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## CREATIVITY AND TALENT OF STUDENTS SHOWCASED

*Submitted by Dyan McMillen*

Grover Cleveland Elementary School culminated its Black History Month celebration with a vibrant and educational event on February 29, 2024. The program showcased the creativity and talent of its students, honoring the rich legacy of black americans.

The evening began with the unveiling of a captivating wax museum created by the talented fourth graders. Transformed into historical icons, students stood frozen in character, ready to "come to life" and share their stories with visitors.

Sixth graders took center stage next, delivering powerful speeches in the school's annual oratory contest. Their well-researched and passionately presented narratives explored the lives and achievements of prominent Black figures throughout history.

The magic continued with a heart-pounding performance by Steppers with Attitude, a local Steppers group. Their energetic routine dazzled the audience and set the tone for a night of celebration.

The Grover Cleveland Gator Band filled the auditorium with their spirited music, while a special performance by Grover Cleveland alumni added a sentimental touch, connecting past and present generations.

Grover Cleveland's entire student body participated in a music video. They brought Rihanna's uplifting anthem "Shine Bright Like a Diamond" to life in a dynamic music video filled with positive energy

and school spirit.

Beyond the program, the walls of the school provided a stunning backdrop throughout Black History Month. Student artwork adorned the hallways, showcasing a vibrant array of artistic expressions that reflected themes of Black history and culture.

"This culminating event was a true testament to the dedication and creativity of our students and staff," said Mr. Giambrone, Principal of Grover Cleveland Elementary School. "Black History Month is a time to learn, celebrate, and be inspired, and our students embraced this opportunity with enthusiasm and passion."



(above) Transformed into historical icons, students stood frozen in character, ready to "come to life" and share their stories with visitors.



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## FIREFIGHTERS COMPETE AT COOKED AND UNCORKED FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL

On Monday, February 26, 2024, Rahway firefighters joined together with firefighters from around New Jersey to compete in The Ultimate Fire Department Cook-off, part of the Cooked and Uncorked Food and Wine Festival. The Rahway team took home 1st place in the Dessert category.

The event benefited the New Jersey State

Firefighter's Mutual Benevolent Association and The Burn Center at Saint Barnabas Medical Center.

The Fire Department Cook-off is part of a culinary extravaganza where participants were able to experience the tastes and flavors of some of New Jersey's finest restaurants, caterers and dessert shops all in one location.



(above) Rahway Firefighters took home 1st place in the Dessert category of the competition.

Photos from this and other events can be found online at [rennamedia.com](http://rennamedia.com) and on the Our Town Rahway page on [facebook.com](https://facebook.com/OurTownRahway). Feel free to "Like," "Tag," and "Share."

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# NATIONAL FLOWER DAY CELEBRATED AT CLEVELAND SCHOOL

*Submitted by Dyan McMillen*

In honor of National Flower Day on March 12th, Grover Cleveland Elementary School got their hands dirty and celebrated a little differently this year. Students from all grades participated in a fun and eco-friendly activity that combined creativity with a lesson in plant growth.

Instead of traditional paper flowers, students received special plantable seed paper. This innovative paper contains embedded flower seeds, allowing students to take a more active role in cultivating their own blooms.

“National Flower Day is a wonderful opportunity to teach our students about the beauty and importance of flowers,” said Nurse Kate Giametta. “This year, we wanted to go beyond just learning about flowers and empower our students to actively participate in growing their own. The plantable seed paper allows them to not only express their creativity but also witness the fascinating process of a seed transforming into a flower.”

The plantable seed paper activity not only sparked students’ creativity but also provided a valuable lesson in plant growth and responsibility. Students will be responsible for tending to their planted seeds, eagerly awaiting the day their paper flowers transform into beautiful blooms.



(above) Plantable Seed Paper

# STUDENTS EMPOWERED TO RISE ABOVE


*Submitted by Colleen Kurdyla*

Roosevelt Elementary School recently welcomed renowned resilience expert Ms. Tina "StarzTina" Wilson for a powerful multi-part assembly series titled "Traumedy to Triumph: Overcoming Challenges and Building Strength." Ms. Tina, a dynamic presenter and advocate for youth empowerment, engaged students in open conversations about trauma, its potential impacts, and effective coping strategies.

The first assembly served as a safe space for students to explore the concepts of trauma and tragedy. Through age-appropriate discussions and activities, Ms. Tina clarified key terms, acknowledged the diverse experiences children may face, and fostered a sense of understanding and mutual support. From facing personal loss to navigating academic struggles or bullying, the

assembly addressed a wide range of situations that can impact a child's well-being, highlighting the importance of recognizing and acknowledging even seemingly minor incidents. Students participated in breakout sessions discussing coping strategies and shared personal “I am” statements, highlighting the importance of daily self-affirmations.

