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DECADES OLD TRADITION CONTINUES

A loud and colorful convoy traveled through Fanwood on Saturday, December 14, 2024, bringing Santa Claus door to door delivering presents to the town's children. The annual Santa Parade, a tradition that began as a neighborhood celebration in the 1950s, has grown to a town-wide journey which this year visited 450 homes.

Escorted by the Fanwood Fire Department, Rescue Squad and the Union County Sheriff's Department, Santa brought presents to individual homes and the waiting arms of children. Families who desired a gift delivery brought gifts to the fire department the first week of December. There, volunteers sorted them by address then arranged them into numbered boxes and a streamlined route for Santa to follow on the day of the parade.

The Santa Parade began in the 1950s as a small holiday treat for children on Waldon Road. A neighbor's red station wagon was the equivalent of a fire truck. Santa visited a few local families. The idea caught on and became more and more popular over the years. Today, it is one of the most anticipated and beloved events in Fanwood.



(above) Santa Claus and the Bianco Family.

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(above) Santa Claus with Mayor Mahr and Fanwood Volunteer Fire Department members.

Courtesy photos

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OPEN-MIC REFERENDUM FORUM – JAN 16

Scotch Plains and Fanwood residents are invited to a in-person, open-mic community in the Terrill Middle School Auditorium, 1301 Terrill Road, Scotch Plains on January 16, 2025, at 7 p.m. to learn how the Jan. 28 vote would address the space constraints and pressing infrastructure needs in Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools, at a significantly lower cost than the last referendum. This is the 2nd of 2 forums offered, the other was held on Dec. 16, 2024.

Both events will allow community members to hear a presentation about the January 28 vote and then ask questions of the administrators and Board of Education members who helped form this referendum based on community feedback. The event will be open microphone, meaning residents will have the opportunity to ask questions publicly and hear the questions of others.

On Jan. 28, voters will consider a proposal that captures \$11.4 million in state aid to offset local costs and is based on community feedback. Voters will be asked to consider two independent questions:

Question 1 – Acquire La Grande School for space and HVAC upgrades - \$44.8 million (state aid covers \$11.4 million)

Free up nine classrooms across the elementary schools and ease space constraints with the purchase of La Grande School and

relocation of all pre-kindergarten classes to this building. The cost of minor renovations would be funded by the district’s Capital Reserve, which is an account earmarked for capital improvements that do not fit within the regular operating budget.

No expansion, complete renovation, or redistricting.


Critical upgrades to HVAC, electrical, and fire alarm systems, as well as universal air conditioning across all schools.

Question 2 - Funding La Grande School into the future - \$1.1 million annually

Fund the annual costs for building and support staff for La Grande School including: administrator, nurse, secretaries, custodial staff, security officer, and buildings and grounds personnel.

If both questions pass, the owner of a home assessed at the average in Scotch Plains and Fanwood could expect to pay \$21-\$24 per month. The district would also stand to receive \$11.4 million in state aid, which is collected from all New Jersey taxpayers and only made available to districts that have voter approval of a referendum.

Residents who cannot attend the forums should read the FAQs section of spfk12.org/future and email questions to future@spfk12.org.



SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

VOTE TUESDAY, JANUARY 28

A SCALED-BACK PLAN TO IMPROVE LEARNING SPACES FOR STUDENTS WITH \$11.4 MILLION IN STATE AID

TWO INDEPENDENT QUESTIONS ON THE BALLOT:

QUESTION 1

\$10.5 million - Free up nine classrooms across the elementary schools and ease space constraints with the purchase of La Grande School and relocation of all pre-kindergarten classes to this building.

- Funds from the district’s Capital Reserve would cover costs of minor renovations to La Grande School.
- Redistricting would no longer be part of our plan.

QUESTION 2

\$1.1 million - Fund the annual costs for building and student support staff for La Grande School.

*\$21-\$24 per month for the owner of a home assessed at Scotch Plains and Fanwood’s average if **both questions pass**.

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Two Ways to Vote


IN-PERSON

Polls open Tuesday, January 28 from 2-8 pm at usual polling locations.

BY MAIL

Applications can be mailed to the Clerk’s Office by January 21 OR requested in-person at the County

Clerk’s Office in Westfield up until 3 pm on January 27.
Ballots must be postmarked for return or left in a drop box by Tuesday, January 28.



