

Westfield MONTHLY NJ

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\$58K IN SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED BY COLLEGE WOMAN'S CLUB

The College Woman's Club of Westfield awarded \$58,000 in scholarships at its annual meeting on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at Echo Lake Country Club. The awards were presented to eight young women from Westfield to help them pursue their higher education. The recipients were selected based on academic achievement, leadership, and financial need.

Altai Abrams was awarded a \$7,000 College Woman's Club Scholarship. She will attend SUNY Binghamton and intends to major in English and Environmental Science.

Caitlin Cabrales received a \$7,000 College Woman's Club. She plans to major in business as Jacksonville University.

Erin Doherty received a \$5,000 College Woman's Club Scholarship. She will attend Salisbury University where she plans to major in Exercise Science.

Hannah Gerstel received a \$5,000 Past Presidents' Scholarship and \$5,000 College Woman's Club Scholarship. She plans to major in history at SUNY Binghamton.

Shannon Gibbs received a \$5,000 College Woman's Club Scholarship. She will attend SUNY Brockport where she plans to major in physical education.

Caroline Morrelli received a \$6,000 College Woman's Club Scholarship. She will attend George Washington University to major in history and political science.

Chloe Wiedman received an \$8,000 College Woman's Club Scholarship. She will attend Franklin & Marshall College where she will major in business.

Skyler Schaible, a 2023 scholarship recipient, was awarded an additional \$3,000 Grant in Memory of Katharine Jaruzelski and a \$7,000 College Woman's Club Scholarship to continue her education at Coastal Carolina University where she plans to pursue nursing.



(above, l-r) The 2024 CWC Scholarship recipients Caroline Morrelli, Shannon Gibbs, Erin Doherty, Caitlin Cabrales, Chloe Wiedman, Altai Abrams, Hannah Gerstel and Skyler Schaible.

Courtesy photo

"This year's graduates began high school during the isolation of COVID and finished with a faulty FAFSA roll-out that seriously hampered their quest for college funding," said CWC Scholarship Chair Jennifer Jaruzelski. "Through all these challenges, they have emerged with a remarkable sense of resilience, optimism, and teamwork. We wish them continued success as they pursue their college and career goals."

Scholarship applications are available through local high school guidance departments in February of each year and are evaluated by a committee of CWC members each spring. Funds for scholarships come from membership dues, community sponsorships, fundraisers, and legacy bequests from members.

Founded in 1917, the College Woman's Club is an intergenerational organization devoted to educational opportunities and lifelong learning for women. In addition to awarding scholarships, the club hosts social and cultural events, including college admissions seminars, book clubs, and museum trips. For information on scholarships or membership, please visit cwclubwestfield.org. or contact cwc.westfield@gmail.com.

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HONORING THE FROMTLINGS

Town of Westfield

During a council meeting held in June, Mayor Shelley Brindle issued a proclamation honoring residents Bob and Annie Fromtling for their three decades of leadership to Boy Scout Troop 73. "During this time, they have devoted countless hours guiding and mentoring young Scouts, and embodying the principles of Boy Scouts of

America. They have tirelessly led numerous camping trips, service projects, troop meetings, and volunteer events – well after their boys graduated 20 years ago. As they retire from their leadership roles, their legacy of service, kindness, and perseverance will continue to influence the Scouts and leaders here in Westfield for years to come."



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(above) Jerry & Margaret Boyle

WESTFIELD VETERANS BANNER PROGRAM

Town of Westfield

To commemorate Memorial Day, the Westfield Veterans Banner program is now displaying the next round of banners to recognize our veterans and active duty military personnel. The 25 new banners recognize honorees from WWI to present day and represent all branches of service.

For the first time, the banners feature a married couple! Staff Sergeant Jerry Boyle landed in Normandy in June 1944 and led men into France, where he was wounded. He was flown back to England and sent to the 144th General Hospital for surgery and treatment, where he met Margaret Mary McCarthy, a Second Lieutenant in the Army Nursing Corps. They were married in 1946 and moved to Westfield, where they remained and raised their family. You can see both of their banners, as well as those of all honorees, on display through Veterans Day.

Applications for next year's 50 banners can be submitted through March by contacting WestfieldVeteransFund@gmail.com or on the Town website. Many thanks to the Westfield Veterans Fund, a locally established 501(c)(3) organization that partners with the Town, for their commitment to this program.



GOLD STAR STREETS

Memorial Day, it's a good opportunity to remind the community about the origin and meaning of our Gold Star Streets, named for 18 Westfield residents, known as the Supreme Honor Men, who gave their lives during the First World War. More than 100 years later, most Westfield residents know these heroes' names from the street signs marked with a gold star in their honor.

Find out more about each man's service and the naming of Westfield's Gold Star Streets at westfieldnj.gov/goldstarstreets.