Roosevelt Elementary Principal, Mrs. Tankard applauded Ms. Tina's impactful visit. "Ms. Tina's unique ability to connect with our students and engage them in these crucial conversations is invaluable. By equipping them with the tools and understanding to overcome challenges, we're fostering a generation of resilient and empowered individuals." We thank Ms. Tina and the Mally Gains Foundations for partnering with Roosevelt School.



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## THE BUNNIES ARE COMING, THE BUNNIES ARE COMING!!!

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THIS IS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO GET A LOT OF CABBAGE FOR YOUR CURRENT LAIR. I WOULD BE HONORED TO HELP YOU FIND THAT NEW HOME TO MOVE YOUR EGG BASKET INTO OR TO SELL YOUR CURRENT LAIR AND TO MANUEVEUR THROUGH THE POSSIBLE AND OCCASSIOAL OBSTACLES IN DOING SO.

HOWEVER FOR NOW I WISH YOU AND YOUR FAMILY A JOYFUL SOLMEN HOLIDAY SEASON AND ONE OF COLORFUL EGGS, FABULOUS CHOCOLATE, JELLY BEANS TASTY MATZOS AND HAPPY TIMES WITH FAMILY.

DURING THIS SEASON WE ASK THAT YOU INCLUDE THE SUFFERING PEOPLE OF UKRAINE IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS. WHY NOT FLY THE BLUE AND YELLOW COLORS OF THE UKRAINE AS A SIGN OF SUPPORT.


Happy holidays and God save the people of Ukraine and protect our troops.

Matt Dobrowolski

I wish to thank Mayor Ray Giacobbe, the council and Councilman Joe Gibillisco for the honor of selecting me as the recent recipient of the City of Rahway 2023 "SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD" for the city.

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# NJ STATE POLICE MARINE SERVICE VISITS STUDENTS



(above) Mr. Giambrone with Marine Service Bureau officers, Trooper Nigel Ferreira and Trooper Kenneth Bayer

Photo by Kate Giametta

*Submitted by Dyan McMillen*

Braving the frigid temperatures wasn't on the agenda for Grover Cleveland Elementary School students, but thanks to the NJ State Police Marine Service Bureau, they got a firsthand lesson in ice safety that was both informative and engaging.

Marine Service Bureau officers, Trooper Nigel Ferreira and Trooper Kenneth Bayer well-versed in the dangers of icy waters, brought their expertise to Grover Cleveland. Through interactive presentations and demonstrations, they enlightened students about the importance of ice safety during the colder months.

The program wasn't just talk! Students participated in a simulated ice rescue, putting their newfound knowledge into action. This hands-on experience allowed them to understand the proper procedures for staying safe on frozen surfaces and what to do if they

witness someone in trouble.

Troopers showcased the specialized equipment they use for ice rescues, including ice picks, throw ropes, and flotation devices. Students got a close look at these tools and learned about their vital role in keeping people safe.

Principal Mr. Giambrone of Grover Cleveland Elementary echoed this sentiment. "This program was an invaluable experience for our students. It equipped them with the knowledge and skills they need to stay safe around frozen water."

The NJ State Police Marine Service Bureau's visit to Grover Cleveland Elementary School served as a crucial reminder of the importance of ice safety. By combining education with interactive activities, the program empowered students to make informed decisions and potentially save lives.



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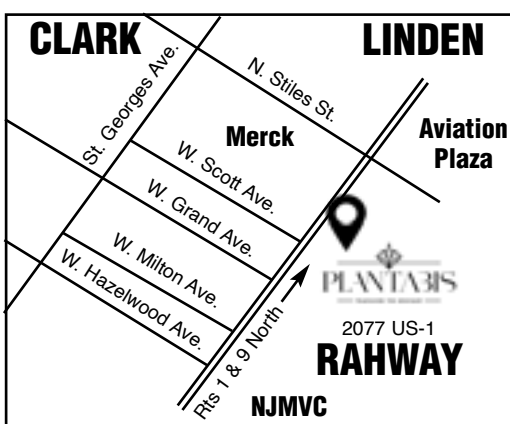
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Jennifer is just one of the more than 500 children removed from home in Passaic and Union counties each year due to abuse and neglect. These children are separated from all they've ever known: parents, siblings, friends, teachers, and their belongings. For Jennifer, the road ahead is long, and she needs a caring, consistent adult in her corner to protect her best interests. That's where Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers come in.

