

Scotch Plains NJ

WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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Issue 100 • January 2024



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MOCK ACCIDENT DRIVES HOME MESSAGE TO STUDENTS

Borough of Fanwood

There was an awful drunk driving accident at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School the morning of November 16, 2023, but it was all staged to simulate the damage, grief and death that result from poor decisions behind the wheel.

First responders raced to the scene on Happle Court where a car hit a student riding her bike, then crashed into a tree. Lights and sirens filled the air as groups of students took turns watching the fake accident scene that was quite real looking. It featured an unresponsive victim, a distraught passenger and a driver placed under arrest. The scene was repeated a number of times so that multiple groups of students could see.

“We’re trying to promote making the right decisions when it comes to being responsible behind the wheel,” said Sgt. Mike Baltazar of the Scotch Plains Police Department.”

“Put down the cell phones. Ignore the radio, the GPS, whatever it may be,” said Sgt. Gerard Rites, Scotch Plains Police Department to the group of students watching. “Ignore your friends telling you to go faster.”

In the end everyone walked away with smiles and a new appreciation for the damage drunk or distracted driving can do. Students and teachers played the victims, driver and grieving parents.

Police from Fanwood and Scotch Plains, EMTs from the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, paramedics from JFK Medical Center and firefighters from the Scotch Plains Fire Department did everything they would actually do at such



(above) SADD group featuring chapter president Nikhil Desai, far left, and teacher/advisor Alison Weigel, far right

Photos by Tom Kranz

a scene including stabilizing the car, transporting the surviving victim and pronouncing the unresponsive young woman dead at the scene.

The SPF High chapter of Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) teamed with local responders to make the scene as real as possible.

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(above) Student actors: Grace Bottomly, Sonya Shah and Chance Perez



(above) SP firefighters Dave Mullin, Raymond Lestarchick and Joe Flammia



(above) Scotch Plains EMTs assess “victim”



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Scotch Plains NJ

WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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HOME AFTER THE HOLIDAYS SALE

Fanwood-Scotch Plains Thrift Shop

You can't beat being home for the holidays but shopping the "home" event at the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League Thrift shop is a pretty sweet deal, too. After closing for the Christmas holidays, the shop re-opens on Tuesday, January 2, displaying a wide array of new and gently used home goods that are sure to perk up your home décor or update your serving dishes, all at very reasonable prices.

Here you can find kitchen tools and table goods, cookware and cookie jars, pots, potholders, small appliances and more. The January event is a great opportunity to replenish or supplement items in your kitchen, to set up a new living space for first-time home buyers or apartment dwellers, or to purchase items to donate to charities helping families in need.

And, while putting away this year's holiday presents, make room for your new items by sorting through the old. Clean out closets and weed out underused possessions, from clothing to jewelry to purses and toys. Whether it is a garment that no longer fits or a new gift that just doesn't fit your style, unneeded items in good condition can be treasured by another person. Donate them to the Thrift Shop at 1741 East Second Street, Scotch Plains. Store hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and Saturday 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Note that all store proceeds outside of

operating expenses are donated by the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League to local non-profit organizations or used for student scholarships. To learn more about the Service League, volunteer opportunities and types of donations accepted call the store during Thrift Shop business hours: 908-322-5420. You can also visit our web site scotchplainsthiftshop.weebly.com, or find the "Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League" on Facebook.

THRIFT SHOP SEEKING VOLS

The Fanwood Presbyterian Church Thrift Shop is looking for a person or two who think it would be fun to be a shopkeeper for four hours on the third Saturday of each month. No previous experience is necessary. Enjoy all of benefits of being a volunteer. If you are interested in volunteering, please call the church office at 908-889-8891.

If you haven't found this hidden treasure of a shop, come look behind the church's education building. Our entrance is on McDermott Place. The shop is currently open on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for shopping and donations. Fanwood Presbyterian Church is located at 74 South Martine Avenue, Fanwood with side streets Marion Avenue, LaGrande Avenue and McDermott Place. All proceeds from the shop are donated to local charities and non-profit service organizations.



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Warm Wishes for a Happy Holiday!

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NJ MOM CELEBRATING 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF LIVER TRANSPLANT

NJ Sharing Network

Renee Reilly, a resident of Madison, NJ, is celebrating an incredible milestone as she marks the 10-year anniversary of her life-saving liver transplant. Renee, 52, has not only cherished every moment of her life since her successful transplant but is also passionate about advocating for NJ Sharing Network, the nonprofit organization responsible for the recovery and



(above) Renee Reilly after her liver transplant surgery.

placement of donated organs and tissue for transplant in the Garden State. She actively shares her story with others to encourage more people to register as organ and tissue donors.

