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## SANTA ARRIVES ON A FIRE TRUCK

Santa riding on a fire engine made the rounds in Long Hill Township on Dec.14, 2024, bringing joy and happiness to more than 100 children and their families. Just before arriving on the Stirling fire engine Christmas music was played that could be heard in advance of his arrival, then came the big red fire engine with its lights flashing and siren going. As the children saw it most didn't know it was stopping at their house and when it did, they were overjoyed with his visit. The children jumped with joy and excitement as the fire engine stopped at their house and Santa climbed off.

Santa talked with each child, had his photo taken with them and their family by one of Santa's elves, and he gave the children a present. At one stop Santa even had a present for their pet cat! Everyone was elated with Santa's visit.

More than 20 Stirling firefighters worked hard to make this a special day for residents and their efforts were a big success. The Stirling Volunteer Fire Co. thanks the many residents for their support of this annual fund raiser. All the recipients of Santa's visit were delighted and very appreciative of their on-going dedication.



(above) Madison just turned 5,  
and lives in Stirling. Courtesy photo



(above) Santa did an excellent job and Stirling Fire Co. received many compliments about his caring, joy, and compassion.

### KEEP'EM CLEAR

If there's a fire hydrant near your house,  
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**3 ft.**

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# Long Hill LEADER

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# ANNUAL WINTER INSTRUMENTAL CONCERT

The Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS) Music Department recently resented its Annual Winter Instrumental Concert, a celebration of musical talent and holiday spirit. Under the direction of Allan V. Daleus, Director of Instrumental Music, the WHRHS instrumental ensembles, including the String Orchestra,

Symphonic Band, Concert Band, and Wind Ensemble, performed an eclectic program featuring classic holiday tunes, contemporary pieces, and traditional repertoire. Highlights of the evening included "The Night Before Christmas" being narrated by Mr. Peter Martin, a WHRHS teacher.



*(above) The Winter Instrumental Concert featured the incredible talent and teamwork of Watchung Hills Regional High School students while fostering a sense of togetherness and holiday cheer.*

Photos by Watchung Hills Regional High School

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# DAISY'S COOKIE SALES PROFITS HELP LOCAL FAMILIES IN NEED

The second year Girl Scout Daisies of Troops 98840 and 98834 visited Twelve Baskets Food Pantry in Millington, NJ on November 15, 2024. The girls used their hard-earned cookie sales profits to supply the side dishes needed for Thanksgiving dinners.

to local families in need. The girls decorated special Thanksgiving tags and formed an assembly line to pack the totes.

They learned about the food pantry and its increasing needs and were happy to know that they were helping people in need in Long Hill Township.

Together the two troops filled thirty-six reusable totes which were given



Courtesy photo

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# VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER GRAND OPENING

The County College of Morris (CCM) celebrated the grand opening of its Veterans Resource Center with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Friday, Dec. 6, drawing veterans, students, and local dignitaries from around the county in support of a reconstructed area of Sheffield Hall that will assist veterans and their families both on campus and in the broader community.

The Veterans Resource Center on campus was designed to provide a dedicated space for veterans to access U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits, academic and career advice and counseling services. The center will also connect veterans to county, state, and federal resources available directly on campus.

The CCM Veterans Resource Center was developed in partnership with a Veterans Steering Committee comprised of representation from CCM, public officials, area veterans and organizations including the VA and many others throughout the state and county. The steering

committee was led by CCM Board of Trustees Chair Paul Licitra (U.S. Army Vietnam veteran), former director of the Secaucus Vet Center David Cathcart (U.S. Army Vietnam veteran), Morris County Commissioner John Krickus (U.S. Marine Corps veteran), U.S. Dept. of VA Public Affairs Specialist Scott W. Dadaian (U.S. Navy veteran), Morris County Sheriff's Officer Ryan Wood (U.S. Army Veteran), and VFW Post 7333 members Emerson Crooks (U.S. Marine Corps Vietnam veteran), Deacon Richard Reck (U.S. Army Korean War veteran) and William Menzel (U.S. Army Vietnam Veteran).