A CASA volunteer is trained on the ins and outs of advocating for child-victims and fully supported by CASA staff for the duration of the case. No special background in child welfare is necessary; successful CASA volunteers are dedicated community members with varied life experiences who believe abuse and neglect are non-negotiable. CASA volunteers visit the children, make unbiased observations, interview others in the child's life, and make

recommendations to the judge. They often are the only consistent adult in the life of a child involved in the child welfare system, as caseworkers, professionals, and even placements can be ever-changing. A CASA volunteer provides continuity during a time of chaos and unknowns.

There are currently hundreds of Union County children in need of a CASA volunteer! Plans are underway for an advocate training class. To learn more, attend an information session either Monday, April 22, at 5:30 p.m. at the Clark Public Library, 303 Westfield Avenue in Clark, or Tuesday, April 30, at 10 am at the CASA office, 1143 East Jersey Street, Second Floor in Elizabeth. Register now at [casapassaicunion.org/info-session](http://casapassaicunion.org/info-session).

## ABOUT CASA OF PASSAIC AND UNION COUNTIES:

The nonprofit is court-empowered to recruit, train and support volunteer advocates to speak up for the best interests of children in foster care. Assigned by a court order that grants access to the child and all those in their lives, the CASA volunteer gathers information and makes informed recommendations to the judge deciding the child's future. Often, the CASA volunteer is the only consistent person in the child's life.

For more information about CASA of Passaic and Union Counties, call 973-832-4002, e-mail [info@casapassaicunion.org](mailto:info@casapassaicunion.org) or log on to [www.casapassaicunion.org](http://www.casapassaicunion.org).



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# WESTFIELD COMMUNITY CONCERT BAND SPRING CONCERT - APRIL 12

The Westfield Community Concert Band will present its annual Spring Concert on Friday, April 12 at 7:30 p.m. at Roosevelt Intermediate School, 301 Clark Street in Westfield. Dr. Thomas Connors, conductor and music director of the band, has prepared a program which is highlighted by popular, traditional and contemporary selections for wind band. Admission is free and open to the public.

The program will feature the band's performance of the complete *Candide* Suite, written by Leonard Bernstein and adapted by Clare Grundman for wind band. Composed in 1956 as operetta based upon a Voltaire's novella of the same name, the music from this selection is widely featured in *Maestro*, the recent film about Bernstein.

The program will also feature the music of Gilbert and Sullivan, renowned composers of British operettas, with a performance of the music from the ballet, *Pineapple Poll*. This 1951 composition includes music from the most popular Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, including *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *The Mikado*. This arrangement has been performed leading wind bands, including the United States Marine Band, "The President's Own".

The band also performs *Epic March*, by John Ireland, *Savannah River Holiday*, by Ron Nelson, and *Music for a Festival*, by popular contemporary composer, Philip Sparke.

The band, in its 112th concert season, will also be presenting its annual Summer Concert

Series on Thursdays, June 20, June 27, July 4 and July 11 in Westfield's Mindowaskin Park.

Experienced area musicians may inquire about joining the band by contacting Barry Rosenberg, band president, at 908-337-9073 or by email at [info@westfieldcommunityband.com](mailto:info@westfieldcommunityband.com).

The band rehearses each Wednesday evening from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the community room located in the Westfield Municipal Building, 425 East Broad Street, and performs throughout the year.

The band is sponsored in part by the Westfield Recreation Department, Megan Schaffer, Director. The band's concerts are made possible by funds from the Union County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.



(above) The Westfield Community Concert Band, under the direction of Dr. Thomas Connors, Music Director, will present its annual Spring Concert on Friday, April 12 at 7:30 p.m. at Roosevelt Intermediate School, 301 Clark Street, Westfield.

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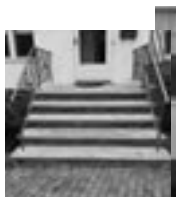


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# READ ACROSS AMERICA DAY WITH RAHWAY ACADEMY

*Submitted by Lauren Battiato*

Students at Roosevelt Elementary School enjoyed a vibrant celebration of literacy on March 2nd for Dr. Seuss’s Read Across America Day. The event was a collaborative effort organized by Susan Krivenko, Roosevelt Elementary School’s Media Specialist, and Anjanette Highsmith, Rahway Academy science teacher and advisor for Rahway Academy’s National Junior Honor Society (NJHS).

