

# New Providence NEWS

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## STEM CLUB RECEIVES HIGH HONORS AT THE STATE LEVEL

### New Providence School District

New Providence High School was thrilled to send 48 students from the STEM Club to compete in the 2024 NJTSA (Technology Student Association) State Conference held on April 27, 2024, at The College of New Jersey. Students competed in 29 different competitive events under the direction of their faculty advisors; Rachel Fintz, Daniel Barletta, Jennifer Pasuit, Susan Rembetsy, and Kathleen French.

NPHS STEM Club brought home a record number of 11 trophies, the first ranked public high school in New Jersey! NPHS finished with five first-place winners, two second-place winners, and four third-place winners! These 14 students are eligible to compete at the 2024 TSA National Conference in Orlando, FL from June 26-30, 2024.

Mrs. Jennifer Pasuit, Department Head for STEM, adds "Given this is our third consecutive year with TSA National competitors, our students have proven that a focused, quality STEM education can yield exceptional results regardless of the institution's size. Our high school's success in this prestigious event underscores the strength of our dynamic STEM programming and club offerings K-12."

Carina Pang, Ram Panchacharam, and Maria Armenciu took home two first-place trophies in Animatronics and System Control Technology. They created a phenomenal representation of the Perseverance Rover and Ingenuity Helicopter on Mars which truly belongs on display in a science museum! The team also created a winning system to sort chicken nuggets versus tenders into dedicated containers.

In Data Science Analytics, AJ Boyle moved up to first place after second last year by assessing social media market manipulation. Nikhil Srivastava took home third place for the

second year in a row! AJ Boyle and Valmik Nahata placed first in Software Development with their animated app to teach students to code, an event in which they had placed sixth in the Nation as sophomores.

Sebastian Mercado and Trevor Fornuff self-taught themselves new programming languages to create a Virtual Reality Visualization focused on increasing the health of children, and placed first in the event! They are excited to bring this project to the National level!

Conner Wood and Adam Moy's book "Circus Tweed" placed second in the state in the Children's Book event, after working collaboratively with their advisor Ms. French and additional group members Anna Fanning, Veronica Saburova, Benne Le, and Michael Bradford. Eden Kim accepted on their behalf.

Elijah Xie placed second in Dragster Design with his CO2 dragster car built under the supervision of Mr. Barletta.

Trevor Fornuff, Anna Fanning, and Veronica Saburova took home third place for Digital Video Production ([tinyurl.com/2mky4e84](http://tinyurl.com/2mky4e84)) with their hilarious fantasy film. Joe Egan brought home third place in Flight Endurance with his hand-crafted plane. Matteo Agastra and Joe Egan brought home third place for their Optical Engineering project of a restaurant lamp.

In addition, seven students were inducted into the TSA National Honors Society: Rohan Kulkarni, Ram Panchacharam, Carina Pang, Cleo Rossmann, Sean Kruger, Brandon Le, and Brandon Maneely.

For more information on STEM related opportunities and academic offerings at New Providence High School, please view the NPHS Program of Studies and STEM Department website.



(above) AJ Boyle and Valmik Nahata



(above) TSA National Honor Society Inductees

Courtesy photos

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# POLICE OFFICER MICHAEL GELORMINI SWORN IN

The New Providence Police Department welcomes our newest member, Michael Gelormini. Michael was sworn in as a full-time police officer at the May 14th council meeting. He is currently enrolled at the John H. Stamler Police Academy as an alternate route recruit and will be graduating in June.

Prior to the police academy, Michael attended Fairleigh Dickinson University, graduating with

an accounting degree. He has previously interned at our police department, served as a volunteer basketball coach for special education students, was an assistant basketball coach and a substitute teacher at New Providence High School. Michael has also worked seasonally as a basketball coach for the New Providence Recreation Department.

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*(above) Michael Gelormini was sworn in as a full-time police officer at the May 14th*

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## NJ SHARING NETWORK OPENS JOSEPH S. ROTH SIMULATION CENTER



NJ Sharing Network (NJSN), the federally designated non-profit organization focused on saving and enhancing lives through the recovery of donated organs and tissue in the Garden State, marked the opening of its Joseph S. Roth Simulation Center within its New Providence headquarters with a special ribbon cutting ceremony.

