

Scotch Plains NJ

WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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HOLIDAY CELEBRATION AT THE VILLAGE GREEN

The Township of Scotch Plains hosted a holiday celebration on Sunday, December 4th at the Alan M. Augustine Village Green. The event was supported by the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association. There were performances by Theatrical Artists Prep, photos with Santa, a petting zoo, horse-drawn carriage rides, face painting, vendors and more. The grand finale was the Christmas tree lighting.

(More photos on page 17.)



(above, l-r) At the Scotch Plains Holiday Celebration and Tree Lighting on December 4, Santa arrived on a firetruck and the Grinch also made an appearance. Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO members were present with giveaways for those in attendance. Pictured here are UNICO members with The Grinch: Jeff Blanck, Daniela Sellinger, The Grinch, and Luciana Rodak.



Photos from this and other events can be found online at rennamedia.com and on Scotch Plains Monthly page on facebook.com Feel free to "Like," "Tag," and "Share."

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Scotch Plains NJ

WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY CHURCH TO HOST "ALPHA" SESSIONS

Is There More to Life Than This? In a world of isolation, anonymity, and keyboard-warriors, Alpha offers content and guidance for churches, ministries, and individuals to create a space for honest and open conversations about life's biggest questions. Everyone is welcome and no questions are off limits.

Alpha is a place to connect with other people who are open to exploring life, faith, and meaning. Alpha fosters honest, open, and judgment-free conversations for anyone to explore the Christian faith. Each session includes a time to connect with others (often over a free meal), watch a short video on an element of the Christian faith, and then a chance for each person to share thoughts and questions with the group.

"I was invited to participate in the Alpha pilot. From the initial meeting, I knew this was something that I wanted to be a part of," explains Nancy Schreck. "After completing the pilot, I joined the Alpha team to help plan for the future of Alpha at IHM. It's a wonderful opportunity for people at any level of faith to meet new people and explore new ideas."

Sessions are free to attend and are scheduled on Monday nights at 7:30 p.m. The first meeting will be live and in-person on Monday, February 13, 2022 beginning at 7 p.m. in the Nazareth

Center of Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) Church: 1571 S. Martine Ave. Scotch Plains. Good food and conversation will be offered to all in attendance. Most meetings after that will be hosted on Zoom. Links and directions will be provided to those who register. Participation is capped at 30 people.

"When I offered tech support for the pilot program at IHM, I had no idea what I was in for. I'm not very religious. But Alpha was an unexpected surprise!" offers Gabe Lamberty. "The program is interesting and entertaining. And it's nice to meet new folks from the community. Overall an unforgettable experience."

"I'm looking forward to the Alpha experience," says Lou Zappo. "It sounds like a lot of fun, and who knows, I might learn something about myself."

Registration is required, please go to our website at ihmparish.net/alpha or call 908-889-2100. If you have questions about Alpha, please email office@ihmparish.net.



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FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP

Are you feeling stressed and alone in trying to cope with the effects of a loved one's mental illness? Union County's Family Support Group is for family members and caregivers of persons with mental illness. 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.

Zoom sessions are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month from 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. To register, email Denise at: namiunioncounty@yahoo.com with your name, town, and phone number.



The College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains held a drawing for two Shop Rite gift cards on October 9 at Brookside Park in Scotch Plains. Members of the College Club and friends gathered to share hospitality, the arrival of fall, and cheer the raffle winners.

The College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains expresses sincere appreciation to all who purchased raffle tickets for the Shop Rite Gift Cards. Due to the generosity of the Culley/Lusk families who donated the \$750 in gift cards, the \$3,750 generated by the ticket sales will go directly into the club's scholarship fund for the coming year.

The winners of the \$500 and \$250 Shop Rite gift cards are from Fanwood and Fords, NJ.

SP-F UNICO WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Chapter of UNICO recently welcomed two new members into its organization. Serina Agosta and Joe Schiavo were sworn in by past president Geri Samuel at the chapter's November meeting.

UNICO is the largest Italian-American service organization in the United States. The organization's objectives are to promote the image of Italian Americans, to serve the community, and to contribute to charitable, cultural, and educational organizations and projects.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Chapter of UNICO was chartered in 1973. The chapter raises and donates thousands of dollars annually to support scholarship programs, organizations, and individuals in the New Jersey area. Since 1974, they have co-sponsored the St. Barts / UNICO Italian Festival which attracts thousands of visitors over Labor Day weekend.