Ms. Highsmith brought 23 eighth grade NJHS members to Roosevelt Elementary to share the joy of reading. The academy students fanned out to classrooms throughout the school to read aloud a variety of titles. The selections offered a mix of time-honored classics like Dr. Seuss’s The Cat in the Hat and books focused on diversity and inclusion, including Amy Wu and The Perfect Bao by Kat Zhang and Jacqueline Woodson’s

The Day You Begin.

The NJHS students and their young audiences came together to recite the Read Across America Reader’s Oath and share in the magic of books read aloud. Afterward, bookmarks and custom pencils were distributed to further commemorate the day. One heartwarming aspect of the event was seeing Academy students reunite with former teachers, expressing gratitude for fostering their love of reading.

“Read Across America Day is about inspiring a love of reading in young people,” says Susan Krivenko. “And this event highlighted the power of mentorship and positive examples set by older students.”

Read Across America underscores the importance of cultivating a passion for reading and literacy within the Rahway school community.

Photo by Rahway Public Schools



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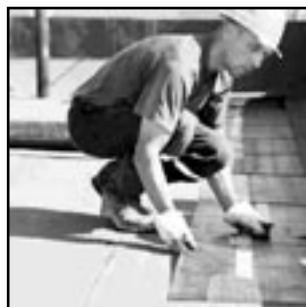
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# BAYWAY COMPLEX COMMUNITY ADVISORY PANEL

A ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the Bayway Industrial Complex Community Advisory Panel (CAP) donation of a new bingo machine for seniors. Former AristaCare resident and Linden senior Jane Kosa championed the new bingo machine cause. Jane Kosa noted: “A bingo machine is a very important, fun activity that the residents of the AristaCare facility really enjoy and offers numerous benefits for seniors. When I realized that the old one was no longer working, I had to do something.”

The bingo machine costs were covered by member companies of the Bayway Complex Community Advisory Panel (CAP). Companies supporting the costs included Cogen Technologies Linden Venture, Infineum USA L.P., Linden VFT, Phillips 66, Parkway Generation, Solutia Inc., Veolia North America.

The Bayway CAP was established in 1998 and has been providing a forum for open dialogue between the community and CAP member companies. The CAP has annually awarded High School scholarships for many years and now has expanded its support to include annually supporting a community item or program in need. “The request for support of the bingo machine came to my attention at the end of the year with a call from Jane Kosa. As facilitator of the Bayway CAP, I felt it was a perfect fit for the CAP. Our CAP member companies were pleased to be able support this community need,” stated Nancy Sadlon, Phillips 66 Bayway Refinery, Manager of Public Affairs.

## ABOUT THE BAYWAY COMPLEX COMMUNITY ADVISORY PANEL (CAP)

The Bayway Community Advisory Panel (CAP) is a committee of community representatives from Linden, Rahway, Elizabeth, and Staten Island including neighbors, educators, retirees, public officials, emergency responders,

and environmentalists who attend quarterly meetings that serve as a forum for dialogue between the community and company representatives from Phillips 66 Bayway Refinery, Infineum USA L.P., Cogen Technologies, Veolia North America, Solutia, Parkway Generation and Linden VFT LLC.



Courtesy photo




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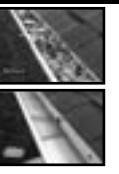
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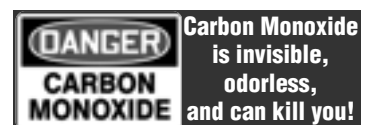


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**MENTAL ILLNESS  
SUPPORT TALK APRIL 23**

The Union County Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI UC) is hosting a free presentation on April 23, 2024. Christine Backiel of Bridgeway Crisis Intervention Services (BCIS) of Union County will speak about their services. There will be free resources for adults. The meeting will be held from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m., at the RWJ Fitness Center, 2120 Lamberts Mill Road, in Scotch Plains. No advance registration is required. Audience participation is encouraged and free literature will be provided. Visit [namionioncountynj.org](http://namionioncountynj.org) to learn more about NAMI's free resources on mental illness.

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**AMERICAN LEGION & VFW POST BREAKFASTS**

**PANCAKE BREAKFAST – APRIL 21, 2024**

Come to a Pancake Breakfast, hosted by the American Legion Auxiliary - Unit 102, on Sunday, April 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 Kielbasa. 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 - APRIL 27, 2024**

Come one, come all to the VFW#1397 Pancake Breakfast on Saturday, April 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!

