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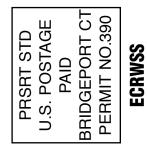
Issue 163 • February 2024

AREA ELKS RECEIVE VETERANS WELCOME HOME KITS

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(above) Area Elks and volunteers - Elks Care and Elks Share.

Courtesy photo

Recently, twenty-five area Elks and volunteers helped to restock the shelves at the NJ State Elks Veterans Annex in Stirling. The items that were received will be assembled into Welcome Home Kits and delivered free of charge to previously homeless Veterans who are moving into a new residence.

Welcome Home Kits include a bed, night stand, dresser, sofa, dining table and chairs, lamps, bedding, linens, appliances, cleaning supplies, a shower curtain, mats, pots and pans, flatware, glassware, and more. All items are brand new.

Enough items to assemble 20 Welcome Home Kits were purchased by the NJ Elks East Central District, with Lodges in Stirling, Summit, Springfield, Mountainside, Union, Cranford, and Rahway, at a cost of approximately \$10,000 which was provided through grants, donations, and fundraising events.

The NJ State Elks National Veterans Service Commission

has helped over 2,300 veterans since 2016 and makes 25–30 deliveries each month throughout the state. The NJ State Veterans Annex was recently featured in "Givers of Hope" view on YouTube: youtu.be/Qvndf_310Y4

Every night, as many as 40,000 veterans are sleeping on the streets. In partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Elks National Veterans Service Commission has pledged to help end veteran homelessness, and ensure that every veteran has the safe, stable home they deserve. In New Jersey, Elks volunteers provide direct service to over 1,000 veterans in multiple VA homes and connect with veterans and military members in their communities, providing them with services where they live.

Please email njelksnvsc@gmail.com to learn more about what NJ State Elks do to help veterans and visit Elks.org for more information about the Elks and how to join.





Renna Media LLC, Publishers

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RED RIBBON WEEK POSTER & ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

Rahway Public Schools

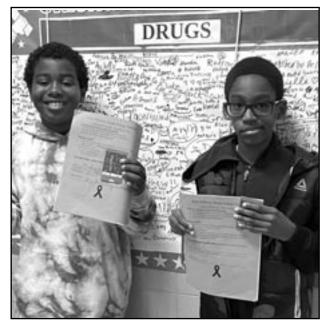
Franklin Elementary School held a poster contest for sixth graders and an essay contest for fifth graders as part of Red Ribbon Week, a national campaign to promote drug-free living. Students submitted posters and essays with creative and positive messages about staying drug-free. The following winners were selected:

- Poster Contest (6th Grade): 1st Place: Kendall Richards; 2nd Place: Ava Darrow
- Honorable Mentions: Victoria Valerio, Jaylynn Grote, and Jeison Hernandez
- Essay Contest (5th Grade): 1st Place: Montaine Ali; 2nd Place: Sebastian Altidore The winning posters and essays were

displayed at the school during Red Ribbon Week. "We are so proud of all of our students who participated in the poster and essay contests," said Barbara Maher, School Nurse of Franklin Elementary School. "Their posters and essays were creative, inspiring, and showed their commitment to living a drug-free life."

Red Ribbon Week is a national campaign that takes place each year in October to raise awareness about the dangers of drug use and promote healthy living. The campaign was started in 1985 in memory of DEA Special Agent Enrique Camarena, who was killed in the line of duty while investigating drug traffickers Franklin Elementary School is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students. The school offers a variety of programs and activities to help students stay drug-free and make healthy choices.

Congratulations to all of the winners and honorable mentions!



(above) Winners of the 5th Grade Essay Contest Montaine Ali and Sebastian Altidore standing in front of the anti-drug poster that every student signed.

Photos by Rahway Public Schools



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BLUE & GOLD CLUB SPREAD MUGS OF LOVE

Submitted by Linda Lampert

Young hearts from Franklin Elementary School's Blue & Gold Club are spreading warmth and comfort this winter, one "Mug of Love" at a time. The club delivered its thoughtful creations to bring a touch of joy and positivity to patients and families facing challenging times.

Filled with coffee, tea, hot cocoa, snacks, and heartwarming messages, these personalized mugs weren't just containers. They were carefully crafted by the Blue & Gold students, each adorned with colorful designs and uplifting words meant to bring a smile to those who needed it most.

