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THE CITY TURNED INTO A WINTER WONDERLAND

Linden's Annual Holiday Tree Lighting was held on Friday, December 2nd on Wood Avenue, at Linden City Hall. There was live entertainment, horse drawn wagon rides, holiday music, refreshments, photos with Santa,

and bike giveaways for younger children. After the tree lighting, Linden families were invited to visit with Santa at the Promenade which is decorated for the season as a winter wonderland of lights.



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SANTA'S HELPERS

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."

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

Courtesy photo



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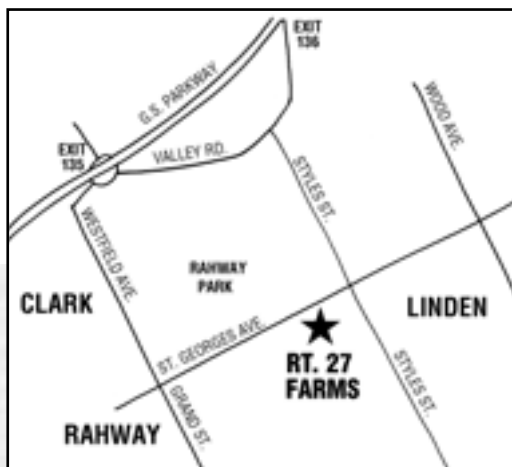
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FIVE COMPLETE INAUGURAL CITIZEN ACADEMY COURSE

City of Linden Police Department

On December 7, 2022, Chief David Hart and members of the Linden Police Department gathered to celebrate the five members of our community who completed our inaugural Citizen Academy program.

The 8-week program met one night a week and offered participants valuable insight into a range of law enforcement topics including the Internal Affairs process, use of force guidelines, 9-1-1 Emergency Dispatch procedures, and crisis intervention. Participants also participated in hands-on practical exercises where students handled simulated motor vehicle stops, crime scene processing, and internal affairs.

"Many members of our community have little experience dealing with law enforcement, and as a result there are a lot of misconceptions about how and why we take the actions we do," said Chief Hart. "Our Annual Youth Academy has been very successful at helping to bridge that understanding gap with our youth, and this program was developed to foster those same relationships with adult members of our community."

"Participants particularly seemed to enjoy the interaction with our Police Officers and Dispatchers, and they all said they walked away with a much deeper understanding of the legal system," said Det/ Sgt. Christian Ramirez, who developed and coordinated the program. "We are already working on improving and expanding the program for next year."

Congratulations to this year's participants: 2nd Ward Councilman Barry Javick, 7th Ward Councilman Ralph Strano, 5th Ward Councilman-elect Carlos Rivas, Linden Board of Education member Lymari Cintron, Rebecca Tattoli, and John Samsel.

VFW AND AMERICAN LEGION BREAKFAST'S

AMERICAN LEGION POST 102 JANUARY 15

Come to a Pancake Breakfast, hosted by the American Legion Auxiliary - Unit 102, on Sunday, January 15, 2023 at the American Legion Post 102, located at 112 West Elizabeth Ave., from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Donations: Adults \$8.00 / Seniors & Children \$7.00 / Ages 5 & Under Free.

So come out and enjoy a home cooked breakfast, including this month's special Omelets.

VFW #1397 JANUARY 28

Come one, come all to our Pancake Breakfast on Saturday, January 28, 2023 for the VFW Post #1397, which will be held at the American Legion Post 102, located at 112 West Elizabeth Ave in Linden from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Donations: Adults \$7.00 / Seniors & Children \$6.00/ Ages 5 & Under Free.

This event is open to the public, so come out and enjoy a home cooked breakfast!

Take outs are available. Support our Veterans!



(above) Five members of the Linden community completed the Linden Police Department's inaugural Citizen Academy program.

Photo by City of Linden Police Department

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INTERNATIONAL NATIVITY DISPLAY

The Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist at 2018 Dewitt Terrace in Linden hosted an International Nativity Display on December 10 in conjunction with the Church's Christmas Sale and on December 11 with Mystic Vision Player's Yuletide Carol. Father Peter De Franco, Rector of the Church, displayed 94 sets ranging in size from a charm of the Nativity to dressed porcelain figures over 9 inches tall. Carved Olive wood sets from Israel were featured from a realistic set to an abstract design. Images of a Black Jesus included a Lenox Holy Family to a corn husk set from Uganda to a resin African American scene. Mindful of the war in Eastern Europe, a painted wooded set from Ukraine was placed next to a Russian nesting doll display. A Lenox ensemble from the First Blessing series spanned two tables while more contemplative representations came from LLadro, the Grail and the French