The Joseph S. Roth Simulation Training Center, named and dedicated in memory of NJSN's former President and CEO, will help prepare clinical teams with the best hands-on learning options available to manage organ and tissue donors and support families. It features the same advanced technologies and equipment used in partner hospitals throughout New Jersey, including patient simulators, monitors, ventilators, and advanced video technologies.

Currently, there are over 100,000 Americans – nearly 4,000 of whom live in New Jersey – waiting for a life-saving transplant, according to United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS). However, the generosity of those in the Garden State is providing hope for the future. In 2023, the number of organs recovered for transplant (715) in a single year reached an all-time high. This marked the fifth consecutive year NJ Sharing Network has reported new organ donation records. To learn more, get involved and register as an organ and tissue donor, visit [NJSharingNetwork.org](http://NJSharingNetwork.org).

*(above) Pictured here cutting the ribbon is Joe's wife Lori Roth. Lori is joined by (back row) Ciro A. Scalera, NJSN's Board Chairman; Sharyn Sawczak, NJSN's Vice President of Clinical Utilization and Laboratory Operations; Alison Roth; Jonathan Roth; (front row) Arleen Lipsman; Karen Spano; Carolyn M. Welsh, NJSN's President and CEO; and Cheryl Feinberg Roth.*

Courtesy photo

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*- Morgan GRIT Athlete Parent*
- “My son has been talking about it since the summer program ended. After he attended the summer program we have seen a tremendous improvement with Mason in sports. He is much more aggressive and focused now.”  
*- Robert, GRIT Athlete Parent*
- “My son is more disciplined and confident in himself”  
*- Steve Hughes, Grit Athlete Parent*
- “I have watched my children become more confident and vocal.”  
*- Christine Stramandinoli, Grit Athlete Parent*
- “His confidence has shot up in the last few months...and has carried forward to the way he approaches other activities like sports and schoolwork. My son is now making his bed daily and exercising every day.”  
*- Catherine Solfaro, Grit Athlete Parent*
- “We saw a noticeable difference in his throwing - he could throw it further and faster! The training definitely paid off!”  
*- Dara, GRIT Athlete Parent*

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## PINEWOOD DERBY CAR EXHIBIT

*Submitted by Tina Shih*

The New Providence Memorial Library hosted a temporary exhibit in May. A selection of NP Cub Scout Pack 363 and NP Girl Scouts SU 50 Pinewood Derby cars were display. Also featured were a couple cars from this year's first Outlaw Derby - an adults-only race that was held at Untied Brewing Company.

The Pinewood Derby is a nationwide annual Cub Scout event that started in 1953. Cub Scouts build their own unpowered miniature cars from wood kits containing a block of pine wood, plastic wheels, and metal axles. There are strict rules around how these cars are built, and each racer must pass official inspection before their car is allowed to race on the track.

New Providence Pack 363 holds races every year in late January / early February. During the race, Cub Scouts race against their denmates (those in the same grade), and winners from each den (grades K-5) are invited to race against other Packs within our District. The Girl Scouts from New Providence SU 50 are also invited to participate in their own races against troops in the same grade.

Courtesy photo



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## CARE PACKAGES FOR NJ TROOPS SERVING OVERSEAS

*Submitted by Jon Joshua*

Area Elks Club members recently teamed up with Girl Scouts from New Providence and Chatham at the Stirling Elks Lodge to assemble and mail 22 care packages packed with cookies and "Thank You" cards to troops from NJ who are currently deployed overseas.

They were joined by Air Force 2D Lt. Mitchell Horn from the New Jersey Air National Guard and a member of American Legion Post 322 in Summit who explained how receiving a care package can have a huge positive impact on the morale of someone who is serving thousands of miles away from home.

The National Veterans Service Committee of the NJ Elks East Central District, with Lodges in Stirling, Summit, Springfield, Mountainside, Cranford, Union, and Rahway, spent approximately \$1,200 to purchase the cookies and postage. Elks members help to support programs like this through grants, donations, and fundraising events.

