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(above) Westfield's Franklin School Cub Scout Pack 172 made cards and decorations for the troops serving both at home and overseas.

Courtesy photo

Cub Scout Pack 172

Westfield's Franklin School Cub Scout Pack 172 made cards and decorations for the troops serving both at home and overseas. The Cub Scouts are one of the many organizations and classes throughout Westfield, Cranford, Kenilworth, and Scotch Plains-Fanwood that participated in making more than 4,000 handmade cards, ornaments and decorations that were sent all over the world by several organizations including the American Legion in Westfield and local mom, Colby Sheppard.

In addition to making cards and crafts, they learned how our "Freedom isn't Free" and how members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard have dedicated

their lives to protecting us, all over the world... not just today, but over the decades (and more).

During the event, they listened to how the troops and veterans appreciate all of the handwritten letters and saw pictures of "real soldiers" (standing in front of planes used in wartime).

A big thank you to this generous community, who over the past 16 years, has supported Mrs. Sheppard in collecting over 47,000 cards, letters, ornaments to help our troops' holidays be a little brighter, and feel appreciated! And thank you to all the schools, scouts, churches, and individuals that participated in brightening the troops' lives this holiday season.

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MAKING WESTFIELD MERRY AND BRIGHT

The Garden Club of Westfield members Westfield Municipal Building.

They also delivered wreaths to the decorated and hung holiday wreaths on the Department of Public Works and the two firehouses. Courtesy photo



(above, l-r) Cary Prisch, Kathleen Young, Margaret Allen, Nancy Brandt and Rosemary Shire.





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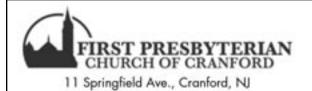
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SOPHIA BASALDUA RECEIVES NATIONWIDE RECOGNITION FOR ART AND DESIGN



(above) Westfield High School 12th grade Sophia Basaldua has been selected among 50 students nationwide to have artwork featured in College Board's 2024 AP Art and Design Exhibit, a digital presentation of exceptional student creativity. Her work was chosen from over 80,000 submitted art portfolios.

Photo by Amanda Procaccino

Westfield Public Schools

Westfield High School 12th grade Sophia Basaldua has been selected among 50 students nationwide to have artwork featured in College Board's 2024 AP Art and Design Exhibit, a digital presentation of exceptional student creativity. Her work was chosen from over 80,000 submitted art portfolios.

"This year's exhibit features high-quality student artwork showcasing diverse ideas, styles, materials, and processes," writes Dr. Rebecca Stone-Danahy, Director of AP Art and Design at College Board. "The 2023 AP Art and Design Exhibit has had over 250,000 views and is used as a teaching and learning tool in visual art classrooms globally."

The school district's Supervisor of K-12 Visual and Performing Arts Shawna Longo says she was thrilled to hear the news.

"This extraordinary achievement is a testament to Sophia's exceptional artistic talent, creativity, and hard work," says Longo. "I am proud to have Sofia represent the Westfield Visual & Performing Arts Department. Her selection is a significant honor that reflects the high quality of our arts program. We are incredibly proud of her accomplishments and look forward to seeing her continued growth as an artist."

College Board plans to publish the digital exhibit in February.



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NYC MARATHON TEAM RAISES \$26K FOR GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP IMAGINE

Dr. Konika Bose, a long time Westfield, NJ resident, took to the streets of New York City on Sunday, November 3rd, as she ran the TCS New York City Marathon in honor of her late brother, Kanishka Paul to support Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss. Dr. Bose, along with fellow runners, helped raise over \$26,000 for the nonprofit organization, which provides grief support to children and families.



(above) Dr. Konika Bose ran the TCS NYC Marathon to Support Imagine.

Courtesy photo

the

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2025 CALL FOR VOLS

Don't miss your last chance to submit an application for upcoming vacancies on various boards, commissions, and committees for 2025 on the town website: westfieldnj.gov/volunteer

"Thanks to the residents who have already applied to renew their expiring terms and to those seeking volunteer positions for the first time. We're always impressed by the talent and eagerness of our residents to help the community, and we are grateful to those who step up to devote their time and energy to benefit us all." – Mayor Shelley Brindle



Dr. Bose was part of a dedicated team of runners, including Caden Mika and Maddy Choate from New York, and Sunny Chang from Georgia, who raced through the five boroughs of New York City. While Florida's Michael Becker was unable to race due to an injury, he was still a significant contributor to the fundraising efforts.