UNICO takes great pride in its rich history, cultural heritage, and dedicated membership. The local chapter also has been recognized as "Volunteer of the Year" and has earned its place in the community for service to others and charitable contributions.

You are invited to learn more about the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Chapter of UNICO at spfunico.com and anyone interested in membership is encouraged to email the chapter at spfunico@gmail.com.



(above, l-r) Serina Agosta and Joe Schiavo were sworn in by the Chapter's Past President Geri Samuel. Courtesy photo

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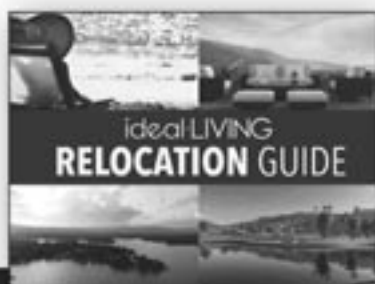
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SANTA'S HELPERS

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EXPANDS INTO CLARK

GWACC Chamber of Commerce at its November Board of Director meeting approved the addition of the Clark Business Alliance, and the Irish Business Association (IBA) to the GWACC Chamber. GWACC will now cover six towns, Clark, Fanwood, Garwood, Mountainside, Scotch Plains, and Westfield.

Elected to the GWACC Board of Directors for a one-year term were Alan Tennant, President of the Clark Business Alliance, and Steve Flood, President of the Irish Business Association. These additions will afford exceptional access to business professionals in all six towns.

The first meeting in Clark took place at Manny's Diner on November 10 and was sponsored by the Clark Township. GWACC will now continue to schedule and publicize IBA and Clark Township events.

Gene Jannotti, GWACC CEO stated, "This is the first expansion of GWACC in many years and it will bring a new group of business professionals into the organization. All existing members will benefit from this relationship."

Clark Mayor Sal Bonaccorso said, "I am excited to see the Clark Business Alliance as part of GWACC working with businesses in town. We need to support our local businesses in any way we can, they are the heartbeat of a thriving community."

All future networking event information and registration can be found on the GWACC website, GWACCNJ.com.

ABOUT THE GWACC

Established over 74 years ago, the GWACC is the primary business organization in Clark, Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Garwood, Mountainside, and Westfield. The chamber promotes local business opportunities, economic development, and community growth. The GWACC includes 500 member businesses and nonprofit organizations. For more information, go to GWACCNJ.com or call Gene Jannotti at 908-233-3021.

Over the last four years, a small group of Santa's elves has helped fill Christmas stockings for Family Promise of Union County. The organization serves low income families and families experiencing homelessness.

Students and staff at the Academy for Performing Arts at the Magnet School in Scotch Plains participated this year also. Kaitlyn Landaverde, a Junior from Clark, organized the drive at the high school.

Patricia Novy of Clark, who started the project four years ago, shared the fact that the group filled 36 stockings the first year, 67 stockings last year and 91 Christmas Stockings for children ages 4 to 12 this year.

"The need is greater than ever," Novy said. "In speaking with Family Promise, the children often receive donated gifts, but stockings are not considered. Our little group of friends, family and former colleagues help fill that void."

We are inspired each year by this quote from a nine-year-old boy, "When you give something; someone else gets."



Courtesy photo

(above) Patricia Novy with Christmas stockings waiting for delivery to Family Promise of Union County.



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CHILDREN LEARN THE MITZVAH OF “GIVING” ON GIVING TUESDAY

JCC of Central New Jersey

Two Union County agencies came together on “Giving Tuesday” to assist the Jewish Family Service of Central NJ (JFSCNJ) Charlotte Shak Food Pantry with a food collection of several thousand cans and boxes of food, and other essential products. The JFSCNJ Board, staff and constituents served, were overwhelmed by the generosity of donations received with the “Pack the Truck” initiative spearheaded by the Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Scotch Plain’s “Giving Tuesday” event.