“I continue to feel overwhelmed, humble, and grateful,” said Renee. “Giving someone a second chance as an organ and tissue donor is such a special and amazing gift of love.”

Renee’s journey began when she was 16 years old and was diagnosed with Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD). Her father, who also battled PKD, had received a life-saving kidney transplant that gave him an additional 35 years of life. Renee later developed Polycystic Liver Disease (PLD) after giving birth to her two boys. She was added to the liver transplant list in 2009.

“Waiting for the liver transplant phone call, I felt hopeless at times, tired, anxious, and I didn’t think I would ever get ‘the call,’” said Renee.

The pivotal moment in Renee’s journey arrived unexpectedly on a day filled with emotional turmoil. Her father had been in the hospital for weeks due to complications from a previous surgery. Renee had just visited him when she received ‘The Call’ from the transplant center.

“I began to cry because I was filled with emotions, from joy and excitement to worry about my family and guilt about receiving such a precious gift. But my husband, John, and my sons, Ian and Brendan, served as a source of strength and kept me focused because they were

excited to know that I was going to get a liver transplant,” said Renee.

On August 6, 2013, Renee’s liver transplant surgery was a success, giving her a new lease on life. In 2017, Renee’s kidneys started to fail. Fortunately, she received a kidney transplant in 2018, sparing her from the hardships of dialysis treatments.

The transformation in Renee’s life post-transplants has been remarkable. She now enjoys all of her favorite hobbies, including gardening, knitting/crocheting, sewing, and spending time with her family.

“Thanks to my organ donors and the miracle of transplantation, I have been there for unforgettable moments like my boys’ graduations. I am now able to give hugs again without any pain due to my enlarged liver,” said Renee. “Now, I am focused on sharing my story to give hope for those waiting for the gift of life and inspire everyone to register as organ and tissue donors.”

According to United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), there are over 100,000 Americans – nearly 4,000 of whom live in New Jersey – waiting for a life-saving transplant. One organ and tissue donor can save eight lives and enhance the lives of over 75 others. To learn more, get involved, and join the National Donate Life Registry as an organ and tissue donor, visit NJSharingNetwork.org.

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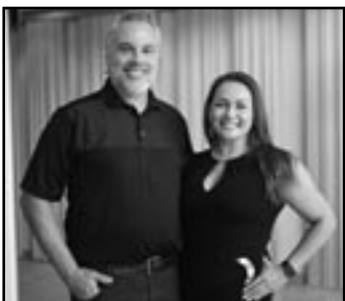
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LOCAL MUSIC EVENT SUPPORTS RARE CANCER RESEARCH

Submitted by Angelo Ucciferri

The Scotch Plains Fanwood chapter of UNICO was honored to be a sponsor for the 8th annual "Pig Gig", a pig roast and live music event that benefits the Fibrolamellar Cancer Foundation. Organized by Scotch Plains resident Glenn Alexander, guitarist for the legendary NJ band Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes, Pig Gig is an annual benefit held in honor of Glenn's nephew, Jay, who lost his battle to fibrolamellar cancer in 2011.

The event took place on October 22 at the Scotch Plains Italian American Club and members of UNICO were there to present a \$500 donation to the foundation. In addition to

Southside Johnny, the event also featured musical performances by The Weeklings, James Maddock, The Lonesome Pines, Blue Americana, and Glenn Alexander & Shadowland.

Fibrolamellar Cancer is a rare liver cancer that primarily occurs in adolescents and young adults who have no history of liver disease. The Fibrolamellar Cancer Foundation supports research efforts that can lead to the development of more effective therapies. UNICO encourages SPF residents interested in helping support this cause to consider donating to the Fibrolamellar Cancer Foundation at fibrofoundation.org.

UNICO is the largest Italian-American service organization in the USA, and the Scotch Plains Fanwood chapter is celebrating its 50th year. To learn more about becoming a UNICO member or obtain additional information on UNICO events, please visit their official website at unicospf.org or email them at spfunico@gmail.com.



(above) UNICO members Luciana Rodak and Daniela Sellinger present Glenn Alexander with a donation to the Fibrolamellar Cancer Foundation. Courtesy photo

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POLICE COMPETE IN HIP HOP DANCE BATTLE



(above) Sgt. Baltazar (Scotch Plains PD) and Officer Hudspith (Fanwood PD) competed during the third-annual Police Dance Battle.