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BENEFIT FOR FIBROLAMELLAR CANCER FOUNDATION

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood chapter of UNICO, a dedicated Italian-American service organization, proudly sponsored the 9th annual Pig Gig fundraiser—an unforgettable afternoon of live music and a pig roast benefiting the Fibrolamellar Cancer Foundation. Held on November 10, 2024, the event brought together local residents, businesses, musicians, and supporters to raise awareness of this rare liver cancer that primarily affects adolescents and young adults.

Each year, Pig Gig is hosted by Scotch Plains resident and professional musician Glenn Alexander in honor of his late nephew, Jay Alexander, who tragically lost his battle with Fibrolamellar cancer at the age of 20—just 32 days after his tumor was discovered. Glenn’s heartfelt dedication to raising awareness for this rare form of cancer, which occurs in individuals with no prior history of liver disease, has made Pig Gig a beloved annual tradition. People travel from near and far for this event!

This year’s event featured an incredible lineup of musical performances, including Glenn and his daughter Oria of Glenn & Oria, The Lonesome Pines, Joe D’Urso, Anthony Tamburro & Louis Bevere, and Glenn Alexander & Shadowland with special guest Richie “LaBamba” Rosenberg. The afternoon was filled with lively performances, delicious food and beverages, and an outpouring of support from all those in attendance.

“Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO is proud to sponsor this incredible event. It’s always a

fantastic day, with great food, drinks, and talented musicians. But the most meaningful part is knowing we’re raising funds that could help save a young person’s life—that’s what makes it all worth it. Here’s to Jay! On behalf of the Pig Gig 9 committee, I want to thank all the sponsors, attendees, and supporters who made this year’s

fundraiser such a success.” said Daniela Sellinger, VP of SP-F UNICO.

To learn more about: The Fibrolamellar Cancer Foundation or to make a donation, visit fibrofoundation.org. The Scotch Plains-Fanwood chapter of UNICO and their community efforts, visit unicospf.org.



(above, l-r) Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO members, Jackie Stasenko, Luciana Rodak, Daniela Sellinger, Pam Davita with Glenn Alexander (center).

Photo by Phyllis McQuillan

NEW UNICO MEMBERS WELCOMED

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Chapter of UNICO swore in 4 new members during its November general membership meeting. UNICO is the largest Italian American service organization in the United States. The organization's objectives are to promote the image of Italian Americans, serve the

community, and contribute to charitable, cultural, and educational organizations and projects.

To learn more, or to become a member of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO Chapter, please visit our website unicospf.org, or email spfunico@gmail.com.



(above, l-r) Geri Samuel welcomes new members Angela Kobliska, Catherina Agosta, Pamela DiVita, Romel D'Munda.

Courtesy photo

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SAANVI SURESH'S RESEARCH FEATURED AT MIT CONFERENCE

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

Saanvi Suresh, a senior at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, recently presented research at the MIT Undergraduate Research Technology Conference on a pothole detection and autonomous repair system. In addition, a research paper she contributed to was published by The Governor's School of Engineering & Technology at Rutgers University.

"Saanvi is already contributing to the fields she is interested in and thinking of unique ways to solve problems," said SPFHS Principal Dr. Warren Hynes. "We are proud of her for doing such meaningful work for the greater good."

Saanvi, who is also captain of the Raiders Robotics team, was selected to attend the Governor's School last summer as part of the state's program to support high-achieving high school students who are interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects. As part of the four-week program, she and a team of other high school students from around the state researched ways to locate and fill potholes, created a small-scale prototype of the concept, and presented their findings. The group designed a system to be installed on a city street sweeper – with the front end detecting the potholes and the back end filling the potholes.

"The idea was that in cities of the future, a city sweeper could go over the pothole and detect and

fill it using instant asphalt that hardens as more and more vehicles drive over it," Saanvi explained.

In August, she and the team submitted their research and were accepted under the Humanity track to present at the MIT Undergraduate Research Technology Conference, held in October in Boston. The experience was one that Saanvi said she'll never forget.

Saanvi is interested in majoring in computer engineering in college. She said the research opened her eyes to the possibilities for the future and allowed her to explore the real-world applications of the field.

"I want to be able to invent something and create something that helps a lot of people," she said. "Something like this pothole repair technology can help so many people, especially as they're commuting to and from work."

