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JOE COVINO THANKFUL FOR HIS LIFESAVING TRANSPLANT

Joe Covino, a resident of Union, NJ, is celebrating his lifesaving liver transplant, which took place on November 4, 2024. Just a few months after his surgery, Joe's remarkable recovery serves as an inspiring testament to the power of organ and tissue donation and his determination to embrace his second chance at life.

Joe's journey to transplant was a challenging one. Diagnosed in 2015 with Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC), a rare autoimmune disease that attacks the bile ducts and ultimately leads to liver failure, Joe endured years of fatigue, debilitating cramps, periods of jaundice, swelling and worsening symptoms. His quality of life was poor. A pivotal moment came while traveling abroad to celebrate his 60th birthday. While visiting Paris with his wife and family, Joe experienced a medical emergency that revealed his condition had reached a critical point. After an emergency flight home, Joe was hospitalized and listed for a transplant.

"When I was told I had only months to live without a transplant, it was a shock," said Joe. "On the outside, I didn't look that sick, but my liver was failing, and time was running out. It was so scary, but I knew I had to fight if I wanted to live."

Joe's background gave his experience an even deeper meaning. As a former NJ Sharing Network employee and clinical research manager specializing in rare diseases, Joe had long appreciated the importance of organ and tissue donation. "You never think you'll be the one in need of a transplant, but life puts these challenges in your path," said Joe.

Joe's transplant at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City was made possible thanks to the selfless decision of a donor and their family. Just weeks after his surgery, Joe is already experiencing a renewed sense of health and vitality.

"When you're sick all the time, it becomes your norm, and you forget what living fully feels like. Now, I wake up every day excited for what's ahead," said Joe. "I'm so grateful to my donor and their family for giving me this incredible gift. It's given me a second chance, and I want to use it to inspire others to consider registering as organ and tissue donors to leave a legacy behind as the ultimate gift to others in need."

Joe and his wife, Lucy, a nurse at Hackensack University Medical Center, are looking forward to traveling again and making new memories. Joe also hopes to connect with his donor's family one day to express his heartfelt gratitude directly. For now, Joe is focused on sharing his story to raise awareness and encourage others to register as organ and tissue donors.

"This experience has taught me that life is a precious gift. I am forever grateful to wife, my family, and all my friends that supported me, prayed for me, and cared for me," said Joe. "Always remember to live life with joy - take a vacation, have a



(above) Joe Covino and family

(left) Joe and Lucy Covino



Photos courtesy of NJ Sharing Network

great meal, kiss a loved one or simply take some time today to do something that brings you happiness!"

According to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), over 100,000 Americans are waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant, with nearly 4,000 of them in New Jersey. One organ and tissue donor can save eight lives and enhance the lives of over 75 others. However, the opportunity to give the gift of life is extremely rare - not everyone who registers as a donor is able to donate after they pass away. In fact, less than 1% of all deaths meet the specific medical criteria to be an organ donor. This underscores the pressing need for more registered donors.

To learn more about organ donation, get involved, and join the National Donate Life Registry, visit NJSharingNetwork.org.

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PINEWOOD DERBY RESULTS

Submitted by Daniel Bernier

Cub Scout Pack 23 held its annual Pinewood Derby on February 7. Working with a parent or other adult, each Scout shaped a block of wood into a race car, painted and decorated it, and then competed with it against other Cubs on a 30-foot long 6-lane track. There was a lot of excitement and enthusiasm among the Cub Scouts who participated.

The overall winners for the Pack were as follows:

- 1st place – Gavin Jones
- 2nd place – Noah Bustamante
- 3rd place (tie) – Isaac Pedreiras
and Athan Skamangas

The Best Design award, as chosen by his fellow Cub Scouts, went to Joseph Cueva-Cruzado. Congratulations to all!

If you know a child who is anywhere between a Kindergartener and a high school senior, please encourage them to get in on the fun of Scouting. The Scouting program instills character, good citizenship and physical fitness in youth through outdoor activities such as campouts and hikes, involvement in community activities, and just plain FUN!

Cub Scout Pack 23 provides activities and training for boys and girls in Kindergarten through fifth grades. Boy Scout Troop 23 is for boys who are at least 11 years old or graduated from the fifth grade. New members are welcome at any time, all year round.

For more details, please contact Dan Bernier, Scoutmaster, at 908-451-1948 or webfootroop@gmail.com.