- Archbold Place, named after Private Nelson S. Archbold, Jr.
- Brown Avenue, named after Private George E. Brown
- Cacciola Place, named after Private Domenico Cacciola
- Cauefield Place, named after Private Bernard Cauefield
- Coleman Place, named after Second Lieutenant Coleman T. Clark
- Cowperthwaite Place, named after Private Harold Frederick Cowperthwaite
- Dunham Avenue, named after Private Ernest F. Dunham
- Hanford Place, named after Sergeant Robert C. Hanford
- Hort Street, named after Lieutenant Nathaniel Hort
- Hyslip Avenue, named after Private Edward Hyslip
- Palsted Avenue, named after Corporal Axel Thomas Palsted
- Raymond Street, named after Private John Raymond Clark
- Reese Place, named after Private Walter Dilts Reese
- Salter Place, named after Salter Storrs Clark, Jr.
- Saunders Avenue, named after Lieutenant Stuart Benton Saunders
- Stevens Avenue, named after Sergeant Henry Carrington Stevens
- Tice Place, named after Corporal Raymond Smith Tice
- Wallberg Avenue, named after Private Martin Wallberg

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(above) The Westfield Community Concert Band presents its annual Summer Concert Series in Mindowaskin Park, Westfield, with performances on July 4, and 11 at 7:30 p.m.

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES CONTINUES IN JULY

Every Thursday through July 11, 7:30 p.m., Mindowaskin Park.

The Westfield Community Concert Band, under the direction of Dr. Thomas Connors, continues its 112th season with its annual Summer Concert Series in Mindowaskin Park, East Broad Street, Westfield. The band will be performing Thursday evening concerts on July 4 and 11. All concerts begin at 7:30 p.m. and are free to the public.

Highlighting this season's summer concerts will be a special Independence Day program taking place on July 4th featuring an appearance by the Westfield Town Crier and vocalist Kerry Stubbs. The concert series will also include performances of selections from popular Broadway musicals, including The Lion King, Fiddler on the Roof, Miss Saigon, South Pacific and Les Miserables. Each of the band's summer concerts will include popular marches, classical works and many patriotic compositions, including works by Cole Porter, George Gershwin and Leonard Bernstein.

The band welcomed many new musicians this season, including Doug Maurer on alto saxophone, John Cavaliere on trumpet, Alyssa Aiello on trumpet, Joe Reo on trumpet, Steve Wasco on Euphonium and Natalie Strauss on flute. The band also celebrates the 20th anniversary season for the band's conductor and music director, Dr. Thomas N. Connors. Dr. Connors has been a member of the music faculty

at Kean University since 2000, where he teaches conducting and instrumental methods courses for music education majors, directs the University Wind Ensemble and Chamber Winds and, since 2013, has served as Director of the Music Conservatory at Kean University.

The band rehearses each Wednesday evening from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Community Room in the Westfield Municipal Building, 425 East Broad Street. The band's membership includes musicians from ages 18 to 80, including many active and retired music educators. Under the baton of conductor Dr. Thomas Connors, the band continues to perform a wide variety of concert band literature, including many contemporary compositions. Experienced area musicians who are interested in a position with the band should contact band manager Barry Rosenberg at 908-337-9073 or info@westfieldcommunityband.com.

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

Chairs and blankets are recommended. In the event of rain, the concerts will take place in the Westfield Community Room, located in the Westfield Municipal Building.

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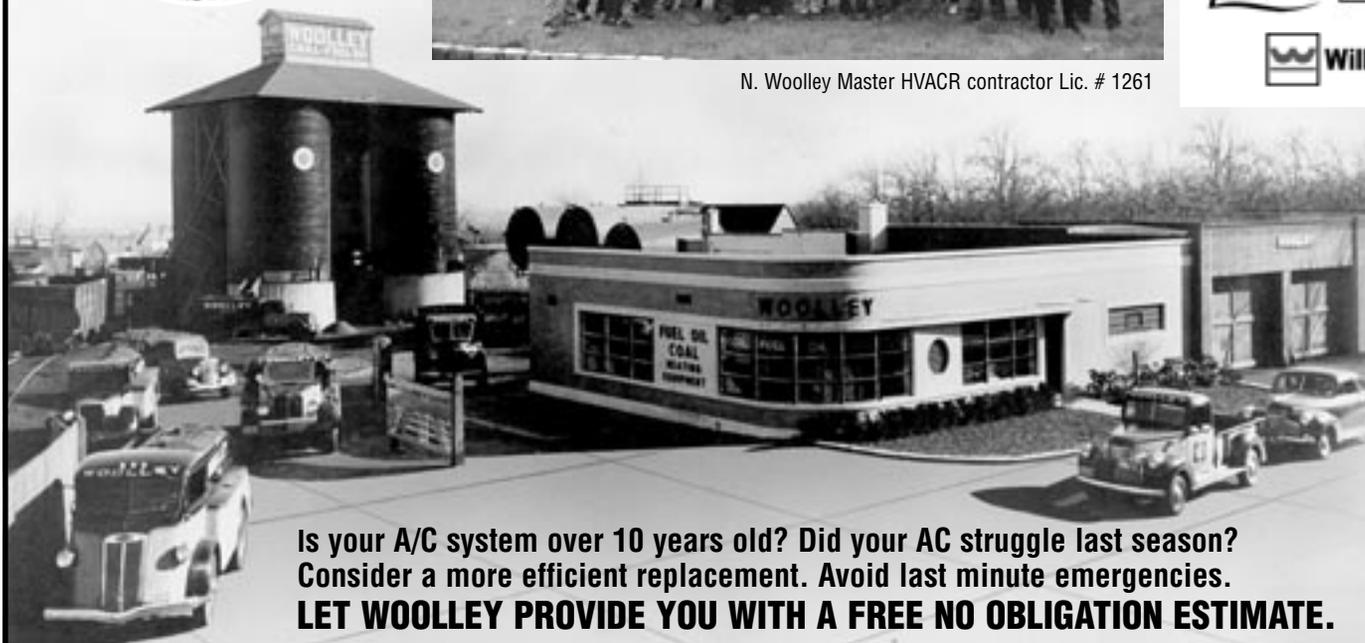
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A RECORD \$75,400 IN SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS AWARDED