Reflecting on the experience, Dr. Bose shared, "To say this was the experience of a lifetime is an understatement. I felt my brother was cheering me on the entire time, putting his hand on my shoulder and coaxing me through the course. After crossing the finish line, I simply let go and cried as I walked out of Central Park."

Imagine will find out in January if they will be selected as an official charity partner for the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon. If chosen, the organization will begin accepting applications for the 2025 marathon team in late February or early March. If you are interested in applying for a spot

Dr. Bose was part of a dedicated team of on the 2025 team, you can begin checking their nners, including Caden Mika and Maddy website, Imagineni org in late January.

Imagine would like to extend a heartfelt thank you and congratulations to all members of the 2024 TCS NYC Marathon Team. Their dedication and fundraising efforts have been instrumental in supporting children and families coping with loss to foster resiliency and emotional well-being for all those who grieve.

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@imaginenj.org or visit our website at imaginenj.org.

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VOLUNTEERS MODEL CLOTHES FOR CHARITY

Westfield Service League

Twenty volunteers from the Westfield Service League (WSL) put on a fashion show for the residents of Cranford Senior Housing on Friday, November 29th. All the clothing and accessories modeled was then available for sale.

"We started the Fashion Show as a community outreach effort and now it is an annual event that residents look forward to," said Michele Williams, founder and co-chair of the show. "The goal has always been to provide entertainment to the seniors while also giving them an opportunity to shop for inexpensive items in their own environment, since the majority of them lack access to transportation."

Beyond the fashion show, an additional thirty WSL volunteers set up a Boutique on the premises where items such as jewelry, toys,

scarves, handbags, hats and gloves, and holiday décor were purchased. Almost all items were \$5.00 or less. Barbara Cantor and Patty Tata cochaired this part of the event and worked with the volunteers to sell the merchandise.

"This event is wonderful on so many levels. The seniors have fun, they can buy holiday gifts for their families and something for themselves, and we raise money for the non-profits that the WSL supports," said Barbara Cantor.

"For the second year in a row, the seniors received a special gift from Martin Jewelers in Cranford. We are grateful to owner Ellen Ramer for providing these gifts," said Patty Tata.

"I'm thrilled with the relationship we have with the Westfield Service League and thankful to Michele Williams for coordinating the Annual Fashion Show and Boutique. I also want to thank

all the volunteers who help to make this such a special event for our residents each year." said Cindy Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Cranford Senior Housing.

The WSL Thrift & Consignment Shop is located at 114 Elmer Street in Westfield. All net proceeds from the fashion show, the boutique, and the shops are given out in grants to local nonprofits that the WSL supports. Last year, the WSL donated more than \$90,000 to 41 organizations.

The shop is open Tuesday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information about donations or volunteering, call 908-233-2530 for the Thrift Shop or 908-232-1223 for the Consignment Shop. Visit thewestfieldserviceleague.org and follow the organization on Facebook and Instagram.