Elks pledge "So long as there are Veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them." The same holds true for active duty military members and their families. Please visit [Elks.org](http://Elks.org) for more information about the Elks and how to join.



*(above) Area Elks recently teamed up with local girl scouts to send care packages to NJ Troops that are stationed overseas.*

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## SUMMIT AREA OLD GUARD – JUNE SPEAKERS

The Summit Area Old Guard is a social, educational, and recreational organization that serves men of retirement age. We meet most Tuesdays at the New Providence Presbyterian Church located at 1307 Springfield Ave. Our dues are minimal, and members manage all aspects of the operation. Our motto is “Come for the Programs. Stay for the Friends.” The organization was founded in 1930.

We will have four programs in June:

On June 4th, Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz will be our speaker. Ms. Munoz, a Republican, represents the 21st legislative district of New Jersey in the General Assembly. She was first elected in 2009. In 2017, she was appointed minority whip, and co-chair of the Republican party in 2020. Since 2022, she has served as Deputy Minority Leader of the Assembly, and

she is also the minority budget director. Representative Munoz will discuss what New Jersey is doing to keep retirees from migrating out of the State.

On June 11th, Robert E. Potok will be our speaker. Dr. Potok received his Doctor of Science from MIT in nuclear engineering. He is also a science fiction author. He will discuss how consciousness ties to overall human life experience. He feels the relationship is expressed in many of the "ship" words: friendship, stewardship, apprenticeship, authorship, brinkmanship, censorship, etc. All these words describe qualities of human experience and are meaningless without consciousness.

On June 18th, our topic will be “How the

Universe Came to be Smooth and Flat: the great challenge for gravity and cosmology”. Our speaker will be Paul J. Steinhardt, the Albert Einstein Professor of Physics at Princeton University. A snippet from his extensive Wikipedia page states, “Steinhardt is best known for his development of new theories of the origin, evolution and future of the universe.”

On June 25th, the monthly program chair, William Tittle, will attempt to bring the previous three speakers’ ideas together by building a theme that will converge their talks covering politics, human consciousness, and the universe in which we live, with the idea of a personal credo on what we each conclude about life – multiple 20th-century philosophers have had a go at this weighty topic – should be interesting.

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(above) Assemblywoman. Nancy F. Munoz, Dr. Potok, Dr. Steinhardt, Wm. Tittle



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## ELKS ASSEMBLE 200 BACKPACKS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

Elks members from across NJ recently gathered at the NJ Elks Veterans Annex in Stirling to assemble 200 backpacks which will be distributed to homeless veterans at Stand Down events in Newark, Atlantic City, and other locations throughout the state. These backpacks help to provide comfort to homeless veterans, offering them a sense of support and care during challenging times.

The backpacks contain clothing, food, personal hygiene, and other care items, including many of

the 4,000 pairs of socks and undergarments that were collected and donated to the Elks through the Middlesex Borough Police sock drive for New Jersey veterans.

The NJ Elks Veterans Annex also serves as a warehouse for Welcome Home kits consisting of furniture and other household items that a formerly homeless veteran would need when moving into their new housing. It is featured in the Youtube video "Givers of Hope".

Elks pledge "So long as there are veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will

never forget them." Every night, as many as 40,000 veterans sleep 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 all veterans have the safe, stable homes they deserve.

Please email [njelksnpsc@gmail.com](mailto:njelksnpsc@gmail.com) to learn more about what NJ State Elks are doing to help veterans and visit [Elks.org](http://Elks.org) for more information about the Elks, including how to become a member.

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## SUMMIT ELKS RECEIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AWARD

Summit Elks Lodge #1246 received the Community Partnership Award At the Summit Area YMCA's annual celebration held on April 25th, 2024, to recognize their efforts in joining the YMCA to host the Extra Special Prom - an event for special-needs students aged 13-25, their parents, and other volunteers.

During the award presentation, a highlight video of the Extra Special Prom was played. The footage demonstrated the utter joy emanating from the young adults who attended the prom, which was a milestone they might otherwise miss out on if not for the Elks partnership with the Y.

