

CRANFORD MONTHLY_{NJ}

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ELKS LODGE INSTALLS OFFICERS FOR 2025-2026 TERM

The Cranford Elks Lodge #2006 held its Installation of Officers for the 2025-2026 year during a public ceremony on March 22. The newly installed officers are Exalted Ruler Adam Smith, Esteemed Leading Knight Natalie Stevens, Esteemed Loyal Knight Steve Jaskowak, Esteemed Lecturing Knight Miguel Quinones, Secretary Anna DiFabio, Treasurer Joe O'Brien, Esquire Melissa Hoffman, Chaplain Alisha Lardieri, Tiler John Smith, Inner Guard Collin Mayer, 1-Year Trustee Michael Gedman PVP, 2-Year Trustee Carl Gaspar, 3-Year Trustee Bob Bruns, 4-Year Trustee Kevin Carney PER, and 5-Year Trustee Andis Kalnins.

The installation ceremony was conducted by District Deputy Hank Bedlivy, who was joined by Vice President Jonathan Joshua, Past District Deputy Mark Dunnder, Past District Deputy Carmel Kretchmer, Past District Deputy Dan Kretchmer, Vice President Elect Steve Grote, and Past

Exalted Rulers Krste Donovski, Rich Clark, Kevin Sargent, Audrey Smith, Ken Boudreau, and John Kretchmer. Their presence emphasized the strong leadership and support within the Elks community.

Founded in 1871, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks is the largest fraternal organization in the country, with a network of over 2,100 local lodges. The Elks are dedicated to fostering American patriotism, promoting camaraderie, and serving communities through various benevolent programs. Since its establishment in 1956, the Cranford Elks Lodge #2006 has contributed significant time and resources to supporting special needs children, youth scholarships, active and retired military personnel, and patriotic initiatives.

For more information about the Elks and how to join, please visit www.elks.org.



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HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS GOLF TEAM DONATION

The Cranford Jaycee’s and Greg Wofsy of the Cranford Golf Studio generously donated golf bags for the Cranford HS Girls Golf team, which is starting only its second season.



(above, front, l-r) Dave Farrell,, Greg Wofsy, Meghan Wukovits, Sophia Bloom, Cayla Reilly;
(back, l-r) Sean Rees, Coach Rich Hurley, Ashley Patt, Kiran Shusterman, Aubrey Dispensa, Molly Parker.

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K OF C GIVES THANKS FOR "BREAKFAST WITH THE BUNNY" EVENT

The Knights of Columbus had another outstanding "Breakfast with the Bunny" event held on April 5th at St. Michael's School. The collaboration between the Cranford Knights of Columbus and the Home School Association made this event a resounding success, bringing joy to many families in our community.

The dedication of the over 20 Knights who

prepared and served breakfast to the 190 attendees was truly commendable. Their efforts created a warm and welcoming atmosphere that was enjoyed by all.

The two sessions, highlighted by the Easter Bunny's appearance and the distribution of crayons and coloring books, delighted the children and added a special touch to the

morning.

Events like these are vital in fostering community spirit and creating lasting memories for our families. Your hard work and commitment to organizing such a wonderful gathering do not go unnoticed, and we are all grateful for your contributions.



(above) Over 20 Knights of Columbus members prepared and served breakfast to the 190 attendees of the Breakfast with the Bunny event held at St. Michael's.

Courtesy photo

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UNSUNG HEROES RECOGNIZED FOR POSITIVE IMPACT ON COMMUNITY

Cranford Public Schools

Ashley Sremcevic, a senior at Lincoln School, and Sean Hanna, a senior at Cranford High School (CHS), were honored by the Union County School Boards Association with the Unsung Heroes Award on March 12 at Kean University. This prestigious award recognizes a senior from each high school in Union County who is making outstanding contributions to their schools and community.

School Counselor Vanessa Velazquez, who nominated Ashley, highlighted her unwavering drive to excel and her commitment to making a meaningful impact on the world around her.



(above) School Counselor Vanessa Velazquez nominated recipient Ashley Sremcevic.



(above) Cranford High School Principal Mark Cantagallo with recipient Sean Hanna.

Photos by Cranford Public Schools

“Having worked closely with Ashley it is very clear that she is the type of person who has the potential to make a community stronger,” said Ms. Velazquez. “This well-deserved recognition highlights her commitment to learning and the positive impact she has on those around her.”

Ashley has dedicated herself to service, participating in activities such as wrapping gifts for families in need during Christmas, donating to food pantries, and volunteering at day care centers. She is currently working at the YMCA, through her work study program, where she provides aftercare for students during the week and coaches sports on Saturdays, further showcasing her leadership and commitment to others.

Sean Hanna, Unsung Hero at CHS, was nominated by Supervisor JoAnn Sei and School Counselors Gretchen Lenehan and Catherine Gallo. They spoke about his determination,

resilience and compassion for others.

At the awards ceremony, Principal Mark Cantagallo said, “Sean consistently displays an unwavering commitment to his work, always challenging himself and pushing beyond his comfort zone. He participates in extracurricular activities, takes college-level courses, and relentlessly pursues his dream of becoming a firefighter.”