**2ND ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY EXTRAVAGANZA**

*Submitted by Linda Lampert*

Nearly 400 attendees gathered at Franklin Elementary School on a rainy Wednesday evening for the school's 2nd Annual Black History Extravaganza, a vibrant celebration of Black excellence featuring artistic expression, community spirit, and shared stories.  
The event commenced with a vibrant "gallery walk," where visitors explored student artwork, setting the tone for an evening brimming with creativity. In the auditorium, Principal Dr. Patrick Holness delivered a powerful opening message, highlighting the significance of Black history and its ongoing story. Dr. Holness emphasized celebrating the past, present, and future while acknowledging and learning from the monumental contributions of Black individuals throughout history. He also stressed the role of the students as future history makers, empowering them to build upon the legacy of Black excellence.  
Captivating student performances then brought to life the words and wisdom of renowned Black poets and writers, exploring themes of hope, resilience, and the fight for

equality. Recitations included powerful poems like "I, Too" by Langston Hughes and "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou. Additionally, performances like "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "Lift Every Voice and Sing" reflected national pride and unity.  
The celebration was further enriched by:  
- A dynamic performance by the Rahway High School Drumline Duo.  
- A captivating showcase by the talented young steppers of Steppaz With Attitude.  
- Group performances by students, including songs like "Diamonds" and a video introduction for "Our Deepest Fear."  
Dr. Patrick Holness concluded the event by expressing gratitude to all attendees for their participation. The 2nd Annual Black History Extravaganza at Franklin Elementary School served as a testament to the school's commitment to fostering cultural awareness, celebrating diversity, and empowering the next generation to build upon the legacy of Black excellence.  
Franklin School would like to extend special thanks to the BHM committee and the volunteers who helped to support the event.



(above) Franklin Elementary School Celebrated Black History Month

Photo by Rahway Public Schools

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# NEW FOOD PANTRY AND CLOTHING BUILDINGS CELEBRATED



(above) A moving dedication ceremony concluded with an uplifting blessing offered by Father Anthony Randazzo of Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church in Westfield.



**St. Joseph Social Service Center**  
The St. Joseph’s community, encompassing residents from Elizabeth and volunteers and supporters from five counties in New Jersey, came together on February 24, 2024, to celebrate the opening of two new buildings on its campus. The new food pantry building is already in use, and the second building will ultimately be used for clothing distribution.

The cold weather was no match for the warm spirit of compassion and caring that animated the event and has guided the agency for the past 38 years. All in attendance toured the new buildings and participated in a moving dedication ceremony that concluded with an uplifting blessing offered by Father Anthony Randazzo of Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church in Westfield.

The two new buildings represent the first phase of an ambitious capital improvement plan to improve and expand services to families and children in need in Elizabeth and to fulfill St. Joseph’s vision to serve those experiencing homelessness and poverty with dignity. The new food pantry building will allow St. Joseph’s to offer a better food pantry model – an individual choice food pantry. With this model, clients will come at an appointed time and will be able to choose their food based on their personal and cultural preferences. The new clothing building will be used as temporary program space during the next wave of renovations and ultimately will be used to offer clothing and home goods in a more dignified environment.

“Dignity has been a core value of the agency since our founding in 1986,” noted Bernadette Murphy, Executive Director. “Our goal is to help people acquire the material items they need to live with dignity. We believe that it is vital for our clients to receive food, clothing, supplies and support services in an environment that fosters

dignity, where individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness are truly welcomed as sisters and brothers.”

Daisy Trocan, a member of the Board of Trustees, spoke at the dedication event about what these new buildings will mean to Elizabeth residents. As a child her family relied on support from the agency during difficult times. “The love and support my family received from St. Joseph’s meant so much to us,” Trocan reflected.

Harold “Kess” Kessler, who has overseen the capital improvement plan from its inception several years ago, remarked that work has already begun on the second phase of the construction plan. Over the next year, the main hall on campus will be transformed into a multipurpose space with private offices for mental health counseling and case management services, new facilities for the soup kitchen program, spaces for the Adult Learning Center and health and nutrition workshops and diagnostic testing, and a reception area where residents can obtain information about agency programs and community services. Karen Maher, President of the Board of Trustees, noted that these new spaces will “allow the agency to expand services to the community, particularly in the areas of physical and behavioral health.”

Six days a week a dedicated team of 6,000 volunteers from Elizabeth, Union, Westfield, Cranford, Mountainside, and dozens of other communities, make sandwiches for the hungry in their kitchens, bring food, clothing and home goods, serve meals at the soup kitchen and help with the operations of the agency. St. Joseph’s serves over 3,500 individuals annually. The organization helps Elizabeth residents access food, medicine, mental health counseling, adult education, clothing and a myriad of additional healthcare and support services.

