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JOB/INTERNSHIP PORTAL FOR LOCAL EMPLOYERS & JOB SEEKERS

Greater Union Chamber of Commerce

In a special collaboration with the Township of Union and the Union Township Board of Education, the Greater Union Township Chamber of Commerce has unveiled a “Job/Internship Portal” designed to assist local employers in finding talent – and enabling job seekers from the surrounding communities to search and apply for jobs.

The portal is featured on the websites of all three sponsoring entities: unionchamber.com; uniontownship.com and twpunionschools.org.

Job postings are free to Chamber members and Union Center SID businesses. Businesses that are not members may also participate at a nominal charge.

“Since the days of the pandemic, our members have shared the difficulties they have encountered in recruiting and retaining qualified staff,” said Chamber CEO James Masterson. “This initiative helps to address that concern among our businesses, while also helping job seekers in our communities as well.”

To post jobs, employers may visit the Chamber website and click on the “Job Board” tab. From there, they may request a log in ID to begin the process. Employers looking for interns may also follow the same process.

Members of the community seeking jobs may click on the “Find a Job” link under the original tab.

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jobboard.unionchamber.com

For more information on how to participate in this initiative, contact Masterson at the Chamber Office: 908-688-2777, or email executivedirector@unionchamber.com.

JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL – JUNE 15TH

The Township of Union will sponsor a Juneteenth Festival on Saturday, June 15th, 2024, at Rabkin Park from 12 to 6 p.m., a day of community celebration, great music, food, art, and vendors.

Juneteenth (short for “June Nineteenth”) marks the day when federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas in 1865 to take control of the state and ensure that all enslaved people be freed. The troops’ arrival came a full two and a half years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Juneteenth honors the end to slavery in the United States and is considered the longest-running African American holiday.

In 1979, Texas became the first state to make Juneteenth an official holiday; several others followed suit over the years. In June 2021, Congress passed a resolution establishing Juneteenth as a national holiday; President Biden signed it into law on June 17, 2021.

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HOMESCHOOL CHEMISTRY CLUB

Cecilia Wisniewski's HomeSchool Chemistry Club in Union just completed another semester of fun and fascinating science.

Some of the activities covered were electrochemistry, making a voltaic pile (battery), REDOX reactions, egg drop, water bottle rockets, making ice cream, determining specific heat of various metals, and much more.

Cecilia stated "After my son graduated high school I returned to college and earned a degree

in Chemistry. I enjoy chemistry and I try to share that enthusiasm with my students. Hopefully they 'graduate' with a new and positive appreciation of chemistry."

My Chemistry Club is offered every semester to homeschool students ages 12 through high school and we meet at Cecilia's home in Union. Students interested in Chemistry Club can contact ctwiz@msn.com.

Courtesy photo



(above, l-r) Seated: Sebastian Vargas, Sarah Giorgio; Standing: Aslan Bonaventura, Ezra McFarlane, Sean Bladis and teacher 'Ms. W'.



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SALEM ROADHOUSE CAFÉ JUNE SHOW

The Salem Roadhouse Café presents the Stephen Fuller Quintet, Saturday, June 8, 2024. The doors open at 7:15 p.m., the show starts at 8 p.m. Admission is \$20 and includes show, snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and dessert. The venue is located in Bailey Hall, below Townley Presbyterian Church, 829 Salem Rd, Union, NJ. The Roadhouse operates as a non-profit that raises funds for several carefully chosen local charities.

Stephen Fuller's deep rich voice and soulful renditions have long made him a favorite with sophisticated audiences around the world, performing in Israel, Jamaica, Costa Rica and The US Virgin Islands. In addition to his overseas engagements, Fuller has performed in renowned New York City and New Jersey venues and has opened for both Stevie Wonder and Bill Withers while attending Colgate University.

Stephen will perform at the Roadhouse with his quintet, consisting of Brandon McCune – Piano; Alex Gressel – Bass; Gordon Lane – Drums and Oloye Karade - Percussion. Music featured will cross styles: from American Songbook, to Jazz, R&B, Bossa Nova, Calypso and more.

As always, the Salem Roadhouse Café is live, intimate, up front, and personal. All ages are welcome.