Students and community members dropped off their donations of packaged food and toiletries into a truck parked in the JCC’s parking lot the entire day. The truck then made its way to the JFSCNJ Halpern Building in Elizabeth, where the middle school students from the Jewish Educational Center in Elizabeth, sorted thousands

of cans and boxes of food that were donated by the monumental Giving Tuesday event, the next day.

Our sincere thanks to the leadership, students, and members of our sister agencies, the JCC of Scotch Plains and the Jewish Educational Center, for their generosity and hard work on behalf of the community. Our community children have

certainly learned the Mitzvah of “Giving” on Giving Tuesday.

Visit jfscentralnj.org/donate, to make a donation to the JFSCNJ Charlotte Shak Food Pantry, or any one of our programs. Contact Danielle McLeer, dmcleer@jfscentralnj.org, if you would like to learn about volunteer activities at JFSCNJ.



(above) The Two’s class photo

Courtesy photo

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TEEN HELPS RAISE MONEY FOR FAMILIES FACING PEDIATRIC CANCER

Nick Swandrak, 18, of Cranford, NJ, teamed up with retired NFL Coach Tom Coughlin to raise money for local families facing pediatric cancer on October 21 at Cipriani 42nd Street, New York. In a speech to a crowd of nearly 500 professional athletes, celebrities and supporters at the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund's annual Champions for Children Gala, Swandrak shared his own journey of being diagnosed and treated for acute lymphoblastic leukemia and his subsequent relapse earlier this year. The Jay Fund, the nonprofit founded by the two-time Super Bowl winning coach of the New York Giants, marked its 17th year of providing financial, emotional and practical support for families tackling pediatric cancer in the New York/New Jersey Metropolitan area.

Swandrak knows all too well the challenges families face when a child is diagnosed with cancer, and he is passionate about raising awareness and funds to support them. He has spent much of the last four years enduring grueling cancer treatments and being isolated from his friends due to his immunocompromised condition. His family, like all families who have

a child with cancer, has faced expensive medical bills coupled with rising inflation and record-high food costs.

Swandrak and his family have been supported by the Jay Fund throughout his treatment.

"The Jay Fund covered our mortgage payments when our bills became overwhelming and has given me experiences that I will never, ever forget," Swandrak told the crowd of current and former New York Giants, business leaders and Jay Fund families and supporters.

Swandrak's emotional words captivated the audience, and his speech was one of the highlights of a night that raised \$1.25 million for the Jay Fund and the families it serves in the New York/New Jersey Metropolitan area.

"Nick is a remarkable young man and a current Jay Fund scholarship recipient," said Mary Jane Pulzello, Managing Director of the Tom

Coughlin Jay Fund in NY/NJ. "He received a standing ovation from the audience, as many were deeply moved by this young man's courage and tenacity in fighting cancer for more than four years."

Swandrak thanked his medical team who continue to help him through this fight, as well as his friends and family who have lifted him up from day one. He saved his most heartfelt appreciation for his parents, stating their love and support have been everything to him.

"As of today, I've had 126 chemo shots, 28 spinal taps, and over 200 days sleeping on scratchy hospital sheets," Swandrak told the crowd. "Fighting cancer is tough. You're in bed, and sick a lot of the time. There are days that are a real struggle. But I'm looking forward to ringing that bell for the second time this December and being back in remission."



(above) Nick Swandrak, a Cranford, NJ, teen who has been tackling pediatric cancer for more than four years, joined former NY Giants head coach Tom Coughlin and the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund to help raise funds for other NY/NJ children and their families facing childhood cancer.

Courtesy photo

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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.

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- 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.'"
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THRIFT SHOP

Tuesday, January 3 marks the re-opening of the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Thrift Shop after a week-long closure for the holiday season. Featured for January is a wide variety of new and gently used household goods, including small appliances, cooking and bakeware, bowls, glasses and dish sets.

A trip to the Thrift Shop in January is the perfect time to:

- Replenish or supplement items in your own kitchen cabinets.
- Help set up a new living space for first-time home buyers.
- Gather goods for a college student who will soon be moving from a dorm room to a shared apartment.
- Purchase items at a very reasonable cost to re-donate. There are many charities helping adults and families in need set up homes of their own.