"We wanted to do something special for people who might be feeling down," shared Aryana Boydman, a member of the Blue & Gold Club. "These mugs are our way of sending a message of love and support, letting them know they're not alone."

Their "Mugs of Love" were delivered to pediatric hospitals in the area. Where their creations helped to brighten the days of parents with children receiving treatment. They were also delivered to the Rahway Soup Kitchen, another important pillar of their community. The "Mugs of Love" were given to individuals and families facing food insecurity, offering a practical gift alongside a reminder of hope and solidarity.

"The Blue & Gold Club's initiative exemplifies

the power of compassion and empathy," said Dr. Elementary School. "They used their creativity lives of others, setting a shining example for our community."

The "Mugs of Love" project is a testament to Patrick Holness, Principal of Franklin the impact young people can have when they unite for a common cause. It's a reminder that and kindness to make a genuine difference in the even the smallest gestures, driven by love and care, can create ripples of positive change in our communities.



(above, l-r) Dimar Mejia Torres, Aryana Boydman, Anthony Martinez, Ava Darrow, and Valentino Arias Photo by Rahway Public Schools



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ELKS MEMBERS CELEBRATED THE HOLIDAYS WITH VETERANS

Submitted by Kristina Petti

Rahway Elks members celebrated the holidays with veterans by distributing the "Veterans Angels" gifts at the Menlo Park Facility this past December. The program allows veterans to make a wish list for the holidays and various charity organizations donate items. Our lodge sponsored four wish lists this year!

If you are interested in learning more about our organization or becoming a member please visit our website rahwayelks.org and follow us on Facebook: Rahway Elks #1075. To become a member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks you must be 21 or over, an American citizen, and believe in God. May God bless all of you during this holiday season!





Courtesy photos









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YOUNG CHAMPIONS OF WARMTH

Submitted by Linda Lampert

hearts of Franklin Elementary School's young leaders as they bundled up for a cause worth celebrating: their recent coat drive in partnership with Jersey Cares, a statewide organization dedicated to warming lives.

For the 7th year in a row, the school's dynamic Blue & Gold Club spearheaded the drive with the help of Madison School's nurse, Ms. Brittany Darrow, collecting over 120 gently used winter coats for men, women, and children in need across New Jersey. This impressive contribution adds to Jersey Cares' ambitious goal of gathering and distributing more than 30,000 coats this year alone.

"It's awesome to know we helped keep someone warm," shared fifth-grader, Journi Tisdale. "Every coat is like a big, fuzzy hug!"

Jersey Cares, celebrating its 27th year of coat-collecting magic, has already warmed

over 500,000 New Jersey residents with their The chilly winter air couldn't dampen the annual drive. Their innovative network of collection sites, manned by generous volunteers like those at Franklin and Madison Schools, allows for convenient coat donations across the state.

> "The dedication of our young citizens is truly inspiring," said Dr. Aleya Shoieb, Rahway's acting Superintendent. "Their contribution strengthens our community and brings vital warmth to countless families."

> The Blue & Gold Club's unwavering commitment to community service shines brightly throughout the year, as they tirelessly dedicate themselves to various charitable initiatives. Their recent coat drive serves as a powerful testament to the impact young minds can have when united by a common goal.

> A special thank you goes out to all who donated coats, making this act of community support a resounding success.



(above) Zumera Watson, Tumera Watson. and Journi Tisdale, proud members of Franklin Elementary School's Blue & Gold Club. Photo by Rahway Public Schools