The College Men's Club of Westfield

The College Men's Club of Westfield (CMC) has awarded a record \$75,400 in four-year scholarships and one-time standardized test preparation grants to five young men from Westfield High School to help them pursue their college education. David Germond, CMC President, explained that "the recipients were selected based on a rigorous assessment of their academic achievement, community involvement, career direction, and financial need."

Ryan Clark, CMC Scholarship Chair, noted that "this was once again an extremely competitive year for the CMC scholarship program with a large group of highly qualified applicants." The three scholarship awardees from the WHS class of 2024 include:

Adam Goddard was awarded a four-year, \$24,000 College Men's Club of Westfield Scholarship. Adam plans to study Film Production at Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts. He hopes to pursue a career in film and TV production.

Benedict Nematadzira was awarded a four-year, \$24,000 College Men's Club of Westfield Scholarship. Benedict will attend Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He plans to major in Computer Science, laying the foundation for a career in data analytics for public health.

Ethan Witten was awarded a four-year, \$24,000 College Men's Club of Westfield Scholarship. Ethan will attend Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts this Fall. He plans to study Entrepreneurship, with a long-term goal of founding his own business.

In addition to the four-year scholarships, earlier this Spring the CMC awarded two WHS juniors one-time grants each valued at \$1,700 to fund one-on-one standardized test preparation courses conducted by CollegeWise.

The College Men's Club of Westfield was founded in 1922 and over the past century has helped hundreds of Westfield young men by providing college tuition assistance and funding

standardized test preparatory courses. Since its founding, the CMC has raised and distributed over \$1.4 million in higher education assistance to young men of the Westfield community to attend over 130 institutions of higher learning.

Scholarship applications are available online at the CMC website and through the WHS guidance department in February of each year. Applications are evaluated by a committee of CMC Trustees each Spring. Funds for scholarships are generated through fund raising events, donations, membership dues, endowment investment income, and legacy bequests.

To learn more about the College Men's Club of Westfield, please visit cmcwestfield.org.



(above) Adam Goddard



(above) Benedict Nematadzira



(above) Ethan Witten

Courtesy photos

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JUNE GARDEN OF THE MONTH

Submitted by Rosemary Shire

The Garden Club of Westfield has designated the lovely cottage garden of Rosemary and Bob Shire at 17 Doris Parkway, Westfield as their June Garden of the Month. The Shires began planting their garden over 30 years ago when there were just a few yew bushes, no flowers, and the soil consisted mainly of clay with rocks. Their garden now contains an ever-changing assortment of flowering shrubs, bulbs, annuals and perennials. Spring offers daffodils, hyacinths, primroses, forget-me-nots, columbines, irises, and foxgloves. An attractive assortment of American and Japanese azaleas borders the porch and patio of the house. The garden is resplendent in June when the hybrid tea, floribunda, rugosa, David Austin English, and miniature roses become the stars of the garden. Summer cottage favorites include astilbes, hollyhocks, sunflowers, and zinnias. Dahlias extend colorful blooms from midsummer through fall. Late blooming perennials such as Japanese anemones, asters and monkshood brighten the garden until frost. The Shires designed their garden as a serene and enchanting place where flowers can be seen wherever one casts one's eye.

For further information, please contact us at gardenclubofwestfield@gmail.com.



Courtesy photo

DR. D. MICHAEL HART INDUCTED INTO EAGLE SCOUT HALL OF FAME

The Patriot's Path Council of Scouting America inducted Dr. D. Michael Hart into the Eagle Scout Hall of Fame, on May 16, 2024.

This award is for individuals who have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout at least 25 years previously, have had an outstanding career, volunteer for scouting, and provide exceptional community service.

Dr. Hart had a distinguished career in his profession of dentistry. He attended the Ivy League Columbia University and completed a residency. In 1984, he started his own dental practice in Edison, NJ. Mike served on the Board of Directors of the Middlesex County Dental Society. He continually improved his

professional skills with continuing education, earning a Fellowship, then a Mastership, then two Lifetime Learning and Service Recognitions in the Academy of General Dentistry. His dental practice grew to four dentists and 18 employees over 37 years.

As a lad, Mike was in the scouts from first grade through high school. Michael earned the rank of Eagle Scout in December of 1966, with Troop 76 in Mountainside at the age of 13. He was a Pack and Troop leader while his son was in scouts. After retirement 7 years ago, Mike joined the Flintlocks, which is a group of scouter volunteers who help the Council, where he was elected secretary and serves on the Foundation Board. He earned Wood Badge, and was awarded the Trailblazer, Golden Eagle, Cliff Dochterman, and Silver Beaver Awards. Mike recently chaired the Patriots' Path Council Toys For Tots Drive. The Patriots' Path Council, Scouting America, (formerly The Boy Scouts of America), consists of over 300 scouting units in 5 counties of northern New Jersey, serving 10,000 youths.