Township of Scotch Plains
 The third-annual Police Dance Battle between Scotch Plains and Fanwood was a huge success! This year was a tie breaker because Sgt. Baltazar (Scotch Plains) won the first battle (2021) and Officer Hudspith (Fanwood) won the second battle (2022). The winner this year? Fanwood.

The Hip Hop Experience Dance Class, created by María Daniel of iDance Ministry, implements social emotional learning and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. This annual event brings the community together through Hip Hop dance taught through the lenses of context, culture, and community connections.



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WhartonCommunityPlayers



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THE LOST MURALS OF ROBERTO DE LA SELVA

Scotch Plains Public Library

For many decades the work of a distinguished Latin American artist lay hidden beneath the wallpaper in a cottage in Feltville—Union County’s “Deserted Village. Eventually uncovered by volunteer maintenance workers, the colorful images depicting rural Mexican life displayed a compelling talent. Extensive research revealed them to be the work of Roberto de la Selva, a native of Nicaragua. De la Selva would go on to become renowned as a bas relief sculptor in wood, working as part of the movement known as Mexican Modernism in which artists such as Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco celebrated post-Revolution social reform and the heritage of indigenous cultures.

On Monday January 8, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., the Library is pleased to host a special program “Rediscovering An Artist: The Lost Murals of Roberto de la Selva” to share the fascinating story of these unique murals and the artist who left his mark here in Union County. The panel of speakers will feature:

- Daniel Bernier, Director of Park Planning and Environmental Services for Union County, and resident caretaker of Feltville
- Priscilla Hayes, a writer and researcher dedicated to chronicling Feltville’s rich three-century history
- Alejandro Anreus, Ph.D, Emeritus Professor of Art History and Latin American Studies, William Paterson University
- Ron Burkard, a longtime collector of de la Selva’s art (joining us from Oklahoma via Zoom)

Please register to join us either in-person or on Zoom for this event.

For more information or to register, go to scotlib.org, email library@scotlib.org or call (908) 322-5007 x 204. The Scotch Plains Public Library is located at 1927 Bartle Avenue.



(above) *Rediscovering An Artist: The Lost Murals of Roberto de la Selva* Event at the Scotch Plains Public Library On Monday, January 8, 2024, at 7:00 pm.



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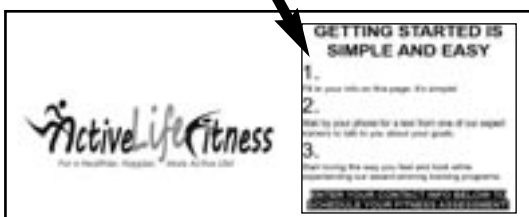
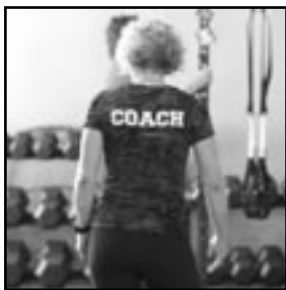
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	<p>"THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS ARE AMAZING!"</p> <p>Maria: I joined last year for a six-week challenge. I got more benefits from those six weeks than going to a 'big' gym for six years! The coaches are great and easy to talk to, and they know much about fitness! I've met and become good friends with other members. I always look forward to working out because they've made it challenging but fun. The physical and mental health benefits are amazing! Thank you, ALF!</p>		<p>"ALF HAS DONE MORE FOR MY OVERALL HEALTH THAN I COULD HAVE IMAGINED!"</p> <p>Teresa: I started at Active Life Fitness in March 2022 after a battle with breast cancer, knowing I had to take better care of myself ALF has been a blessing This comes from someone who hasn't been in a gym in over 30 years and hates After a few months, I found my balance was better, I had more stamina, and, most importantly, I could get through the day with clarity! I'm in a better mood and don't suffer from I as much brain fog! ALF has done more for my overall health than I could have imagined! I highly recommend Active Life Fitness!</p>
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HERE'S HOW TO GET ALL THE DETAILS

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www.activelifitness.net • 908-389-8009 **ABOUT ACTIVE LIFE FITNESS:** We are a personal training gym that specializes in adults over 40 who want to lose weight, feel younger, and age better without crazy diets or workouts designed for people half their age.