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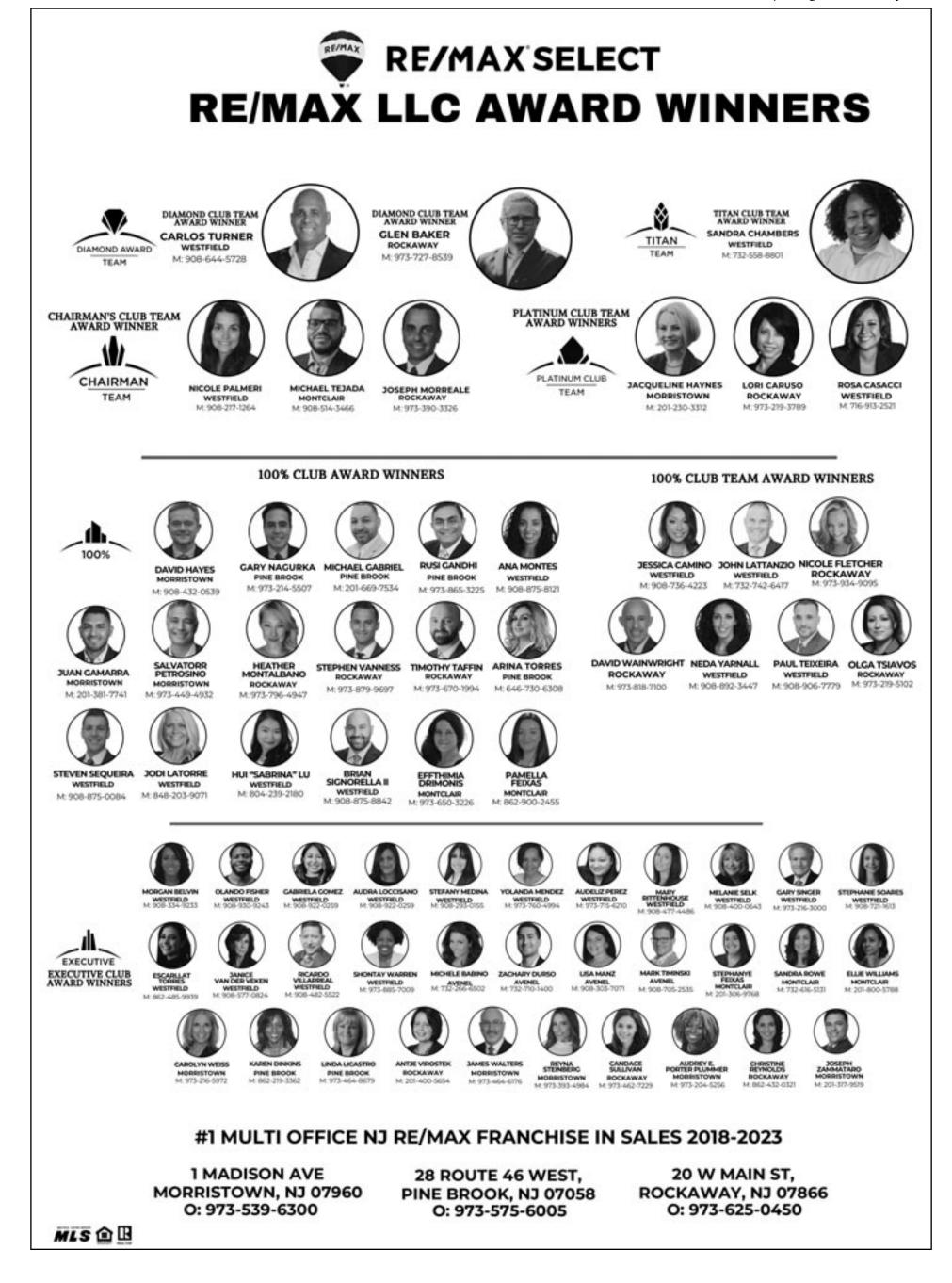
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UPCOMING BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS

City of Rahway

In honor of Black History Month, and one of American history's most influential individuals, the City of Rahway proudly welcomes the Harriet Tubman: The Beacon of Hope traveling monument from February 1 through February 29. The 13-foot bronze statue created by sculptor Wesley Wofford of Wofford Sculpture Studio will be on display at City Hall Plaza, located at 1 City Hall Plaza, Rahway, NJ all month long, with an official community celebration taking place on Saturday, February 3 at 2:00 p.m.

Harriet Tubman, originally known as Araminta Ross, was born into slavery and emerged as a beacon of hope and resilience during a pivotal era in American history. Renowned as a courageous abolitionist, she not only liberated herself, but dedicated her life to freeing countless others through the Underground Railroad.

Harriet Tubman's unwavering commitment to justice and equality is vividly captured in the monument, which portrays her as a free woman, extending an encouraging hand to the viewer. A

closer look reveals a golden "generational key" in her hand, inspiring observers to unlock their inner strength and forge their destinies, mirroring Harriet's own resilience.

As described by Wofford Sculpture Studio, the oxen yoke is a metaphor for the yoke of slavery. It also illustrates the legendary story of Araminta's youth which describes her singlehandedly steering a team of oxen for her father. The piled shackles and chains depict all of the lives adversely affected by the scourge of slavery. The open shackles represent those freed by Harriet and others on the Underground Railroad, while the locked ones depict those not liberated until after the Civil War. The closed manacles also symbolize the unfinished work ahead of us, essential to achieving a just and equitable future for all.