During the event, Assemblywoman Aura Dunn (Morris-25) and Assemblyman Mike Inganamort (Morris-24) presented joint assembly resolutions to Cathcart, Crooks, Menzel, Dadaian and Reck, and Paul Licitra acknowledged Wood, who had just returned home from being deployed.

"The Center was created with extensive input from community veterans," said Dr. Anthony

Iacono, president of CCM. "It will be a true resource not only for CCM students who are veterans, but for veterans in the community along with their families. CCM is honored to have this opportunity to serve the men and women who have sacrificed for our country, allowing all of us to enjoy freedom and democracy."

The idea for the center originated after CCM hosted the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall in July 2022, an initiative spearheaded by State Senator Anthony Bucco in partnership with VFW Post 7333. Following the event, CCM leadership engaged with veterans to identify their needs and began planning the resource center.

The Veteran Resource Center's services are available Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Veterans can reach out to CCM's Coordinator of Veteran and Military Services, Shenandoah Ellis-Ulmer, MSgt (ret.), USAF, at 973-328-5220 or SELLIS-ULMER@ccm.edu. For more info, visit [ccm.edu/admissions/for-veterans](http://ccm.edu/admissions/for-veterans).

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## LIBRARY PROGRAMS

We have book clubs for all ages, conversation classes for French & Italian, as well as online author talks and programs for genealogy and health. Especially for children, the Library has storytimes every morning at 10:30, STEM projects & crafts, and the Lego Challenge Club on Fridays at 4pm.

### Online Moonlight Meditation Classes

*Mondays, starting Jan 13 @ 8:30pm*

Learn techniques from our experienced instructor Anita Pacheco.

### Vision Board Workshop

*Saturday, Jan 11 @ 11am*

Start off the new year the right way with this vision board workshop! Collage artist Kara DJ will help you build a vision board to keep you on track in 2025 and on the way to achieving your goals.

### Hickory Tree Chorus

*Sunday, Jan 12 @ 3pm*

Come to the library and enjoy beautiful music of the Beatles and Broadway sung for us by the beautiful voices of the Hickory Tree Chorus!

Hickory Tree is an award-winning women's chorus dedicated to advancing the musical art form of four-part a cappella harmony sung in the barbershop style.

### Puzzle Tournament for All Ages!

*Saturday, Jan 18 @ 11am*

January 29th is National Puzzle Day and we are celebrating with a Long Hill Township Library Puzzle Tournament! You can join in on the fun as an individual or a family! Win recognition of your puzzle skills (and maybe win an LHT Library prize!) and have fun on a cold January weekend! Registration required.

### Backyard Bird Watching

*Saturday, Jan 25 @ 11am*

Ever wonder about the birds in your backyard? This program by a Naturalist from the Somerset County Park Commission Environmental Education Center will help you get acquainted with many of New Jersey's common backyard birds just in time for the Great Backyard Bird Count in February!

# ROBOTIC COMPANION PETS DISBURSED TO HOMEBOUND RESIDENTS

## Morris County

During the holiday season, the Morris County Office of Aging, Disabilities, and Community Programming (ADCP) reminds residents of the importance of supporting the senior community and ensuring they feel connected, valued, and cared for during this special time of year.

This year, the ADCP office provided more than 110 "Joy for All" robotic companion pets to qualifying residents and facilities across the county as part of an initiative aimed at alleviating social isolation, loneliness, and cognitive decline among seniors.

The program, which was funded by the Aging American Rescue Plan, allocated 20 robotic companion pets to the Morris County Sheriff's Office, which distributed them to clients enrolled in its Project Lifesaver program. Additionally, 12 pets were donated to the Cornerstone Adult Day Center and each of the county's 12 nutrition sites

"adopted a pet" to keep onsite. 40 pets were distributed through the Nutrition Home Delivered Meals program, and Hope House will distribute another 25 pets.