Mike has been active in Rotary for 42 years. He has served as President of two clubs, was District Governor, and International Foundation Chair for 6 years. He has been given many awards, and ran many community charity events. Dr Hart was awarded the Rotary International Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service. Mike created a 501c3 Foundation for the Rotary District, of which he is still Chair.

Michael Hart grew up in Mountainside. He has been married to his wife Eileen for 48 years. They have two adult children and two grandchildren.



Courtesy photo

(above, l-r) Garrick Stoldt, Patriots' Path Council President inducting Dr. D. Michael Hart into the Eagle Scout Hall of Fame.



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MILITARY FAMILIES SACRIFICE TOO

Michael D Boll, NJVN President

For the last few years, the New Jersey Veterans Network (NJVN) has been helping veterans with resources and assistance with their mental health conditions. Over time we came to realize that the veteran's family was being affected by their struggles as well. Our team had to learn how to include their family members in our outreach efforts. We lose 22 veterans each day to suicide, and they leave behind grieving families. Recently, we decided to make sure all veteran family members can use the same resources that our team has available for veterans. Sometimes we forget about the sacrifices our veteran families have to make and this country should appreciate them for this.

One thing our team decided to do was to have Gold Star families meet disabled veterans at our events, so they can work together and form a bond. This effort was extremely affective and immediately brought joy to both the Gold Star families and to the disabled veterans. By adding veteran family members to the team, it allows us to work together on our peer support and recreational therapy programs. We are honored to have veteran family members to work alongside us and know they are just as committed with helping our veterans live a better way of life.

If you need assistance, or would like to join the team as a volunteer, please send us your name, email, and phone number to NJVN1775@gmail.com.

ABOUT NEW JERSEY VETERANS NETWORK

We are a group of veterans and volunteers dedicated to helping our veterans and their families live better lives. Our mission is to identify veterans and connect them with resources and programs designed to meet their unique set of needs. Help us save Vets! We are always looking for volunteers, with various skills, to join the team. If you are a veteran or family member that is in need of assistance; or are interested in volunteering, would like us to speak at your event, or contribute to our mission, call 973-332-1556 or email NJVN1775@gmail.com. To learn more visit njvn.org.



(above) Michael D Boll, NJVN President, with Dina and Tom Duffy who lost their son Tom Duffy, a Marine Corporal and Afghanistan War veteran. Courtesy photos



(above) NJVN team members participated in a 22-hour ruck march in Wildwood, NJ in remembers of Tom Duffy, a Marine Corporal and Afghanistan War veteran.

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2024 MARC WESLEY HARDY HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Submitted by Debra Volz

First Congregational Church of Westfield (FCC) presented the 2024 Marc Wesley Hardy Human Rights Award on May 19, 2024, to Sophia Mekbeb of Scotch Plains, NJ. Awarded annually to a student advocate for social justice and human rights, the honor commemorates the life of Marc Wesley Hardy, a member of FCC who was killed in a car accident in 1990 shortly before his graduation from Westfield High School. He was a national merit scholar, a gifted singer and actor, and was very passionate about the preservation of human rights.

Sophia Mekbeb is a junior at the Union County Academy for Performing Arts (Union County Vocational-Technical Schools/UCV-TS). During her time at the school, she has served as President of APA's International Thespian Society, an academic honor society for which she organized multiple community outreach events and fundraisers.

In addition, and to further her commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, Sophia organizes monthly school assemblies, including showcases for Black History Month and Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Month. She is also the recipient of College Board National African American Recognition Award., an honor for academically exceptional African American students who have scored in the top 10 percent of the state on the PSAT or earned a top score on AP exams.

"As the daughter of an Ethiopian immigrant, my heritage is integral to my identity and is a driving force in my being so politically minded," says Sophia. "My hope is that I can one day be a leading example and make space for other women and people of color in the political sphere."

Sophia was the Secretary of Speech & Debate at UCVTS and helped to organize and coordinate the school's first County Invitational since COVID-19, in which she competed at the varsity level, and which led her to Montclair State University's Model UN Academy.

"During this week-long intensive, under the instruction of a former United Nations ambassador, I was able to simulate UN summits on a wide variety of diplomacy issues, negotiate treaties, draft legislation, and observe real-world current events alongside teens from across the globe," Sophia stated. "At the program's culmination, I was voted and awarded Best Delegate for significant treaty propositions, consistent leadership, and conflict resolution."

In Sophia's application for the Marc Hardy Award, she explained that her work experience, awards, and advancement opportunities have propelled her into a lifelong dedication to political activism, and that she plans to pursue a degree in public policy or international relations.

"The intersection of art and activism is a fundamental aspect of everyone's lives; theatre has the unique power to resonate with audiences emotionally, challenge them intellectually, and inspire them to take steps toward a more just future. I hope that, in pursuing a politically

minded career, I can also incorporate my deep love for the performing arts in a way that creates meaningful change."