(above) The Cub Scouts of Pack 23 at St. Genevieve's Church built racing cars out of blocks of wood and raced against each other on February 7 at the exciting annual Pinewood Derby.

Spirit of UNION

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JUNIOR LEAGUE OF ELIZABETH-PLAINFIELD

SCOUTS EARN GOLD NUGGETS IN ANNUAL KLONDIKE DERBY

Submitted by Daniel Bernier

Many years ago, men raced by means of dogs and sledges across the frozen wastes of Alaska in search of gold. The Scouts BSA program capitalized on this theme and developed the Klondike Derby as an exciting annual event. Scouts pull a sled full of equipment over a field course in the Watchung Reservation to simulated towns, where the Scouts are challenged to solve problems using Scouting skills, such as firebuilding, first aid, and orienteering.

On February 1, the Flaming Arrow Patrol of Boy Scout Troop 23, sponsored by St. Genevieve's Church of Elizabeth, competed against 27 other sled teams in the Pioneer District Klondike Derby. Under the direction of Patrol Leader Alex Banic, the Scouts earned 102 gold nuggets, out of a possible 120 points, by solving 7 problems and cooking a hot lunch.

Troop 23 welcomes any boys who are at least 11 years old or graduated from the fifth grade to join them on upcoming camping trips and hikes, a 4-day trip on Memorial Day weekend, and a week-long summer camp in July. Contact Scoutmaster Dan Bernier at 908-451-1948 or webfoottroop@gmail.com for more details.



(above) The Scouts of Troop 23's Flaming Arrow Patrol pulled their sled to 7 locations in the Watchung Reservation to earn 102 gold nuggets in the Klondike derby.

Courtesy photo

The Junior League of Elizabeth-Plainfield (JLEP) is pleased to announce that in 2025 we will be awarding three \$4,000 scholarships to college bound women who reside in Union County and demonstrate a passion for volunteerism.

The JLEP believes that volunteerism is a vital force in our community, and we support young women who share our passion by awarding scholarships to college-bound high school seniors who have demonstrated a commitment to volunteer activities. The scholarships will be awarded in May 2025.

To be considered for a scholarship, applicants are asked to complete the application form, write a 300-to-400-word essay about their volunteer experiences, and provide two letters of recommendation. The application form is available on our website, jlepnj.org, or can also be obtained by sending a request via email to scholarship@jlepnj.org or by leaving a message

with your address and/or email address at 908-709-1177.

The deadline for submitting applications is April 4, 2025. There will be a formal presentation of the scholarships to the recipients at the JLEP's Annual Dinner on May 21, 2025.

To find out more about the League's scholarship program or about how to join as a member, please contact the League at 908-709-1177, via email at scholarship@jlepnj.org, or visit our website at jlepnj.org.

ABOUT THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF ELIZABETH PLAINFIELD

The Junior League of Elizabeth Plainfield is a chapter of the Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc. and is an organization of women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.

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ANNUAL YOUTH FISHING DERBY - APRIL 12

The Newark Bait and Fly Casting Club Annual Youth Fishing Derby will be held on Saturday, April 12, 2025 at Echo Lake Park in Westfield, NJ. The event is free for children under 16, and \$10 for adults who wish to participate. Sign up is early morning 7:30/8:00 a.m. and throughout the event.

Tagged Fish will be stocked that day so the children can see them get stocked. Prizes are awarded for different species of fish. This is an ongoing event until May 3 so if a child cannot fish that day they can sign up and send in their tag if they catch a tagged fish up to the deadline that tags will be received.

You may donate and sponsor a fish for this event. Download our form online at nbfcc.org, we can mail one to you, or stop in at Ponzio's, 211 Union Ave., Scotch Plains, NJ.

The Newark Bait and Fly Casting Club was founded in 1907 and remains the oldest fishing club in the nation. We are listed on Amazon Smile and are a recognized 501(c)3 nonprofit. We provide outings to support veterans, adults and children as well as people with disabilities which focus on environmental education, fishing knowledge and practice. We are always looking for new members, donations, and volunteers if anyone would like to get involved. Our monthly meetings are held at the Kenilworth VFW, located at 33 S. 21st St., Kenilworth, NJ, on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. (except July

and August). There is no fee to attend a meeting. For more information visit nbfcc.org or contact Bob Jones: BJonesJRNJ@hotmail.com, 908-325-6657.