"When addressing social isolation and dementia care, we wanted something creative approach. The "Joy for All" companion pets have been the focus of rigorous, peer-reviewed studies demonstrating their efficacy to alleviate the many of the effects of loneliness and social isolation," said Christine Hellyer, Christine Hellyer, Director of the ADCP office. "The partnership with the Sheriff's Office to distribute the pets was an essential component of this program. In total, about 120 companion pets were provided to seniors or senior programs that could benefit from them."

To qualify for a companion pet, recipients must be at least 60 years of age, homebound, and either socially isolated or experiencing dementia or a

similar cognitive condition. Designed to mimic real pets, the "Joy for All" animals aim to provide companionship and comfort for those unable to care for live animals.

Sheriff Gannon, who joined in delivering a companion pet to a Project Lifesaver client, emphasized the importance of this program.

"Anytime the Sheriff's Office can provide comfort to those in need, we are going to do it. This simple act of support provides aid to those who are homebound," said Gannon. "We look forward to seeing the tremendous benefits of this program being passed on to a sometimes forgotten population in our community."

The pets respond to motion and touch: the cats will roll over and purr, while the dogs bark and wag their tails. The pets do not come with names, allowing recipients the personal experience of naming their new robotic dog or cat, which they are welcome to keep for as long as they wish.



(above) Morris County Sheriff James Gannon and a Project Lifesaver client with a companion pet cat.



(above) Morris County resident Lynn Biss receives her companion pet dog.



(above) Morris County resident Regina Shekon with her companion pet dog

Photos by Morris County

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# SIEMINSKI THEATER 2025 SEASON STARTERS

The Sieminski Theater is thrilled to announce Act 1 of their 2025 season featuring diverse shows that are sure to deliver something unforgettable for every theatergoer.

**JANUARY 25TH @ 7:30PM  
WOODEN SHIPS BAND**

Opening their season on January 25th @ 7:30pm is WOODEN SHIPS. The WOODEN SHIPS BAND pays homage to the fantastic music of Crosby, Stills & Nash (and Young). The band faithfully reproduces the CSN songbook just like you remember it, but with a twist – the beautiful, intricate vocal harmonies are sung by three women! WOODEN SHIPS BAND is composed of seasoned, well-respected musicians who know how to deliver a great show. The music, having passed the test of time, is classic.

**FEBRUARY 8TH AND 9TH  
THE LIGHT OPERA OF NEW JERSEY  
PUCCINI'S MADAMA BUTTERFLY**

Up next, The Light Opera of New Jersey presents one of the most beloved of all operas, Puccini's Madama Butterfly February 8th and 9th. Madama Butterfly premiered in 1904 and has enthralled audiences ever since. This timeless opera tells the tragic story of Cio-Cio-San, a young Japanese woman who falls in love with an American naval officer, B.F. Pinkerton. As she waits faithfully for his return, her unwavering devotion clashes with the harsh realities of betrayal and abandonment. With its breathtaking melodies and powerful themes of hope, longing, and heartbreak, Madam Butterfly not only captivates opera enthusiasts but also invites newcomers to experience its profound emotional depth.

**FEBRUARY 23RD @ 2:30  
THE NEW JERSEY FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA**

On February 23rd @ 2:30 the New Jersey Festival Orchestra, under the music direction of David Wroe, will present "Vienna: Invitation to the Dance" with Strauss Waltzes and a Mahler's 4th symphony to close the program. Famed Polish Soprano Marcelina Beucher to also join NJFO.

**MARCH 2, 2024, AT 2:30 PM  
NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS**

The New Jersey Symphony Chamber Players will present two programs this season. On March 2, 2025, at 2:30 pm they will present a mix of classical and contemporary compositions spanning a range of vibrant, dynamic styles and showcasing the versatility of a woodwind quintet. The chamber players will return on June 22, 2024, at 2:30 pm, this time with a string quartet. The programs will feature compositions by Black composers from the 18th century through today in a collection of powerful string quartet works.