Each year the honoree receives a scholarship and certificate from the FCC Board of Ministries during its worship service. On Sunday, May 19, Marc's mother, Delores, was in attendance to celebrate this amazing young woman and the work she has only just begun.

To view the award presentation and hear more from Sophia Mekbeb, visit the FCC Facebook page (facebook.com/FCCWestfield/videos/1358734084792464). To learn more about the Marc Wesley Hardy Award for Human Rights, visit fccofwestfield.org/marchardy.

FCC is a welcoming, inclusive, open-minded Christian community that has discovered the freedom and joy a spiritual life offers. Our ministry is committed to sharing God's love through service to others, thought-provoking worship, and fostering faith among generations.

We aspire to nourish the individual on their spiritual journey; explore the intersection of community and faith; and remain faithful to God's vision in a changing world.

First Congregational Church is located at 125 Elmer Street, Westfield. For additional information on worship services, outreach efforts and programs for all ages, please call (908) 233-2494 or visit fccofwestfield.org, and follow FCC on Facebook @FCCWestfield.



(above) Sophia Mekbeb (center) with Rev. Dr. Jennifer Testa Hrynyk, Sophia's parents, Board of Ministries representative Beidget Andersen, and Marc's mother Delores Hardy (front).

Courtesy photo



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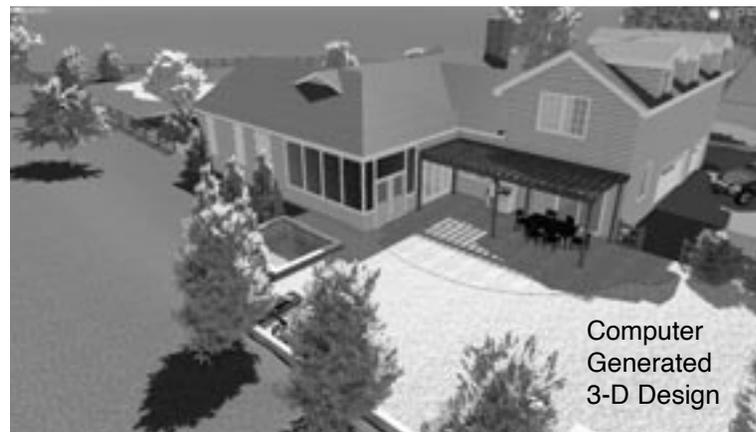
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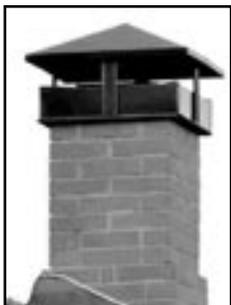
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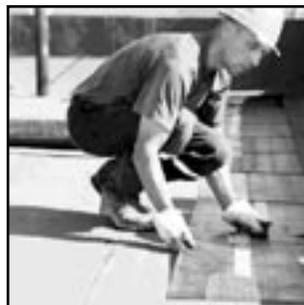
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PHILHOWER FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

Westfield Public Schools

McKinley 4th grade teacher Branice Moore is the 2024 recipient of the Rotary Club of Westfield's Philhower Fellowship in recognition of outstanding teaching at the elementary school level. At the same time, Westfield High School paraprofessional Maria Martinez received the Steengrafe Award, introduced last year by the Rotary Club to recognize non-certificated staff for their dedication and commitment.

Moore and Martinez received the news on May 6 as Superintendent Dr. Raymond González paid surprise visits to their schools.

"On behalf of the Board of Education and the



(above) Westfield High School paraprofessional Maria Martinez (center) with WHS Principal Mary Asfendis (left) and Superintendent Dr. Raymond González.

Photos by Westfield Public School



(above) McKinley 4th grade teacher Branice Moore (center) with Superintendent Dr. Raymond González and McKinley principal Mary McCabe.

entire school district, I congratulate Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Martinez on this well-deserved honor from the Rotary Club. Their dedication to our students and passionate commitment to education is an inspiration to us all," says González. "Mrs. Moore's differentiated teaching strategies and Mrs. Martinez's tireless work in student support services have made a profoundly positive impact on countless young lives in our district."

Moore joined the Westfield Public School District as a 2nd grade teacher at McKinley in 2014, moving to a 4th grade classroom three years later where she has taught ever since.

"While there are many things I enjoy about teaching, what I love the most is the ability to not only shape the minds of learners, but also to help to create great, well-rounded humans," says Moore.

Letters of nomination for Moore from parents laud her as "a fantastic role model" and "outstanding educator" who "is able to explain and demonstrate concepts in a variety of ways for a variety of different learners and learning styles."

"My daughter comes home each day with a clear understanding of what is expected of her," writes one parent nominator. "She feels confident in her work and knows exactly the areas she needs to focus on to improve."

Another parent writes: "All three of my children (10th, 8th, and 4th graders) have had the privilege of being taught by Mrs. Moore. Because of her teaching, they have a great work ethic, are creative, and love school. Mrs. Moore teaches them to be responsible, to be excellent, and to think outside the box. She is a wonderful communicator and truly cares about her students."

Martinez has worked as a paraprofessional at the high school for the past 22 years.

"What I like most about my job is to be in the classrooms, assisting our students," says Martinez, who adds that she "feels lucky" to be able to work with an "amazing" staff at WHS. "I love helping my students to reach their goals and make sure they receive all the support they need to be successful in our classes. It is very

rewarding to see the growth my students make through their years in high school."