Customers of the Thrift Shop will also find regularly replenished clothing in sizes from infants to plus-size adults; shoes; all types of accessories from scarves to pocketbooks; bric-a-brac; linens; and toys, games, books and DVDs, all at very reasonable prices that simply cannot be beat at any local store. Goods sold at the store come from very generous donors within our communities, and all store proceeds outside of operating expenses are donated by the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League to local non-profit organizations or used for student scholarships.

The Thrift Shop is located at 1741 East Second Street in Scotch Plains and is open Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Children are welcome provided they are accompanied by an adult.

To learn more about the Service League, our donation policy and volunteer opportunities please call the store during Thrift Shop business hours at 908-322-5420

or visit the Scotch Plains Thrift Shop website, scotchplainsthriftshop.weebly.com.



(above) Small appliances and kitchen essentials abound at the shop.

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CENTER FOR HOPE'S AUXILIARY YEAR-END DONATION

The Center for Hope Hospice & Palliative Care, a community-based non-profit hospice organization in Union County, New Jersey, celebrated the season with their Auxiliary on Monday, December 5. At the party, the Center received a very generous gift: a check for \$100,000 representing the funds raised from the Auxiliary over the past year.

Marge Hussey, the Auxiliary's president, was pleased to be able to present the check to the Center. "Each year," she said, "with our many events and the Hope Chest Thrift Store, we work tirelessly to not only educate the community about the Center, but to help the Center in its mission: providing only the finest in hospice care to all those who need it regardless of an inability to pay. As I present the fruits of that work to the Center tonight, I hope you all can share the pride I feel in knowing that we're making a difference in the lives of so many each and every year."

Tom Kasper, the Chairman of the Center's Board of Trustees, was on hand to accept the gracious donation. "This is incredible," he said. "While each and every one of us, alone, do what we can, it pales in comparison to the work that can be done when we come together as a group and work toward a goal. You all have shown that here tonight. There's simply no way the Center can properly state the gratitude we feel for the Auxiliary throughout the year."

Marge concluded by saying, "As we come together this holiday season, I want to again thank everyone for their hard work...and remind everyone that our work is not done! Next year,

those in need in our community will still remain and will still need our support." She reminded the group that "we still need new members to help us do even more next year."

The Center for Hope offers hospice and palliative care in its two residences in Scotch Plains and Elizabeth, and provides hospice care to patients in the wider community where they live. For more information on the Center or the Auxiliary, visit cfhh.org.

ABOUT CENTER FOR HOPE HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE, INC.

Center for Hope Hospice & Palliative Care (Center for Hope) is a non-profit, community-based organization that provides terminally ill patients with hospice care, and their families or loved ones with physical, emotional, and

spiritual support during their time of need. The Center actively supports the individual's right to live out the remainder of their life with dignity and in comfort, surrounded by the love of family and friends, and eased from the burdens of physical, emotional, spiritual, financial or social distress. Center for Hope welcomes all terminally ill patients, their families and loved ones without concern for race, ethnicity, religious affiliation or ability to pay. It also offers pain and symptom management for chronically ill and seriously ill patients through its palliative care program. Center for Hope operates two facilities in Scotch Plains and Elizabeth; the latter provides nearly \$3.5 million a year in charity care. For more information, visit cfhh.org.



(above, l-r) The officers of the Center for Hope Auxiliary present a \$100,000 check to the Center for Hope's Board of Trustees Chairman. Pictured are Marge Hussey, Dolores Paruta, Ginny Comer, Thomas Kasper, Dolores Hynes, and Rosemary Burke.

Courtesy photo

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CRAIG CLARK CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY OF HEART TRANSPLANT

Craig Clark, 61, is taking time to reflect on the gift of life and the miracle of organ and tissue donation and transplantation as he recently celebrated four years since his life-saving heart transplant. With his health and strength now restored, Craig is living each day to its fullest by enjoying life's precious moments and spending time on his favorite hobbies, including home improvement projects, day trips and travel.

"Each day that I get to travel and spend time with extended family and friends or special events like our children's weddings or the birth of a grandchild, I remember that it was made possible thanks to my organ donor and the care of Susan Pardi, NP, and the amazing transplant team at NYU Langone who kept me alive through heart failure," said Craig.

