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## NAVY VETERAN SHARES PRIDE OF 07036 WITH STUDENTS

*Submitted by Christine Hudak, Linden Public Schools*

Linden High School Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) students had the opportunity to celebrate Veterans Day on Wednesday, November 1st through a Webex discussion with a former Linden Public Schools student and retired United States Navy Veteran, Eric Coleman.

The Linden High School NJROTC unit was established in 1986 and originally had approximately 90 cadets in the first years of its establishment. Currently, the program has an impressive number of about 480 cadets enrolled in the program.

The NJROTC students paid a special honor to the Navy Veteran Mr. Eric Coleman, a retired Senior Chief Petty Officer (E-8), by having him participate in the promotion of several cadets along with Superintendent Atiya Perkins. The students were able to meet and learn the story of Senior Chief Coleman, a former student of the NJROTC Linden High School, and now a permanently disabled United States Navy veteran. This was a unique lesson for the students to hear the story of a former student and the lessons that he learned through his military career and life.

Senior Chief Coleman grew up in the 4th ward on Carnegie Street and spent a large amount of time at the Linden Library. He reminisced about walking the halls of Linden High School with his friend Superintendent Atiya Perkins. He stated that he is very proud of his friend Atiya whom he knew from childhood and now she is the Superintendent of Linden

Public Schools, the very schools that provided her with her education. Superintendent Atiya Perkins said "Our students are very fortunate to hear the story of a former NJROTC cadet from Linden High School who has continued a life of service."

Senior Chief Coleman told the cadets that he worked at the Linden Post Office, and he delivered mail throughout Linden after his high school years. He was outgrowing his environment, he had an inner calling to do more, and wanted to serve his country. He joined the military in 2000. Senior Chief Coleman stated, "No matter what ship, what country he was in, he always shouts out 07036," and always came back to his foundation, - back to Linden. When he speaks about Linden, he reminisces about going to St. Mark Park, walking to Wood Ave, and thinking back to the Linden Halloween Parade, remembers going to the movies on Wood Ave and then having a slice of pizza at Anacapri. Eric still enjoys going to the library.

Eric was a little frightened boy from Linden who grew up to embrace adventure. He never understood defeat and no tragedy or disappointment ever broke his spirit. With the pride of 07036 and paired with the Service of ROTC and the Navy, it comes down to respect, honor, and choosing to overcome and go through any obstacle no matter what.

Courtesy photos



*(above) School community thanks Retired Senior Chief Petty Officer Eric Colman and all that have served, are serving, and will be serving.*



*(above, l-r) Cadets Chrisna Fiemon and Ethan Hodasi*



*(above, l-r) Cadet Captain Camila Restrepo, pinning Cadet Olivia Pudelko; Superintendent Atiya Perkins promotes Cadet Alivia Young Bey.*

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# LINDEN TEACHER PARTICIPATES IN MACY'S THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE

## LIFE in LINDEN

Renna Media LLC, Publishers  
202 Walnut Ave., Cranford, NJ 07016

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The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade is a highlight for many families on Thanksgiving morning. For the past 13 years, a Linden Public School No. 9 teacher has served as a balloon handler in the parade. Ever since Theresa Rogakos was a child, she watched (on T.V.) the big balloons float high above the crowd, amazed by the people in costumes walking the twists and turns of the parade route and wondered.

Mrs. Rogakos first became involved with the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade through a contact from her days as a volunteer E.M.T. (Emergency Medical Technician). Balloon handlers, like Rogakos, volunteer their Thanksgiving morning to assist Macy's in making the parade come to life.

Being that this is her 13th year as a balloon handler, she proudly wears a Macy's Balloonfest sweatshirt to school each day from November 1st through Thanksgiving Day. The first parade Mrs. Rogakos participated in was 2011 and the balloon was Frieda the Dachshund. Since then, she has been lucky enough to travel the parade route with celebrities such as, SpongeBob, Snoopy and Woodstock, the red elf, Ronald McDonald (twice), and Pikachu and Eevee. This year, she helped to fly the one and only Grog.

Throughout the year, there are training sessions for volunteers including the balloon handlers, flight management teams, and vehicle crews. This includes the annual fall training, and

if you are lucky enough, Balloonfest. This is what teachers would call "Hands-On Learning" with core standards and indicators. Following each fall training session, Mrs. Rogakos shares photos and stories with her students as the parade gets closer and the excitement builds.

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(above) Theresa Rogakos

Courtesy photo

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## DJ DREWSKI & FRIENDS CONCERT AT THE UCPAC

Dj Drewski a radio host on Hot 97 fm and TV Personality hosted a Hip Hop concert that concert goers will never forget for years to come.

The Halloween themed concert was a huge success that sold out the UCPAC in Rahway NJ. Majority of its attendees were High School and college students who attend local schools in the New Jersey area. One concert goer said "Shout out to DJ Drewski because this has been the best show I ever seen!"

