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KENILWORTH CHAMBER JOINS UNION TOWNSHIP CHAMBER

The Greater Union Township Chamber of Commerce (GUCC) Board of Directors formally welcomed the Borough of Kenilworth and its Chamber of Commerce as a new addition to its association at a ceremony recently held at the Union Chamber's headquarters. Officials from both Union and Kenilworth were in attendance to mark the occasion.

"Although our Chamber has always welcomed businesses from outside the Union area to its membership, this is the second formal expansion of our organization that will bring Kenilworth under our auspices so that they may avail themselves of our member benefits and to have our Chamber represent and promote Borough businesses, said Union Chamber CEO James Masterson. "We warmly welcome them and we pledge to do all that we can to promote and represent each business."

Kenilworth is joined by Roselle Park, which came into the Union Chamber last November.

Greater Union Chamber Board President Marie Maguire added, "Those Kenilworth businesses who join the Chamber will find more than 50 member benefits to help them succeed in these challenging times and we encourage them to become as active as possible."

The Greater Union Township Chamber of Commerce is an association of 400 businesses. Its mission is to promote, unite, represent, and strengthen its members through networking opportunities, special events and a variety of economic initiatives.

For more information, contact James Masterson at executivedirector@unionchamber.com.

Courtesy photo



(above) The Greater Union Township Chamber of Commerce (GUCC) Board of Directors formally welcomed the Borough of Kenilworth and its Chamber of Commerce as a new addition to its association at a ceremony recently held at the Union Chamber's headquarters. Officials from both Union and Kenilworth were in attendance to mark the occasion.

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COPING WITH LOSS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

There is so much pressure to be happy in our culture, especially at the holidays. We are supposed to have a Happy Thanksgiving, a “merry little Christmas” or a Happy Hanukkah. But grief doesn’t take a holiday.

Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss would like to offer support to those navigating the challenges of grieving during the holiday season and offer some coping strategies as well. On Thursday December 14th from 6:30-8 pm, Imagine will offer a workshop on Coping with Loss During the Holidays. The free workshop will be held at their center at 244 Sheffield Street in Mountainside and is open to adults and children grades 3 and older.

Imagine’s Grief Educator, Connie Palmer, LCSW will present the workshop in English and Training and Education Director, Veronica Ortiz, LPC and Bilingual Program Manager, Sonia Nuñez will present the workshop at the same time in Spanish. Pizza dinner is available prior to the session beginning at 6:15 for those who sign up. Hot cocoa and cookies will be served as well.

If you are looking for support as you cope with a loss this holiday season, the staff at Imagine would like to help, and hope to see you at the workshop on the 14th.

Imagine is a 501c3 nonprofit that 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 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@imagineenj.org.



(above) If you’re interested in attending the workshop presented in English, please scan the QR code or visit Imagine’s website at imagineenj.org/education-training/community-webinars/ to register. Registration is not required for the workshop presented in Spanish.



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BLUE CHRISTMAS PRAYER SERVICE

The Church of the Little Flower will be hosting a Blue Christmas prayer service on Sunday, December 10 at 3 p.m. The service will be held in the Bernauer Parish Center, 290 Plainfield Avenue in Berkeley Heights.

Many of us feel down or depressed this time of year, whether due to stress, financial issues, broken relationships, death of a loved one, or may be looking for a brief respite from the hustle and bustle of the season.

The Bereavement Ministry of the Church of the Little Flower invites anyone from the parish or any faith community to attend our service where we can pray for renewed strength and hope and experience the presence of the Lord.

Light refreshments will be served afterward. For further information, you may call the parish center at 908-464-1585 and ask for Dan Grossano or email bereavement.lf@gmail.com.

FRIENDSHIP DAY AT TURTLE BACK ZOO

Over 700 special needs students, their teachers, and aides had smiles on their faces for the Elks 46th annual Friendship Day at Turtle Back Zoo on October 2, 2023. The event was sponsored by area Elks club members.