(above) The Newark Bait and Fly casting Club Annual Youth Fishing Derby will be held on Saturday, April 12, 2025 at Echo Lake Park in Westfield, NJ. - Photo from 2019 Derby

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COUNTY EXCELLENCE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION CELEBRATED THEIR GRAND RE-OPENING AND 90TH ANNIVERSARY ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025.

County Excellence Federal Credit Union, located at 16 E Lincoln Avenue in Roselle Park, celebrated their Grand Re-opening and 90th anniversary on February 6, 2025.

Established in 1935, as a Credit Union for teachers, we are now a community charter. County Excellence FCU now offers financial services to anyone who lives, works (or regularly conducts business in), worships, attend school in Hunterdon, Somerset, and Union County, New Jersey.

Judite Pinho (President/CEO) during the ceremony extended her gratitude and appreciation to all the members, Board of Directors and staff for their support and loyalty throughout the years.

County Excellence FCU is very proud to not only work in but for the communities it serves. The partnership that we have with The Chamber of Commerce and Kean University helps us to give back to the communities we serve.

To commemorate 90 Years, we are running a promotion for every new member we will give

back to The Arc foundation. For 90 days the new members can earn \$45.00. Visit www.countyexfcu.org, call 908-245-0173 or stop into one of our branches for more information.



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*Offer valid for new accounts opened between 2/6/2025 through 5/7/2025. County Excellence will deposit \$45 into your share savings account once the new member has held a \$100.00 balance for the first 90 consecutive days.



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MARCH EVENTS AT THE UNION PUBLIC LIBRARY

For more information about our adult programs and resources, and to register for events, please our website at uplnj.org, or call Adult Services at 908-851-5450, extension 3, or visit us at the Main Library at 1060 Stuyvesant Ave. and the Vauxhall Branch at 123 Hilton Ave. Registration is required for all events.

12 Million Black Voices (Vauxhall Library)

Richard Wright, Edwin Rosskam, & the Golden Age of Documentary Photo Books

Mon. 3/3 @ 6:00 pm

Join educator Gary Saretsky, for his lecture on "12 Million Black Voices," a 1941 photodocumentary book authored by Richard Wright. Photos were originally taken by the Farm Security Administration. 12 Million Black Voices, first published in 1941, combines best-selling author Richard Wright's poetic history of African Americans with 90 photographs made for a federal agency, the Farm Security Administration (FSA), during the Great Depression.

2025 Mock Hall of Fame Election:

A Tribute to Legendary Iconic Negro and Pre-Negro Leaguers (Virtual on Zoom)

Wed. 3/5 @ 6:00 pm

Please join us online as baseball enthusiast, David Shuffler, discusses how the selection committee continues to lag behind in their selections from Negro League Baseball. He will also share a list of players during that time who deserve to be shrined in Cooperstown and how we can participate in a mock vote.

Register for Zoom link.

Book Talk with Vauxhall Author Mwatabu "Baba" Okantah (Vauxhall Library)

Mon. 3/10 @ 6:00 pm

Please join us as local Vauxhall author, Mwatabu "Baba" Okantah, holds a book talk on his new title, A Black Voice in the Wilderness.

Okantah holds a BA in English and African Studies from Kent State University (1976) and an MA in Creative Writing from the City College of New York (1982). He is an

Associate Professor and Poet-in-Residence in the Department of Pan-African Studies at Kent State University. Okantah also serves at the the Center of Pan-African Culture and the Department's Study Abroad in Ghana Program.

Build Your Balance (Main Library)

Wed. 2/12 @ 10:30 am

It's more important than ever to avoid the risks of falling as we age. Through gentle strength exercises, and stepping strategies, learn to keep your body balanced in different situations. Give this popular class a try!

Library Karaoke! (Vauxhall Library)

Wed. 3/12 @ 6:00 pm

Do you think you can sing better than Whitney or Taylor? Maybe you have better moves than the King of Pop? Please join us for some fun and meet some new people as we sing some music hits.

Monday Night Trivia: A Celebration of Women (Vauxhall Library)

Mon. 3/17 @ 6:00 pm

From Jane Austen to Maya Angelou, women have played an important part in shaping this world. Join us as we celebrate women in this trivia contest where attendees can have fun and win prizes.

Adult Crochet for Beginners (Vauxhall Library)

Wed. 3/19 @ 6:00 pm

Please join us as Ms. Lisa Roberts teaches attendees the basics of learning how to crochet. Attendees can bring their own crochet hooks and yarn, but supplies will be provided!