ABOUT SALEM ROADHOUSE CAFÉ

It's not "church music." It's music music. Folks who've come to the Salem Roadhouse Café know that it's a clean, safe place for people who enjoy listening to live music — in a world otherwise filled with clubs and bars. The Roadhouse has always offered its stage to local and independent mainstream musicians. Jazz, rock, folk, and other groups have performed. What's the common thread? They're all great musicians playing the kind of music people like to hear. There's no message, just music.

The Roadhouse started in 2008 by members of Townley Presbyterian Church with a grant from the Presbytery of Elizabeth. Hey — that's why we're located where we are, 829 Salem Rd, Union, NJ. The Roadhouse operates as a non-profit that raises funds for several carefully chosen local charities. That's its social mission.

But the many musicians who've played the Salem Roadhouse Café see it as a solid performance venue. They love it because of its special intimacy and great audiences. They say people here "really listen." Ask any of the musicians you meet here — they love to play the Roadhouse, and they want to come back often.

The Salem Roadhouse Café has raised funds for many carefully chosen charities. They include: The Presbytery of Elizabeth E-port Center, Center For Hope Hospice, Community Food Bank, Monarch Housing, Angel Paws Animal Rescue, National MS Society, Haiti Disaster Relief, Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief, The Union County YWCA Domestic Violence Program, Making It Possible To End Homelessness, Camp Johnsonburg, The Music Institute, and others. Many thousands of dollars have been raised for these deserving charities.

SALEM ROADHOUSE CAFÉ
PRESENTS
STEPHEN FULLER
SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 8:00 PM
DOORS OPEN AT 7:30 PM ADMISSION: \$20.00 STUDENTS \$15.00
Admission includes snacks, beverages, tea, coffee & desserts



2024 Show proceeds will benefit
GATEWAY YMCA Childrens Programs

All shows are featured on UNION TV34's "ROADHOUSE UNPLUGGED" nightly music series
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FIND YOUR JOY, FIND YOUR Y THIS SUMMER

The Gateway Family YMCA is registering now for select YMCA summer programs including summer day camp and registration begins June 10 for swimming lessons, youth sports, enrichment and group exercise. Registration is available at The Gateway Family YMCA branches in Elizabeth, Rahway and Union and online at tgfymca.org.

In celebration of the kick-off to summer, The Gateway Family YMCA is sharing a list of five activities for families to encourage their kids to try. The goal is to have them try something new by promoting a variety of opportunities to get involved in active play - hopefully, this will inspire a lifetime love of physical and mental activity! Share these activities with your children and inspire them to “find their fun” by discovering an activity that they love.

FIND YOUR SWIMMING SKILLS WITH Y LESSONS

Each year The Gateway Family YMCA teaches over 1,000 children to swim. This helps them find their CONFIDENCE, teaches a lifelong skill, and introduces them to safety around water. Swimming lessons and Safety Around Water programs are available for

parent/child, preschool, youth, teen, and adult. Taught by certified swimming instructors in a small-group setting, the YMCA focuses on a skill-based curriculum with a basis of safety skills training. Private lessons are also available to meet the needs of individuals or families.

FIND YOUR ADVENTURE WITH Y SUMMER CAMP

Summer is a time for kids to explore new things and expand the limits of their imagination. At The Gateway Family YMCA, every day is a new adventure! Whether experiencing the wonder of new activities or having a blast with new friends at summer day camp, many children and teens find their ADVENTURE with the Y. Summer camp is available for preschool and youth, with specialty opportunities like a fun sports camp.

FIND YOUR PASSION WITH Y SPORTS

Youth sports are just the start of something bigger— aside from teaching fundamental skills, they also teach the value of teamwork, help fuel determination, and build character. At The Gateway Family YMCA, a variety of sports programs help keep children active while igniting their PASSION for something greater. Visit the Y to learn more about Youth Sports, Swim Team and Esports this summer.

FIND YOUR VOICE WITH Y TEEN PROGRAMS

The YMCA believes young people have the power to change the world. Teen programs are designed to help young people develop the skills and confidence they need to lead positive change in the local community and beyond. Visit the Y to learn more about the 7th Grade Initiative and Leaders Club, Leap and Learn, Boys and Young Men of Color Strategy, and more.

FIND YOUR CURIOSITY WITH STEAM AND CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

YMCA programs include activities that help inspire wonder about the world around us. Guiding children to find their CURIOSITY is key to helping them reach their full potential. Learn more about STEAM, arts, enrichment, and Child Care programs at the Y.

