNJ.org/HomeBorrowing101.

ABOUT SOMERSET COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM OF NEW JERSEY

Somerset County Library System of New Jersey (SCLSNJ) partners with you to connect, explore, share, and discover. Together we enrich lives, expand knowledge, and strengthen communities. SCLSNJ branches can be found in Bridgewater, Bound Brook, Hillsborough, Manville, North Plainfield, Peapack & Gladstone, Rocky Hill at Mary Jacobs Memorial Library, Somerville, Warren Township, and Watchung. Additionally, there are two SCLSNJ reading stations in Branchburg and Washington Valley. Visit SCLSNJ.org.

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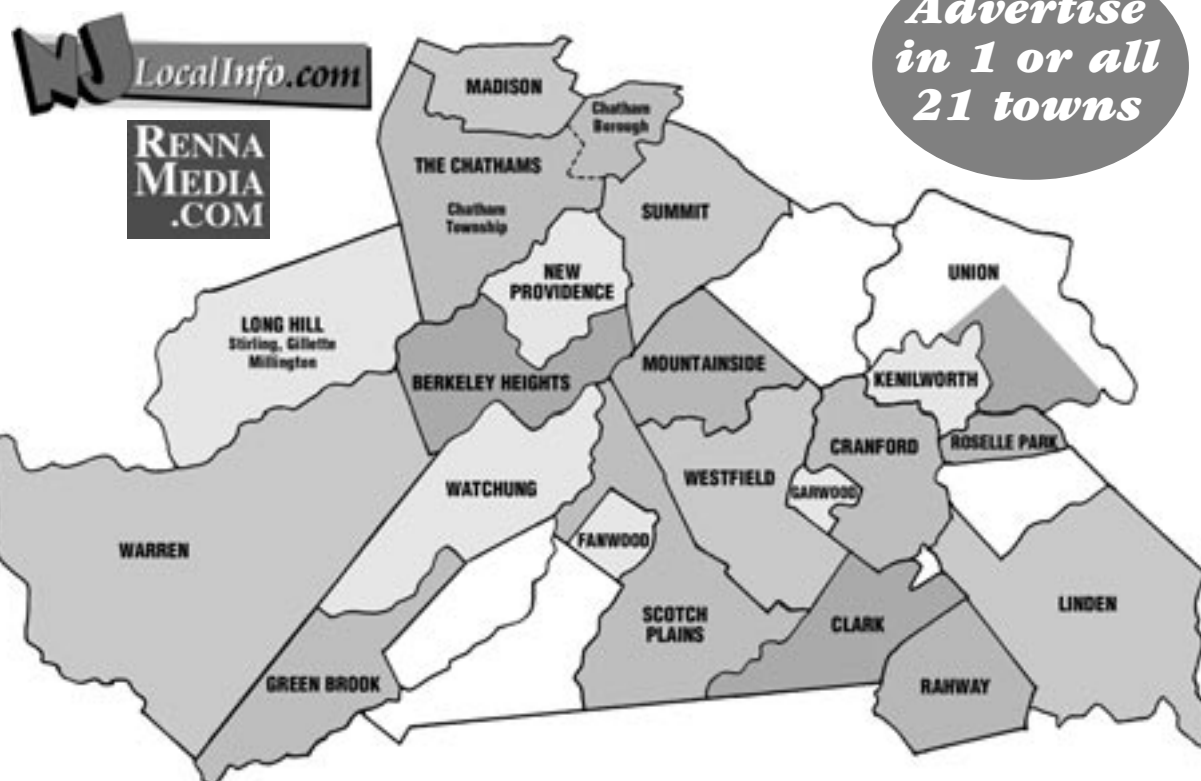
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6 Units	6.5" x 6.25" or 10" x 4"	\$240	\$600	\$900	\$1200	\$1400	\$1600	\$1800	\$2000
9 HALF PAGE	6.5" x 9" or 10" x 7"	\$320	\$800	\$1000	\$1300	\$1600	\$1900	\$2200	\$2400
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The American Red Cross is facing a national blood crisis – its worst blood shortage in more than a decade. Dangerously low blood supply levels are posing a concerning risk to patient care and forcing doctors to make difficult decisions about who receives blood transfusions and who will need to wait until more products become available.