Contemplative Sisters of Bethlehem. Among the contemporary groups, the House of Lloyd produced a group with Joseph wearing jeans and a hoodie raising the Baby Jesus to the imaginative work of Patience Brewster who depicts a multicultural group of people with animals wearing shoes, eye glasses and clothing including feathers. Because of its cultural role in this country's celebration of Christmas, a set depicting a Charlie Brown Christmas was arranged amid children's blocks. Latino culture was celebrated in an alabaster set and a matchbox group from Mexico, a group by Lladro and three clay sets from Peru. In recognition of the Episcopal church's English heritage, sets from the British Isles included both porcelain and glass groups from England and a Celtic stone representation. While 2022 marked the first time Father Peter

put the collection on public display in Linden, he hopes to share the Nativities again in 2023. The Church welcomes all persons to worship on Sundays at 10 a.m. The Christmas season comes to a close on January 8 at 10 a.m. with a celebration of the visit of the Magi and the Baptism of Jesus. On January 15, 2023, the church celebrates the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., acknowledged as a Martyr and Prophet by the Episcopal Church. Daphne Roberts, an intern for the deaconate who serves at the church, will preach. The Gift and Thrift Boutique, also located at the church on 2018 Dewitt Terrace, will open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the Second and Fourth Saturdays of the month. This upscale Thrift Store offers bargains on everything from household items, jewelry, clothing, toys, tools, books, and CD's along with upscale dining sets.



(above) An International Nativity Display held at the Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist on December 10 and 11, 2022.

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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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JAN 7 JAN 14 JAN 21 JAN 28

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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

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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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RELIEF FROM CHRONIC KNEE PAIN

FDA Approved Treatment to Avoid Surgery

DON'T BLAME THE ARROW FOR MISSING THE TARGET

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



If Knee Surgery Sounds Scary, It Should

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

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

Consider This Alternative To Surgery

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

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

How Does This New Treatment Work?

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

Do you Suffer from any of these Symptoms?

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

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

Let Me Show You Targeted Relief From Your Knee Pain

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

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

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

Call 732-827-0800

Scot Paris MD, FACS



Here's what our patients have to say

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

- Patricia G.

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

- Perry O.

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

- Quenton L.

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JANUARY FILM SCREENINGS

Linden Public Library continues its twice-weekly films in January, including a series of non-fiction Friday documentaries. All movies are presented free of charge in the Columbia Bank Room.

The Linden Public Library is proud to continue its tradition of presenting movies in 2023. Tuesday films will be recent Hollywood releases while Friday films will feature documentary offerings, including the recent Ken Burns' two-part PBS film about Benjamin Franklin. These films are shown on afternoons at 1:00 p.m. and shown free of charge in the Columbia Bank Room at the library.

THE FILMS THIS MONTH ARE:

January 3: Flag Day

(2021; R; 109 minutes)

January 6: Becoming Helen Keller

(2021; G; 120 minutes)

January 10: On The Rocks

(2020; R; 96 minutes)

January 13: Benjamin Franklin, Part 1

(2022; G; 120 minutes)

January 17: Tesla

(2021; PG-13; 102 minutes)

January 20: Benjamin Franklin, Part 2

(2022; G; 120 minutes)

January 24: The Gentlemen

(2019; R; 113 minutes)

January 27: The Truffle Hunters

(2019; 84 minutes)

January 31: The Girl Who Believes in Miracles

(2021; PG.; 100 minutes)

Located at 31 East Henry Street in Linden, the Linden Public Library has been the city's educational, social, cultural and entertainment center since its founding in 1928. If you have any question about the library's programs, please call us at 908-298-3830. Please "Like" the Linden Public Library on Facebook and follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Tik Tok.



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Ask for TV Project Department, for job evaluation and estimate of cost and compensations!

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Diverse businesses have historically encountered many obstacles to success, and these obstacles have become even more apparent in recent months. To help battle these injustices the Union County Economic Development Corp., UCEDC, a non-profit economic development company, has developed a Virtual Incubator Program (VIP). The VIP will allow 10 businesses with ownership from an underserved population the opportunity to sustain themselves through these trying economic times by offering education and access to capital.

Upon completion of this 8-week program, which includes virtual training sessions and both group and one-on-one counseling, participants will gain access to an exclusive loan program from UCEDC created specifically for VIP graduates.