To learn more about St. Joseph’s please visit [sjeliz.org](http://sjeliz.org).

*Photos from this and other events can be found online at [rennamedia.com](http://rennamedia.com) and on the Renna Media page on [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com). Feel free to “Like,” “Tag,” and “Share.”*

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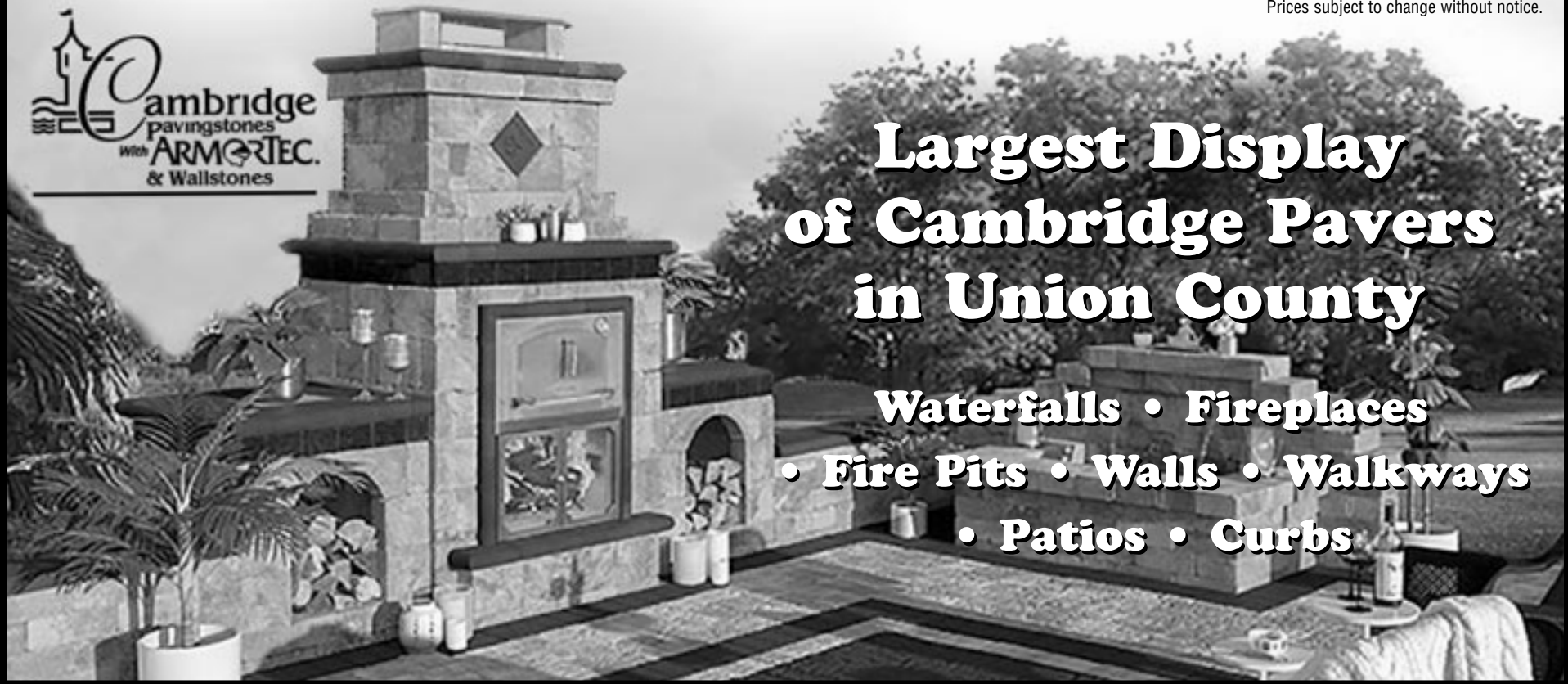
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# DIVINE MERCY (FORMER ST. MARY'S) CELEBRATES 170TH ANNIVERSARY

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

The history of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church dates back to 1845 when Father Isaac Howell, pastor of St. Mary's Church of Elizabeth, chose Rahway as the site of one of his first mission churches. At that early time, Father Howell's parish extended from Elizabeth all the way to New Brunswick. The Rahway mission grew steadily and in 1853, Father Thomas Quinn, who would serve the congregation over the next 19 years, was appointed the first resident pastor. A year later, in 1854, the first church, rectory, and school were built under his leadership, and property was also purchased at the west end of Rahway for a parish cemetery.