Saanvi said that the teachers and staff at SPFHS have been supportive of her goals. Raiders Robotic Coach Matthew Ducker Duffy, Biology Teacher Lauren DeNicola, and Supervisor of Science, Engineering, and Gifted & Talented Guida Faria have all helped her explore the field of engineering and computer science. Faria nominated her for the Governor's School and was instrumental in the process. While at SPFHS, Saanvi has also taken part in computer programming courses and AP Computer Science classes offered by SPFHS.



(above) Saanvi Suresh's research on pothole detection and autonomous repair system earns recognition. Courtesy photo

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TWO SUPER BOWL TROPHIES BROUGHT HOME TO SP-F

Scotch Plains Fanwood PAL

Scotch Plains Fanwood PAL football teams won two Super Bowl trophies when the New Jersey Suburban Youth Football League (NJSYFL) held its championship games for the American Division on Sunday, November 17, and the National Division on Saturday, November 16, 2024.

In the American Division Super Bowl games that were played at Lombardi Field in Old Bridge, the Scotch Plains Fanwood Raider 5th grade team defeated Westfield, 20-6, in the D level final and then the Raider 6th grade squad followed with a 26-6 victory over Bridgewater-Raritan in the C level title game.

However, Scotch Plains Fanwood's bid for the

hat trick was thwarted when the Raider 7th graders fell to Old Bridge, 14-12, in the B level championship game.

Among the eight overall Super Bowl winners in the NYSYFL playoff games this past weekend—four in American and four in National—Scotch Plains Fanwood and Summit were tied for the most championships with two apiece. Summit won its two Super Bowl titles (A and B levels) in the National Division title games on November 16 at A.L. Johnson High School in Clark.

The two Super Bowl trophies titles won by Scotch Plains Fanwood followed the three Super Bowl trophies captured by the Raiders last year on the National Division level. Scotch Plains Fanwood moved up to the larger division—

American - for this 2024 season.

The championship won by the 6th grade Raiders in Old Bridge was the second straight Super Bowl captured by coach Mike Podell and his players. This team won the D level 2023 National Division Super Bowl last November.

The Raider 5th graders who won its 2024 D level Super Bowl in Old Bridge are coached by Tim Green, a former High School star player.

"This a great day for Scotch Plains Fanwood football. The football program is continuing to soar here." said both Scotch Plains Fanwood PAL President Shawn Johnson, who is the head football coach at Scotch Plains Fanwood High School, and Scotch Plains Fanwood PAL Vice President Bruce Moran.



(above) SPF PAL 5th Grade Football Team with Super Bowl trophy



(above) SPF PAL 6th Grade Football Team with Super Bowl trophy

Photos by Bruce Moran

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SPENCER MARTIN NAMED STUDENT VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Historical Society of Scotch Plains & Fanwood

Spencer Martin, a junior at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS), has been recognized as the Historical Society of Scotch Plains and Fanwood Student Volunteer of the Year. As the founder and co-president of the SPFHS History Club, Spencer has forged a vital connection between local students and the Historical Society since the Fall of 2023. Prior to his involvement, student volunteers were rare. There now exists a meaningful bridge between the SPFHS History Club and the Historical Society linking our towns past with its present.

Spencer has organized volunteers to help out at the Osborn Cannonball House Museum, one of Scotch Plains' Revolutionary War-era sites, by managing students who volunteer for two of the museum's biggest events. Alongside Historical Society members, students serve as docents giving tours of the museum and aid children with crafts and games. Visitors to the museum have remarked how encouraging it is to see students involved in the preservation of their local history.

In addition to volunteering his time to the

museum, in May of 2024, Spencer spearheaded a fundraiser on the museum's behalf. Over \$1,000 was raised to help support the preservation of the museum building. His passion and commitment to local history also earned him a seat on the Historical Society's Board of Directors, where he serves as its first student and youngest member.

Spencer's drive, dedication and leadership skills make him an ideal candidate for this award. His outstanding academic record and his involvement in other activities and community organizations outside of the Historical Society only highlight his achievements.

The collaboration between the SPFHS History Club and the Historical Society is an inspiring example of how different generations can come together to support a common cause. Both organizations are optimistic that this partnership will remain strong. The Historical Society looks forward to continued work with Spencer and future History Club students who will follow in Spencer's footsteps. Together, we will keep history alive across all generations.