Colleagues who nominated Martinez for the Steengrafe Award say that she is "a devoted educator" who "exhibits a genuine interest in student success."

"Students can always tell when teachers really care about them and they flock towards Senora Martinez because of her genuine concern and her gentle humor," reads one nominating letter. "She encourages them to reach their fullest academic potential while boosting their self-esteem."

"Maria is always there, ensuring that students' educational needs are being met and reminding them of what they have to do to ensure their own success," writes another nominator. "Her kindness and soft-spoken demeanor allow students to check in with her and ask her questions, never fearing reproach."

Moore and Martinez were recognized at a Board of Education meeting on May 21. They will receive the Philhower and Steengrafe Awards on June 4 as guests of honor during a Rotary Club luncheon.

A committee of three Rotarians and two elementary school principals reviewed all nominations and selected Moore and Martinez as this year's recipients.

The Philhower Fellowship was established in 1993 by the Rotary Club to honor former Westfield Rotarian Charles Philhower and to recognize the importance of teaching in the elementary grades. An educator for more than 50 years, Charles Philhower, who died in 1962, was supervising principal (superintendent) of Westfield schools for three decades as well as co-founder and past president of the Rotary Club of Westfield.

This is the second year of the Steengrafe Fellowship, established in memory of Weyman O. Steengrafe who began teaching Social Studies in the Westfield Public Schools in 1942 before serving as principal at Franklin, Tamaques, and Wilson Elementary Schools. Weyman was a lifelong Rotarian from 1966-2010, serving as Club President in 1971-1972 and District Governor in 1985-1986.

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ACADEMIC HONORS AT WESTFIELD HIGH SCHOOL



(above) 113 Westfield High School 12th graders received the Seal of Biliteracy, an award granted to students who attain proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation.

Photo by Westfield Public Schools

Westfield Public Schools

Five Westfield High School students earned perfect scores on recent ACT and SAT subject area tests, with one of the students receiving a perfect score on all sections of the February ACT.

- Garrett Gao - March 2024 SAT - Math
- Kevin Deegan - February 2024 ACT - Reading
- Logan Feinstein - April 2024 ACT - Reading
- Olivia Gaffney - February 2024 ACT - Reading
- Jacob Park - February 2024 ACT - All Sections (Math, Science, STEM, English & Reading) and Overall Composite

Additionally, 113 Westfield High School 12th graders received the Seal of Biliteracy, an award granted to students who attain proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation.



(above) Principal Mary Asfendis with Westfield High School students, Garrett Gao, Logan Feinstein, Jacob Park, Kevin Deegan, and Olivia Gaffney, who earned perfect scores on recent ACT and SAT subject area tests.

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(above) Singer / Songwriter Bret Fleming of Westfield, NJ., recently released the single "The Bridge of Inclusion"

TRAIN STATION FEATURED IN BRET FLEMING "THE BRIDGE OF INCLUSION" MUSIC VIDEO

Bret Fleming is a singer/ songwriter and drummer with William's Syndrome from Westfield, NJ., recently released the single "The Bridge of Inclusion" which is an anthem for inclusion for people with or without disabilities. His musical journey began at the age of 2 years old when his aunt Helen bought him his first snare drum. Since then, Bret has been drumming away. He released his first full length LP entitled "Life" in 2016.

Bret earned a bachelor's degree at the Berkshire Hills Academy of Music in

Massachusetts in 2002 when he also joined the global non-profit organization Best Buddies International, whose mission is inclusion for people with developmental disabilities. Today, Bret is still a global ambassador for Best Buddies and part of the New Jersey chapter advisory board.

Bret shot the music video for "The Bridge of Inclusion" in downtown Garwood, New Jersey at the train station. His music can be found on all major social media and streaming platforms.

SPRING 2024 LIFT WHILE YOU CLIMB AWARD

Westfield Public Schools

Twice a year, the Westfield High School Counseling Department sponsors the "Lift While You Climb Award" to recognize students who exemplify the qualities expressed by the late Westfield High School principal Dr. Derrick Nelson. Dr. Nelson -- who died in 2019 from complications he suffered while donating bone marrow to a boy he didn't know in France - is quoted as once saying "We have an obligation to our fellow human beings that if we are in a

position to help someone, you do it. You lift as you climb. If you can do that, you have contributed more to society than anything your bank account can produce and, ultimately, contribute more to your own well-being."

Nominated by WHS faculty and staff, the five recipients of the Spring 2024 "Lift While You Climb Award" are pictured l-r: Joshua Dias, Addison Mulholland, Garrett Gao, Jillian Almendral, and Isabella DeMatos, pictured with WHS principal Mary Asfendis.