It was a perfect Fall day for participants to walk around the park and learn about the animals on display while enjoying activities, games, a DJ, and face painting sponsored by Elks from the North Central District.

Meanwhile, Elks from the East Central District, with Lodges in Stirling, Summit, Mountainside, Springfield, Cranford, Union, and Rahway, provided, prepared, and served 1,200 hot dog meals to hungry visitors.

Elks Care - Elks Share. And Friendship Day is one of many ways that the Elks turn those words into action. Throughout NJ, Elks provide assistance for the caring of special needs children. The Elks maintain clinics, hire nurses, therapists, pediatricians, psychologists, and teachers as well as provide equipment such as crutches, wheelchairs, walkers, and hospital beds to those in need. In addition, Elks Camp Moore provides special needs children with a fun-filled vacation away from home where they can try new adventures, create lasting friendships, and experience opportunities that promote independence and greater self-confidence.

Please visit Elks.org for more information and how to join The Elks.



(above) Annual Friendship Day at Turtle Back Zoo

Courtesy photo

SEE THE GOOD IN PEOPLE

Submitted by Peter DeSarno

Perhaps it is because I see today due to the generous life changing gifts of two donated corneas, I tend to become very reflective when I collect the donated glasses that are received in the Lions drop box.

When I sort the glasses and package them to be sent into the Lions Processing Center, I am reminded of the good in people who are eager to help. I look at all the glasses that were once worn on the faces of members of our community which form a beautiful mosaic representing so many different shapes, sizes, colors, glasses for the old and young...and think that this is beautiful on many levels. I then think about the people who will experience that magical moment I had when sight is restored.

The New Providence Lions Club Eyeglass collection site is in front of the New Providence Library which is located at 377 Elkwood Ave. Since January 2022 we have collected 2,165 pairs of glasses.



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SHINING STARS CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR – DEC. 2ND

With cast members from all over Union County and beyond, the Shining Stars Network has been producing live programming for the special needs community for eleven years.

Celebrate the holiday season when the Shining Stars take the stage for their 2023 Christmas Spectacular” set for Saturday, December 2nd, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

The show will take place on the main stage at the historic Union County Performing Arts Center in Rahway as this talented cast sings and dances to your holiday favorites.

This year’s Christmas Spectacular marks the return of the Shining Stars to one of the most beautiful theaters in New Jersey and will feature 35 special needs cast members and their volunteer buddies from local high schools, who serve as mentors to the cast during rehearsals.

Two previous Shining Stars shows at UCPAC drew more than 1,000 audience members for each performance, and already, the buzz is building in the community.

“We’re so excited to ring in the holiday season,” noted Shining Stars Network founder and President Mike Curci. “Our stars are ready to share their smiles, energy and amazing talents with everyone. This will be a great way to cap off our 11th year.”

“We strongly believe in creating an inclusive environment for our cast, and our buddies are an integral part of the Shining Stars experience,”

noted Shining Stars founder and show director Sally Curci. “We are so excited to bring a new show to the stage and cannot wait to connect with our incredible audience again to celebrate the holiday season.”

Shining Stars Network is wrapping up their biggest year yet, which included their annual “Evening of Shining Stars” Spring Show, their Broadway debut at the Gershwin Theatre, and their impressive main stage debut at the iconic Paper Mill Playhouse.

The Shining Stars performed “This Is Me” on Broadway as part of the Arts for Autism concert and soon after, took the Paper Mill stage to present The Greatest Show, a history-making performance which was the first full production of performers with special needs in Paper Mill history.

“Shining Stars Network is not only about

performing, but more importantly we’re about building self-confidence and self-esteem,” said Shining Stars co-director Nicole Greene. “Our cast members are not only talented, but inspire us every day, and we are all very excited about seeing our cast take the stage again to share another magical night with the audience.”

Tickets are on sale now at UCPAC.org. For groups of 10 or more, email shiningstarsnetwork@gmail.com.

The night will also feature a Tricky Tray and 50/50 raffle. Doors will open at 6:00 p.m.