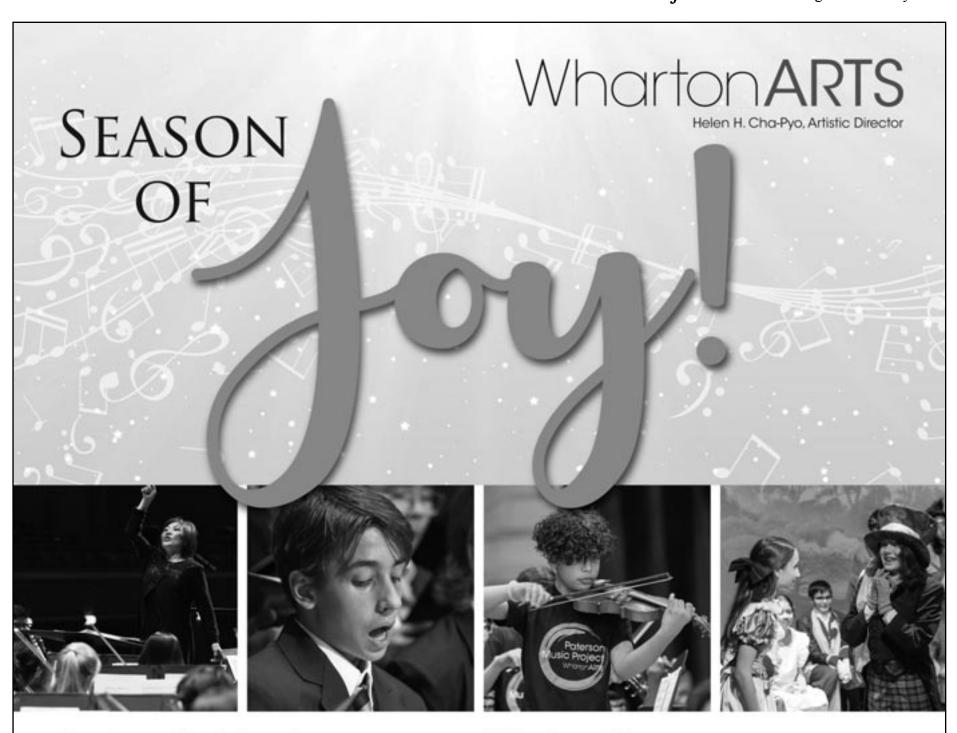




(above, l-r) WSL volunteers, Susan McClelland and Jan Herringer, walk the runway to raise funds for local non-profits.







New Jersey Youth Symphony Concert for Peace with Violins of Hope January 12

Wharton Arts in the Community
Piano & Cello Faculty Recital January 26

Performing Arts School
The Moors January 24-February 2

Paterson Music Project

Black History Month Concerts February 1

New Jersey Youth Chorus Men That Matter February 23

New Jersey Youth Chorus Just Us Girls March 8

Wharton Arts in the Community Jazz Vespers March 23

Wharton Arts Day March 16 Wharton Arts invites students ages 4-18, as well as adults of all ages, for transformative performing arts education programs designed to hone their skills and nurture their personal growth. The depth and breadth of our offerings is unmatched in the Garden State. Our community transcends backgrounds and beliefs: we are united through the universal language of the performing arts.

Our umbrella organization, **Wharton Arts**, encompasses four distinct programs, each founded to advance music and performing arts education and engagement: New Jersey Youth Chorus, New Jersey Youth Symphony, Paterson Music Project, and the Performing Arts School. Join us this Season of Joy for life-changing performing arts experiences.

Tickets and more information at WhartonArts.org

2024 GREEN TEAM COLLABORATION AWARD WESTFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL

The Westfield Public School District and Town of Westfield are recipients of the 2024 Green Team Collaboration Award from Sustainable Jersey for Schools. This award recognizes the efforts of school and municipal green teams in creating and promoting sustainable practices in the schools and community.

The Westfield Green Team and district Green Team were recognized for their joint educational initiatives, including:

Launching a food composting program at Jefferson Elementary School, environmental field studies for Westfield High School science students, planning, planting, and maintaining school gardens, and the design and future development of a bike oasis at the high school, inspired by two similar structures in downtown Westfield.

"We are honored to have received this award alongside the Westfield Green Team. Westfield is an outstanding community to live and learn in," says Westfield Public Schools Green Team Chairperson and K-12 Science Supervisor Tom Paterson. "Our strength lies in our people and the support we give each other. The schools and the town exemplify this partnership."

"The Town of Westfield is proud to advance its commitment to sustainability through these initiatives," says Westfield Town Administrator Jim Gildea. "We thank the Westfield Public Schools Green Team and Town of Westfield Green Team for their work to implement these

The Westfield Public School District and Town important improvements to benefit district Westfield are recipients of the 2024 Green students and the community at large."

During an October 23 ceremony, members of the district administration and Board of Education accepted the award, highlighted by a video showcasing the collaborative efforts. The video is posted on the district YouTube Channel at westfieldnjk12.org.

Sustainable Jersey for Schools is a certification program for public schools in New Jersey. It was launched by Sustainable Jersey, an organization that provides tools, training and financial incentives to support and reward municipalities and schools as they pursue sustainability programs. To date, 1,191 schools are participating in the program.



(above) Board of Education President Robert Benacchio (third from left) and members of the Westfield Public Schools administrative team accepted the 2024 Green Team Collaboration Award on behalf of the school district and the Town of Westfield during an awards ceremony on October 23, 2024.

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MARCHING BAND WRAPS UP FALL SEASON

wrapped up its 2024 fall season with impressive performances. The Marching Blue Devils placed 1st in their division at the Scotch Plains and Piscataway competitions, while being named Grand Champion for the highest score among all competing bands. In East Brunswick,

The Westfield High School Marching Band they placed 2nd in their division and 2nd overall. The band finished the season, performing in the New Jersey Marching Band Directors Association State Championships where they placed 3rd in Class AAAA, and received the 4th highest score of the over 30 high school bands in attendance.