From Shirley to Kamala:

The Rise of Black Women in Politics (Vauxhall Library)

Mon. 3/24 @ 6:00 pm

Join us for this biographical program as we talk about Shirley Chisholm, Kamala Harris, and other black women who have made historic strides in politics.

Hilton Readers Book Discussion Group (Vauxhall Library)

Wed. 3/26 @ 6:00 pm

March's selection is Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Ladies of Motown (Vauxhall Library)

Sat. 3/29 @ 1:00 pm

Please join us as singer Rhonda Denet returns to the Vauxhall Branch Library as she sings the

Ladies of Motown. Rhonda will sing a collection of hits by the female singing groups, solo artists, and songwriters who helped to introduce the world to the Motown sound.

Listen to classics from the 1960s and 70s by The Supremes, The Marvelettes, Martha & The Vandellas, Mary Wells, Kim Weston, Tammi Terrell, and more.

Vauxhall Negro League Baseball Club (Vauxhall Library)

Mon. 3/31 @ 6:00 pm

Are you a baseball fan and love history? Perhaps you are a fan of Satchel Paige or the Kansas City Monarchs? Come join us as our goal is to preserve the history of Negro League

Baseball. Our meetings will consist of presentations, discussions, film viewings, book talks, and much more. March's meeting will be

a viewing & discussion of the 1983 Documentary -There Was Always Sun Shining Someplace: Life in the Negro Baseball Leagues.

Weekly Chair Yoga (Main Library)

Tues. @ 9:00 am

Take a deep breath with friends and stretch! A popular class for beginners or professionals now as a weekly series. Presented by the Gateway Family YMCA.

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

Weds. @ 12:30 - 2:00 pm

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

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ST. JOSEPH SOCIAL SERVICE CENTER DEDICATES RENOVATED MAIN HALL

The St. Joseph's community, including residents from Elizabeth and volunteers and supporters from five counties in New Jersey, came together on February 8 to celebrate the renovation of the Main Hall on its campus. The Hall is the main building at the agency, used to provide a wide array of social services to residents in need in Elizabeth. The renovated Main Hall includes new private offices for mental health counseling and case management services, new facilities for the soup kitchen program, new spaces for the Adult Learning Center and health and nutrition workshops and diagnostic testing, and a reception area where residents can obtain information about agency programs and community services. Karen Maher, President of the Board of Trustees, noted that these new spaces have "allowed the agency to expand services to the community, particularly in the areas of physical and behavioral health."

The renovation of the Main Hall marks the successful completion of a comprehensive facilities improvement plan for the agency. From the initial planning phase five years ago, the principal objectives of this plan have been to 1) enhance and expand services to families and children in need in Elizabeth; and 2) offer services in an environment with greater dignity. "Dignity has been a core value of the agency since our founding in 1986," noted Bernadette

Murphy, Executive Director. "Our goal is to help people acquire the material items they need to live with dignity. We believe that it is vital for our clients to receive food, clothing, supplies and support services in an environment that fosters dignity, where individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness are truly welcomed as sisters and brothers."

The renovations have created new spaces to serve the needs of Elizabeth residents more effectively. The private offices for counseling and case management, for example, now allow staff to speak with residents in confidence about mental and physical health issues, family dynamics and personal trauma. The Adult Learning Center now has a dedicated space for English as a Second Language classes and for work skills training sessions. Community healthcare partners have state of the art spaces to test and diagnose residents on health issues. There is now adequate space to offer health, nutrition and wellness workshops. The soup kitchen now has new equipment and better workflow to serve food. And the reception desk finally gives the agency a central place for residents to come to access agency and community partner resources. All of these spaces have allowed the agency to improve and expand services.

Guests at the dedication included contributors to the \$1.6 million capital campaign to finance

the renovations, community leaders in Elizabeth and Union County, agency volunteers and partners and residents of the local neighborhood. As part of the dedication program, soup kitchen volunteers convened to recognize the founders of the agency by naming the new soup kitchen the "Founders Kitchen" in the Main Hall. Remarkably, the soup kitchen has served guests every single Saturday for 2025 weeks without interruption since the agency was established. Founder and longtime Executive Director of the agency, Sister Jacinta Fernandes, traveled from her community in Maryland to attend the dedication. All in attendance toured the Founders Kitchen and other renovated spaces in the Main Hall and participated in a moving dedication ceremony.