Now four years post-transplant, Craig is filled with energy and spends as much time as possible with his grandchild. He is also forever mindful of his organ donor who gave him the gift of life. "The only thing that I know about my donor is that he was 51 years old when he passed," said Craig. "My donor or his family's decision to be a donor has essentially given me a new lease on life."

Craig has also made it a priority to advocate for NJ Sharing Network, the nonprofit organization responsible for the recovery and placement of donated organs and tissue in the Garden State. By sharing his story with others, Craig hopes to encourage more people to register

as organ and tissue donors. "One organ and tissue donor can save eight lives and enhance the lives of over 75 others," said Craig.

At the age of 17, Craig enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. He earned bachelor's degrees in Criminal Justice and Art History from Seton Hall University before returning to active military duty as an Artillery Officer. At that time, doctors detected that Craig had a heart murmur, and he was soon diagnosed with cardiomyopathy. Despite his critical health challenges, Craig and his wife, Anna, raised their three children, Adam, Rachel and Nathan, and he enjoyed a successful career in transportation and supply chain management.

As years passed, Craig's heart disease grew progressively worse. He suffered a stroke and his heart stopped beating twice in a two-week period. Craig had a defibrillator implanted, but he was later diagnosed with congestive heart failure (CHF) in 2017. He was added to the heart transplant waiting list. On August 25, 2018, while admitted at NYU Langone, Craig's prayers were answered when he received "the call" from NYU Langone cardiologist Alex Reyentovich, MD that a heart was available for transplant.

"I remember answering the phone was basically the only thing that I had enough strength to do at the time," said Craig. "The next day, I had my transplant. I recovered quickly in the immediate days and weeks after transplant. I was out of the hospital in just seven days!"

Currently, there are over 100,000 Americans –

nearly 4,000 of whom live in New Jersey – waiting for a life-saving transplant, according to United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS). However, the generosity of those in the Garden State is providing hope for the future.

To learn more, get involved and register as an organ and tissue donor, visit www.NJSharingNetwork.org.



(above) Heart transplant recipient Craig Clark of Scotch Plains recently celebrated the four-year anniversary of his life-saving transplant.

Photo courtesy of NJ Sharing Network



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GIVING THANKS FOR A LIFE WELL LIVED

Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless

Mikaela Santos came into our lives in the summer of 2022. In July, we received an email from Karen Gilmour, a yoga instructor with Alluem Yoga in Cranford, telling us about a young student with a desire to give back to the community, especially homeless children. She wanted to collect backpacks full of all the necessary school supplies to start the year off right. Mikaela, together with her instructor Karen, her sister Vivienne, her mother Yesica, her Aunt Natalie, and her good friend, Marielle, started a giving tree with the backpack needs of nearly 50 children in our housing programs.

A few weeks later at the beginning of the 2022 school year Mikaela passed away. Mikaela was just 11 years old. She lived most of her life in and out of hospitals because she had childhood cancer. So briefly did we know her yet how profoundly she affected us all. She left everyone she met with a sense of love and light. And it is her story we want to share with you today.

Just days after her death, her mother, sister, aunt, and friend delivered her backpack project to the Elizabeth Coalition. We were amazed at the love and care that went into creating each individual backpack. Mikaela willed her idea into being...she really made it happen!

What made Mikaela so special was her ability to transform her experiences of pain and illness into a project for others. Mikaela was asked what inclined her to helping others when she herself was going through so much. Mikaela answered, matter of fact-ly, "I might have cancer but I also have love, a home, and my family to support me. One thing does not have to do with the other."

Karen remembers Mikaela as someone who always showed up with love...to the studio...to her practice of yoga...to her friendships. "Every moment with Mikaela was a favorite one. I loved her little laugh and her sweet smile. Mikaela was a light in this world...and in my life."

Mikaela's mom, Yesica, recalls how knowing Mikaela made her a different person, "Mikaela was my first-born, she's the reason I became a mother and then when her sister, Vivienne, was



(above) Mikaela Santos

born we were complete. Knowing Mikaela makes me feel honored and proud to be her mother." Mikaela's precious spirit burns brightly in memory for those who loved her most but also for those lives she touched so briefly with her creativity, her giving, and her compassion.