Photos by WHS Marching Blue Devils

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LIFT WHILE YOU CLIMB AWARD

Westfield Public Schools

Three Westfield High School students have been recognized with the Lift While You Climb Award, in honor of the late WHS principal Dr. Derrick Nelson.

Nelson, who died in 2019 from complications suffered while donating bone marrow to a boy he didn't know in France, once said: "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 for Fall 2024, the three recipients of the Lift While You Climb Award are 12th grader Ethan Selvers, and 11th graders Jose Flores Rodriguez and Chloe Martin.

Selvers - nominated by the WHS Counseling

Department - is described as going "above and beyond to help his school community." The counseling team writes: "As part of Model United Nations, Counseling Ambassadors, and other community service projects outside of school, Ethan shows selflessness and a genuine interest in helping others."

"Jose is a new student at WHS from Panama," writes Spanish teacher Pilar Vasconez Urigelz in her letter of nomination. "In a short time, he has demonstrated a very positive attitude towards the school and community."

In her letter of nomination, French teacher Samantha Carrington says Martin is "wellrounded and profoundly dedicated to helping the community. She volunteers at Children's Specialized Hospital and for a rescue squad."

The award is sponsored by the WHS Counseling Department twice during the academic year, in the fall and the spring.



(above) Pictured with K-12 Director of Counseling Falynn Balassone (left) and WHS Acting Principal Tom Paterson (right), (l-r) Ethan Selvers, Chloe Martin, and Jose Flores Rodriguez are recipients of the "Lift As You Climb" award, in honor of the late WHS principal Dr. Derrick

Photo by Westfield Public Schools



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ELLEN DEVIN SWORN IN AS CASA VOLUNTEER FOR FOSTER YOUTH

Child Focus

Ellen Devin of Westfield proudly took the oath as a volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) on Nov. 1, 2024 along with fellow trainees Deirdre Monroy of Scotch Plains, Kathleen McMahon of Cranford, Lydia Hernandez-Walford of Bayonne, Esther Paden of Linden, and La Wrence Burroughs and Tisa Joyner-Nance of Rahway. Union County Superior Court Judge Gavin I. Handwerker presided over the swearing-in.

These volunteers, equipped to champion the best interests of child victims of abuse and neglect, join a team of hundreds of devoted advocates with CASA of Passaic and Union Counties. Child Focus, the nonprofit organization that operates this CASA program, aims to provide dedicated life-changing advocacy and support services to each of the more than 500 children living in foster care through no fault of their own, across both counties.

"These seven dedicated individuals have made an invaluable commitment to ensure that every child's voice is heard and valued. We are proud to welcome them to the Child Focus family," said Erica Fischer-Kaslander, Executive Director of Child Focus. "Each CASA volunteer brings unique perspectives and strengths that impact the lives of those who need it most. There is a waitlist of children awaiting an advocate, and we urgently need community members to step up to serve. We encourage anyone interested in supporting vulnerable children to attend an upcoming information session to learn how they can make a difference."

No specific qualifications are required to become a CASA volunteer; Child Focus provides comprehensive training to equip volunteers with the skills needed to advocate effectively. Volunteers commit to visiting their assigned children at least once a month and collaborate with caregivers, educators, and other key figures in the child's life to make informed recommendations to the court.

Child Focus urges the community to enroll in CASA winter training to support growing list of abused and neglected children awaiting an advocate. This winter, Child Focus will hold two expedited CASA training sessions, each of which cover all necessary material over two- and threeweek periods, as an alternative to the traditional six-week course.

To learn more about becoming a CASA volunteer visit casapassaicunion.org/infosession.

ABOUT CHILD FOCUS:

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



(above) Westfield's Ellen Devin Sworn In as CASA Volunteer for Foster Youth. To learn more about becoming a CASA volunteer visit casapassaicunion.org/info-session.

Courtesy photo

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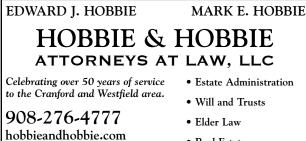
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ESSAY CONTEST FOR FEMALE SOPHOMORES

College Woman's Club of Westfield

The College Woman's Club (CWC) of Westfield is excited to invite female sophomore students to participate in an inspiring essay contest: "Write a Letter to Your Younger Self." This contest encourages students to reflect on their personal experiences and share five valuable lessons about success and failure, along with meaningful messages they would offer their younger selves.

