

Watchung Post

Watchung's Hometown Newspaper

NJ

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ISSUE 133 • DECEMBER 2023

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ROTARY CLUBS BAN TOGETHER TO HELP HOMELESS VETS

Westfield Rotary Club

The Watchung-Warren Rotary Club recently banned together with representatives of five other Rotary clubs, including Westfield, Madison, Somerset Hills, Hillsborough, and Morristown, and delivered needed supplies to the homeless veterans living at Lyons VA Administration, building 53, in Lyons, NJ. This Rotary program was designed to help homeless military veterans by Westfield Rotarian Burim Regjaj, and has been running for 4 years.

Rotary International President Gordon McNally has made addressing mental health a priority for Rotary Clubs this year. Past District Governor Dr. Michael Hart feels that as a society we have an obligation to take care of our veterans whose health has been damaged by their service. These men and women put their lives at risk to protect our freedom. More than that, they put their health at risk, and now may be damaged mentally with PTSD.

Eighteen American military veterans commit suicide every day. That's 6,570 suicides per year. More than four times as many than we lost in all the wars since September 11th, 2001. In that time period, the US has lost 7,057 soldiers fighting wars; and 30,177 soldiers to suicide.

Veterans who are damaged with PTSD may turn to drugs and/or alcohol, lose their jobs, then their house, their family, and everything, until they hit rock bottom. Some commit suicide at this point. The VA will dry them out, help them recover, provide psychological counselling, provide help with designing a resume, and provide career counselling. The VA Administration provides the veterans with a bed and meals for 9 months, but then they are either moved to low-cost long-term housing, or just put out of the hospital, back onto the street.

Right now, there are 71 veterans living at the Lyons VA Building 53, including 6 women, and another 162 veterans living at Valley Brook Village next door. Valley Brook Village is basically a dormitory for low-cost, long-term housing.

Since the hospital does not provide the veterans with most clothing or toiletries, Rotary



Courtesy photos
(above, l-r) Rotarians Lonnie Sherman, Susan Sherman,
Burim Regjaj, Past District Governor Dr. D. Michael Hart.

fills the gap. The most requested item is socks. Rotary provides underwear, socks, long underwear, T-shirts, boots, winter coats, hats, gloves, scarves, razors, shaving cream, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, a "Thank You for Your Service" card from the Ronkonkoma, Long Island Rotary Club, and a rugged duffel bag to keep everything in.

Rotarians recently delivered 71 duffel bags to the veterans, bomber jackets in October, pillows and pillowcases in November, and winter coats, pajamas, hats, gloves, and scarves in December.

An important part of the project is to talk to the veterans as we are giving out the supplies, to let them know that someone cares about them, and thank them for their service, to help instill hope.

The consortium of six Rotary clubs purchases the supplies and clothing from a charity on Long Island called General Needs, Inc. which buys the materials wholesale. This 501c3 was started by Rotarians Lonnie and Susan Sherman, who are members of the Ronkonkoma Rotary Club, and are seen in the photos. They drive 2 hours each way from Long Island to Lyons, NJ to deliver the supplies which the New Jersey Rotarians purchase.

Every Wednesday special education students from Commack High School, Long Island, volunteer at the General Needs, Inc. storage facility to help assemble the duffel bags. The kids are learning skills, and helping the veterans at the same time.

In December, the Rotarians host a Holiday party and give out wrapped gift boxes which include hats, gloves and scarves. High School students wrap the presents, and elementary school students make holiday cards

This is such a wonderful project that the Rotary Clubs pool our funds in the Rotary District 7475 Foundation.

For information about this effort visit rotary7475foundation.org, or contact Westfield Rotary Club secretary Dr. D. Michael Hart by email at drmhart@yahoo.com.

For information about the Watchung-Warren Rotary Club visit their Facebook page.