DONATIONS NEEDED FOR GIFT BASKETS TO BENEFIT RESCUE SQUAD

The Scotch Plains Rescue Squad Auxiliary is gearing up to host another amazing Pancake Breakfast on Sunday, February 25, 2024.

To help make this annual get-together even more fun and exciting, donations are being collected for gift baskets that will be auctioned off during the event.

Only new items will be accepted, and no shoes, clothing or stuffed animals are needed. Please consider donating items for inclusion in the following themed basket prizes:

- Baking • Wellness • Gardening • Sports • Pets
- Health • Children • Scrapbooking • Coffee/Tea
- Comic Books • Arts and Crafts • Italian Dinner

- Games • Crazy Socks • Vacation & Holiday Items • Baskets and ribbon

We also encourage donors to put together their own gift baskets using the various themes above. This would be a great project for a family, a scout troop or other groups that would like to contribute to this worthy fundraiser.



(above) The Scotch Plains Rescue Squad Auxiliary meets once a month, and its grass roots function is to assist the Squad in many capacities – from holding fundraisers and providing meals during crises to performing outreach to squad and fellow auxiliary members. Members also attend town functions, such as fairs, concerts and holiday events, in order to connect with the community and promote Squad interests. If you're interested in becoming a member of the Auxiliary, come by the Squad building one evening to pick up an application, or go to ScotchPlainsRescueSquad.com/The-Auxiliary.

The Auxiliary will be collecting donations on the following dates at the Rescue Squad building at 1916 Bartle Avenue:

- Friday, January 5
- Saturday, January 6
- Tuesday, January 9
- Friday, January 12
- Saturday, January 13
- Tuesday, January 16
- Friday, January 19
- Saturday, January 20
- Tuesday, January 23
- Friday, January 26
- Saturday, January 27
- Tuesday, January 30
- Friday, February 2
- Saturday, February 3
- Tuesday, February 6
- Friday, February 9

The donation times on Tuesdays and Fridays are 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. For Saturdays, the times are from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

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STAYING SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Township of Scotch Plains

The holidays are a great time for family and friends to gather for great food, drink and company. Not to put coal in the stocking here, but this is also the time of the year when there is a spectrum of hazards.

The Scotch Plains Fire Department offers tips to help everyone safely navigate through the season. One of the biggest potential hazards is a live Christmas tree. The tree needs to be kept alive and should be watered daily to make sure it does not dry out.

In addition, where the tree is placed is important. It should not be located near a heat source, such as a portable heater or radiator. The heat might help increase the possibility of the tree drying up and making it easier for it to catch fire.

Plugging everything into one outlet can cause the circuit to overload and start a fire.

Check holiday lights and extension cords to ensure the lines are not frayed and there are no nicks. Replace anything that may not work properly.

Use the proper electric extension cord for the job. Some cords are not rated to be used with intricate lights and decorations. Check the gauge.

Follow manufacturer instructions and recommendations on how many light strands can be connected.

When putting lights in high places, use clips instead of nails to hold the lines. Nails can damage the wires.

If using a ladder to put up decorations, make it a two-person job and have a decoration spotter. The spotter can hold the ladder and assist the person who is decorating. And, if someone should fall, there's a buddy to help.

Don't leave open flames - candles, menorahs or scented candles - unattended and place them on stable surfaces.

If there are smokers visiting, ask them to smoke outside to alleviate a possible emissions source in the house.

If people are visiting, make sure they know the exits, even if there is a back stairway or a side door.

Don't forget the basics: Make sure smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers are working and up to date. Make sure the first aid kit is stocked.

SPIRITUAL? CURIOUS? SEEKING?

Do you consider yourself Spiritual? Are you Curious about what people are talking about when they speak of having faith or being spiritual? Are you Seeking peace of mind, of heart of soul?

Come and see for yourself. Come and explore the Christian faith. Come and discuss with other seekers what is on your mind, what you cannot talk about except with other seekers. Come to an Alpha gathering.

Alpha is for everybody that wants to discuss seeking answers to life's big questions. Why are we here? Is this all there is to life? Where are we going? How do I attain peace of mind, heart, and soul? Whether you are young or old, have faith or are atheist or agnostic, Alpha provides a safe environment for exploring our big questions about life.

We begin by sharing a meal together and getting to know each other. We watch a video

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.

The live in person sessions will be held at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, 1571 S. Martine Ave., Scotch Plains, NJ 07076.

If you have any questions, please call (908) 889-2100.