Summit Elks Exalted Ruler Fred Honold and fellow members then continued to detail the synergies between the two organizations in their commitment to serving the community and to enriching the lives of youth with special needs.

The Summit Area YMCA serves more than 15,000 individuals with their free and fee-based

programs and services in an area spanning the New Jersey communities of Berkeley Heights, Gillette, Millburn, New Providence, Short Hills, Springfield, Stirling and Summit.

The Summit Elks and Elks Lodges throughout NJ and the United States work with compassion and dedication to provide programs and services

for special-needs children and adults. Local events such as the Extra Special Prom, scholarships, sports programs, and NJ Elks Camp Moore are made possible through donations, fundraising events, and grants from the Elks National Foundation. Please visit Elks.org for more information about the Elks and how to join.



(above) Summit Elks Exalted Ruler Fred Honold receives the YMCA Community Partnership Award from Summit Area YMCA President & CEO Paul Kieltyka.

Courtesy photo

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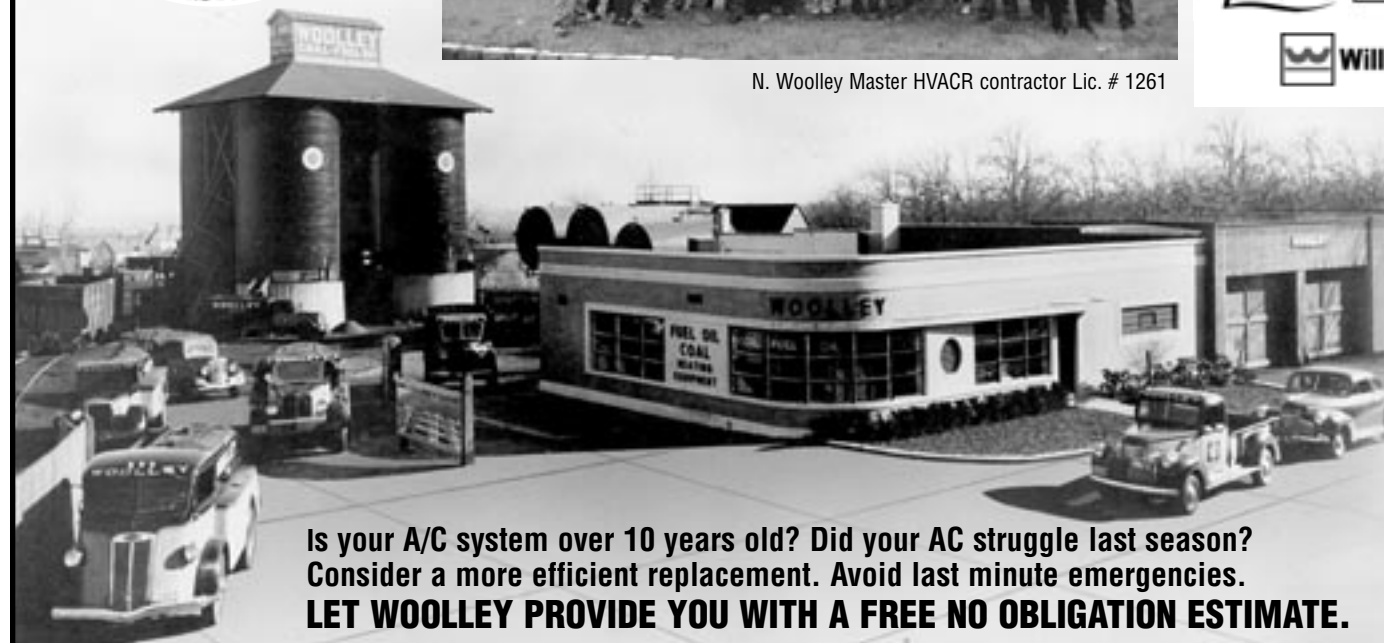
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We are reaching out to let the public know that May was National Speech-Language-Hearing Month. As leaders in the field, we thought it would be a great time to share some very important facts about hearing loss with you.