(above, l-r) Historical Society Members with the Volunteer of the Year: Darlene Palombo, George Pierson, Spencer Martin, Gloria Broderson, Cathy Thek & Jess Mongold.

Photo by David Bierman



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The series runs for 12 weeks on Monday nights beginning at 7:30 p.m. and ending at 9:00 p.m. It will begin February 3rd, 2025, and end May 12th, 2025. Three of the sessions are live in person and the remainder are on Zoom. There is no cost to participate. You will need a desire for frank discussion, a willingness to participate and a commitment to attend. You will also need a computer or smartphone capable of Zoom sessions.

The live in person sessions will be held at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, 1571 S. Martine Ave., Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

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ZACHARY RITTNER'S REFLECTIONS ON THE ARCTIC ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains

"A Teacher's Reflections on the Arctic Adventure of a Lifetime," presented by Mr. Zachary Rittner, is free and open to the public January 20th at 7:30 p.m. at Mira Vie, 295 South Avenue Fanwood. Come and bring guests to this fascinating, and timely, event presented by the College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains.

Mr. Rittner has an impressive background: he received his B.S. in Biology from Union College, Schenectady, NY, his M.A. in teaching at Montclair State University, and an M.S. in Land Resources and Environmental Science from Montana State University. He is a National Geographic Certified Educator, a Chris Morgan Wildlife Ambassador, a Gideon Hawley Teacher of the Year in 2020 and 2023, a New Jersey Exemplary Educator, a Seasonal Naturalist Certified Educator, and was recently featured for his bird walks at Trailside Museum.

In 2023 TV host Chris Morgan invited Mr. Rittner to join him in an Arctic polar bear expedition to Svalbard, Norway. His presentation will share his experiences there. Of his arctic experience he says, "Just knowing that there are still wild places left on Earth was very moving and humbling. It was a reminder of just

how special a place Earth is and the responsibility we each have to acknowledge and protect that intrinsic value."



(above) Zachary Rittner

GOVERNOR'S EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools is excited to recognize 16 exceptional teachers and educational services professionals nominated for the 2024-25 Governor's Educator of the Year Recognition Program.

Each year, New Jersey school districts nominate their educators for the prestigious Governor's Educator of the Year Award through the New Jersey Department of Education. The program seeks to recognize educators "who have gone above and beyond in their service to New Jersey's students" and to create a culture that recognizes excellence and brings public attention to the work of outstanding educators.

"On behalf of the district and Board of Education, I want to say 'congratulations' to the 16 teachers and educational services professionals who were recognized through the Governor's Educator of the Year program," said Superintendent Joan Mast, Ed.D. "Their hard work and dedication to student success is appreciated by all of us in Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools."

THE GOVERNOR'S EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR RECIPIENTS ARE:

TEACHERS:

Alexandra Graham, Brunner Special Ed. Teacher
 Jessica Mandy, Coles 2nd Grade Teacher
 Paige Kovacs, Evergreen Special Ed. Teacher
 Kristen Zmuda, McGinn Special Ed. Teacher
 Marina Beirne, School One 1st Grade Teacher
 Katelyn Washuta, Nettingham Special Ed. Teacher
 Ellen Christiano, Terrill Math Teacher
 Lorissa Clark, SPFHS Spanish & ESL Teacher

SERVICE PROFESSIONALS:

Rosemarie Pearce, Brunner Classroom Aide
 Deborah Mehl, Coles Support Specialist
 Patricia Compierchio, Evergreen Classroom Aide
 Katherine Dreyer, McGinn Classroom Aide
 Jerri Tanella, McGinn Classroom Aide
 Carol Ekstrand, School One Classroom Aide
 Lori Sciachitano, Nettingham Classroom Aide
 Denise Palozzola, SPFHS Guidance Counselor

DONATIONS NEEDED PANCAKE BREAKFAST GIFT BASKETS

Volunteer Rescue Squad Auxiliary

The Scotch Plains Volunteer Rescue Squad Auxiliary is gearing up to host another amazing Pancake Breakfast on Sunday, February 23, 2025. To help make this annual get-together even more fun and exciting, donations are being collected for gift baskets that will be auctioned off during the event.