“The summer is a great time to try something



(above) The Gateway Family YMCA Encourages a Healthy Summer. At The Gateway Family YMCA, every day is a new adventure!

new, and we are here to support our families throughout the summer months,” stated Melynda A. Disla, President/CEO, The Gateway Family YMCA. “We know that families are busier than ever and providing activities for all ages – either together or separate is something that makes a YMCA unique. From social opportunities and events to structured enrichment programs and child care, the Y is here to support every family in the community.”

The Gateway Family YMCA Summer Program Session will be held June 23 through August 29, with programs available in Elizabeth, Rahway and Union, NJ. Registration is available at YMCA branches and online at tgfymca.org

The Gateway Family YMCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, health and community service organization of caring staff and volunteers dedicated to strengthening community through Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility. The Gateway Family YMCA impacts the community by providing quality services for all. The Y doesn’t just strengthen bodies – it strengthens people, families and communities.

For more information about The Gateway Family YMCA, visit tgfymca.org or contact the Elizabeth Branch 908-355-9622, Five Points Branch 908-688-9622, Rahway Branch 732-388-0057 or the Wellness Center and WISE Center Branch at 908-349-9622.

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THE GATEWAY FAMILY YMCA tgfymca.org

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PASSAIC COUNTY CASA EXPANDS TO UNION COUNTY

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. As a combined force, we will build on that good work. I remain grateful to all professionals involved in these cases for their support – judges, attorneys, caseworkers, and more – and look forward to the collaboration required for us all to do our best for the children depending on us."

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. For details on becoming an advocate or other ways to get involved, visit casapassaicunion.org.

24TH ANNUAL FEAST OF ST. ANTHONY

Church of the Assumption, Roselle Park, NJ
- June 6-9, 2024

The Church of the Assumption's annual St. Anthony Italian Feast returns for its 24th year! The Feast will feature rides, games, live entertainment, homemade cooking, food vendors, a beer and wine garden, and a SUPER 50/50 drawn Sunday night at 9 p.m.

The Feast, located on the Church grounds at 113 Coolidge Place, Roselle Park, NJ, begins on Thursday, June 6 and runs through Sunday, June 9.

Feast hours: Thu 6-10 p.m., Fri 6-10 p.m., Sat 5-10 p.m. and Sun 5-10 p.m.

On Sat, June 8, there will be a 4 p.m. mass honoring St. Anthony, followed by a procession through Roselle Park beginning at 4:45 p.m.

Thursday, June 6, Pay-One-Price unlimited ride wristbands will be sold at the Feast for \$30.

Visit the Church of the Assumption website at assumptionrp.com for more information and to

Musical entertainment:

Thu, June 6: Valencia School of Music/
Paper Statues, 8 to 10 p.m.

Fri, June 7: 2/5ths Crazy, 7 to 10 p.m.

Sa, June 8: Diamonds in Jupiter, 7 to 10 p.m.

Sun, June 9: DJ playing traditional Italian music from 5:30 -7 p.m.

Other performances at the Feast:

Thu, June 6: 6 p.m. – Roselle Park H.S. Band, Fusion Dance, Planet Dance

Sat, June 8: 5:30 p.m. – Susie Karlik Dance Sensation, Akido Schools of NJ

Sun, June 9: 5 p.m. – Sabre Guild, 730, Maplewood Glee Club



24th Annual 2024 Feast of St. Anthony

Church of the Assumption • 113 Coolidge Place • Roselle Park, NJ

Thursday, June 6 6:00pm–10:00pm **Friday, June 7** 6:00pm–10:00pm **Saturday, June 8** 5:00pm*–10:00pm **Sunday, June 9** 5:00pm–10:00pm

*Mass 4:00pm Saturday, June 8 followed by St. Anthony's Procession

\$30 Pay-One-Price Ride Wristband Night on Thursday, June 6

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Valencia School of Music

Paper Statues

Thursday, June 6
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2/5ths Crazy

Friday, June 7
7:00pm–10:00pm



Diamonds in Jupiter

Saturday, June 8
7:00pm–10:00pm

A special thank you to the Borough of Roselle Park for supporting our Feast!