Shining Stars Network is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization based in Cranford, N.J. that offers opportunities in the performing arts for the special needs community.

For more information on Shining Stars Network or to make a donation, please visit shiningstarsnetwork.org.



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FAMILY FUN BEGINS AT THE GATEWAY FAMILY YMCA

At The Gateway Family YMCA, individuals and families find more than just a place to work out. With opportunities to connect with new people, develop new skills and explore new interests, the Y facilitates the discovery of new passions and assists in gaining a greater sense of purpose for all. For local families, The Gateway Family YMCA provides a fun and unique opportunity to support all ages, together or apart, within the same organization.

“At the Y, we have the unique opportunity, and mission, to support all. We strive to provide inclusive, equitable and innovative programming and services for all ages, and commit to supporting individuals and families throughout the 17 communities we serve in Eastern Union County and Northern Middlesex County,” stated Melynda A. Disla, President and CEO, The Gateway Family YMCA. “At our Y, everyone has a place to go where they can feel supported and receive help. We are proud to be the place where adults can find life balance; children can reach their full potential; seniors can be active and social; and families can connect and strengthen relationships.”

The Gateway Family YMCA offers a variety of programs to help achieve greater health and well-being, nurture youth and inspire individuals to give back to better their community. Program information and registration is available online at tgfymca.org for programs including swimming lessons, youth sports, active older adult fitness, dance, gymnastics, Esports, WISE Community Services and chronic disease self-management programs. Through the 7th Grade Initiative and 7th Grade Leaders Club, youth are supported with a complimentary membership, leadership opportunities and special events.

The Gateway Family YMCA provides individuals and families with the opportunity to improve their health and well-being and connect with the greater community, all while participating in their favorite program or activity, either at the Y, or virtually from home. Social events, affinity clubs, family special events, programs, activities and specialized children’s theme events provide the variety of activities



necessary to keep everyone engaged. No other organization provides the breadth of programming inclusive of all ages.

“Our goal is to provide a seamless opportunity to make healthy living easy and equitable for all ages,” stated Rodger D. Koerber EVP, Chief Operating Officer. “We know that social and mental well-being are increasingly important for all. At the Y, neighbors from all backgrounds and walks of life can discover common ground, broaden their perspectives, and support one another. We like to say there are no strangers, only friends you haven’t met yet.”

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. The Gateway Family YMCA is a non-profit charitable organization serving Eastern Union County and Northern Middlesex County for over 123 years. Through the Y’s Annual Support Campaign, Membership For All Financial Assistance is available to those who qualify.

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 (908-349-9622) for more information.

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BLUE ENVELOPE PROGRAM

The Blue Envelope Program is accessible to all Union County residents on the Autism Spectrum. Residents can obtain a Blue Envelope at their local police departments throughout the county.

The Blue Envelope Program introduces a simple yet effective tool that contains essential information for drivers with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This includes a copy of their driver's license, vehicle registration, insurance details, and an emergency contact card. Additionally, the envelope provides clear instructions to drivers on how to navigate a traffic stop and interact with law enforcement officers in a manner that promotes clarity and safety.

Key features of the Blue Envelope Program include:

- **Specialized Training:** Every officer in Union

County, including local officers in all 21 municipalities, will undergo specialized training to develop a deeper understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder and the best practices for engaging with individuals during traffic stops.