Only new items will be accepted, and no shoes, clothing or stuffed animals are needed. Please consider donating items for inclusion in the following themed basket prizes:

Baking – Wellness - Gardening - Sports - Pets - Health - Children - Scrapbooking - Coffee/Tea - Comic Books - Arts and Crafts - Italian Dinner - Games – Vacation – Holiday Items and Crazy Socks. Baskets and ribbon would also be very much appreciated.

We also encourage donors to put together their own gift baskets using the various themes above. This would be a great project for a family, a scout troop or other groups that would like to contribute to this worthy fundraiser.

The Auxiliary will be collecting donations on the following dates at the Rescue Squad building at 1916 Bartle Avenue Starting January 18 through February 15, 2025 on Tuesdays and Fridays from 7-9 p.m., and Saturdays from 10-1 p.m.

The Scotch Plains Volunteer Rescue Squad Auxiliary meets once a month, and its grass roots function is to assist the Squad in many capacities – from attending town functions such as street fairs, concerts and holiday events in order to connect with the community and promote Squad interests to holding fundraisers and performing outreach to squad and fellow auxiliary members.

If interested in becoming a member of the Auxiliary, come by the Squad building one evening to pick up an application, or email SPRSAuxiliary@scotchplainsrescuesquad.com.

Thank you for your support!

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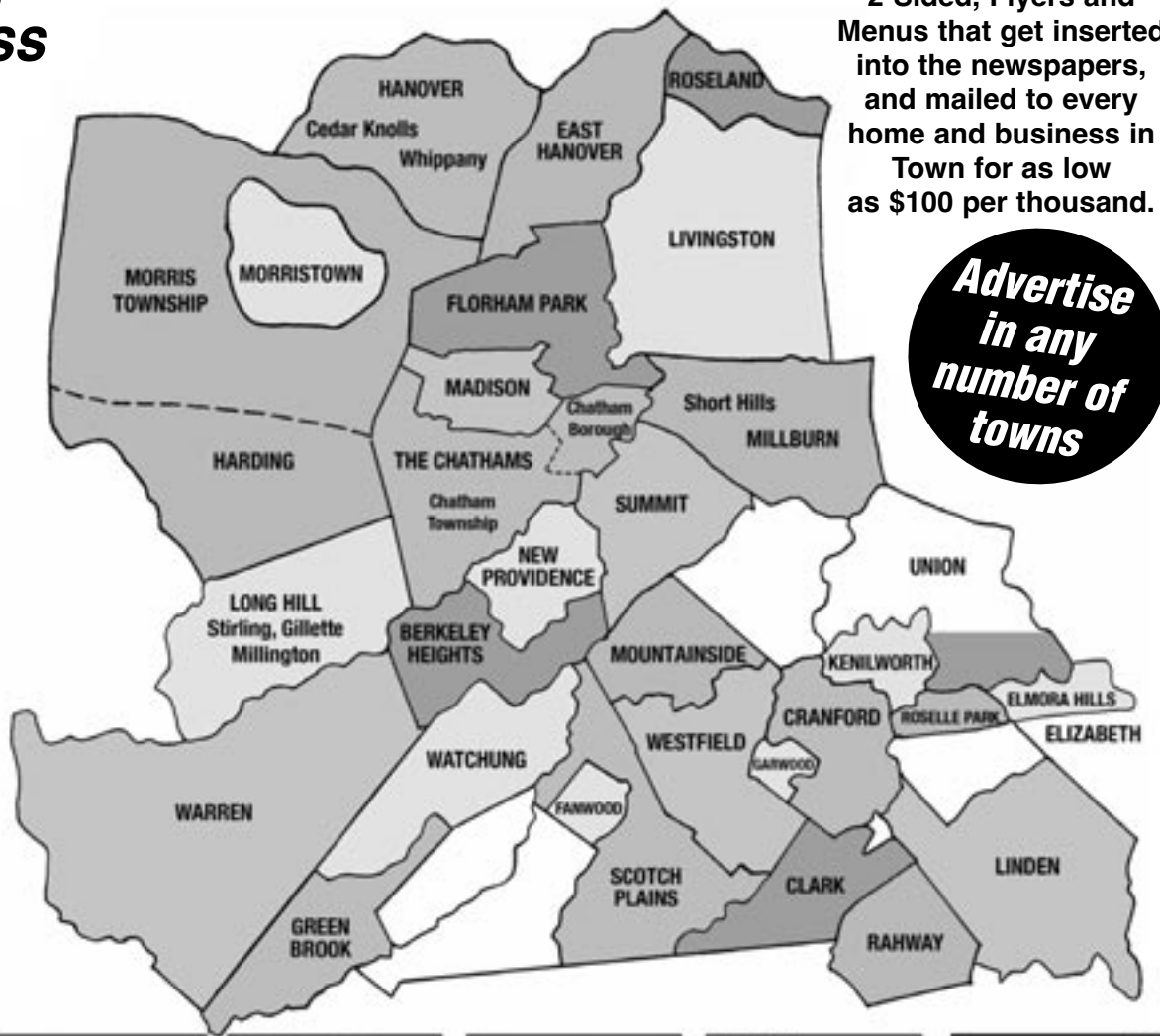
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AN UNUSUAL GOOSE REHABBED AND RELEASED