The contest is open to female sophomore students attending public, private, parochial, or home school. Applicants must be current residents of Westfield. Submission guidelines are as follows: Essays must be typed and limited to 500 words or less. All submissions must be original work.

The winner will receive a \$150 Amazon gift card. You will receive recognition on the CWC website and in local media outlets. This will be an opportunity to showcase this achievement on future college applications.

Please include your full name, email address, and cell phone number on your application.

The deadline for submission is

Tuesday, March 4, 2025 at 3 p.m. Email entries to cwc.westfield@gmail.com.

Since 1917, the College Woman's Club of Westfield has been dedicated to promoting higher education for women. Its primary mission is awarding scholarships to Westfield's young women, focusing on academic excellence, leadership, and financial need. Beyond scholarships, the CWC hosts an active calendar of events, including guest speakers, interest groups, and fundraisers.

For more information about the contest or the College Woman's Club, visit cwclubwestfield.org.

Take this opportunity to reflect, write, and share your journey to success while competing for recognition and rewards!

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF 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 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.



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curious about what people are talking about when they speak of having faith or being spiritual? Are you seeking peace of mind, of heart of soul?

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Alpha is for everybody that wants to discuss

Do you consider yourself spiritual? Are you going? How do I attain peace of mind, heart, and soul? Whether you are young or old, have faith or are atheist or agnostic, Alpha provides a safe environment for exploring our big questions about life.

> We begin by sharing a meal together and getting to know each other. We watch a video together then break into small groups for uninhibited discussion about what is on our minds.

The series runs for 12 weeks on Monday seeking answers to life's big questions. Why are nights beginning at 7:30 p.m. and ending at 9:00 we here? Is this all there is to life? Where are we 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

To register go onto IHMParish.net. If you have any questions, please call 908-889-2100.

Alpha Winter/Spring 2025 13-week program returns

Monday February 3, 2025

7:00 PM LIVE SCREENING + DINNER

@ The Nazareth Center Immaculate Heart of Mary Church 1571 South Martine Ave. Scotch Plains, NJ More details available at www.ihmparish.net/alpha



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OVER 100 FOOD GIFT CARDS DISTRIBUTED

Darielle Walsh, President, Optimist Club Members of the Westfield Optimist Club and Rotary Club demonstrated their commitment to community service this holiday season by providing holiday food to Westfield area families and local food pantries. Due to current health and safety concerns and food restrictions. ShopRite food gift cards are distributed to families and

The Holiday Food distribution program has been an annual community service project for the Optimist Club of Westfield for the past 35 years. This project is made possible through the generosity and funding from the Optimist Club and Rotary Club of Westfield, and contributions from members, friends and local organizations

food pantries instead of food baskets.

that sponsor food gift cards.

Over one hundred food gift cards were delivered to local families, the Westfield Food Pantry, Mobile Meals, Presbyterian Church Agape Food Program, Union College of New Jersey (Union County College) Student Assistance Food Pantry and the Saint Joseph's Social Service Center Food Pantry. Thank you to the members of the Westfield Optimist Club and Rotary Club who contribute to the project and deliverer the gift cards.

The involvement of volunteers and local organizations ensures the success of this annual program, which reflects the mission of helping those in need and assisting the less fortunate members of our community.



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Motorcycling through Mongolia-C. McCormack @7pm Artist-in-Residence 1/8, 15, 22, 29 Kiyanna Lawrence @3-5pm demonstrates her art MLK and WML Book @7-8:30pm Discussion Part 1: King A Life Beyond Divorce Support @7-8:30pm Group w/M. Schwartzman 1/10, 17, 24, 31 The Fundamentals of Tai Chi by Gang Huang @3-4pm 1/11 Muslim Heritage Event @ 9:30am-5pm Making College Affordable 7-8:30pm Via Zoom 1/16 Crafterdark-Work on your own craft projects @ 6:30-8pm 1/16 Racial Healing Circle @ 6:30-8:30pm 550 E. Broad Street 908.789.4090 Register or find more information at wmlnj.org

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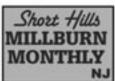
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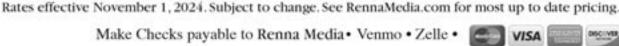
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The Raptor Trust

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

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habitats. Look for them in estuaries, mudflats, and salt marshes, 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.

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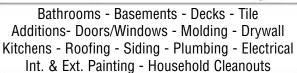
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