The attendees got way more than they bargained for when they got to witness some of the hottest hip hop acts hit the stage.

The show featured hip hop stars such as Sleepy Hollow, 41, Ron Suno & Dj Drewski (who is a Elizabeth NJ native.)

"I was extremely happy with the turnout and being able to use my platform to entertain and inspire the youth" said Dj Drewski.

"It was a great opportunity to bring the local youth to an incredible theatre like the UCPAC and show them they do not have to go out of town to see some of their favorite performing artists."

Solar, who is Dj Drewski's 2yr old daughter also joined the stage with him to celebrate such an incredible show. For Drewski, that was a full circle moment because as a child himself DJ

Drewski's father hosted a Rock & Roll concert at the same theatre years prior. Inspired by his upbringing in Elizabeth NJ, Dj Drewski plans to host more events and shows like this in the near future and is glad he was able to give both The City of Rahway and the surrounding communities a taste of what is to come.

Thank You to the Union County Police Department, Rahway Police Department and UCPAC for making sure everyone was safe and had a wonderful time.

To keep up with more of what Dj Drewski is doing follow him on social media at @SoDrewski



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# FOSTER YOUTH JOIN FOREVER FAMILIES AT ADOPTION DAY

**CASA of Passaic and Union Counties**  
On a recent fall morning, five youth ranging from three to 10 years old entered the courtrooms of Superior Court Judges Gavin Handwerker, Paul Nieves and Chanel Hudson as foster youth and, shortly after, emerged as official members of their new families.

Adoption Day is eagerly anticipated by many at Union County's Family Court, as ample smiles fill the courthouse – a juxtaposition to the daily navigation of complex issues fraught with loss or discord. This year, county dignitaries presented

families with proclamations and certificates, and festivities included performances by 30 high school students from Elizabeth's Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy A Cappella Choir; a former foster youth sharing her personal journey and adoption story; a roaming balloon artist; sheriff's officers dressed as superheroes and a Batmobile outside for visiting; furry greetings from Kenilworth's David Brearley Middle High School mascot bear; personalized cupcakes; and ice cream, face painting, and friendship-bracelet making stations.

CASA of Passaic and Union Counties presented family fun-themed gift baskets made possible in part from donations by David Brearley Bears That Care program and the Union County Bar Association. Baskets were given to all those finalizing on Adoption Day, as well as several families who adopted earlier in the year.

Cynthia Evans of Scotch Plains was among the CASA volunteers to attend the ceremonies for their assigned children. "The day was a long time

coming for these sisters, and it was amazing," she said. "I've been their advocate since 2020. Between their adoptive families and all involved, embraces and cheers were aplenty. My time as their CASA volunteer was both rewarding and challenging. I'm thankful I could help ensure their needs were met and services were provided while in care."

Adoption Day is a national movement to raise awareness of children in foster care. Since its inception 23 years ago, nearly 60,000 children have found permanency. More than 437,000 youth in the United States are currently in the child welfare system awaiting a permanent home, and the average wait is four years. For more than 23,000 youth, that doesn't happen, and they age out of the system, facing life on their own.

For details on CASA of Passaic and Union Counties, becoming an advocate for foster children or other opportunities to support the organization's work, log on to [www.casapassaicunion.org](http://www.casapassaicunion.org).



(above, right) Event included a balloon artist; cupcakes; ice cream, face painting, and bracelets.



(left) Each family received a basket made possible by CASA of Passaic and Union Counties & the David Brearley Middle High School Bears That Care Program.



(above) Sheriff's officers dressed as superheroes, and maned a Batmobile outside the courthouse.

Courtesy photo

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(above) The Hickory Tree Chorus invites the public to sing with them at an Open House, on January 10 and 17, from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m.

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together then break into small groups for uninhibited discussion about what is on our minds.

There is no cost to participate. The series runs for 12 weeks on Monday nights beginning at 7:30 p.m. and ending at 9:00 p.m. It will begin February 5th, 2024, and end May 6th, 2024. Three of the sessions are live in person and the remainder are on Zoom. You will need a desire for frank discussion, a willingness to participate and a commitment to attend. You will also need a computer or smartphone capable of Zoom sessions.

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# HOLIDAYS ARE A FESTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Submitted by Christine Hudak/Linden Public Schools

The holidays at Linden Public Schools are very festive. Students are involved in fun, engaging hands-on learning experiences. One such Classroom experience is an activity such as creating butter from heavy cream creating a special time for the students to form a bond over family traditions and spark an opportunity for cultural conversations with each other. Talking about traditions and the foods that represent their families' traditions is an enjoyable and tasty avenue where teachers such as our School No. teacher Mrs. Hamilton embraced the teachable moment with her kindergarten children learning different ways families from other countries celebrate the holidays.