QUALIFIED VIP CANDIDATES MUST:

- Business must have majority ownership by an under-served individual or group of

individuals (Asian, Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ, Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Veteran)

- Business must be located and perform the majority of their operations in New Jersey
- Must be in business for 2 years (forced closure from pandemic does not count)
- Must have been operating profitably, or at break-even, prior to the pandemic
- Must be willing to participate fully in the program as outlined below (failure to fully participate will result in removal from the program)
- Must provide most recent personal tax return, and two years of business tax returns

The fifth session of the VIP will run from Wednesday, February 8 - Wednesday, March 29, 2023, from 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. The application deadline is Wednesday, January 11, 2023. If you or someone you know can benefit from this program, please apply on line: ucedc.com/ucedcs-virtual-incubator-program/



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PHILLIPS 66 DONATION TO LINDEN FD

LIFE in LINDEN • Page 11 • January 2023

The Linden Fire Department recently received a generous donation from Phillips 66 in the form of structural firefighting hoods. "Teaming with a community minded partner in Phillips 66, we were able to acquire enough hoods for every member of our Department," said Deputy Chief Kevin Brady. According to Phillips 66 Fire Chief Tony Muccia, "These are the best hoods we've ever used!"

Linden Fire Chief William Hasko was also

present for the event and stated, "Cancer is a growing concern in firefighting as more firefighters are diagnosed than ever before. These protection hoods are made to mitigate the risks of Carcinogenic Particulate Contamination.

Once again, the Linden Fire Department is very thankful for the continued support of Phillips 66, and their dedication to safety and preparedness in our community."



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Sunday, January 29, 2023

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FIND PASSION AND PURPOSE THIS WINTER

The Gateway Family YMCA

Find your passion and purpose at The Gateway Family YMCA this Winter. At the Y, you'll find more than just a place to work out. With opportunities to connect with new people, develop new skills, explore new interests and support your community, you'll discover new passions and gain a greater sense of purpose. The Gateway Family YMCA is inviting the community to visit the Y and learn more with an Open House from January 11-13 and a YMCA Membership Special through January 15.

"We all need a place to go where we feel supported and where we belong. The Y is that place for many. A place where adults can find life balance; children can reach their full potential; seniors can be active and find community; and families can connect and strengthen relationships," stated Melynda A. Disla, CEO, The Gateway Family YMCA. "Our supportive community of staff and members will inspire you to find your inner strength and expand your health in spirit, mind and body."

To help more people benefit from the Y, The Gateway Family YMCA is hosting a membership special through January 15, providing No Joiner Fee for all new members who join using the code NY23 at tgfymca.org/join-the-Y or in person at the Y. Flexible membership opportunities are available, including short-term memberships, virtual memberships, and a free community membership for all to belong to the Y. In addition, The Gateway Family YMCA will be opening their doors to the community January 11-13 for a YMCA Open House at four locations in Elizabeth, Rahway and Union. For more information, visit tgfymca.org/events

At the Y, individuals and families have the opportunity to improve their health and well-being and connect with the community, all while participating in their favorite program or activities at the Y, or virtually from home. "To be our best selves, we need to take care of our wholes selves, and our goal is to provide that seamless opportunity to make healthy living easy for all, whether they travel to the Y or join their favorite class from home," stated Rodger D. Koerber, Chief Operating Officer. "Here,



neighbors from all backgrounds and walks of life can discover common ground, broaden their perspectives and support one another. At the Y, there are no strangers, only friends you haven't yet met."

The Gateway Family YMCA is a non-profit charitable organization serving Eastern Union County and Northern Middlesex County since 1900. As a leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community by connecting all people to their potential, purpose and each other, the Y focuses on empowering young people, improving health and well-being and inspiring action in and across communities. By bringing together people from different backgrounds, perspectives and generations, the Y ensures that all have access to the opportunities, relationships and resources necessary to learn, grow and thrive. Through the Annual Support Campaign, Membership For All Financial Assistance is available to those who qualify.

Winter 2023 program registration is available online at www.tgfymca.org for programs including swimming lessons, youth sports, active older adult fitness, dance, gymnastics, virtual WISE adult services and chronic disease self-management programs. Through the 7th Grade Initiative, youth are supported with a complimentary membership, leadership opportunities and special events.