Six days a week a dedicated team of more than 6,000 volunteers from Elizabeth, Union, Clark, Westfield, Cranford, Mountainside and dozens of other communities, make sandwiches for the hungry in their kitchens, bring food, clothing and home goods, serve meals at the soup kitchen and help with the operations of the agency. St. Joseph's serves over 3,500 individuals annually. The organization helps Elizabeth residents access food, medicine, mental health counseling, adult education, clothing and a myriad of additional healthcare and support services.

To learn more about St. Joseph Social Service Center, please visit www.sjeliz.org



(above, l-r) Msgr. Tom Nydegger St. Helen's Westfield, Marilyn Ryan St. Helen's Westfield, Steven Abood St. Helen's Westfield, Sr. Jacinta Fernandes Founder of St. Joseph's, Ray Kostyack, Jr. St. Helen's Westfield, Cindy Abood St. Helen's Westfield, Annette Calderin St. Joseph Social Service Center Elizabeth, Maria Chaillet St. John's Clark, Shirley, Doris & Idali Ramirez Immaculate Conception Elizabeth, Jerry Conheeney St. Michael's Cranford, Aswm. Annette Quijano LD 20, Joan Garthwaite Holy Spirit Union, Harold Kessler Building Project Manager & St. Helen's, Michael Marcus Temple Sha'arey Shalom Springfield, Fr. Anthony Randazzo Holy Trinity Westfield, Second.

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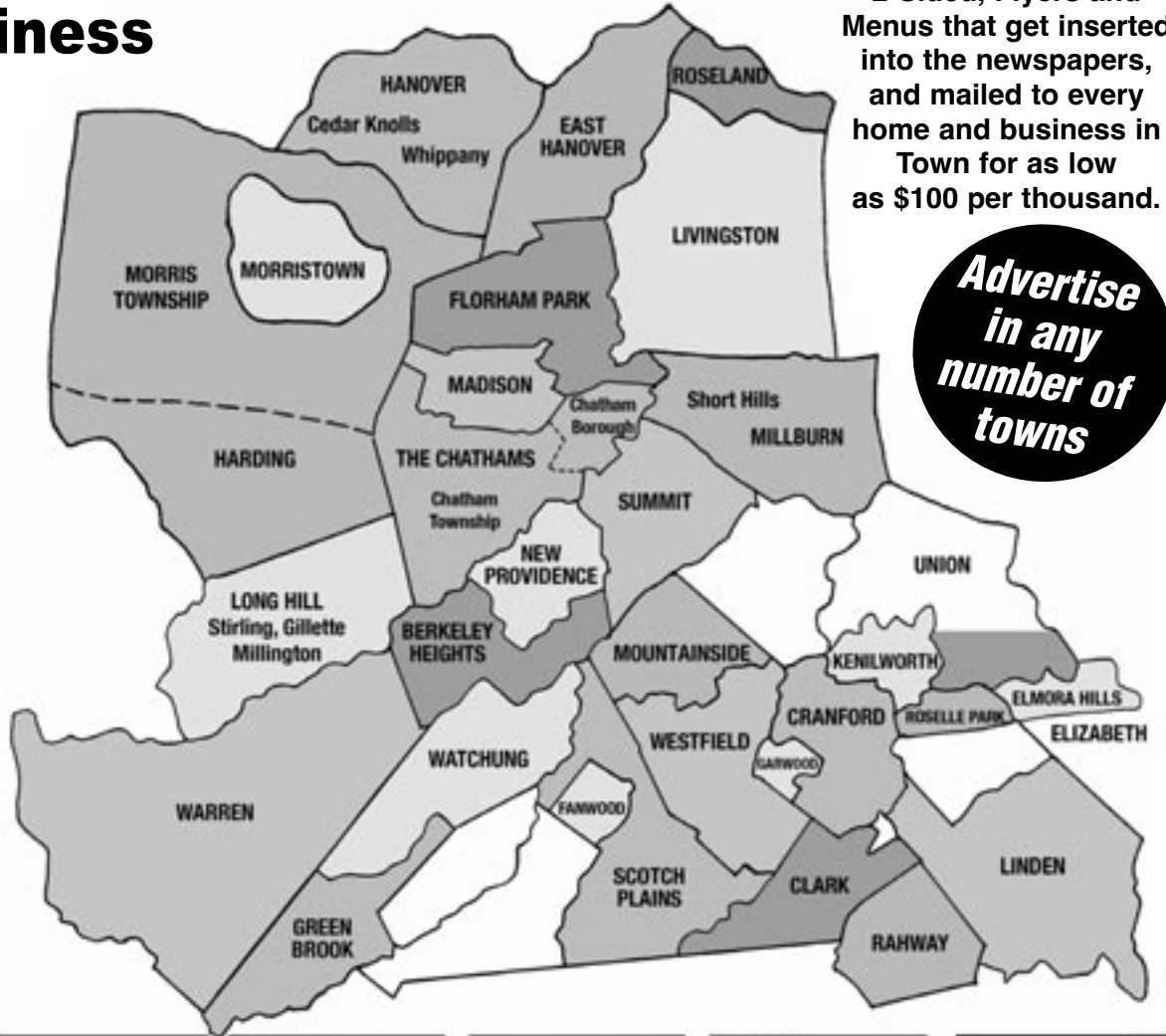
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BUS TRIP TO WIND CREEK CASINOTO BENEFIT