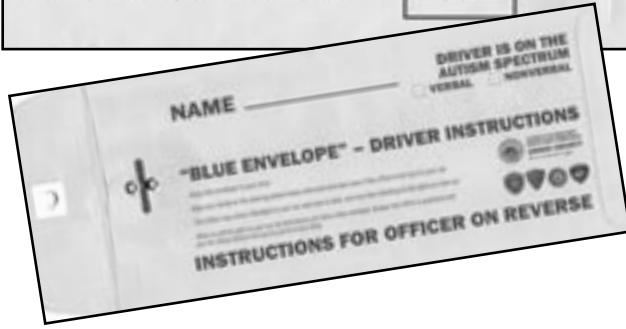
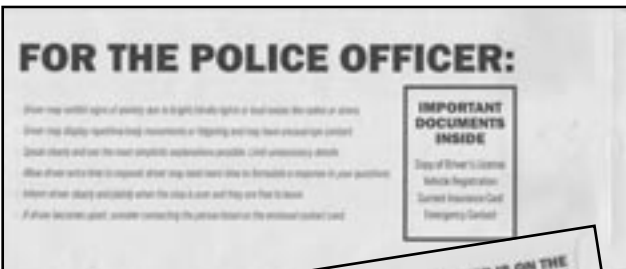
- **Communication Facilitation:** Drivers with Autism Spectrum Disorder can present the blue envelope to the officer upon being stopped, allowing officers to quickly recognize the situation and adapt their approach accordingly.
- **Essential Information:** The envelope includes guidance for officers to simplify requests and minimize the risk of misunderstandings or potential escalation. Additionally, officers are advised to contact the person listed on the

emergency contact card for assistance if needed.

- **Verbal or Nonverbal Indication:** A checked-off box on the envelope indicates whether the driver is verbal or nonverbal, which aids officers in communicating effectively.

"Every single police department in Union County is proud to be a part of this initiative," said Elizabeth Police Chief Giacomo Sacca and President of the Union County Police Chief's Association. "Our officers have undergone thorough briefings and trainings to ensure they are well-versed in the proper protocols, and they are eager to put their training into action."

For information on this program in your town, contact your local Police Department's Community Outreach Unit.



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ASSUMPTION CHURCH CHRISTMAS CONCERT

The Church of the Assumption in Roselle Park, in conjunction with Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark, is coordinating a Christmas Concert on Wednesday evening, December 6th @ 7 PM.

New Jersey's own Chris Pinnella and His Quartet will be performing an array of Christmas and Holiday Classics. Chris is a world class vocalist who has been compared to Josh Groban and Micheal Buble.

All proceeds from the concert will benefit Assumption Church and Catholic Charities.

Tickets in advance are \$20, and can be purchased via the Rectory or by visiting assumption23.givesmart.com Tickets at the door will be \$25.

Sponsorships are also available.

For more information contact Peter Ruccione @ 973-818-4060. pruccione@ccannj.org

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NJ INTERGENERATIONAL ORCHESTRA PRESENTS FREE FAMILY HOLIDAY CONCERT IN - DEC 10

New Jersey Intergenerational Orchestra will be entertaining families on Sunday, December 10, 2023 with a free concert of seasonal holiday favorites. The concert will be from 2pm to 3pm at the Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School, 272 Morris Avenue, Summit, NJ. Families with children of all ages are invited to come and join in the fun!

NJIO's three orchestral ensembles will combine to perform music by Strauss, Mozart, Brahms, and more! The concert concludes with Leroy Anderson's exciting Sleigh Ride, with percussion accompaniment provided by the youngest members of the audience!

The concert is free and open to the public. Donations are gratefully accepted.

Following the concert, the famous NJIO Instrument Petting Zoo returns! Experienced NJIO musicians will guide young audience members and assist them in safely trying out the instrument of their dreams. Instruments are loaned by Elefante Music of New Providence and Scotch Plains.

Concert Details:

Sunday, December 10, 2023 at 2 pm
Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School
272 Morris Avenue
Summit, NJ 07901
Admission is free;

donations are gratefully accepted.

This concert is made possible by funds from: the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts; Frank and Lydia Bergen Foundation; The Lillian Schenck Foundation; The Henry S. and Agnes M. Truzack Foundation; Investors



(above) Young audience members get to try out orchestra instruments at NJIO's Holiday Concert Instrument Petting Zoo. Instruments are loaned by Elefante Music.

Foundation; Standish Foundation; and many other generous supporters. NJIO is a proud participating organization in the Families First Discovery Pass Program, a program of the NJ Departments of Health and Human Services.