To register go onto IHMParish.net/alpha.



Meet new people & explore faith together.

Alpha is a place to connect with other people who are open to exploring life, faith, and meaning. Each session includes a time to connect with others (often over a free meal), hear a short talk on an element of the Christian faith, and then a chance for each person to share their own questions with the group. We'd love to hear your perspective!

Alpha Winter/Spring 2024
Season begins LIVE
Monday February 5th
7:00 pm @
The Nazareth Center

(Followed by weekly sessions hosted on Zoom)



Scan the QR Code with your phone or smart device to access our sign up page at www.ihmparish.net/alpha

If you have questions about Alpha, please contact the Nazareth Center Office at 908-889-2100 or send an email to office@ihmparish.net

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COME SING WITH US AT OUR OPEN HOUSE AT SHRINE OF ST JOSEPH

Hickory Tree chorus

Put some music in your life in 2024! Join the Hickory Tree Chorus for an Open House at Shrine of St Joseph, 1050 Long Hill Road, Stirling, NJ, which will include a meet-and-greet, movement warm-ups and, of course, some wonderful singing. Dates are January 10 and 17, 2024, from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. The chorus sings a

variety of music, including old-fashioned love songs, Broadway, Disney, Beatles, and more in a fun, supportive community. Come sing with us and share the joy of music together! Stay for the friendship and fun!

Hickory Tree is an award-winning women's chorus singing four-part a cappella harmony in the barbershop style. We are passionate about

music, performance, fun & friendship. We believe every voice counts and encourage women singers of all ages, colors, ethnicities, and orientations to visit us and share our joy of music.

Please contact the Chorus for the Open House by email at info@hickorytreechorus.org.

Find more information at hickorytreechorus.org.



(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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FOOTBALL PROGRAM BRINGS HOME THREE SUPER BOWL VICTORIES

Scotch Plains Fanwood PAL

November 19, 2023 is a day that will be recorded as one of the finest in the history of the Scotch Plains Fanwood (SPF) PAL football program.

It was on this cool and sunny Sunday at Foley Field in Bloomfield when the SPF Raiders completed a hat trick by winning three Super Bowl trophies in the New Jersey Suburban Youth Football League (NJSYFL) division playoffs.

The A (8th grade), B (7th grade) and D (5th grade) SPF Raiders each won the Super Bowl in its grade level in the National Division Super Bowl title games.

The day began when the Raider D team defeated Clark, 24-12, in the championship game. The SPF B team held off Clark to win 6-0 and the Raider A team capped this monumental day with a 30-19 victory over Kenilworth.

The fourth SPF Raider team that competed in the Super Bowl title games on November 20, the Raider C team (6th grade), fell in a heartbreaker, 7-6 in overtime, to Bloomfield.

The NJSYFL American Division Super Bowls were played on Saturday, November 18, in Old Bridge.

The Super Bowl trophies are the first since 2019 when the Raider D team won the championship in its division final.

The previous Super Bowl title for SPF came in 2011 when just one Super Bowl was contested per grade level and not two Super Bowls such as the present playoff format. In 2011, that legendary SPF Raider D team capped an 11-0 season with its Super Bowl championship.

In the opening game on Super Bowl Sunday, the Raider D team were sparked on offense by touchdowns delivered by shifty and gifted

runners MJ Podell and RJ Robinson. Jackson Spieler and Elliot Sobo also contributed to strong play on the offense.

Podell and Robinson also both shined on the defensive side of the ball with Luca Barretta, Darius Lewis and Luca Kresge as they helped long-time coach Shawn Johnson, who is the President of the SPF PAL, win his first Super Bowl trophy.

The Raider B team drove down the field and scored on the first series of the game when Julian Monroy plowed into the end zone from five yards.

That was all the scoring in the Super Bowl for an SPF team that completed an incredible turnaround.

Just one year ago, these Raider 7th graders went winless on the C level.

But coach James Monroy (Julian's father) and the SPF PAL rebuilt the coaching staff and they teamed up to guide these players to a Super Bowl title one season later.

"It's pretty incredible," said Coach Monroy. "The boys played their hearts out."

On Super Bowl Sunday, those boys included Joey Reaves, Kayden Vazquez and Julian Monroy who all delivered key performances on offense against Clark and a sturdy defense that was anchored by Joe Kelly, Brendan Wilson and Daren Louis.

The Super Bowl for the A level did not go off too well at first for the Raiders.