The children who received a backpack wrote notes and drew pictures to thank Mikaela. Some notes make mention of an angel, which is how they choose to remember her and her supreme act of bravery in being a force for good in the world. To be so young and yet full of such a wise mind and kind heart, sharing her blessings with others, is a page from her remarkable story that we can all learn and grow from.

Thank you, Mikaela.

It is supporters like Mikaela that are so vital to our work. Donations and volunteers free us to offer premium case management to those who need it, allowing us to offer the care and focus on each client who comes through our door. Consistent, dedicated partnerships push our vision that one day, we will eliminate homelessness and equip each person with the support they need.

For volunteer opportunities to help our homeless brothers and sisters, and donate, visit theelizabethcoalition.org.



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“MAN OF THE YEAR” AND “YOUTHS OF THE YEAR”

Congregation Beth Israel

Peter Fleischmann, Michael Liebermann, and Keira Baerson, members of Congregation Beth Israel (CBI) in Scotch Plains, were honored as “Man of the Year” and “Youths of the Year”, respectively, at the Northern New Jersey Region of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs dinner, held at Temple Beth Ahm Yisrael in Springfield, on Sunday, December 4.

This year’s “Man of the Year”, Peter Fleischmann, has been an active member of CBI since 1965. Born in Czechoslovakia in 1927, Peter emigrated to the United States at age 14 with his parents and brother and lived in Forest Hills, Queens. He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps for 18 months, and later earned a B.S. in Journalism from the University of Illinois. Peter married his late wife Bernice in 1950; he has three children and seven grandchildren. During

his long career, Peter worked in the radio, television, advertising and printing industries. After his retirement in 1994, Peter volunteered to mentor start-up and operating businesses through the U.S. Small Business Administration and the U.S. Department of Commerce. A Holocaust survivor, Peter also volunteers through the Jewish Federation of Great MetroWest’s Holocaust Council to educate younger generations, either through one-to-one meetings with Bar and Bat Mitzvah students or through presentations to elementary, middle school and high school classes.

“Youth of the Year” Michael Liebermann is a 12th-grader at Westfield High School and “Youth of the Year” Keira Baerson is in 11th grade at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. Both honorees are madrichim (teachers’ aides) in CBI’s Religious School and attend Darcone, the

synagogue’s program for High School students. Both students also assume additional leadership roles at CBI and within the larger Jewish community. Michael participated in the Diller Teen Fellowship program, a selective leadership development program for Jewish 10th and 11th graders, sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ. Keira, in turn, spent last summer in Israel with USY (United Synagogue Youth) on its EPIC program (Experience with Purpose, Intention, and Community).

“The CBI Men's Club Selection Committee worked with the synagogue's clergy and staff to identify those individuals who truly exemplify the best of CBI,” said Jonathan Jaffe, chair of the Selection Committee. “Peter is widely known for his participation in an ongoing ‘Twinning’ program with Bar and Bat Mitzvah teens, as he continually shares his story about escaping the Nazis with new generations. Meanwhile, Michael and Keira are superb representatives of CBI's youth; both have accomplished so much already, and we are very pleased to honor them for all of their hard work within the Jewish community. Both are tremendous role models for the students in our Hebrew School.”

The Federation of Jewish Men’s Clubs presents awards annually to recognize volunteers who have been active leaders within their communities. Congregation Beth Israel is affiliated with The United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism and has an active Men’s Club and youth program. For synagogue information, call 908-889-1830.



(above, l-r) Photographed at the award ceremony are Peter Fleischmann; David Glass, Northern New Jersey Region (NNJR) President; Michael Liebermann; and Keira Baerson.

Courtesy photo

SCHOLARSHIP APPS AVAILABLE


The College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains 2023-2024 scholarship application forms can be obtained from the SPFHS Counseling Office, at spfk12.org, or at fspcollegeclub.org.

This will be the 87th year that female students seeking financial assistance to pursue a four-year college degree have been helped by the College Club’s fundraising efforts. To date the College Club has awarded approximately \$750,000.00 in scholarships to approximately 574 local women. In 2022-23 the club awarded \$30,500 to 12 recipients.

In the words of one of the scholarship recipients, “From the bottom of my heart I thank the College Club for investing in my education. It means the world to me that I have a team of female supporters who saw something in me and spent their precious time and energy to raise the scholarship money that will enable me to further my education and pursue my dreams. I hope that one day I can return the favor and share the same generosity with future candidates.”