The Raptor Trust

The Brant goose, with its compact size and striking black-and-white plumage, is a remarkable bird. Adapted to drink saltwater, these geese embark on long migratory journeys from their Arctic breeding grounds to coastal winter



(above) We're thrilled to see this Brant goose take to the skies (or water) once more! It was a charming patient.

Photo by The Raptor Trust

habitats. Look for them in estuaries, mudflats, and saltmarshes, where they thrive throughout the winter months.

Recently, The Raptor Trust treated a Brant goose (Admit #21-4190) found in Long Valley with wounds from a predator attack. After intensive care, including suturing lacerations, treating an eye injury and parasites, this resilient bird was successfully released at Sandy Hook on November 2nd.

ABOUT THE RAPTOR TRUST

The Raptor Trust is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization located at 1390 White Bridge Rd., Millington, NJ. They provide free care and assistance to injured, sick, or orphaned wild birds. They offer educational programs to the public about wild birds, especially birds of prey. They strive to provide a human example for others. For more information about upcoming events, to make a donation, and volunteer opportunities visit info@theraptortrust.org. To report an injured wild bird call 908-647-2353.

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS NIGHT SKY GAZING

Amateur Astronomers, Inc (AAI) of Cranford, NJ celebrated their 75th Anniversary on Sunday, November 17, 2024, at The Westwood Caterers of Garwood, NJ. In attendance were 53 past and current members who range from teenagers to seniors.

AAI has always interested anyone who loves looking and learning about the night sky. Housed in the William Miller Sperry Observatory on the Union College campus in Cranford, the observatory is open to the public every Friday night with their twin domes looking at the heavens. One of the domes houses a 24-inch reflector and the other dome houses a refractor, which was constructed by club members. Public lectures start at 8:30 p.m. on Fridays, they are on current topics in Astronomy.

Youth lectures are presented by the club at 7:00 p.m. to preregistered scout groups to help them earn their patches in science. If you are interested in preregistering a scout group, please contact info@asterism.org.

The club also celebrates celestial events such as eclipses by opening the Observatory and having numerous telescopes outside the building. For more information about AAI email, membership@asterism.org or visit asterism.org.

ASTRONOMY DAY - MAY 17, 2025

Amateur Astronomers, Inc. along with the North Jersey Astronomical Group, two amateur astronomy clubs located in New Jersey, are once again holding their annual Astronomy Day on Saturday, May 17, 2025. The event will be held in 2 locations: Trailside Nature & Science Center in Mountainside in the afternoon and at William Miller Sperry Observatory on the campus of Union College in Cranford in the evening. The theme is "Solar Max, Unlocking the Secrets of the Sun." This is a family friendly event that focuses on learning about our Sun and its impact on us, and also about astronomy and related sciences in a fun and easy to understand atmosphere. This event appeals to both children and adults. The event is free and open to the public and does not require preregistration. So, mark your calendars for Saturday, May 17, 2025, and come out to learn more about the Sun and our universe!



(above) AAI has always interested anyone who loves learning about the night sky. Housed in the William Miller Sperry Observatory on the Union College campus in Cranford, the observatory is open to the public every Friday nights. One of the domes houses a 24-inch reflector and the other dome houses a refractor. Public lectures start at 8:30 p.m. on Fridays, on current topics in Astronomy.

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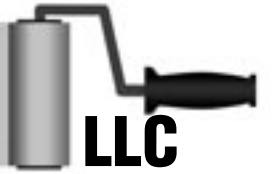
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