For more information on all the upcoming shows of our 2025 season visit our website at [www.sieminskitheater.org](http://www.sieminskitheater.org).

Tickets are available online at [www.sieminskitheater.org](http://www.sieminskitheater.org) or by phone at 908-580-3892. Tickets range from \$25.00 to \$90.00 depending on the show with discounts available for students and seniors. The theater is located at 8000 Fellowship Road, Basking Ridge on the campus of Fellowship Village.

Enjoy an exceptional preshow dining experience at Wilson's Tapas Bar Lounge restaurant before the evening performance. Located steps away from the Sieminski Theater, culinary dishes prepared by Fellowship Village's award-winning executive chef feature only the freshest ingredients and highest quality. Make a reservation by calling 908-580-3818 for 5:30 pm for the show date.

**ABOUT THE SIEMINSKI THEATER:**

Bringing a professional performing arts venue with a diverse lineup of entertainment to Basking Ridge and the surrounding communities makes the Sieminski Theater and Somerset County an artistic and cultural destination. We enjoy a newly expanded performance schedule from American Theater Group, Light Opera of New Jersey, New Jersey Festival Orchestra, Trilogy Repertory, and countless national touring groups. Our intimate, award-winning non-profit venue features technical amenities that rival any Broadway theater.

# PANCAKE BREAKFAST JAN. 12

*Stirling Firehouse*

Please join us for our first ever pancake breakfast open to the public will be held on Sunday, Jan. 12 from 8am – Noon in the Stirling firehouse, 321 Somerset St., Stirling. It is prepared by the excellent firefighter chefs of this all volunteer first responder organization and is one of their annual fund raisers.

The menu features homemade pancakes, fresh eggs, sausage patties, breakfast potatoes, toast, juice, hot coffee and tea. Park in the firehouse parking lot and pay at the door. Adults \$15, kids under 12 and senior citizens \$10. Carryout breakfasts are available.

Please come out and support your local firefighter heroes who volunteer their time and expertise 24 hours a day every day of the year! As volunteers they receive no compensation other than the satisfaction of helping Township residents during emergencies.

New members of the fire company are always welcome. Contact the Fire Co. at [stirlingfirecompany@gmail.com](mailto:stirlingfirecompany@gmail.com) for more information and a free tour of the Stirling firehouse where you may meet some firefighters. If you and your group would like a talk about fire prevention and safety as well as a tour of the firehouse, please email us. It's free!

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<p><b>New Jersey Symphony Chamber Players</b> <i>Woodwind Quintet</i> March 2</p>	<p><b>Anything Goes</b> <i>Presented by Trilogy Repertory</i> March 2 – April 6</p>	<p><b>Frontiers</b> <i>A Journey Tribute</i> April 26</p>
<p><b>Doscoteks</b> <i>A Disco &amp; Motown Tribute</i> May 10</p>	<p><b>Broadway in the Burbs</b> <i>Presented by American Theater Group</i> May 18 &amp; 19</p>	<p><b>New Jersey Symphony Chamber Players</b> <i>String Quartet</i> June 22</p>