To learn more about The Gateway Family YMCA, visit tgfymca.org or contact the Elizabeth Branch 908-355-9622, Five Points Branch 908-688-9622, Rahway Branch 732-388-0057 or the Wellness Center Branch and WISE Center Branch 908-349-9622 for more information.

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FIND YOUR PURPOSE.
FIND YOUR Y.

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NEXT GENERATION TO LEAD CHILDREN'S BENEFIT FUNDRAISER

This year marked the 40th anniversary of the Children's Benefit Fundraiser (Toy Drive/Christmas Holiday Party). Forty years ago, Joe Sarica of Linden sought to honor the memory of his niece by organizing a toy drive and raising funds to benefit local children in need. Also, a special tribute was paid this year to Joe's sister, JoAnne Tortorello, who passed in 2022 from Breast Cancer and had been helping him from the startup of the benefit. This is a grassroots effort that has grown each year as his family, friends, neighbors, and businesses stepped up to help him out. Their donations went to several community service organizations. The party was held at the Union Elks Club on December 10, 2022 will benefit Linden Food Pantry LINCS, and St.

Joseph's Social Services in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

At the end of the evening Joe told the crowd that he will be stepping down as the point person and handing over the reins to the next generations of family members and great friends who will possibly lead the event for the next forty years! Joe and Jack Helfrich's children and their nieces and nephews, who have been volunteering since they were young will be stepping up to take over planning and continuing the party and gift giving.

Sarica tapped into his network of musician friends to provide entertainment, forming an "All-Star Band" which featured over a dozen performers. Each year, an array of top talent generously entertains over 200 guests at the

superbly catered event. Further, local businesses donate gifts that are raffled off to raise funds, and the toys brought by the guests fill a 10-foot U-Haul truck.

It is impossible to thank all those who volunteered, performed, and donated over the four decades, but when asked Sarica rattled off a list that seemed never ending, "Jack Helfrich, Denise Helfrich, Mary Sarica, Barbara and Mike Ozeransky, JoAnne and Vito Tortorello, Johnny and Vikki Sarica, Jack Gregory, Bill Daniel, John Dwyer, Yosh and Lori of The Linwood Tap House, Mr. B Printing, Barbara Harris and The Toys, Kenny Wiltshire, Rob Paparozzi, Mitch Eisenberg, Ed and Chrissy Schwalje, Patricia Schwalje Nicole Sarica, Dom and Elena Principato, Greg and Michelle Ginand, Mark and Natalie Tortorello, Mike Noon, Jim Brown, Bob O'Connell, Don Sweeney, Kevin and Patty Kanach, Sharon Cocuzza and her family (Anthony, Nicole, Kelly & Ryan), Ryan and Kelly Helfrich, Nick Adase, Tom and Cat Pascale, Mike Soresso, Mike Reuben, Joe Rivera and the Fellas, Tony Nardini, Howie and the Elks Club, Linden KOC, Joe LaPlaca, Bernadette Murphy, Sister Jacinta, Kathy Willis, Carmine Coppa, Mike Giunta, Alexandra Tamayo and Chef Billy of Bayway Catering. Martin and Linda Mulligan. Mary Dudal and Leo DiGuilio, Dan and Jennifer Holzmann, Hetal Parmar . . ."

Social service organizations suffered over the past two years due to COVID-19 restrictions, and in turn, the families they service suffered worse. The Children's Benefit Toy Drive is the quintessential grassroots community service of neighbors helping neighbors. The network has grown as friends of friends get involved.

The next generation would like the 2023 event held in December grow even bigger. They are starting a year-long campaign to invite anyone who wants to make a donation or purchase a ticket to email marleymarion@aol.com.



(above, l-r) Joe Sarica, Jack Helfrich, Jim Brown of Lincs, Bernadette Murphy from St. Joseph's Social Service.



(above) Joe and Mary Sarica with two of "Next Generation", daughters Elena (left) and Nicole Sarica (right).



(above, l-r) Santa's "Next Generation" Helpers: Andrew Zub, Nicky Adase, Bill Weslosky, Willie Leppler, and Ryan Helfrich

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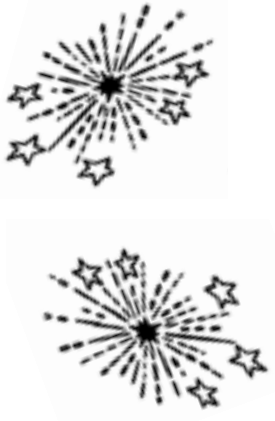
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