The highlight for the Linden Public Schools students is their active participation in the City of Linden's tree lighting ceremony. This event is the turning point for all of Linden, as the official kick-off of the holidays. Linden High School NJROTC, the Fine and Performing Arts department plays a major role in the festivities, dancing, and live music set the tone for the most magical time of the year.

The Linden Superintendent, and Mayor all agree this is Linden's season of gratitude and thankfulness for being a family of community. Both come from a family of service and as a Linden family, all of Linden remembers those who are serving in one of the military branches far far away from 07036. We remember those who are continuing to protect our freedom so we can continue to celebrate and gather together in

public. All agree that it is wonderful to live in such a community as Linden where military veterans are so appreciated. This is an opportunity to gather as one community, thankful for those who are brave to serve and allow us the freedom to become part of stories of diversity of families and friends. Mayor Derek Armstead proudly states "Most importantly to fill everyone with gratitude and kindness during the holiday season while building bridges between the cultures and traditions that make Linden united."



(above) Linden High School and Soehl Middle School students celebrated with left Santa Claus, hot pretzels and hot chocolate.

Photos by Christine Hudak/Linden Public Schools



(above) Linden School No. 4 teacher Mrs. Hamilton and her students are excited to try the finished product. Butter never tasted so good!!



(above, l-r) Oliver Batista of School No. 2, Moises Disla of School No. 1, and Pedro Batista of School No. 2 wait to see the lights on the Linden tree turn on.

## ARTIST DIONIS JOI OFFERS CUSTOM DESIGNED SNEAKER



Dionis Joi is an Artist from Linden, NJ who has launched a collection of sneakers, featuring her original art designs and custom color schematics. Customers can also submit their own images and ideas. Her website makes it simple to order. Visit [4U2NJOI.com](http://4U2NJOI.com)

(pronounced For You To Enjoy) to see samples of previously designed sneakers. New sneaker designs are added each week.

Ordering customized sneakers is easy. First choose one of our standard sneakers, high-tops, or low-tops leather (similar to Nike Uptowns) or canvas (similar to Chuck Taylors), you can also choose a mesh running shoe or an Eco-Tech Running Shoe with Air Bubble Sole, (similar to Nike Air Max). Next, select your size. Then you can choose a design from our gallery or submit your own original image to be printed on your sneaker. A digital proof will be sent to you for approval and then shipped.

Dionis says, "A pair of custom sneakers are perfect for someone looking for a unique, one-of-kind gift."

She adds that "Designs are only limited by your imagination; I love making someone's ideas come to life."

Her sneakers make great individual gifts but have been used by organizations and families for parties and events as well. Dionis also offers a selection of T-Shirts, and Pillows, and other items.

You can reach Dionis through her website [4U2NJOI.com](http://4U2NJOI.com) or email her at [4u2njoiprod@gmail.com](mailto:4u2njoiprod@gmail.com).

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## GIFT & THRIFT BOUTIQUE

Happy New Year and a huge thank you to all of our patrons from The Gift and Thrift Boutique!

January brings in the new year and new inventory, in order to make room we will be having Dollar Days in January. Bring a Friend! We have new inventory for every sale. The 'Gift & Thrift Boutique' is open every 2nd & 4th Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Items for sale include Women's, Men's & Children's clothes, shoes, jewelry, kitchen and household items, decorations, toys, CD's, DVD's, books for all ages, seasonal & holiday décor.

The Gift & Thrift Boutique is found in The Episcopal Church of St. John The Baptist, 2018 Dewitt Terrace in Linden, NJ.

For more information, friend the Gift and Thrift Boutique on Facebook, email [giftandthriftboutique@gmail.com](mailto:giftandthriftboutique@gmail.com) or call the church office at 908-925-1535. Donations accepted during operating hours.

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## ATLANTIC FEDERAL GIVES RECOVERY GRANTS TO LOCAL NONPROFITS

The Atlantic Federal Credit Union ("The Atlantic") distributed \$50,000 in grant funding to five local nonprofit organizations through the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York Small Business Recovery Grant Program ("SBRG"). The SBRG is designed to support the financial security and health of organizations that have faced economic challenges due to the rate environment, inflation, supply-chain constraints, and/or rising energy costs.

The SBRG began in 2017 in response to hurricanes in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Program relaunched in 2020 and was made available again in 2021 to aid small businesses and nonprofit organizations facing

challenges due to the Coronavirus pandemic. By participating in the SBRG this year, The Atlantic was able to grant \$10,000 each to Bianca F.L.O.W.E.R.S. Inc. in Plainfield, Jewish Family Service of Central New Jersey, Mobile Meals of Westfield, St. Joseph Social Service Center in Elizabeth, and The SHARE Alliance in Springfield.