The City of Rahway will be celebrating Black History Month with a variety of activities and educational experiences throughout the month of February. Visit CityofRahway.com/BHM to learn more.

RAHWAY ACADEMY BIC AWARD RECIPIENTS

Submitted by Kristina Petti

In honor of Global Education Week, Bic was asking people to nominate schools that would benefit from their initiative of improving learning conditions for students worldwide. On behalf of the Rahway 7th and 8th Grade Academy, Mr. King nominated the school to be the recipient of their Global Education Week donation that would help Bic continue to meet their goals of impacting students and staff worldwide.

The Rahway Academy was chosen as one of the worldwide schools that would receive a Bic care package donation of 45 cases full of pens, pencils, and other stationary items to help replenish their school supplies.

Mr. King, along with the help of office staff members Teresa Rodriguez, Elizabeth Crudup, Denise Drylewicz and Karen Barnes, were able to create care packages of the donated Bic products and delivered them to all of the classrooms throughout the Rahway Academy. They were also able to gift Ms. Highsmith and the 50 Rahway National Junior Honors Society members Bic Kits that were complete with pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, markers, and highlighters.

On behalf of everyone at the Rahway 7th and 8th Grade Academy, Mr. King would like to thank Bic personally for their extremely generous donation to the Academy's staff and students. As well as all of the staff members that helped create care packages and the students that helped deliver them! "Generous acts such as those from Bic and the staff and students of the Rahway Academy are why I will be forever thankful I am a part of this community and honored I am able to help give back whenever the opportunity presents itself." - Mr. King



(above) Rahway Academy was chosen as one of the worldwide schools to receive a Bic care package donation of 45 cases full of pens, pencils, and other stationary items to help replenish their school supplies.

PLAYGROUND PROJECT CULMINATES YEARS OF PLANNING AND EFFORT

Rahway Public Schools

Franklin Elementary School in Rahway recently unveiled its new early childhood playground, a project that has been years in the making. The playground was funded through the preschool expansion grant that the district received.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on November 15, 2023, and was attended by several of the district's administrators, as well as 6 classes of prekindergarten and kindergarten children. The school's Principal Dr. Patrick Holness, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Dr. Aleya Shoieb, and Director of Early Childhood Education Mr. Mykel Brooks shared some exciting words before cutting the ribbon.

"We are so excited to unveil our new early childhood playground," said Dr. Holness. "This project has been a long time in the making, and we are so grateful to the Department of Early Childhood Education for their support."

Mr. Brooks shared that he was excited to be able to help provide a safe space for children 5 and under to play. "The old playground that was there was not age-appropriate," he said. "This one is much better for this age group."

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, each prekindergarten and kindergarten class had a designated time slot to explore the playground's

many features. Their laughter echoed through the air as they tried out their new playground, and their faces lit up with excitement as they engaged in play. This special day was made even more memorable by the opportunity for everyone to enjoy the new playground.

"This is a great day for our district," said Dr. Shoieb. "We are committed to providing our students with the best possible learning environment, and this new playground is a major step in that direction."

The new playground features a variety of age-appropriate equipment, including a climbing structure, slides, a little house, and a roadway with trikes that goes around the whole structure.

"We are so grateful to the preschool expansion grant that made this project possible," said Dr. Holness. "This new playground will be a valuable asset to our school for years to come."

"I am very excited to see this project come to fruition. The Building and Grounds department was a huge help in getting this project off the ground, and I am proud of the work that we have accomplished," said Mr. Ed Kushpa, Building and Grounds Manager. "I am especially excited to see the students playing on the race track that circles the structure. It's great to see them enjoying it and having fun."

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(above) Franklin School Principal Dr. Patrick Holness, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Dr. Aleva Shoieb, and Director of Early Childhood Education Mr. Mykel Brooks shared some exciting words before cutting the ribbon during a ceremony held on November 15th.