KENILWORTH'S HISTORIC NITSCHKE HOUSE

The Kenilworth Historical Society will host a bus trip to Wind Creek Bethlehem Casino in Bethlehem, Pa., on Saturday, March 22.

The trip will depart Kenilworth (St. Theresa's School parking lot) at 8:30 a.m. and return to Kenilworth at approximately 5:30 p.m. Cost of \$73 includes comfortable motor coach transportation, an approximate 6-hour visit to the casino and \$25 in free slot play. There will be a 50/50 raffle and complimentary drawing for door prizes on the bus. The casino offers more than 3,000 state-of-the-art slot machines ranging in denomination from 1 cent to \$100, more than 150 table games – and more. The Wind Creek Bethlehem site additionally houses a wide range of distinctive outlet stores and popular restaurants/eateries.

For further information and reservations,

please call 908-709-0434. As space is limited, reservations and payment should be made by March 8 to ensure availability. Gift certificates for the trip are also available for purchase.

Proceeds from the bus trip will benefit the Kenilworth Historical Society's historic Oswald J. Nitschke House (c. 1880) by helping defray operating expenses, including the cost of an elevator that makes the restored "living history" museum and cultural arts center fully accessible to everyone.

The Kenilworth Historical Society is an independent, volunteer-based, non-profit, tax-exempt, 501 (c) (3) organization dedicated to the research, preservation and interpretation of the Oswald J. Nitschke House, local history and culture.

Visit kenilworthhistoricalsociety.org.

SOUP'S ON MARCH 20TH

The Kenilworth Historical Society will host a soup-tasting event on Thurs., March 20, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., at the Kenilworth Senior Center (526 Boulevard). This ever-popular event, "Soup's On," will give participants the opportunity to taste a variety of favorite soups from local restaurants/eateries. Assorted breads and desserts also will be served. A 50/50 raffle will be held during the event.

Admission is \$12. Parking and entrance to the Senior Center are located at the rear of the building. Advance reservations by March 13 are requested, as seating is limited. For information/reservations, please call 908-709-0434 or visit Love You More floral boutique, 13 North 20th Street, Kenilworth, where tickets for the event are being sold.

ST. THOMAS FLEA AND CRAFT MARKET

St. Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church in Rahway NJ, will host a Flea Market and Craft Sale on Saturday March 8, 2025. All are invited to shop 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, with vendor access starting at 7:30 am.

The Flea Market is held in the parish center located at 1407 St. Georges Ave. Rahway. This handicap accessible center can accommodate 60+ vendors at each market. Everyone who attends will receive a free raffle ticket for a drawing of a special gift card at 1:00 pm.

The Vendors have beautiful gifts for children and adults, as well as household items, collectibles, toys and antiques. Our Parish Gift Shop will also be open.

Our kitchen will be open for both breakfast and lunch. The St. Thomas chefs offer homemade ethnic specialties such as stuffed cabbage, kielbasa and sauerkraut subs and pirohi, as well as taylor ham and egg sandwiches for breakfast.

Vendors can call 908-217-6856 for table rental information. The Flea Committee provides a 8ft table to rent for \$ 30.00.

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VENDORS CAN CALL 908-217-6856 FOR TABLE RENTAL. 8ft tables available to rent for just \$30.

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