NJIO is committed to ensuring that its programs and concerts are accessible. For more information regarding the concert or to inquire about patron services, please contact NJIO at info@njio.org, or visit NJIO's website njio.org.

New Jersey Intergenerational Orchestra, now in its 30th season, has been nationally recognized as a leader in intergenerational excellence through its unique approach to teaching musical performance and as a model for intergenerational orchestras across the country. Depending on space availability, NJIO welcomes new members of all ages and abilities each concert period to one of its several orchestras - no auditions needed!

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A RIVETING CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE: EARTH MAMA SCREENING!

CASA of Essex County is thrilled to announce the upcoming screening of "Earth Mama." Prepare for a thought-provoking cinematic journey that delves into the complexities of the foster care system. The film unravels the heartache and resilience within the foster care system, focusing on the life of a pregnant single mother who seeks solace and strength in her Bay Area community. As she navigates the daunting challenges before her, she must make life-altering decisions that will shape the destiny of her family.

Following the screening, we are delighted to

present an exclusive Q&A session with the brilliant Director and Writer, Savannah Leaf. The discussion will be expertly moderated by Michelle Miller, distinguished CBS Anchor and New York Times Best-Selling Author of "Belonging."

Screening Details: Date: December 6th; Time: 7:00 p.m.; Venue: The Claridge, Montclair, NJ

Rating: R (Some Drug Use|Language|Sexual References|Nudity)

For more information and to secure your complimentary tickets, please visit casaeearthmama.eventbrite.com.

For nearly four decades, CASA of Essex County has been dedicated to a singular mission: providing unwavering support to the young individuals placed in foster care, who, through no fault of their own, bear the weight of repeated traumas and uncertainties. Our commitment is to offer them the advocacy, guidance, and care they so desperately need to rise above adversity and carve out brighter futures.

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Q&A with the director after screening will be moderated by



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Ring in December at UPL with Music and Craft from Around the World, Soulsville, Cooking, Kwanza and More!

Holiday Crafts and Music from Around the World (Vauxhall Branch)

Sat., 12/2 @ 2-4:00 pm

Join host Susan Justiniano | RescuePoetix, crafts creator Mwikali Words, poet Yari Pares, and musician Carol Lester to commemorate multicultural celebrations within the community. Family friendly.

Please register early.

Sign up for Affordable Health Care Insurance (Vauxhall Branch) - Drop-in event Mon., 12/4 @ 2-6:00 pm

New Jersey Citizen Action provides free assistance with health care enrollment through GetCoveredNJ and NJFamilyCare. Services are provided in English and Spanish.

Practice Your English (Main Library)

Mon., 12/4 @ 6:00pm

Now's your chance to practice your English and have fun. (Must be able to speak basic English).

Not a formal class.

Walk-In Wednesday: 1-1 Technology Assistance (Vauxhall Branch)

Wed. 12/6 @ 12:30-2:00 pm

Get help with library resources, including downloading e-books from Libby and Hoopla, using the library catalog and resources, and using the printer, photocopier, and scanner. No reservations required. Twenty-minute session per person.

Soulsville, USA (Vauxhall Branch)

Wed., 12/6 @ 6:00 pm

Music historian Vinnie Bruno takes you on a musical journey of the collaboration between Atlantic Records and the Stax Volt label. This partnership is considered one of history's most important record company collaborations.

Learn how these companies developed the timeless soul music we still enjoy six decades later, including Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, and countless others.

Union County Department of Aging (Drop in event at Main Library)

Thurs. 12/7 from 10:00 am-12:00 pm

Do you have questions about services for seniors or their caregivers? Visit the Aging Services Kiosk, speak to our specialist, and get answers to your questions about pharmaceutical and home energy, USF and cooling assistance, home care, home-delivered or congregate meals, Medicaid eligibility, Social Security, caregiver relief programs, and transportation.