Ashley's Watchung Market Update

\$1,051,000 Average Sales Price	4 # of sales	18 Average Days on Market	6 # of houses on the market
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The Cherie Berger Team
Cherie Berger M: 908.410.0931
Ashley Berger Freitas M: 908.432.9818
cheriebergerteam@compass.com
O: 973.310.6816



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Watchung Post

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33RD ANNUAL TREE OF LIGHTS EVENT - DEC 2ND Dedicated to Heroes of Watchung Little League

On December 2nd, 2023, at 5:30 p.m., the Watchung Rescue Squad will be holding the 33rd Annual Tree of Lights celebration. This year's event is dedicated to the "Heroes of the Watchung Little League".

Individuals being honored include Ms. Alice Olejar, who, in 1975, worked tirelessly to revive the declining Watchung Little League by raising funds to redo the Borough's baseball field and make uniforms for players. Mr. Eric Javer, Ms. Monica Politi, and Mr. Brad Elicker are also being honored during the event for their more recent contributions to the Little League. Prior to this year, the Borough's fields were in disarray and there were minimal funds to make the necessary repairs. These three individuals worked hard to obtain sponsors and sell concessions at games and were able to raise enough funds for repairs. Without the hard work and dedication of all these individuals, the Watchung Little League would not be where it is today.

The Tree of Lights ceremony is traditionally held the first Saturday of December in honor of Pearl Harbor Day. The tree is lit up to honor and remember those who died on that tragic day. After the tree lighting, fireworks light up the center of Watchung. Food and drinks are also available, free of charge, for all attendees.

This event also serves as a fundraiser for the all-volunteer Watchung Rescue Squad.

Individuals may purchase lights to be lit in honor or memory of loved ones. Each light is \$50 and names of the honorees will be listed on the Watchung Rescue Squad's website as well as displayed on the night of the event. For more information and to purchase a light, visit watchungems.org/tree-of-lights.



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FIREFIGHTER SANTA TO VISIT CHILDREN

The Watchung Fire Department is proud to announce that Firefighter Santa will be visiting the children of Watchung on Saturday, December 9th, 2023, Between 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., with a rain date of Sunday, December 10th. Firefighter Santa and his elves will once again be handing out prewrapped candy canes! We will make every effort to stop on all streets in the borough. Unfortunately, due to time

constraints and possible calls for service we are not always able to. Please send us a direct Facebook message - @ Watchung Fire Department, with your street name and we will make every effort to add your street to our route this year.

If we miss your street feel free to stop and see Firefighter Santa at Mobus Field from 4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.



SCOUTING FOR FOOD DEC. 2

Watchung Cub Scout Pack 32 will be collecting non-perishable food from participating Watchung community members right from your door on December 2nd!

All donations collected will be delivered to the Starfish Pantry of Plainfield to help support families in need this Holiday season.

Items that are Most Sought after Include:

Bread, Pasta, Pasta Sauce, Cans of Soup, Cereal, Mac n' Cheese, Small Boxes of Tea Bags, Peanut Butter, Jelly, Cans: Fruit, Vegetables, Tuna.

To Participate, use the QR code, or sign up via our SignUp Genius Link bit.ly/Pack32Scouting4Food2023.

Please place items in a bag or box labeled "For Cub Scouts" and leave out by your front door by 10 a.m., Saturday, December 2nd. Scouts will pick up your donation by 12 p.m. (noon).

Drop off location also available at the Watchung Police Department foyer, and Wilson Memorial Church. For More Information, Email: pack32chair@gmail.com



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WATCHUNG EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

Submitted by Annette Mayers

The Watchung Educational Foundation “WEF” sponsored the Bayberry Elementary School “Trunk or Treat” at Watchung’s elementary school on

October 27. Fun was had by the students, as well as their parents and teachers.