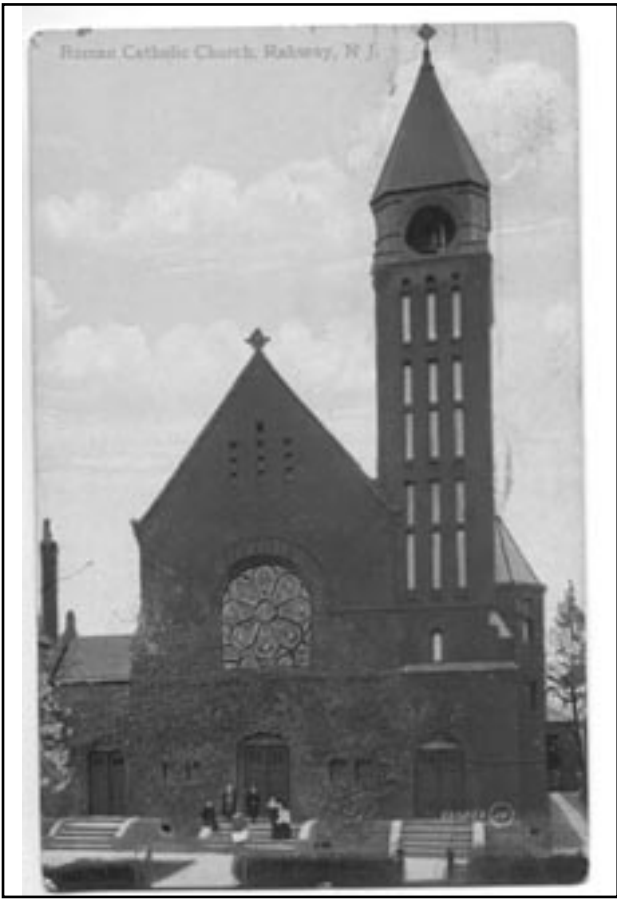
In 1880, Father Edward McCosker was named pastor. It was under his direction that the present imposing brick church and rectory were constructed in 1882. The original church was moved to the rear of the new church and converted into a hall for meetings and social affairs. The hall would serve the community as a make-shift hospital annex for patients affected by the horrific 1918 influenza epidemic.

During the tenure of Father George F. Brown (1905-1910), the church was renovated, and a two-story brick schoolhouse was built behind the rectory which is still in use. The old school was converted into a convent for the Sisters of the Dominican Order. Over the first half century, St. Mary's Parish had taken its place among the leading parishes of the Diocese and had become an active and important congregation in the city.

In 1917, Father Cornelius Kane, who was to serve the Church during a period of great growth and activity, became pastor. Shortly after his arrival, a new auditorium was built to replace the old hall. In 1923, a large estate on Esterbrook Avenue was purchased and remodeled as a convent. Foreseeing the need for a larger school in the aftermath of World War I, a new fourteen room school was erected next to the church on Central Avenue. In 1941, in recognition of the many accomplishments of Father Kane, His Holiness Pope Pius the 12th elevated him to the rank of Domestic Prelate with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor. After thirty years of untiring service to his Church, his people, and his community, Msgr. Kane passed in 1947.

The congregation continued to grow into the 1950s as the church approached its 100th Anniversary. In 1953, Father John P. Sullivan was installed and led a campaign to completely renovate the church and the rectory. The school age population after World War II grew beyond the capacity of the school forcing some grades to move into rooms on the third floor of the Campbell Street City Hall. Membership in the congregation also grew, and it became necessary to call additional assistant pastors to help with the increased spiritual work of the church. In 1954, Rev. Harold Hermanns, who became a highly respected figure throughout the city, joined the staff.

The period from 1955 to 1971 marked the tenure of Father Joseph Murphy, a leader with a great interest in athletics and the youth of the parish. Under his leadership, a modern classroom



*(above) The ornate Romanesque style of Divine Mercy features three large, arched entrance doors, a large circular rose window above the entrance, and a high bell tower with a steep polygonal roof.*

building for 7th and 8th grade students was added to the old brick school behind the rectory in 1957. The new gymnasium was built in 1964 to provide modern facilities for the church's expanding athletic program. Many parishioners remember assistant pastor Rev. Edward Myers who began his service in 1968.

Msgr. Anthony Connell succeeded Father Murphy after his sudden passing. The new pastor organized a successful campaign, which led to the continuation of improvements. The sanctuary was air conditioned, the parking area was expanded and the hall under the gym was modernized to provide rooms for classes and meetings. The hall was named Connell Hall in his honor.