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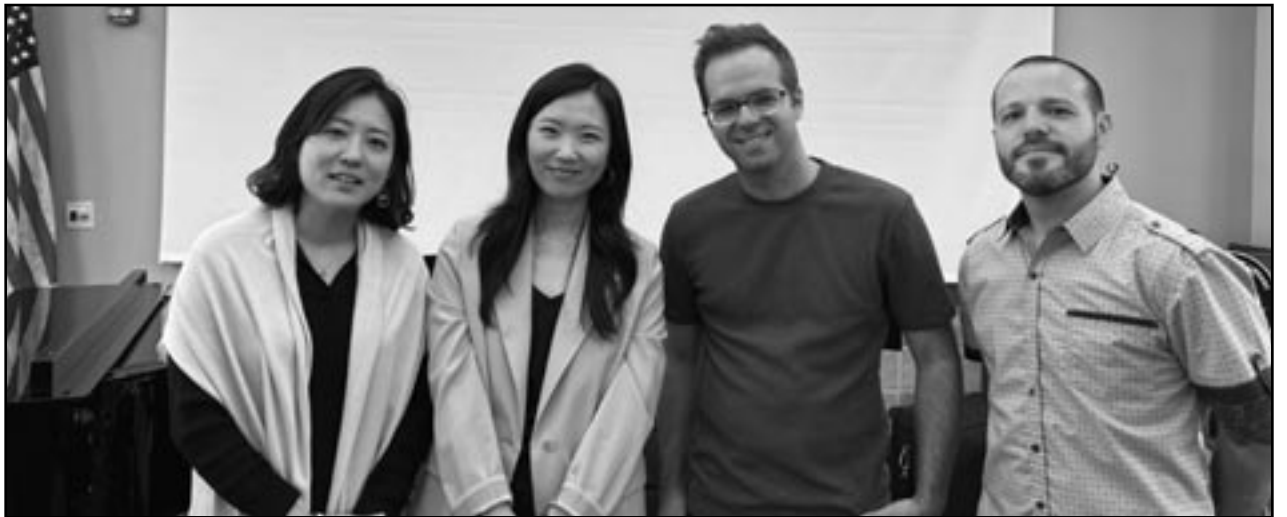
(above) Eli Lee

## THE ELLIE LEE QUARTET PERFORMS IN STIRLING

The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling welcomes the Ellie Lee quartet on January 25, at 7:00 p.m. Admission, as always, is free. A short reception will follow the concert at which attendees may meet the performer. Refreshments will be served. The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling is located at 158 Central Ave.

Ellie Lee is a composer and a jazz pianist based in New York and New Jersey, whose works and performances encompass a variety of styles including jazz, classical, pop, R&B/soul, and gospel. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Classical Piano Performance from the Sookmyung Women's University in Seoul, South Korea. Having been awarded a World Tour

scholarship from the Berklee College of Music in Boston, she moved to the United States and completed her Professional Diploma. While at Berklee College of Music, she studied with George W. Russell Jr, Tim Ray, Alain Mallet, Joanne Brackeen, and Ross Ramsay. Ellie received a Master of Music in Jazz studies Performance from the William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey. She studied with Bill Charlap, a Grammy award winning pianist, and Geoffrey Keezer, a two-time Grammy nominee. Ellie is a recipient of the Roy Meyer Endowed Doner Scholarship at William Paterson University. She now teaches at Felician University in NJ as an Adjunct Professor.



(above) Eli Lee with band members Pureum Jin on sax, Jon Difore on drums and Adrian Moring on Bass.

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# GRIEF FACILITATORS WELCOMED; VOLS SOUGHT

The staff at Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss are so pleased to welcome 10 new facilitators to their wonderful team of volunteers! The new facilitators completed three full days of training where they learned about Dr. Alan Wolfelt's Companioning Model practiced at Imagine, and role-played situations in which they used their new facilitation skills assisted by members of the Imagine staff.

One of the participants in the training shared a bit about her experience saying: "I was amazed by the way a group of strangers could feel so safe in a non-judgmental environment to share their most vulnerable feelings and stories." Another spoke about the Imagine staff who facilitated the training sharing: "All three facilitators were more than generous of heart and spirit."

Each of the new volunteers is now facilitating a grief support group on one of Imagine's Nights of Support in Mountainside or Newark. The staff at Imagine are so grateful to welcome this new team of volunteers! One of the largest hurdles the staff at Imagine faces in meeting the demand for

their services is finding compassionate individuals like those above, who can dedicate their time and talents to volunteer.

If you would like to explore the possibility of joining Imagine's incredible team of volunteers, please visit their website at [imagine-nj.org](http://imagine-nj.org) to complete their interest form, or contact Imagine's Communications and Volunteer Engagement Manager, Val Stierhoff at [val@imagine-nj.org](mailto:val@imagine-nj.org). Additional trainings are planned for youth facilitators in January, and for adults in February and May 2025.

Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss 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@imagine-nj.org](mailto:info@imagine-nj.org) or visit our website at [imagine-nj.org](http://imagine-nj.org).

# KARATE STUDENTS TEST FOR RANK

Chu's Academy of Martial Arts held a rank advancement testing on Friday, December 6th at their academy in Gillette. Intermediate students test for rank approximately every 3-4 months until reaching the level of red belt, when the testing cycle then shifts to every 6 months. This shift is "due to the advanced level of knowledge, understanding of philosophy, and proficiency in technique that is required for red belts as they continue on their path toward reaching the advanced level of Cho Dan" (known in many styles as first degree blackbelt), said Michelle Cavett, co-owner, 4th level dan, and certified master instructor. Cavett, who has been teaching at Chu's Academy of Martial Arts since 2001 is a practitioner of the martial art of Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan, a traditional Korean martial art whose mission is to advance human relations through respect, honesty, courage and other honorable traits. "Soo Bahk Do provides access to courage, concentration, and self-control", said Lydia Chu, co-owner, 6th level dan, and certified master instructor. "And Chu's Academy allows them a safe place to practice these attributes to fully integrate them into their lives", said Chu, who is also a math teacher at Watchung Hills Regional High School.

Chu's Academy of Martial arts has been training and developing students in the art of Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan since it was first founded in 1982.

To learn more, visit their website at [karate4peace.com](http://karate4peace.com) or call (908)647-4194.



(above, l-r) Participants in Imagine's recent facilitator training. Back Row: Indira Jagoo, Imagine's Newark Clinical Program Director; Cynthia White; Zeinab Fattahi; Virginia Farnum; Arlette Rodriguez; Tikeisha Johnson; Rena Jordan, Imagine's Chief Development Officer; Sonia Nunez, Imagine's Bilingual Program Manager; Ruth Lushen; Front Row: Abigail Preece, Imagine's Clinical Program Supervisor; Tracy Maitin; Tèanna Johnson and Caroline Hislip

Courtesy photo



(above, back, l-r) Lucas Gesualdo, 11, of Stirling and London Hodge, 12, of Basking Ridge. (middle, l-r) Andrew Masini, certified master instructor and 4th level dan, of Ledgewood and Lydia Chu, co-owner, certified master instructor and 6th level dan of Millington. (front, l-r) Henry Beckerman, 7, of Millington and Amaris Chan, 6, of Warren.