(above, l-r) Madeline Mayers, Ms. Tara Stevens, Ms. Michele Klier, Max Mayers,



(above, l-r) Maria Yenish-Givney, Arya Radia, Ms. Krystle Cianci, Madeline Mayers,



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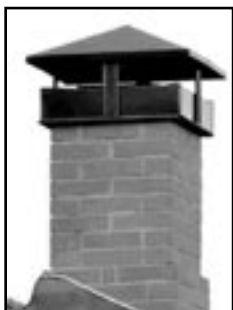




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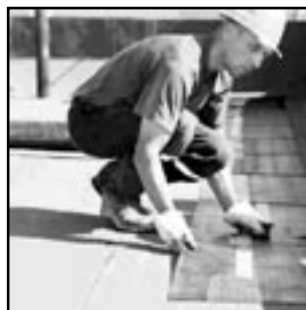
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DIWALI CELEBRATION

Warrenbrook Senior Center

Diwali, the festival of lights, was celebrated by decorating the Warrenbrook Senior center with diyas on November 6th. The clients sang the

prayer to Lord Ganesh and danced by doing garba and dandiya. Bharatnatyam dance was performed by Nirupama and Bijal graciously embellished clients hands with henna art.



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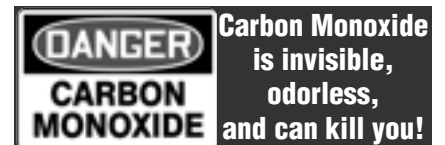
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WARRENBROOK SENIOR CENTER DECEMBER PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Warrenbrook Senior Center is located at 500 Warrenville Road, Warren, New Jersey.

*For more information call 908-753-9440 or visit: seniorcenter.us/sc/warrenbrook_senior_center_warren_nj
December 14 – Inservice Day - Senior Center Closed, December 22, 25 – Senior Center Closed – Christmas*

Warrenbrook Senior Center is one of the six county operated Senior Center. Somerset County residents who are 60 years and older are welcome to participate in any of the programs at Warrenbrook Senior Center. They also provide a choice of 4 different meal choices during lunch that seniors can take advantage of during the weekdays. All the programs are FREE for the registered members.

Brains n Games and Hand Bells with Adrienne Graubard

December 1, 15, 11 a.m.

Did you know that solving puzzles or challenging yourself with new mind-stretching activities like learning music can stimulate the brain and enhance your creative and critical thinking processes? Join Adrienne for some mind-tingling, brain-stumping word games and a fun-filled musical workout using hand bells.

Singing Christmas Carols

December 4, 11 a.m.

Warrenbrook Seniors Ken Tekel and John Blain will lead the group where singing the Christmas Carols while getting into the Christmas spirit.

Bingo with Rashmi

December 6, 27, 11 a.m.

Bingo is more than just an exciting activity.

The Sound of Winter

December 7, 11 a.m.

In this presentation, The Discovery Orchestra staff member and violinist Michael Avagliano will explore the seasonal landscape of “Winter,” the last of Antonio Vivaldi’s famous collection of violin concertos, The Four Seasons. The presentation will include a live performance.

Christmas Ornament - Craft

December 8, 11 a.m.

Use your creativity to create a unique Christmas ornament using 2” Styrofoam balls, self-adhesive glitter squares in assorted colors, felt sheets. All materials will be provided. Pre-registration is required.

WATCHUNG SENIORS CLUB 55+

Regular meetings are held the 2nd Wednesday of the month, from 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at the Watchung Firemen's Exempt Hall, located at 31 Mountain Blvd., Watchung (lower level, handicap accessible). Guest speakers, trips, and fun parties are planned throughout the year. Join us! For more information call Madelyn (908)816-0641.

BROWNSTONE HOLIDAY SHOW BUS TRIP

The Watchung Seniors Club is sponsoring a bus trip to a holiday show at the Brownstone, on Wednesday, December 13, 2023. The cost is \$75. per person. Lunch includes 1-drink, salad & pasta, beef & chicken, veg & potato, Dessert, Coffee, Tea & Soda. For information call (908) 816-0641.

Drum Circles with Dave Miller

December 11, 11 a.m.