Kenilworth jumped to an early 13-0 lead in the first quarter, but the Raiders rallied.

Sebastian Assuncao plowed into the end zone with a short run after quarterback Marcus Schomberg set up the TD with a key 30-yard pass completion to Ryan McCann. Schomberg and McCann hooked up again later for a 10-yard

TD pass when the Raiders took the lead in the third period.

Gabriel Gutierrez burst nine yards to the end zone for a touchdown later in the third quarter when the Raiders began to pull away.

On defense, Jayden Johnson, who called the crucial shifts to the offensive front line and made his way to apply the hits, spearheaded a defense that was also led by Sam Schinesthul, who came up with a critical interception that he returned 51 yards to set up another scoring burst by Assuncao that helped ice the game—and the Super Bowl for the Raiders.

Noah Brown, Tommy Anico, Tyler Doyle and Henry Jacobsen all contributed to the Raider defense that shut off Kenilworth after the first period. And Colby Martin connected on three PAT kicks to assist in the victory.

"The boys showed great resilience and battled back," said A team Coach Plato Schomberg, the father of the quarterback.

In the Super Bowl on the C level, SPF and Bloomfield played to a scoreless tie that forced overtime.

The Raiders struck first and scored on a short run by Ethan Klaskow but Bloomfield tied the game at 6-6 before it won when the QB avoided numerous tackles and hit his receiver in the back of the end zone for the winning PAT point.

Raider Coach Darion Gonzales cited that his entire offense and defense were the stars of the game in which SPF played their hearts out in a losing effort.

"This was a memorable day for our program," said Bruce Moran, the Vice President of the Scotch Plains Fanwood PAL. "These players and coaches have now set the tone for what may be many more memorable days and Super Bowl championships."



(above) SPF PAL D Team

ZOOM WITH JUDITH FLEMING, PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER - JAN. 22ND

College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains

Judith Fleming will share her experiences as a Peace Corps volunteer in Uganda, Africa, focusing on the importance of empowering girls and women. The program which is being hosted by the College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains will be presented via zoom and will begin at 7:30 p.m. on January 22nd. The program is free, and the public is invited to attend. The link required to access the program can be obtained by sending an email request to Jean at jgnog29@verizon.net.

After a successful career working as a staff assistant for the City of Worcester and then for Allmerica Financial/Hanover Insurance, where she rose to the position of Vice-President, Corporate and Human Services and Vice-President, Class Action Administrator at Allmerica Financial/Hanover Insurances, joined the Peace Corps at age seventy and was assigned to serve in Uganda.

After twelve weeks of extensive training, learning the language, culture, economic and community development, Fleming left with a group of approximately fifty others to serve a two-year commitment in southwest Uganda.

During the course of her service in Uganda, Fleming used her extensive business skills to oversee projects focused on empowering girls and women. Her presentation will focus on her experiences in the Peace Corps and two of the important projects that she was instrumental in

developing. The projects create a model for sustainability and income opportunity which has helped to empower the girls and women of Uganda.

Additional information about the College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains can be obtained by sending an email to Collegeclub.fsp@gmail.com.



(above) Judith Fleming, a Peace Corps volunteer, will speak via Zoom on Jan. 22nd. Register via email to jgnog29@verizon.net.



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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



(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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THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS AT VILLAGE GREEN

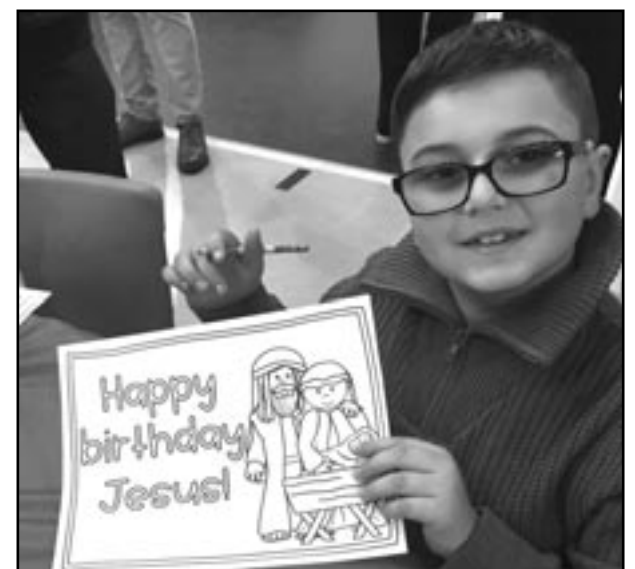
Alan Augustine Village Green on Park Avenue was filled with music and light on Thursday, December 7th, as residents and out of town family and guests joined to celebrate the first

night of Hanukkah. Mayor Josh Losardo ascended a ladder to light the first candle on the town's official menorah, as families enjoyed jelly donuts and other treats, and crafts.