Photo by Westfield Public Schools



Westfield Memorial Library

JULY EVENTS FOR ADULTS

Closed Thursday, July 4 for Independence Day

July 9 @ 10 am	ASK- Aging Services Kiosk in the Gallery
July 9 @ 2 pm	Virtual Author Talk: Mercy Watson and Kate DiCamillo Deckawoo Drive
July 10 @ 7 pm	Pop Art is for Everyone- A Workshop for Adults by Artist-in-Residence Jenn Wilner
July 11 @ 9 am	REAL ID Event for Westfield Seniors- Registration Required
July 11, 18, 25 @ 3 pm	The Fundamentals of Tai Chi by Gang Huang
July 14 @ 2 pm	Virtual Arts for Seniors: Gel Printing Basics by Joy Lara
July 17 @ 7 pm	Explore America's National Treasures: National Parks
July 18 @ 3:00 pm	Book Discussion with Lifelong Westfield: The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store J. McBride
July 24 @ 7:00pm	"How Did She Make That" An Art Lecture by Jenn Wilner
July 28 @ 2:00pm	Virtual Arts for Seniors: Gel Printing: Layering Techniques with Botanicals- Joy Lara

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FAMILY FUN DAY DRAWS RECORD ATTENDANCE

Community Access Unlimited

The 26th Annual Ira Geller Family Fun Day, hosted by Community Access Unlimited (CAU), drew an enthusiastic crowd of over 800 supporters, members, and staff to Warinanco Park on Saturday, May 18th.

The event delivered a day filled with joy and community spirit, with an aim of supporting CAU's essential services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) and at-risk youth. Activities offered enjoyment for all ages and all abilities; the park was made more accessible with a path for those using wheelchairs, and a new sensory station engaged attendees to stimulate and regulate their senses.

Mayor of Elizabeth, J. Christian Bollwage joined the celebration, lauding CAU Executive Director Bernadette Griswold for her dedicated leadership.

"Community Access helps direct services and housing opportunities to those who may have been on the margins—and because of all of you, you make this a reality," Bollwage said.

Participants enjoyed a variety of activities, including over a dozen games, two bouncy slides, a free photo booth, and lively music from CAU's resident DJ. The atmosphere was alive with families and friends reveling in the day's festivities, all while supporting a meaningful cause and commemorating CAU's 45th year of service to the community.

Tonya Hopson of Hillside, a CAU member since 1987, shared her personal journey and the profound impact CAU has had on her life.

As a teenager, Hopson aged out of the foster care system and found a lifeline in CAU, which provided housing and essential services. As an adult with a disability, employment support from CAU assisted her in securing a job at a Target where she has thrived for over 20 years. Reflecting on her experience, she said, "CAU has benefited me in growing better and growing up, and I have a place to live." On having a job coach, she added, "They come and see how I'm doing, and if I need anything they're there to help me."



(above, l-r) CAU members, Tonya Hopson, Dianna Simms, and John Drescher attended CAU's Ira Geller Family Fun Day.

Courtesy photo

This year's Family Fun Day not only celebrated the memory of Ira Geller, a former CAU member and advocate, but also highlighted the significant contributions of CAU in improving the lives of over 3,000 individuals and families across New Jersey. Through housing, education, support services, employment, support coordination, and the Day Program, CAU continues to make a tangible difference in the community.

For more information on CAU and its programs, or to make a donation, please visit caunj.org.

ABOUT COMMUNITY ACCESS UNLIMITED

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating 45 years in 2024, supports people with disabilities in achieving full lives in the community. CAU provides support and gives voice to adults and youth who traditionally have little support and no voice in society. CAU helps people with housing, life skills, employment, money management, socialization and civic activities. CAU also supports opportunities for advocacy through training in assertiveness, decision-making and civil rights. CAU currently serves more than 3,000 individuals and families and is continually expanding its services to broaden the scope of its support.

For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908.354.3040, online at caunj.org or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202.



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URGENT NEED FOR ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Child Focus

The latest class of CASA volunteers were sworn in on June 11, 2024.

Union County Superior Court Judge Rosalba Comas presided over the swearing-in of the newly trained volunteers, and each can now be assigned to work with children living in foster care through no fault of their own, advocating for their best interests and ensuring their needs are met while in the child welfare system.

The nonprofit organization Child Focus operates CASA of Passaic and Union Counties, and its goal is to provide a CASA volunteer for each of the more than 250 child-victims in Union County foster care. Currently, just 30 percent of these vulnerable infants, children, and teens have the continuity and support of a CASA volunteer serving as extra eyes and ears for judges hearing their cases. The need is critical for additional volunteers to step up and serve waiting children.

“We are proud to welcome this new group of volunteers to the CASA family,” said Erica Fischer-Kaslander, Executive Director of Child Focus. “These individuals have taken concrete action to make a difference in the lives of children who have experienced immense trauma, having been removed from home through no fault of their own, often due to abuse or neglect. We look forward to working with our new advocates as they serve these vulnerable youth and urge more community members to follow their example by volunteering to support children in need.”

Judge Comas expressed her gratitude for the CASA program and the volunteers’ commitment to the children they serve. “If I really want to know what’s happening with a child I listen to the CASA worker, because they are 100% in tune with everything that the child needs, and everything that’s happening in the child’s life,” she shared. “Their job is to look out for the kids, represent the children’s interest, and make sure that all of their needs are being addressed. It’s not just whether they need clothes or whether they need toys, it’s the bond. It’s what they need emotionally, it’s someone they can count on.”