Today, infant hearing loss impacts between one and three of every 1,000 children born in the United States, and 90% of children with hearing loss are born to hearing parents. The universal newborn hearing screening can identify hearing loss in infants soon after birth. For babies identified with hearing loss, early intervention, like the services provided at Summit Speech School, has a beneficial effect. Infants may not speak – but they do listen and learn. With early detection, appropriate hearing technology and education at Listening and Spoken Language schools like Summit Speech School, children who are deaf or hard of hearing can have the same opportunities as their hearing peers.

Summit Speech School serves more than 365 children ages birth through high school in three educational programs: Early Intervention (birth – 3 years of age), Preschool Program (three – five years of age), Itinerant Mainstream Support Program (preschool – high school in 67 NJ Public Schools). In addition, the school's state-of-the-art Audiology Center staffed with SSS's highly experienced audiologist, is a warm and child-

friendly environment conducive to acquiring accurate results for young patients. Summit Speech School provides parent support and educational sessions for families to share experiences and seek the guidance of our highly trained staff.

As part of National Speech-Language-Hearing Month, our staff shares some of the following warning signs to watch for in young children:

Does not smile or interact with others (birth and older); Does not babble (4 - 6 months); Makes only a few sounds or gestures, like reaching (7 - 9 months); Does not understand what others say (10 months – 2 years); Says only a few words (19 months – 2 years); or Does not put words together to make sentences (19 months – 3 years).

If you suspect your child may have hearing loss, we recommend contacting your pediatrician or reach out to us for appropriate referrals for testing. We invite you and members of the community to visit and learn more about Summit Speech School, so please feel free to contact me at rdorso@summitspeech.org or 908-508-0011.

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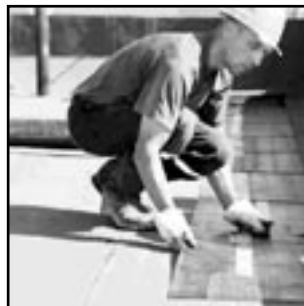
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The Church of the Little Flower Bereavement Support Group will be held on Mondays beginning June 17, 2024, 10- 11:30 a.m. for 8 weeks. This is a free and open to the public. Meetings are held in the Bernauer Parish Center Upper-Level Multi-Purpose Room, 290 Plainfield Avenue, Berkeley Heights, NJ. For more information, or to register (required), contact Dan Grossano at 908-464-1585 or email [pastoral110.LF@gmail.com](mailto:pastoral110.LF@gmail.com).



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## PASSAIC COUNTY CASA EXPANDS TO UNION

Submitted by Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan

Passaic County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), a leading child advocacy organization focused on protecting the best interests of abused and neglected youth, has announced the expansion of its service footprint to include Union County. With this expansion, critical volunteer advocacy for child victims removed from home and living under the jurisdiction of the family court will be made available to even more of New Jersey's most vulnerable children. This expansion allows for greater community impact, efficiency in operations, and greater long-term sustainability.

CASA recruits, screens, trains, and supervises community volunteers to advocate for local abused, neglected, and abandoned youth from birth to age 21 involved in the child welfare system through no fault of their own.

Executive Director Erica Fischer-Kaslander, who continues to lead the expanded advocacy organization, said, "There's no doubt this expansion will reap even greater rewards for Union County's vulnerable youth. The synergy created from two experienced programs allows far greater community impact and enhances its agility to withstand today's shifting landscape as a strengthened, multi-county program." Acknowledging the nearly two-decade impact of the previous Union County CASA organization, Fischer-Kaslander adds, "The dedicated advocates in Union County remain focused on fulfilling CASA's mission: quality advocacy, continuity of presence, and increased access to services for local vulnerable youth-victims."

Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan, Content Director for CASA of Passaic and Union Counties, added, "In my 11 years working with CASA in Union County, I have seen the organization pivot to meet unforeseen needs, adapt to changing trends, and persevere through recent challenges faced by all nonprofits, including a global health pandemic. Indeed, passion for and commitment to every child drives us, and this new chapter is simply an opportunity to enjoy greater efficiency, resource allocation, and space for innovation.