Washington's Crossing:

The Story that Inspired the Painting (Zoom)

Thurs., 12/17 @ 6:30 pm

Learn about the physically and emotionally challenging human experiences on December 25-26, 1776, at a critical moment in the American Revolution War. Presented by William Kidder, author of Ten Crucial Days: Washington's Vision for Victory.

Chair Yoga (Main Library)

Thurs., 12/7 @ 10:00 am

Take a deep breath with friends and stretch! For beginners to professionals. Presented by the Gateway Family YMCA.

Friends of the Library (Main Library)

Thurs. 12/7 @ 6:00 pm

Join the Friends of the Library for their monthly meeting. New members are always welcome.

Balance (Main Library)

Wed., 12/13 @ 10:30 am

It's more important than ever to avoid the risks of falling as we age. Through gentle strength exercises and stepping strategies, learn to balance your body in different situations. Give this popular class a try! Presented by the Gateway Family YMCA.

Walk-In Wednesday: 1-1 Technology Assistance (Vauxhall Branch)

Wed., 12/13 @ 12:30-2:30 pm

Get help with library resources, including downloading e-books from Libby and Hoopla, using the library catalog and resources, and using the printer, photocopier, and scanner. Twenty-minute session per person.

Holiday Cooking with Chef Jesse Jones (Vauxhall Branch)

Wed., 12/13 @ 6:00 pm

Chef Jesse Jones returns for another informative and tasty cooking demonstration focusing on holiday cooking. He will show you how to make "Mommy Smothered Chicken over Cheese Grits with a Southern twist. Chef Jesse Jones is a renowned chef and author known for his modern approach to southern cuisine. Reservations are required; space is limited.

Meditation (Zoom)

Thursdays @ 11:30 am

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

Practice Your English (Main Library)

Thurs., 12/14 @ 6

Now's your chance to practice your English and have fun. (Must be able to speak basic English).

Not a formal class.

Kwanzaa: Zawadi African Dance and Drum Performance (Vauxhall Branch)

Sat., 12/16 @ 12:00 pm

Newark-based Zawadi African Dance and Drum will be doing a half hour performance consisting of drum and dance that will showcase the history of Africa and reconnect attendees with the ancient culture.

Kwanzaa: A Cultural Roadmap for Success (Vauxhall Branch)

Sat. 12/16 @ 1:00 pm

Please join us as Queen Mother Imakhu leads attendees in a lively talk sharing how Africans throughout the diaspora have created an inspiring legacy of achievements based on the power of the Seven Principles, mapping out a positive future. Queen Mother Imakhu will also perform on drums with audience participation.

Sign up for Affordable Health Care Insurance (Drop in at Main Library)

Mon., 12/18 from 3-7:00 pm

New Jersey Citizen Action provides free assistance with health care enrollment through GetCoveredNJ and NJFamilyCare. Services are provided in English and Spanish.

Walk-In Wednesday: 1 on 1 Library Technology Assistance (Vauxhall Branch)

Wed. 12/20 @ 12:30-2:00 pm

Get help with library resources, including downloading e-books from Libby and Hoopla, using the library catalog and resources, and using the printer, photocopier, and scanner. No reservation required. Twenty-minute session per person.

Crocheting for Adults (Vauxhall Branch)

Wed., 12/20 @ 6:00 pm

Please join us as Ms. Lisa Roberts teaches attendees the basics of learning how to crochet. Attendees can bring their crochet hooks and yarn, but supplies will be provided!

Off the Shelf Book Club (Main Library)

Thurs., 12/21 @ 6:30 pm

New members are always welcome. This month's title is This Tender Land: A Novel by William Kent Krueger.

Walk-In Wednesday: 1 on 1 Library Technology Assistance (Vauxhall Branch)

Wed., 12/27 @ 12:30-2:00 pm

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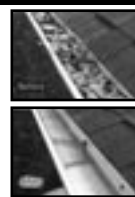
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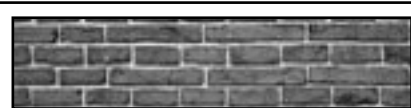
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