"Thank you to the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York for their partnership and the opportunity to extend recovery grants," shared The Atlantic Federal Credit Union Chief Executive Officer Anthony Mero. "The SBRG funding will help recipients continue their selfless work throughout Union County."



(above) Check Presentation St. Joseph Social Service Center: Since 1983, St. Joseph Social Service Center has served the materially poor and homeless community of greater Elizabeth, New Jersey, by providing basic human needs such as food, clothing and medications, as well as a wide range of services and programs to help them acquire the material goods and social services they need to live with dignity. St. Joseph Social Service Center's range of services include a food pantry, health and wellness programs, mental health counseling, an Adult Learning Center, access to clothing and household items, and more. Learn more at [sjeliz.org](http://sjeliz.org).

## AMERICAN LEGION & VFW POST BREAKFASTS

### PANCAKE BREAKFAST – JANUARY 21, 2024

Come to a Pancake Breakfast, hosted by the American Legion Auxiliary - Unit 102, on Sunday, January 21, 2024 at the American Legion Post 102, located at 112 West Elizabeth Ave., from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. This month's special is Omelets. Donations: Adults \$8.00 / Seniors & Children \$7.00 / Ages 5 & Under Free. Take outs are available.

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

### PANCAKE BREAKFAST – JANUARY 27, 2024

Come one, come all to the VFW#1397 Pancake Breakfast on Saturday, January 27, 2024 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. Take outs are available.

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



## LIBRARY PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

Linden Public Library is excited to announce their lineup of programs for the beginning of 2024. Movies will be shown every Tuesday and Thursday. We will continue our regular monthly programs. A full listing of special events:

**Paint (2023; PG-13; 1hr 36min)**

January 2 at 1 pm

**The Mirror Has Two Faces  
(1996; PG-13; 2hr 6min)**

January 4 at 1 pm

**Guillermo Del Toro's Pinocchio  
(2022; PG; 1hr 54min)**

January 9 at 1 pm

**De-Stress Fest- 6:30 pm**

January 10 at 6:30, pm

**Selma (2014; PG-13; 2hr 8min)**

January 16 at 1 pm

**Adult Craft Club- No water snow globes**

January 17 at 6:30 pm

**Barbie (2023; PG-13; 1hr 54min)**

January 23 at 1 pm

**Getting started with Hoopla**

January 24 at 6:30 pm

**Project B.E.S.T. Vision Screening**

January 25

\*Registration Required\*

**Oppenheimer (2023; R; 3hr)**

January 25 at 1 pm

**Marlowe (2022; R; 1hr 49 min)**

January 30 at 1 pm

All programs are presented free of charge. Advance registration is appreciated, but not usually required.

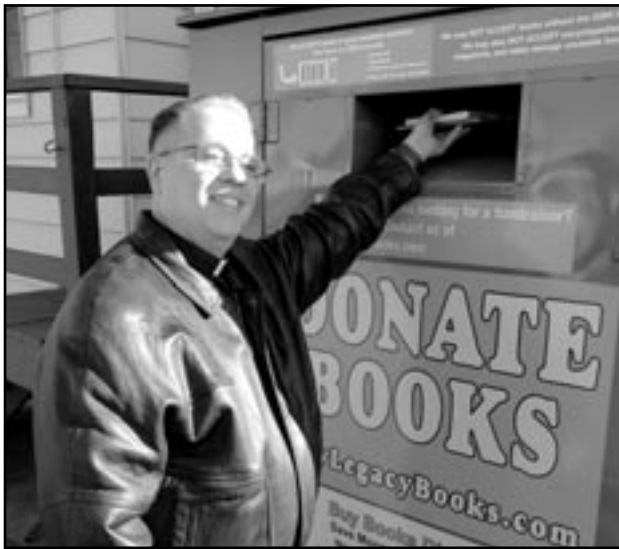
Located at 31 East Henry Street, the Linden Public Library has been at the center of social, educational, civic, and cultural life within the City of Linden since its founding in 1928. If you have any questions regarding these or other events at the library, please call us at 908-298-3830 or check out our website at [LindenLibrary-NJ.gov](http://LindenLibrary-NJ.gov). Please like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram.

## DONATE UNWANTED BOOKS

Looking for a place to donate your unwanted books? Father Paul Prevosto, Pastor of Church of the Assumption in Roselle Park, announces the addition of a book donation bin located in the Church parking lot at 113 Coolidge Place (near the corner of Westfield Ave. and Faitoute Ave.)

All books must have an ISBN barcode on the cover. Hardcover, paperback, and textbooks are all welcome – no encyclopedias, magazines, or water damaged books. Your donation raises funds for the parish.

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*“Cold or warm Beer = Same Price”*  
*“Visit the store for more In-Store Specials!”*

ABC prices prevail other prices, limited to store inventory.

Not responsible for typographical errors.

Prices may vary.