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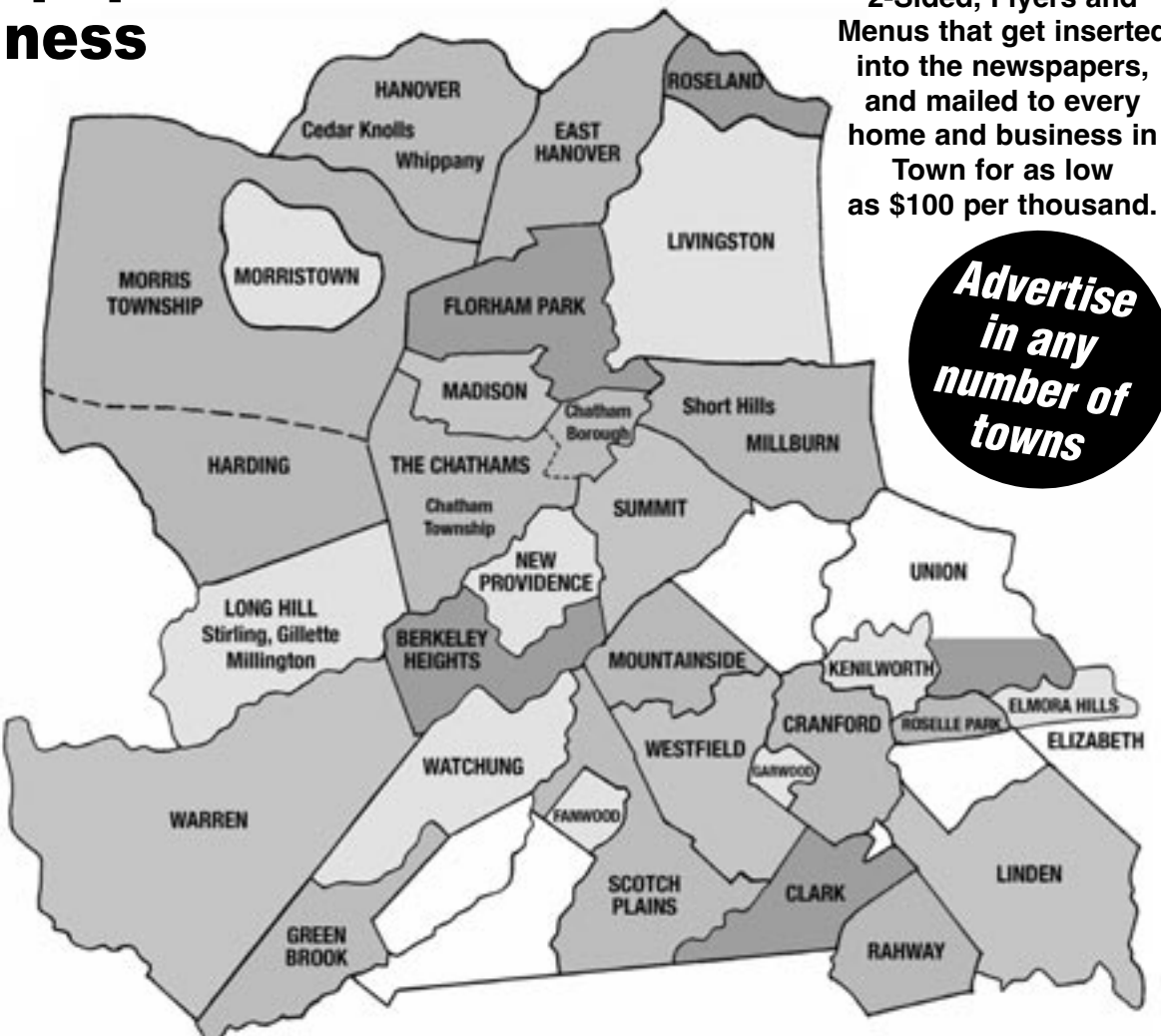
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## AN UNUSUAL GOOSE REHABBED AND RELEASED

### 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](mailto:info@theraptortrust.org). To report an injured wild bird call 908-647-2353.

## 33 TREES PLANTED IN LONG HILL IN 2024

### Long Hill Shade Tree Commission

The Long Hill Shade Tree Commission would like to wish Long Hill residents a Happy New Year.

In 2024, the Shade Tree Commission ran 2 Challenge Grants authorized by the Township Committee. Residents selected and paid for a tree, which was planted by the Department of Public Works.

In the spring, we planted 5 Red Maples, 1 native Dogwood, 2 Linden and 1 Pin Oak. In the fall, we planted 4 Black Tupelos, 2 Redbuds, and 4 Dogwoods.

The Township Committee also initiated the '20 Tree Project'. The Shade Tree Commission chose a neighborhood with limited tree coverage and offered residents the opportunity to have a tree planted on their property in the right of way. Passaic Street in Stirling was selected.

The trees selected and planted for this project were: 2 Weeping Willows, 4 Kousa Dogwoods, 4 Red Buds, a Black tupelo and 3 Maples.

In total, we planted 33 trees in Long Hill in 2024.

Please watch out for the notice of the Spring Challenge Grant in March and the Autumn Challenge Grant in August. We will also keep you apprised of the next area selected for the 2025 '20 Tree Project'.

We look forward to working with you in 2025 to protect and enhance our urban forest.

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