SANTA SIGHTING IN SCOTCH PLAINS

Bad weather kept Santa from paying a visit to the annual Scotch Plains Township tree lighting celebration, however after a blessing of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church's nativity (sans the live animals because of another day's bad weather prediction), Santa paid a visit to the Church's 2nd Annual Christmas Bazaar held in their Nazarene Center on Sunday, Dec. 10th. children were treated to a visit and photos with Santa, free cocoa, and crafts. Adults had a wide array of vendors to choose from for holiday shopping.



Immaculate Heart of Mary Church Holiday Event Schedule 2023

- ▼ Saturday December 9: Memorial Tree Lighting following 5PM Mass
- ▼ Sunday December 10: Living Nativity + Hot Chocolate with Santa and Holiday Gift Market (SPF PAL) starting at 11AM
- ▼ Friday December 15: Christmas Concert featuring Choirs from St. Helen's & IHM at 7pm @ St. Helen's Church, Westfield
- ▼ Saturday December 16: Confessions at 10AM
Mass of Anointing at 11AM
- ▼ Monday December 18: Confessions at 7PM
- ▼ Sunday December 24: Children's Christmas Pageant at 3:30PM

Mass Schedule
 Mon-Fri: 7am + 8:30am
 Sat: 7am, 8:30am, 5pm
 Sun: 8am, 10am, 12 noon
Christmas Mass
 12/24: 4pm, 6pm, 10:30pm
 12/25: 8am, 10am, 12 noon



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Photos from this and other events can be found online at rennamedia.com and on the Scotch Plains Monthly page on [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) "Like," "Tag," and "Share."

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 within the communities we serve,” shared The Atlantic Federal Credit Union Chief Executive Officer Anthony Mero. “The SBRG funding will help our deserving recipients continue their selfless work throughout Essex and Union counties – ensuring community members in need have access to food, clothing, social services and other crucial resources through the holiday season and beyond.”

ABOUT THE ATLANTIC FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

The Atlantic Federal Credit Union was founded in 1935 as a not-for-profit financial cooperative to meet the savings and borrowing needs of Members. Today, The Atlantic Federal Credit Union exclusively serves Essex and Union

counties in New Jersey with financial wellness resources, competitive rates and technology-driven solutions for personal and business banking.

For full eligibility criteria and more information, visit TheAtlanticFCU.com.



(above, l-r) Check presentation Mobile Meals of Westfield - Adam Cadmus, Chief Experience Officer at The Atlantic; Josephine Walsh, Operations Manager at Mobile Meals of Westfield; Carla White-Garrett, Community Engagement Representative at The Atlantic; and Anthony Mero, Chief Executive Officer at The Atlantic.



Bianca F.L.O.W.E.R.S. Inc.: Founded in 2015, the mission of Bianca F.L.O.W.E.R.S. Inc. is to provide food, clothing, and services for the homeless population and families in crisis that are in need of temporary help. Bianca F.L.O.W.E.R.S. hosts a food pantry open to community members in need every second, third and fourth Tuesday of each month at the Boys & Girls Club at 145 Park Avenue in Plainfield. Learn more at bflowersinc2021.com.

(above, l-r) Adam Cadmus, Chief Experience Officer at The Atlantic; Dr. Linda M. Closs, Founder and President of Bianca F.L.O.W.E.R.S. Inc.; Carla White-Garrett, Community Engagement Representative at The Atlantic; Dennis A. Closs, Grocery and Graphics Manager at Bianca F.L.O.W.E.R.S. Inc.; and Anthony Mero, Chief Executive Officer at The Atlantic.



(above) Check Presentation Jewish Family Service of Central New Jersey: The mission of Jewish Family Service of Central NJ, a non-sectarian health and social service agency, is to strengthen family life and encourage personal growth by providing specialized quality services to individuals and families in need in Union County. The Agency is a licensed mental health outpatient agency and a licensed and accredited homecare agency. A diverse staff who speak 11 languages provides a full range of services from mental health counseling, to Kosher Meals On Wheels, to an active Food Pantry and Urban Community Garden. Learn more at jfscentralnj.org.