Ultimately, the expansion of Passaic County CASA to include Union County breeds a strengthened organization that bolsters CASA's impact throughout the county. For our local youth, that's what matters."

Considered extra "eyes and ears" for judges hearing abuse and neglect cases, CASA volunteers are assigned to a youth or sibling set by court order, granting access to all parties in the youth's life. Advocates use unbiased observations to make fact-based recommendations to judges deciding the future of each youth. Often, CASA volunteers are the only long-term, caring, and informed adult in the corner of a youth awaiting a safe, stable, and permanent placement.

Volunteer advocates need no prior experience in child welfare. All prospective volunteers complete a 36-hour training course, extensive application, and screening process in addition to background checks. Volunteers with the newly expanded CASA of Passaic and Union Counties program are supported by a 26-person professional staff with extensive experience in child welfare. For details on becoming an advocate or other ways to get involved, visit [casapassaicunion.org](http://casapassaicunion.org).


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# URGENT NEED FOR VOLUNTEER ADVOCATES FOR FOSTER YOUTH

Information sessions to be held in June in Clark and Elizabeth

Five-year-old Jennifer is diagnosed with autism and almost completely nonverbal. Due to excessive violence in the family home, a concerned neighbor called for help and, after investigation, Jennifer was placed in foster care. The two phrases Jennifer can say graphically depict violence witnessed at home and confirm trauma she's endured. Since entering care and being enrolled in school, it's evident Jennifer has also experienced educational neglect. At age three, she was entitled to an Individualized Education Plan from the Department of Education to provide such intervention services as in-home speech and behavioral therapies, both helpful for future enrollment in a half-day educational program. Unfortunately, Jennifer's parents neglected to utilize these services and she is now more than two years behind her peers.

Jennifer is one of more than 500 children

removed from home in Passaic and Union counties each year due to abuse and neglect. Currently, there is an urgent need for advocates to serve Union County children, as there are more than 250 children in the foster care system, with just 72 children being served. 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 while in foster care. That's where Child Focus comes in. Specifically, its Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program.

Said Executive Director Erica Fischer-Kaslander, "We are committed to recruiting, screening, and training advocates for every child in Union County who needs one, just as we've done in Passaic County. It is difficult to overstate the difference a CASA volunteer can make in the life of a child removed from home through no fault of their own, often due to abuse or neglect." She added, "Children with volunteer advocates are more likely to have needed services ordered on their behalf, spend less time in the foster system, and experience significantly better outcomes than those who go without. Becoming a CASA volunteer requires a significant time commitment and training, but volunteers often find the work as life-changing for themselves as it is for the children they help."

CASA volunteers are trained on the ins and outs of advocating for child-victims and fully supported by CASA staff. 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 placements are ever-changing. A CASA volunteer provides continuity during a time of chaos and unknowns.

The first step to training is to attend an information session. Choose from Thursday, June 6 at 5:30 p.m., and Thursday, June 27 at 5:30 p.m., at the Clark Public Library, 303 Westfield Avenue in Clark; Monday, June 10 at noon, at the Child Focus office at 1143 East Jersey Street, 2nd Floor, Elizabeth, NJ 07201; or Wednesday, June 5 at 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 12 at noon, or Monday, June 17 at 5:30 p.m. at the Wayne Child Focus office, 415 Hamburg Turnpike, Suite D2. Register now at [casapassaicunion.org/info-session](http://casapassaicunion.org/info-session).

### ABOUT CHILD FOCUS:

Child Focus prioritizes the needs and well-being of infants, children and teens impacted by, or at risk of, abuse or neglect by amplifying their voices and working toward lasting, permanent solutions that address their unique situations and provide support needed to thrive. This critical work is accomplished through three distinct but complementary programs: CASA of Passaic and Union Counties, NJ Safe Babies Court Team, and the Open Door Store. For more information about Child Focus, log on to [childfocusnj.org](http://childfocusnj.org).



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# NEW FOOD PANTRY AND CLOTHING BUILDINGS CELEBRATED

## 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).



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