(above) Franklin Elementary School Unveils New Early Childhood Playground Project Culminates Years of Planning and Effort

Photos by Rahway Public Schools

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A TRIBUTE TO RAHWAY SOLDIERS WHO FOUGHT IN THE USCT

Submitted by Al Shipley, City Historian and Rahway Library Research Consultant

The assault on Fort Sumter took place on April 12, 1861, starting a bloody war that would last four long years. Most thought the war would be over in a few short months with limited loss of lives, property, or finances. By the end of the first year, however, reality had set in. With the realization that a long conflict was looming, President Abraham Lincoln decided that it was not only necessary but also vital for the North to enlist black men into the army. With pressure and personal council from leading abolitionists including Frederick Douglass, the President knew that if blacks were allowed to fight, it would help to cripple the economy of the South. He also believed that the black soldiers would make outstanding fighters and had a special cause that would drive their efforts. Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, and five months later, on May 22nd, the recruitment of United States Colored Troops began in full force.

The men who made up the USCT comprised a diverse group. Some were former slaves, others were freemen, some were young, some older, yet they all shared a common bond of unity as they fought for their individual states and the Union. Over 209,000 men of color, enough to fill 175 regiments would eventually enlist, making up one-tenth of the entire Union Army. Many black men from this area were mustered into the 22nd, 25th, 41st, and 127th regiments. Their actions would prove to bolster the Union war effort at the most critical time.





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The service records of the 22nd and 127th regiments are especially worthy of review. The two highly decorated regiments were active in the siege operations against Petersburg and Richmond (June 16, 1864 - April 2, 1865), the Battle of Dutch Gap (August, 1864), Chaffin's Farm (September, 1864), and the Battle of Fair Oaks (October, 1864). A specific instance of the regiment's bravery in battle was illustrated on June 15, 1864, when it was reported that "the men of the 22nd met the enemy near Baylor's farm as Confederate shells were tearing up the troops. The advancing Union lines began to fall back and were only saved when the 22nd Regiment led a charge and joining with the 5th USCT drove the Confederates from their position, captured one gun, and saved the division's honor."

The two regiments were later honored when they were selected to be part of the first group of Union troops to march into Richmond and occupy the Confederate capital on April 3, 1865. A part of the regiment was on duty at



(above) A brick memorial, topped with a bronze plaque, overlooks the graves of soldiers who fought during the Civil War as members of the USCT. The plaque lists the names of the 29 USCT soldiers buried in the historic Rahway Cemetery. The monument was unveiled this past July during the annual "Forgotten Heroes" remembrance program organized by the American Legion, Mackie Post 499.

Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, when Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered. The regiment also participated as part of the escort at the funeral of President Lincoln, and days later were part of the group pursuing the President's assassin.

Over the duration of the Civil War, more than 530 young men who called Rahway home would join the fight, of which over 50 were men of color. Of the 305 Civil War soldiers who are buried in the historic Rahway Cemetery, 29 were members of the USCT. Four of them, Evan C. Randolph, Peter Robinson, Joseph Freeman, and Enos Freeman were part of the 22nd, a regiment that was the second most highly decorated unit of the USCT. (Note: The 54th Massachusetts, the unit on which the movie "Glory" was based, was the most highly decorated).

The bravery and sacrifice of the United States Colored Troops during one of the most tumultuous events in our country's history should not go unnoticed. It is important that all Americans know their story.

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Parker, James	US News	USS Salina	4/11/1885
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HOUSEPLANTS THE RIGHT PLANT IN THE RIGHT SPACE

When you first walk into a modern greenhouse, you'll most likely step into an area filled with beautiful plants from rain gardens and tropical regions from all over the world. Although captivating to look at these may not be the best plants for your home environment or the spot you want to put it in.

Gardeners have a motto, 'The Right Plant in The Right Place'. This basic guideline helps keep your garden plants healthy and happy which makes them easier to care for. This applies to your indoor plants also. The wrong amount of sun, shade or moisture will result in sickly plants unable to fight off insect pests or diseases. If poorly placed even a hardy plant will quickly weaken, breaking down its ability to protect itself.

If you are one of the people that always says "I kill everything," you might just be trying to grow the wrong plants for your home environment or your solution might be as easy as moving you plants to a more favorable spot.

Many tropical plants like a sunny window but there are many which are 'understory' plants that grow under other trees and plants. These plants require some shade during the day or their leaves will burn and dry up.

Philodendrons are a group of tropical plants that prefer indirect sunlight making them a good choice for many spaces in our modern homes.

Succulent plants, which include the fascinating cactus, are considered one of the most specialized of all plant groups. Since they live chiefly in areas typically hot and dry they assume fantastic forms which enable them to survive in regions of adverse conditions. This helps them conserve water and reduce transpiration. The root systems are shallow which helps the plants to quickly absorb any water that comes its way. -Wyman's Gardening Encyclopedia.*



(above) Christmas Cactus have 2 close relatives, Easter Cactus and Thanksgiving Cactus which bloom every year when their names suggest. You can research how to help trigger flowering on You Tube & Google.