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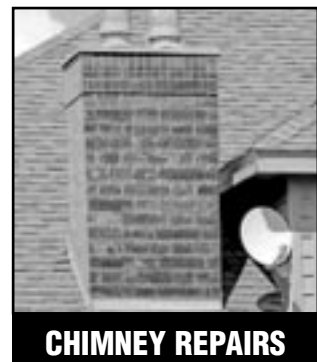
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GREENWOOD GARDENS PRESENTS MUSIC AND DANCE IN THE GARDEN

Experience Performing Arts in a Historic Garden Setting – Sponsored by Stone Mountain Properties

Greenwood Gardens Music and Dance in the Garden Series program is in full swing, with the first concert by the AAPI Jazz Collective selling out for Memorial Day Weekend. Composed of three outdoor concerts in total, featuring jazz and classical music, as well as a dance performance in a stunning historic garden setting, the series is sponsored by Stone Mountain Properties for the third season in a row.

“We are extremely delighted to bring live music – and now dance – to Greenwood Gardens, thanks to the generous support of returning sponsor Stone Mountain Properties, the Short Hills-based property management company, and the Birney family,” said Abby O’Neill, Executive Director.

“Sponsoring Music and Dance in the Garden at Greenwood is very meaningful to our company and to our family, as the series is dedicated to my late mother, Leeshan Birney, who founded Stone Mountain Properties in 1981, and my late sister, Mayling Birney, who was a professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science. They both loved and appreciated nature and the arts, so this is a way to appropriately

honor them,” said Ceyan Birney, who now leads Stone Mountain Properties here in Short Hills, New Jersey.

On July 19, the Vanessa Perea Quintet takes the stage with a lead singer whose style embodies the tradition of the jazz masters. For the final concert on September 20, lovers of classical music will be swept away by Lyrica Chamber Music’s Twelfth Night Ensemble’s program of baroque music.

The dance performance featuring Lori Bellilove & The Isadora Duncan Dance Company on September 6 will enthrall attendees on the Main Lawn with a performance that pays homage to the troupe’s free spirit namesake who is credited with inventing Modern Dance.

For all performances, the gates will open at 5:30 p.m., when visitors are invited to stroll through the garden before the concert begins at 6:30 p.m. Complimentary wine and cheese will be served starting at 6:00 p.m. on the West Terrace.

Tickets to all three events must be purchased in advance and are available at greenwoodgardens.org.

ABOUT GREENWOOD GARDENS

Greenwood Gardens is a non-profit 28-acre public garden and historic site located at 274 Old Short Hills Road in Short Hills, New Jersey. A former private estate owned by the Day and Blanchard families, today Greenwood is a peaceful haven graced by terraced gardens, stately fountains, woodlands, grottoes, Arts and Crafts follies, and winding paths. To accomplish its mission of connecting people with nature in a historic garden oasis, Greenwood offers the visiting public self-guided tours and programs at the nexus of nature, beauty, and history. Greenwood Gardens is supported by gifts, membership, and volunteers. For further information, visit www.greenwoodgardens.org or call 973-258-4026. Please follow us on Facebook @GreenwoodShortHills and Instagram @greenwoodgardensnj.

ABOUT STONE MOUNTAIN PROPERTIES

Stone Mountain Properties, based in Short Hills, New Jersey, owns Short Hills Terrace apartments and the Short Hills Executive Center offices on Morris Turnpike near Kings Supermarkets.

HANNAH CALDWELL DAY – JUNE 8

The Union Township Historical Society invites you to honor Hannah's heroism during the 1780 Battle of Connecticut Farms, when she lost her life and became a martyr for the cause of the American Revolution. Come to the Caldwell Parsonage, 909 Caldwell Avenue, Union, on Saturday, June 8, between 2 and 5 p.m. Admission is free! For more information, call 908-591-4377.

ACTIVITIES WILL INCLUDE:

Chatting with Hannah's husband, the "Fighting Parson," Rev. James Caldwell (played by Meridoc "Doc" Burkhardt thru a Union County HEART grant); sampling old-fashioned sugar cookies and lemonade; butter-making; playing Native American and colonial games; working a wringer washing machine; shopping for souvenirs; making tricorn hats and colonial bonnets; collecting historic trading cards; getting Union County passports stamped.