Application materials must be postmarked on or before February 15, 2023, to be considered.

The F-SP College Club Scholarship Committee will be ready to begin reviewing applications the first week of March. The decision to select the 2023-24 scholarship recipients will be finalized in mid-April.




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BUTTERFLY RELEASE REFLECTS ON GRIEF AND LOSS

Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss

Over 30 Imagine participants and staff gathered in the Tribute Meadow at Fairview Cemetery in Westfield held on Saturday, October 22. It's a lovely spot near the weeping willows, pond, and fountains. They came together for a Butterfly Release Ceremony arranged by Imagine staff member, Kristin Imbimbo and Sharon Rossman and Rick Ralph of Fairview Cemetery.

The ceremony included poetry, music and

reflections on grief and loss followed by the release of the butterflies. As it was a cool night, many of the butterflies chose to stay close to the warmth of the children and adults releasing them sitting on hands, shoulders and jackets as they warmed themselves before flying off. It was an intimate ceremony of remembrance and Imagine and Fairview plan to partner again in the spring to provide another opportunity for families to participate.

Imagine offers free year-round grief support groups for children ages 3-18 and young adults 19-30 who are coping with a loss due to death. Concurrently, support groups are available for the parents and guardians of the children in the groups and are offered in English and Spanish. Imagine also offers grief and loss education and training to the community. For more information please contact Imagine at 908-264-3100 or info@imagine.nj.org.



(above) Members of Imagine and Fairview Cemetery came together for a Butterfly Release Ceremony.

Courtesy photo

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MAYOR RAYMOND A. GIACOBBE AND THE RAHWAY CITY COUNCIL PRESENT

Rahway is SOUPER!

Enjoy the Rahway Soup Stroll!
SATURDAYS IN JANUARY

FROM 1-4pm

JAN 7 JAN 14 JAN 21 JAN 28

FREE EVENT!
NO REGISTRATION NECESSARY!

Warm up this winter with some **FREE** delicious soups!
Visit participating Rahway restaurants on Saturdays in January from 1-4pm and ask for a sample of their featured Soup Stroll soup!

Scan the QR code for a full list of participating restaurants or visit RahwayIsHappening.com/soupstroll

Please note: While supplies last. Establishments will not be able to accommodate food allergies or restrictions. Not all restaurants are open the entire 1-4pm. Please check individual hours of operation.

cityofrahway MAYOR RAYMOND A. GIACOBBE

SHOP RAHWAY SUPPORT LOCAL

Rahway is community!

RAHWAY

JANUARY IS A SOUPER TIME TO VISIT RAHWAY

Rahway is your winter destination in 2023! Looking for something to do to fight off those winter blues? Bundle up and take the train, rideshare, or drive to Rahway to experience all that the city has to offer. Rahway is home to a diverse small business community with unique retail shops and dining experiences. You can start your day in Rahway with a hot cup of coffee and some shopping, get the kids out of the house for lunch and some family game time at the arcade, and plan a date night with drinks and dinner at any one of our many delicious restaurants. No matter what cuisine you are craving, you will find it in Rahway! Watch a show at the Union County Performing Arts Center, view an exhibit at one of our art galleries, or listen to local musicians who can help you rock and sway your way through the winter months.

Looking to warm up this winter? Our annual Soup Stroll, presented by our Special Improvement District (SID), will return every Saturday in January (Jan 7, 14, 21, 28) from 1-4 p.m. Mayor Raymond Giacobbe and the Rahway City Council encourage everyone to attend this free event as a great way to get together with friends, get out of the house, and sample some delicious soups while strolling through the City.

Restaurants will be stirring up their finest soups for you to try, so be sure to follow @Rahwayishappening on Facebook and Instagram or visit RahwayIsHappening.com/soupstroll for participating eateries and more information. Snap a photo of you and your Soup Stroll Squad enjoying your samples and share it with @rahwayishappening on Instagram to enter our Soup Stroll Selfie contest for a chance to win a \$25 Gift Card to your favorite participating restaurant.

Visit Rahwayishappening.com for information on parking, lists of shops and restaurants and details about all of our upcoming events!

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