Succulents are extremely popular now as millennials decorate their homes with plants that are easy to care for. Succulents store water in their leaves and the name succulents actually means 'juicy leaves' so they only need water every few weeks or once a month. I water mine the first week of the month so it's easy for me to remember. If your home is shady these are not the plant for your space.

Many succulent plants such as the Christmas cactus flower, bring a blast of color into your home every year.

Most plants come with a tag that gives the buyer basic information such and light and watering requirements. Today it is easy for many people to get additional information on the plants special requirements from your cell phone right in the greenhouse as you are buying it. This is a great way to find out if your new plant is a good fit for you and your home environment. Information for proper care will include light, temperature, watering, feeding requirements, repotting and propagation and any special care



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(above) Past President of The Rahway Garden *Club, James Keane, has been researching and* answering garden questions since 1995. Visit 'Keane Gardener' blog at: keanegardener.blogspot.com

your new plant requires.

Heads up, overwatering is the number cause of disease and root rot for many plants. Your pots need a hole in the bottom for drainage. Cover the hole with a piece of screen or a piece of a used dryer sheet to keep the soil in the pot. Also the finger test is very helpful when watering your plants. Stick your fingertip into the top of the soil. If the soil is wet do not water for a few days to allow it to dry out.

*Wyman's Gardening Encyclopedia – Donald Wyman

Enjoy gardening all year all,



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MOAB LODGE #70 WARMS STUDENTS WITH WINTER COATS

Submitted by Dyan McMillen

Facing the frosty breath of winter, the students of Grover Cleveland School received a heartwarming gift: a bountiful collection of warm coats courtesy of Moab Lodge #70, a Rahwaybased chapter of the P.H.A. and F & A M led by Worshipful Master Augustus Johnson and supported by dedicated brother Gary Hall, Senior Wardon Dontrell Moore, and Past Master Jimmy Sims, the Lodge spearheaded a successful coat drive to ensure no student went cold this season.

The initiative, driven by a deep commitment to community service, saw Moab Lodge members rally their families, friends, and fellow Brothers in arms. The response was overwhelming, with donations pouring in from all corners. From cozy puffer jackets to snuggly fleece hoodies, the pile of coats grew daily, reflecting the generosity and empathy of the local community.

"Seeing the joy on these children's faces is truly the greatest reward," stated Worshipful Master Johnson. "These coats are more than just warmth; they're a symbol of community, of coming together to ensure our most vulnerable neighbors are cared for. This is the essence of Freemasonry: building bridges, fostering brotherhood, and making a positive impact on the lives around us." The successful coat drive is just one example of Moab Lodge #70's unwavering commitment to Rahway. Whether it's volunteering at local food banks, organizing mentorship programs, or supporting educational initiatives, the Lodge consistently strives to uplift and empower its community.

This winter, thanks to the dedication of Moab Lodge #70 and the generosity of countless donors, the hallways of Grover Cleveland School will be filled not just with laughter and learning, but also with the comforting embrace of winter warmth.

Photos by Dyan McMillen



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The creative team responsible for a recent Broadway flop assemble for a backer's audition of their new show at the Westchester estate of a wealthy and eccentric theatre financier. However, the shadow of the team's last show hangs over the group-- Manhattan Holiday was ravaged by the "Stage Door Slasher," a mysterious killer who stabbed chorus girls. As the composer, lyricist, actors and director prepare their performance, and a blizzard cuts off any possible retreat, bodies start to drop in plain sight. It doesn't take long for everyone to figure out that one of them is The Stage Door Slasher and accusing fingers point in all directions. The bumbling police inspector, who snowshoes in to investigate, is hoping to flush out the killer from this group of suspects--but the killer has other plans. More than that, the threat of Nazi saboteurs lurks among them!

Will the Slasher be unmasked? Maybe, but not before the audience has been treated to a rollicking good time full of the author's biting, satiric and irreverent wit.

Performances are at CDC Theatre, 78 Winans Ave. in Cranford with shows on Fridays and Saturdays, February 9-24 at 8pm and on Sunday, February 18 at 2pm. For the best ticket selection and price, visit cdctheatre.org.





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