Father Joseph Quinlan arrived in 1977 and completely renovated the church while maintaining its original beauty. Work was also done on the rectory and school. It was during Father Quinlan's pastorate that the first bilingual masses and ministry to the Hispanic population began.

Further strides were made in an effort to include the Hispanic community during the tenure of Father Michael J. Feketic (1989 to 2005) who was proficient in Spanish. Presently, of the four Sunday masses, one is given entirely in Spanish as the church continues to be responsive to the diversity of its members.

In 2009, Father Dennis Kaelin was installed as pastor of both St. Mary's and St. Mark's to work with the congregations of both churches during the merger that would form Divine Mercy.

The roots of St. Mark's Parish date back to 1870 when it was established to serve the



German-American families of Rahway and the surrounding towns. Within a year, property was purchased on Hamilton Street and a sanctuary erected. From the time of its founding until 1941, 18 pastors would come to St. Mark's, most serving fewer than three years. October 23, 1941 was a red letter day for the church when Father Charles Buttner was installed. He would remain for the next 37 years and become one of the most fondly remembered pastors. Former congregants also remember the good works of his successor, Father Thaddeus F. Zuber, who served for 16 years (1979-1995).

The current administrator of Divine Mercy, Father Alexander Cruz, was installed in 2018. Under his leadership, many improvements were done to the campus, all made possible by the generosity of the parishioners. During the Covid-19 pandemic, virtual online Masses were instituted to keep congregants connected to their faith as everyone struggled through the grim period. Permanent live-streaming equipment was eventually installed to enable the homebound to experience worship services.

The church's outreach programs touch those in need in the community and across the world. Every Sunday, food is distributed to individuals and families who are experiencing difficult times. In September, school supplies are donated to students, and during the Christmas season, gifts are collected and distributed to children in need. The church helps new mothers and mothers-to-be by assisting the Lifenet Baby Bottle Campaign and the Raphael House. Donations are also made to the Christian Relief Society to help the worldwide community.

As Divine Mercy celebrates its 170th Anniversary in 2024, the church remains a dynamic, diverse, and vibrant community encouraging deep spiritual commitments to the Catholic faith.





# NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS (PART 2) BREEDING & TEACHING THEIR YOUNG

In January, 2024 I wrote an article about Northern Mockingbirds. This is a follow up to that article, how mockingbirds mate and teach their young.

Mockingbirds are usually monogamous during the mating season. However, occasionally a male will mate with more than one female. Male and female breeding pairs stay together for the whole breeding season, and sometimes for many years.

Northern mockingbirds breed in spring and early summer. A male chooses a territory and builds a few foundations for nests in the area. Then he tries to attract a female, hoping she will choose a suitable nest and mate with him.

There are three courtship displays that males use to attract female. The male may chase the female through the territory while singing, or he may run around on branches, showing the female where a nest could be built. Males also perform a “flight display”. In the “flight display”, males sing while flying a few meters into the air and then falling slowly back down. This display shows off his white wing patches to the female.

After a successful courtship the female builds the interior of the nest and lays her eggs. Their nests are cup-shaped and are made of twigs, cotton, dry leaves, stems, paper, grass and other organic material. The nests are built in shrubs and trees up to 50 feet above the ground.



*(above) Audra Loccisano's photo captures a Mocking bird quietly protecting its territory, but they are fierce defenders of their nesting sites and their young.*

The female lays two to six eggs (average 4 eggs). The eggs are about 24 mm long and 18 mm wide. They are blue or greenish with brown or reddish spots. Only the female mockingbirds incubate the eggs, while the male guards the nest and feeds his mate. The eggs hatch after 11 to 14 days. The chicks are helpless when they hatch. However, both parents feed their clutch so the young they grow quickly. They young leave the nest after 10 to 12 days. At this time the female leaves the young in the care of the male and begins construction on the new nest for their next brood.

This is the most dangerous time in a mockingbird's life. Unable to fly, they are



*(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](http://keanegardener.blogspot.com)*

vulnerable prey for cats and other predators. Totally dependent on the male for the next two weeks the fledglings (a young bird that has just left the nest) live on the ground and hide in shrubbery. The father is diligent in his duties, remaining close and always ready to feed or fiercely protect his young. During this time he teaches them important life skills, most importantly how to fly. The fledglings become independent from their parents when they are 10 to 15 days old.

Now the male and female join together and begin the process over again. Northern mockingbirds can raise 2 to 4 broods each year. Young mockingbirds can begin mating when they are one year old.

Information in this article is from two sources: Washington University, Puget Sound Institute & National Geographic, Washington, DC

Happy Springtime everyone,

*James*

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