(above, l-r) Adam Cadmus, Chief Experience Officer at The Atlantic; Carla White-Garrett, Community Engagement Representative at The Atlantic; Peter Jacob, Director of Housing Services at Jewish Family Service of Central NJ; Anthony Mero, Chief Executive Officer at The Atlantic; Tom Beck, Executive Director at Jewish Family Service of Central NJ; and Janine Grieco, Director of Member Engagement and Delivery at The Atlantic.

THE JANUARY SPEAKERS PROGRAM FOR THE SUMMIT AREA OLD GUARD

The Summit Area Old Guard was founded in 1930 and meets most Tuesdays at the New Providence Presbyterian Church located at 1307 Springfield Ave. Our motto is "Come for the Programs. Stay for the Friends."

January speakers include Kathleen Bassiacos, Melanie Hazim, Joe Kane, Iveth Gonzales, and Charles Clarkson. Please join us. Our programs are free to the public, and we welcome you!

On January 2nd, Kathleen Bassiacos, a nurse at Unicity Healthcare, with over three decades of experience in oncology, geriatrics, assisted living and at-home care, will discuss how she focuses on her patients' health by managing emergencies mixed with adaptability. Her presentation will include treating the myths surrounding aging and nutrition.

On January 9th, Melanie Hazim, Director of Outreach at the NJ Division of Consumer Affairs,

will discuss her responsibilities for educating and promoting awareness of scams targeting New Jersey residents, and implementing the Division's mission and goal to protect New Jersey's residents from becoming victims of these frauds.

On January 16th, Joe Kane, a prevention specialist with The Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ, will help us understand compulsive gambling and the need to support those suffering from this addiction. The Council focuses on educating the public, training professionals, referring gamblers and their families to treatment, and advocating for increased treatment services.

On January 23rd, Iveth Gonzales, a team leader with the New Jersey Sharing Network, will discuss organ donation, its benefits and how the acquisition and distribution system is organized. Iveth will also speak from her

experience after her father was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis and why registering as an organ donor, you may change of even save someone's life.

On January 30th, our speaker will be Charles Clarkson, an attorney, and a project director for the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) under the auspices of Jewish Family Services of Middlesex County. Medicare is for seniors, it expends many billions of dollars, and it must deal with the hazards of fraud. Charles will explain how to detect and how to report Medicare fraud and related healthcare scams.

Past speakers and much more can be viewed at SummitOldGuard.org but we encourage people to drop in on our meetings which take place at the church at 10:00 AM most Tuesdays. "Come for the Speakers. Stay for the Friends." We look forward to meeting you.



(above, l-r) Ms. Bassiacos, Ms. Hazim, Joe Kane, Ms. Gonzales, Charles Clarkson

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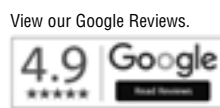
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CELEBRATING A BLUE RIBBON YEAR OF SERVICE

Elizabeth Snyder-Continental Chapter DAR

A National Blue Ribbon Achievement Award is one of the honors being celebrated by Elizabeth Snyder-Continental Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) at their 128th Anniversary Luncheon held in Warren on January 27, 2023. The chapter was recognized for outstanding support of the DAR's goals of historic preservation, patriotism, and education.

"We are very honored to receive this award,"

said Regent Ashley Salsano. "Our members are a dedicated group of women who work hard to honor their heritage by serving our local community and our nation."

Chapter members recorded 1,800 volunteer hours in 2023. Service projects included supporting youth programs and promoting the study of American history; honoring veterans; greeting new citizens at naturalization

ceremonies; organizing public genealogy workshops; preserving local historic sites; and assisting in the creation of a New Jersey Revolutionary War soldier database.

The chapter was also honored for their work with the Children of the American Revolution, American Indians, and Membership committees. Barbara Pollison-Beck, Ruth Ryno, and Holly Dunbar each received committee awards. Ashley Ryno was recognized for serving as a state page and was named Chapter Outstanding Junior.

The DAR is a service organization open to women descended from an individual who aided the cause of independence during the American Revolution. Based in Green Brook, Elizabeth Snyder-Continental Chapter serves areas of Somerset, Middlesex and Union counties. Prospective members are welcome to attend monthly meetings and events as the DAR prepares to celebrate America's 250th. Contact the chapter at ESCchapterDAR@gmail.com.



(above) DAR Chapter members volunteered 1,800 hours of community service in 2023.

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