(above) A Hannah Caldwell trading card

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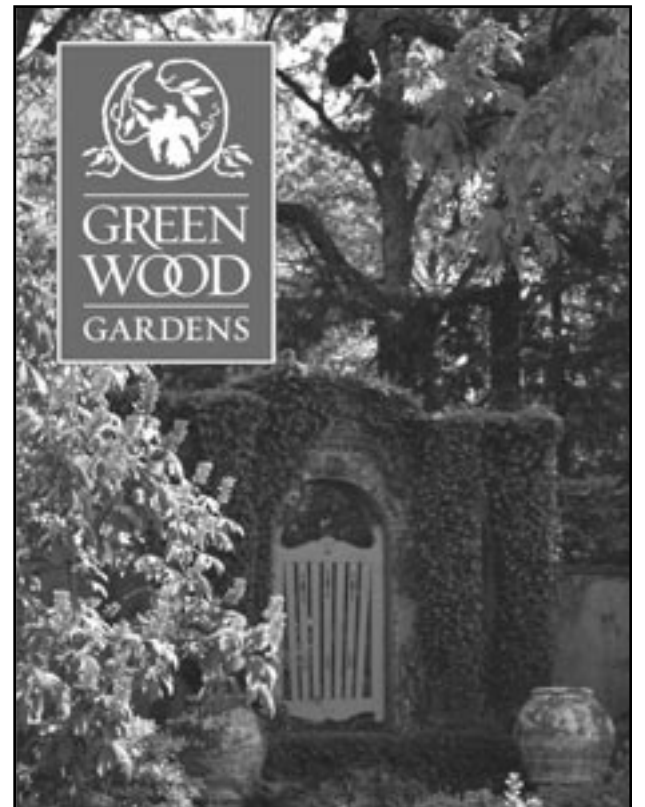
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WOOLLEY HOME SOLUTIONS DAY CELEBRATION

Two towns came together to celebrate a milestone for Maplewood's oldest existing business, which has been operating continuously for 100 years, with a ribbon cutting. Mayor Nancy Adams celebrated the occasion by designating April 26th, 2024, as Woolley Home Solutions Day in the Township of Maplewood in recognition of its 100th Anniversary with a proclamation. In addition, Union Mayor Manuel Figueiredo congratulated Woolley Home with a 100th-anniversary to honor the occasion with a

testimonial resolution. On hand were Maplewood Township Committee person Victor Deluca and Union Township Committeewoman Patricia Guerra-Frazier.

On the grounds to mark the occasion were a 1909 Model T Ford and a 1924 Autocar Fuel Delivery Truck. Roman Gourmet, another family-owned and operated Maplewood restaurant for over 50 years, provided food for the celebrants. Edo's Bakery, which is moving its bakery back to the area, provided the decadent

100th Anniversary cake. The front lawn was filled to capacity with employees, neighbors, customers, and distinguished guests. All in attendance were awarded 100th-anniversary swag, and the big favorite was the Woolley Bucket Hats that helped shade the public from the beautiful sunshine.

The journey began a hundred years ago, fueled by the vision and determination of Nephi Woolley, brothers Norman W. Woolley, and Herb Woolley in 1924. They found a spacious site on Burnett Avenue, where Woolley Coal opened its doors, providing coal and ice to local homeowners. Over the years, Woolley has evolved to be a total home solutions provider that provides Bioheat®, HVAC, and home services.

Two generations of Woolleys were on hand to mark the occasion: current president Norman E. Woolley and third-generation Norman W. Woolley Jr., who has been continually working at the company for 60 years. The generations of Woolleys have created a legacy that goes beyond today. Norman E. Woolley's vision extends beyond the present and looks forward to thriving in the ever-evolving energy and HVAC landscape.

This milestone signifies a century of growth and accomplishments. It serves as a time to thank the generations of employees and, most importantly, the cherished and loyal customers, some of whom have been with the company for over 60 years!



(above) April 26th, 2024, was designated as Woolley Home Solutions Day in the Township of Maplewood in recognition of its 100th Anniversary. In addition, Union Mayor Manuel Figueiredo congratulated Woolley with a testimonial resolution.

Courtesy photo

ARE YOU READY TO BEAT THE HEAT? DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S TOO HOT.

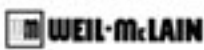
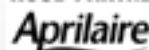
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JUNE EVENTS AT THE UNION PUBLIC LIBRARY

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The 1950's Experience with Kevin Grace (Vauxhall Branch)

Mon. 6/3 @ 6:00 pm

With his amazing spot-on vocals, professional musical skills, and visual presentation highly accurate to the era, Kevin is sure to transport you right back to that golden era of Doo-Wop harmonies and Rock and Roll hits!