Soothe the mind, body and spirit in this drumming circle. This is a holistic experience that leaves participants feeling a sense of joy! This is an ancient approach to promote healing and incite self-expression. The benefits of drumming are deep relaxation, lower blood pressure, reduced stress and help build communication. Dave will teach participants how to hold a drum and how to make different tones.

Holiday Party

December 13, 10:30 a.m.

Every year we follow the tradition of getting together and enjoying the festivities with musical entertainment while singing and dancing to the holiday music and cherishing the sweet memories of the year we are about to bid farewell too. This year DJ Giovanni will be entertaining us for the yearly Warrenbrook Holiday Party while we meet our fellow seniors and enjoy the music and food. Expect a surprise visit by Mr. Claus.

Christmas Songs with Sal

December 18, 11 a.m.

We continue our Christmas Holiday Party with Christmas and Holiday songs sung by Sal Di Bianca. We will have a visit by Santa

Craft – Beaded & Stitched Santa Claus

December 20, 11 a.m.

Create your own Santa Claus using glass beads, Perforated paper, floss and needles. All materials will be provided. Pre-registration is required.

Nutcracker!

(Virtual) December 21, 11 a.m.

Peter Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker is one of the most beloved ballet scores in all music and a perennial favorite during the December holidays. The Discovery Orchestra Maestro George Marriner Maull will look within “The Waltz of the Flowers,” a movement from Nutcracker that is filled with gorgeous string sound and beautiful woodwind solos.

Kwanzaa

December 28, 11 a.m.

Kwanzaa, is a week-long holiday beginning December 26th honoring African heritage, unity, and culture. The colors of Kwanzaa are red, green, and black. We will be playing some Kwanza Trivia like African Countries mix, Crosswords, Maze, Secret Message

New Years Eve Trivia

December 29, 11 a.m.

We will play New Year’s resolutions word scramble, NYE Word Search and learn some New Year Traditions from Around the World.

KNITTING TOGETHER WHILE MAKING NEW FRIENDS

The Gates Avenue Knitters celebrated their 23-year anniversary in April. The group has been meeting at the Long Hill Township Library, located at 917 Valley Road, Gillette, every Monday from 1p.m. to 3 p.m. Everyone is welcome to join in.

In the month of April in the year 2000, Gates Avenue, Gillette resident Arlene Kaplan, started a knitting group along with 4 friends. Twenty-three years later the group, now called the Gates Avenue Knitters, are still knitting together, including 4 of the 5 original knitters who still live in town.

Eighteen to twenty ladies show up on any given meeting day. Their skills range from beginner to experienced knitters (and crocheters). They help each other get past problems with patterns, and they are excited and willing to teach beginners to knit.

They come from Long Hill Township and surrounding towns, including Warren, Watchung, Bridgewater, Springfield, Chatham, Madison, Summit, and Westfield. Many were introduced to the group thru friends.

Along with their own projects, the group knits for causes. They knit approximately 500 hats per year and distribute them to local charities. Beginning in November they have a display at the library and the hats are sold as a fundraiser thru the end of February for \$10 each. The group

recently presented the library with \$1,300 from the proceeds of the last hat sale, which is the most funds ever raised.

The group welcomes donations of yarn and knitting and crocheting supplies. Donations can be dropped off at the Long Hill Township Library any day during business hours.



Photo by David J. Kaplan

(above) A display at the Long Hill Township Library features items made by the Gates Avenue Knitters. They are for sale as a fundraiser for the library. It will be stocked thru the end of February, or while supplies last.

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They're back! Under the baton of Maestro David Wroe, the orchestra will kick off the festive season with a bang and plenty of bling as The Three Holiday Tenors join NJFO to present a family festival of traditional and contemporary holiday songs and music.

"We cannot wait to return to The Presbyterian Church at this special time of year and are thrilled to welcome back The Three Holiday Tenors – each more talented than the next – to help us celebrate the Holiday season," said Wroe.