Blood and platelet donations are critically needed to help prevent further delays in vital medical treatments, and donors of all blood types – especially type O – are urged to donate.

In recent weeks, the Red Cross had less than a one-day supply of critical blood types and has had to limit blood product distributions to hospitals. At times, as much as one-quarter of hospital blood needs are not being met.

The Red Cross continues to confront relentless challenges due to COVID-19, including about a 10% overall decline in the number of people donating blood as well as ongoing blood drive cancellations and staffing limitations. Additionally, the pandemic has contributed to a

62% drop in blood drives at schools and colleges.

“Winter weather across the country and the recent surge of COVID-19 cases are compounding the already-dire situation facing the blood supply,” said Dr. Baia Lasky, medical director for the Red Cross. “Please, if you are eligible, make an appointment to give blood or platelets in the days and weeks ahead to ensure no patient is forced to wait for critical care.”

The Red Cross urges donors to support patient care by making an appointment to give blood or platelets now for the weeks ahead. To schedule an appointment, use the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit RedCrossBlood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Each Red Cross blood drive and donation center follows the highest standards of safety and infection control, and additional precautions – including face masks for donors and staff, regardless of vaccination status – have been implemented to help protect the health of all those in attendance. Donors are asked to schedule an appointment prior to arriving at the drive.



To donate blood, individuals need to bring a blood donor card or driver's license or two other forms of identification that are required at check-in. Individuals who are 17 years of age in most states (16 with parental consent where allowed by state law), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also must meet certain height and weight requirements.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

In addition to blood donors, the Red Cross also needs the help of volunteers to support critical blood collections across the country. Blood drive volunteers play an important role by greeting, registering, answering questions and providing information to blood donors throughout the donation process. Blood transportation specialists – another volunteer opportunity – provide a critical link between blood donors and blood recipients by delivering blood to hospitals in communities across the country. To volunteer to support Red Cross blood collections, visit redcross.org/volunteertoday.

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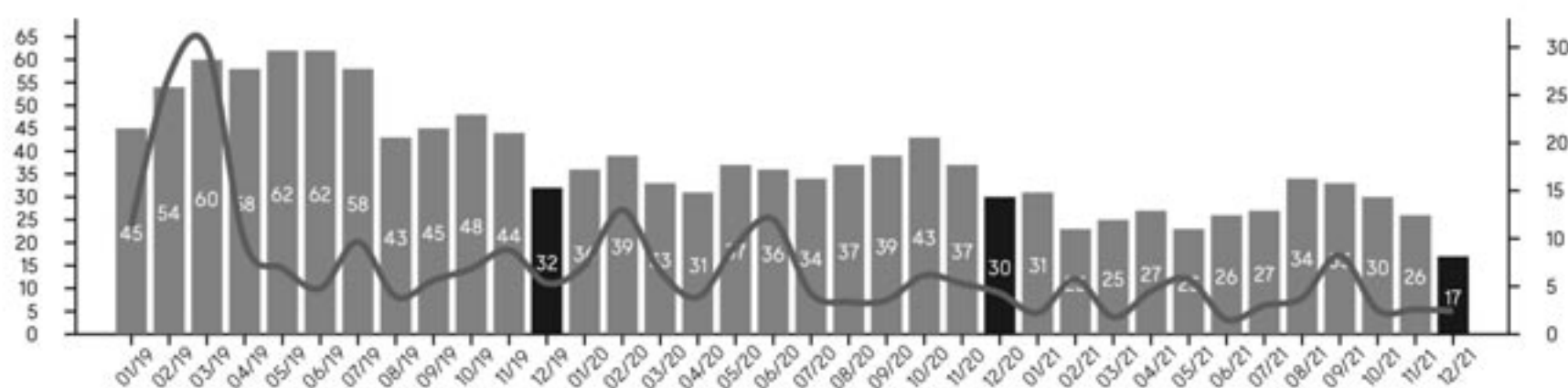
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