Adult SewIt! Workshop: Luxury Eye Blanket (Vauxhall Branch)

Wed. 6/5 @ 5:30 pm

Please join us as Ms. Ellen Brown from the Adult SewIt! Workshop demonstrates to attendees how to make a luxury eye blanket.

Friends of the Library (Main Library)

Thurs. 6/6 @ 6:00 pm

Join the Friends of the Library at their monthly meeting. New members are always welcome.

Come to support your library.

Vauxhall Branch Juneteenth Celebration! (Vauxhall Branch)

Sat. 6/8 starting @ 12:00 pm

At 12pm, Storyteller Ms. Michelle Washington Wilson will discuss her family's journey to South Jersey in the Foods and Folk of the Great Migration. Later on, singer Ms. Rhonda Denet will showcase a variety of songs from the 50's to the 70's that acknowledged the past, supported the quest for change and heralded the future in Music of Change for Juneteenth. Food and refreshments will be provided.

Practice Your English (Vauxhall Branch)

Mon. 6/10 @ 12:00 pm &

Thurs. 6/27 @ 12:00 pm

Do you know anyone who would like to practice their English skills? Now's their chance with us. Join in at a drop-in group that's more like a party than a formal class.

Practice Your English (Main Library)

Mon. 6/10 @ 6:00 pm &

Thurs. 6/27 @ 6:00 pm

Do you know anyone who would like to practice their English skills? Now's their chance with us. Join in at a drop-in group that's more like a party than a formal class.

Boogie Woogie Adult Dance Fitness (Vauxhall Branch)

Mon. 6/10 @ 6:00 pm

Get your exercise in with a fun cardio workout featuring hip-hop inspired dance moves, presented by Tiffany Taylor!

Bike Repair Cafe presented by Wheelies (Main Library)

Tues. 6/11 @ 5:00 pm

Join us with Wheelies and learn to repair and maintain your own bicycle. It's very important to keep your bicycle in the best shape so that you remain safe while riding it throughout the summer! No need to bring your bicycle, a demo will be provided.

Build Up Your Balance (Main Library)

Wed. 6/12 @ 10:30 am

Through gentle exercises and stepping strategies, learn to keep your body balanced in different situations.

Adult Crochet for Beginners (Vauxhall Branch)

Wed. 6/12 @ 6:00 pm

Through gentle exercises and stepping strategies, learn to keep your body balanced in different situations.

Chair Yoga (Main Library)

Thurs. 6/13 @ 10:00 am

Take a deep breath with friends and stretch! For beginners to professionals. Presented by the Gateway Family YMCA.

Juneteenth Celebration (Rabkin Park)

Sat. 6/15 @ 12:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Join the library at the townwide celebration of Juneteenth at Rabkin Park! Enjoy an entire day of community celebration, music, food, art, and vendors.

Monday Night Music Trivia: 90s Music (Vauxhall Branch)

Mon. 6/17 @ 6:00 pm

Do you still rock out to Queen? or dance to the Bee Gees? Polish off your disco boots and test your music trivia for fun and prizes.

Off the Shelf Book Club (Main Library)

Thurs. 6/20 @ 6:30 pm

This month, we are reading Such Kindness by Andre Dubus III. Pick up your copy at the Main Library. Great way to make new friends!

Juneteenth Closure (Both Locations)

Fri. 6/21

In observance of Juneteenth, the Union Public Library's Main Location & Vauxhall Branch will be closed on Friday, June 21st, 2024.

Walk-in Wednesdays: One-on-One Library Technology Assistance (Vauxhall Branch)

Weds. 6/5, 6/12, 6/19, 6/26 @ 12:30 - 2:00 pm

Get help with library resources, including downloading e-books from Libby and Hoopla, using the library catalog and resources, using mobile print, and using the photocopier and scanner. Reservations are not required.

Meditation (Virtual on Zoom)

Thurs. 6/6, 6/13, 6/20, 6/27 @ 11:30 am

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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 for 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.

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ADVOCATES FOR FOSTER YOUTH NEEDED

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.

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.

For more information about Child Focus, log on to childfocusnj.org.



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