The concert features Metropolitan Opera's internationally acclaimed tenor Errin Brooks and award winning tenors Jeremy Brauner and Mackenzie Whitney to celebrate and captivate with a dazzling selection of renowned tenor arias. Traditional carols, signature versions of familiar fare and a host of wintertime curiosities are also sure to delight.

"We believe there is something for everyone in this performance. Our holiday concert is a vessel for children, parents, grandparents and friends – indeed the entire community – come together through festive music at this unique time of the year."

The concert will take place on Saturday, December 9th at 7pm at the Presbyterian Church, 140 Mountain Ave in Westfield.

RING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH NJFO!

NJFO's quintessential New Year's celebration is also back on Sunday, December 31 in Westfield with "The Great American Songbook," a superb revue of American song and dance showstoppers.

Audiences are invited celebrate the New Year and revel in the musical genius of America's great composers, outstanding vocal performers, dazzling dance numbers and a world-class professional orchestra led by Maestro David Wroe.

A cabaret style event for the whole family, the concert promises a superb review of musical theatre classics presented in glorious symphonic splendor. The concert features renowned guest singers direct from the Broadway stage and dancers from Dance Theatre of Harlem who join NJFO to swing to favorites from Broadway and beyond.

The performance will take place on Sunday, December 31 at 7pm at Westfield High School, 550 Dorian Road, Westfield.

"There is much to celebrate this holiday season," continued Wroe. "So gather your friends and family for a series of merry musical programs of song and dance for audiences of all ages!"

This seasonal stroll of timeless classics and sentimental favorites, sure to bring us together with joy, smiles, and distinctive holiday memories, has been made possible in part by support from The Westfield Foundation, a Union County H.E.A.R.T grant and The NJ State Council on the Arts.

For tickets and further information for both events go to www.njfestivalorchestra.org or call 908 232 9400. —

Celebrate the Holiday Season with

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Return of THE HOLIDAY TENORS

Saturday, December 9 at 7pm The Presbyterian Church, Westfield, NJ David Wroe conductor Holiday Choruses	Sunday, December 10 at 3pm Drew University, Madison, NJ Jeremy Bauner tenor Errin Brooks tenor Mackenzie Whitney tenor
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THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK

Sunday, December 31, 2023 at 7pm
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Monday, January 1, 2024 at 2:30pm
 Sieminski Theater, Basking Ridge, NJ

David Wroe conductor
Guest Vocalists
Dancers from Dance Theater Harlem

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NJ INTERGENERATIONAL ORCHESTRA PRESENTS FREE FAMILY HOLIDAY CONCERT

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 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



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

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!

NJIO's 30th anniversary season will continue with two more concerts:

NJIO'S WINTER CONCERT

Sunday, February 25, 2024, 3 pm
Dolan Performance Hall,
Saint Elizabeth University,
Morristown, NJ

NJIO'S SPRING CONCERT

followed by 30th Anniversary Celebration!
Sunday, April 21, 2024, 3 pm
Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church,
Plainfield, NJ

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Saturday, December 2, 2023

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Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission plans to offer several rabies clinics in the fall to assure availability of free rabies vaccines for our cat and dog owners.

As we are still working to coordinate all the moving pieces to make these clinics happen, residents are asked to call the Health Commission at 732-968-5151 to confirm the dates, times and locations. All cats must be held a carrier and all dogs must be leashed.

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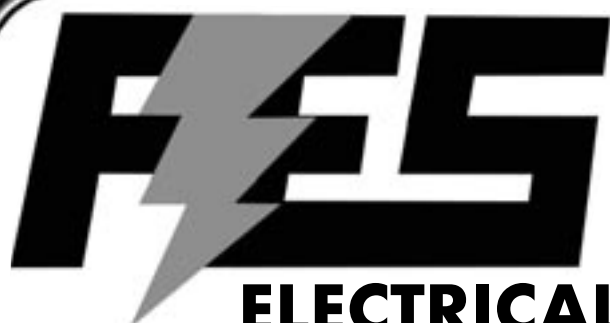
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BLUE CHRISTMAS PRAYER SERVICE

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.



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