Since caseworkers, attorneys, and foster homes are ever-changing, the CASA volunteer – or advocate – is a much-needed constant in a child’s life, committing to work with the child until they reach permanency in a stable home and the case closes. Children assigned a CASA volunteer are more likely to receive services, spend less time in the foster system, and experience significantly better outcomes than those without an advocate.

BECOMING A CASA - TRAINING SCHEDULED IN JULY

Becoming a CASA requires no special skills or background in child welfare. Child Focus provides thorough training on the ins and outs of advocating for abused and neglected children, and volunteers are fully supported by CASA program staff. Volunteers visit the children at least monthly and get to know the people in the child’s life, such as foster parents, biological parents, teachers, therapists, and attorneys in order to make unbiased recommendations to the family court judge that support the child’s best interests.

The first step to becoming an advocate is to attend an information session. Upcoming sessions will be held Monday, July 8 at 5:30 p.m. at the Elizabeth Public Library (Elmora Branch), 740 W Grand St, Elizabeth, NJ 07202; Thursday, July 11 at 5:30 p.m. at the Rahway Public Library, 2 City Hall Plaza in Rahway;

Thursday July 25 at 5:30 p.m. at the Union County Colleen Fraser Building, 300 North Avenue E. in Westfield; or Monday July 1 at 10 a.m., Monday July 15 at 5:30 p.m., Wednesday July 24 at 12 p.m., and Wednesday July 31 at 5:30 p.m. at the Wayne Child Focus office, 415 Hamburg Turnpike, Suite D2. Register: 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, visit childfocusnj.org.



(above) The latest class of CASA volunteers were sworn in to advocate for youth in foster care on June 11, 2024. To learn more about becoming an advocate, info sessions are scheduled for July.

For more information visit: casapassaicunion.org/info-session

Courtesy photo



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YOUTH FACILITATORS SOUGHT – TRAINING IS IN AUGUST

Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss

If you're a high school age youth interested in training to become a volunteer facilitator at Imagine the next training will take place over two days beginning on August 28th and concluding on August 29th and interested volunteers should plan to attend both days of the training. The training will be held from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. each day. Please visit Imagine's website at imagineinj.org to learn more about volunteering with Imagine and to complete an interest form for our upcoming training. Questions about training to be an Imagine facilitator can be directed to Imagine's Clinical Program Supervisor, Abigail

Preece, LPC at abigail@imagineinj.org.

Imagine's youth facilitators partner with our adult volunteers as they facilitate Imagine's peer support groups for children. Youth facilitators are an integral part of Imagine's team as they create safe spaces where Imagine's young participants can share their stories or use play as an outlet for their feelings of grief.

One of Imagine's former youth facilitators said this about her experience as a volunteer:

"Being a part of imagine as a youth facilitator not only made my high school experience, it made me who I am today. I am so honored to be a part of a community that holds a space for so

many families they can find nowhere else, as well as one that creates a space where us too as volunteers grow, and learn, and listen. At Imagine, I gained things that I don't think are accessible elsewhere, all while hopefully adding to someone else's life." The staff at Imagine are so grateful for the time that youth volunteers commit to their programs and for the unique perspective and empathy that they bring to their support groups.

Imagine is a 501c3 that offers grief and loss education and training to the community and free year-round grief support groups for children ages 3-18 and young adults 19-30 who are coping with a loss due to death. Concurrently, support groups are available for the parents and guardians of the children in the groups and offered in English and Spanish. For more information please contact Imagine at 908-264-3100 or info@imagineinj.org or visit our website at imagineinj.org.



(above, l-r) Participants in Imagine's recent youth facilitator training proudly displaying their certificates of completion: Tim Jiao, Addy Oni, Ava Handler, Amanda Linde and Lauren Glasofer

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OLD GUARD JULY SPEAKERS PROGRAM

Summit Area Old Guard

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 five programs in July:

On July 2nd, our speaker will be Craig Guy, Hudson County Executive. He will discuss Hudson County, the process of building a new courthouse, new developments and causes of increased population-growth and some of the initiatives the County has undertaken to keep up with recent changes.

On July 9th, we will hear about Advances in Cancer Research (Zoom presentation). Our speaker will be Pat Morin, PhD, Deputy

Scientific and Communications Director for the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research. He will discuss the history of the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, its programs, and the current developments in cancer research.

On July 16th, Christopher Fiore, Deputy Director of the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency, will discuss New York City's 'Sixth Borough' and review the incredible development of the Hudson County waterfront and of Jersey City - 'a brand new old city'.

On July 23rd, our topic will be Collegiate Athletics. Bryan Felt, Seton Hall University Athletic Director, will tell the story of Seton Hall athletics including the recent NIT Championship, the building of a new basketball practice facility and the success of other sports teams like golf. Also, he will share his knowledge of what NIL is and how the portal works (NIL is an initiative arising out of the recent NCAA scandals exposed in 2019-20).

Finally, on July 30, The Success of a 150-year-old institution. Dr. Michael Gomez, President, Saint Peter's Preparatory, will describe this downtown Jersey City institution that educates students from over 150 towns in New Jersey and New York City. Dr. Gomez will relate how student aid works, the continuing process of updating 150-year-old historic structures and the tremendous success of its student body.



(above, l-r) Mr. Felt, Dr. Gomez, Mr. Fiore, Dr. Morin, Mr. Guy

Courtesy photos

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