“Through it all, he has remained a positive peer role model,” Mr. Cantagallo added.

Sean is also a volunteer EMT, showcasing his deep passion and commitment to helping others.

“Both students are incredibly deserving of this recognition, as they embody the values and vision that have the power to shape a brighter future,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Scott Rubin. “Their passion, character, and accomplishments are a source of pride for the entire Cranford Public Schools community.”

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Location: Westfield Area YMCA

Friday, May 23 | 1:00-1:45pm
Location: Cranford YMCA

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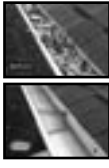
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The Centennial Village Group

Cranford's Group's annual 5k race will take place this year on Sunday, June 1. Registration, including on race day, will be all online, at runsignup.com. The chip-timed race will start at 9 a.m. The route provides a flat tour of part of Cranford's South Side, starting at Lincoln School on Centennial Avenue, and looping through Centennial Village and Mohawk Park. This family-friendly race invites all ages to come out and enjoy the views of Centennial Village. Family and friends are encouraged to cheer on the runners along the route.

Visit runsignup.com to sign up or donate. Pre-registration is open until May 17, and costs \$30 for adults and \$25 for 18 and under. All pre-registrants will receive a tech t-shirt. After May 17, registration costs \$35 for adults and \$30 for youth.

Email cvgvelocity@gmail.com with any questions regarding the race.

The Centennial Village Group is made up of Cranford volunteers dedicated to the revitalization and beautification of the Centennial Avenue business district. In addition to the Velocity 5K Race, the Group holds various other community events, including a Bunny Hop to decorate Centennial Avenue with spring spirit, and an annual Music Fest to raise funds for its continual efforts to improve the community.



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CDC THEATRE PRESENTS LEGALLY BLONDE

Harvard's beloved blonde takes the stage at CDC Theatre in Cranford by pink storm in this fun, upbeat story of self-discovery!

A fabulously fun, award-winning musical based on the adored movie, Legally Blonde, the musical, follows the transformation of Elle Woods as she tackles stereotypes and scandal in pursuit of her dreams. With music and lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe & Nell Benjamin and book by Heather Hach, the show is based on the novel by Amanda Brown and the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer motion picture.

Action-packed and exploding with memorable songs and dynamic dances - this musical is so much fun, it should be illegal! Elle Woods appears to have it all. Her life is turned upside down when her boyfriend Warner dumps her so he can attend Harvard Law. Determined to get him back, Elle ingeniously charms her way into the prestigious law school. While there, she struggles with peers, professors and her ex. With the support of some new friends, though, Elle

quickly realizes her potential and sets out to prove herself to the world.

Edgar Hidalgo directs the cast which includes Melissa Calicchio as Elle, Zach Mazouat as Emmet, Rachel Love as Paulette, Larry Brustofski as Callahan and Gabe Weiss as Warner. They are joined by a talented cast of supporting actors and a fabulous ensemble! With Musical Director Kaeden Oh, Choreographer Jaimie Bass, Stage Manager Dana Dispoto and Producer Elizabeth Howard on the production team, the show promises to be the crescendo of the 106th season at CDC Theatre.

Performances on May 2-18, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sunday, May 11 and 18 at 2 p.m. For the best selection and prices, tickets can be ordered by visiting cdctheatre.org. This production is made possible by funds from the Union County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

CDC THEATRE Presents

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Music and Lyrics by **Laurence O'Keefe and Nell Benjamin** Book by **Heather Hach**

Based on the novel by Amanda Brown and the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer motion picture

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LEGALLY BLONDE is presented through special arrangement with Musical Theater International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. www.mtishows.com

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GIRL SCOUTS OF CRANFORD SU48 INTREPID OPERATION SLUMBER

*Submitted by Kristin Santos,
Girl Scout Junior Troop 40042*

Over 100 Cranford Girl Scouts and their parents boarded the Intrepid aircraft carrier on Pier 86 in New York City for Operation Slumber, after all the other visitors had left the museum for the day.

Operation Slumber is an overnight program that allows groups, like the Girl Scouts of Cranford, to explore and sleep overnight on the retired ship that was commissioned in 1943. The attendees learned about the aircraft carrier’s history including its participation in World War II, the Cold War, Vietnam War, and as a NASA recovery vessel.

The Girl Scouts had the entire evening to explore the aircraft carrier alongside other youth groups.

“I had so much fun visiting the Intrepid,” said Megan McDonald, a middle schooler from Girl Scout Cadette Troop 40826.” I realized how important the Intrepid aircraft carrier was during America’s history and I especially liked going up to the flight deck at night to see the planes and views of New York.”

“My favorite part of the Intrepid was the flight deck,” said Girl Scout Brownie Troop 40400 member Emelia. Her fellow Girl Scout Brownie Troop 40400 sister Bethany said her favorite thing was learning morse code.

"As the commander of the Cranford VFW it is wonderful to see our youth get to experience and learn about the history of the USS Intrepid and get a small feel for what life was like for the sailors who crewed that ship over her decades of historic service, “ said Mark Schwartz, Post Commander of the VFW Post 335 in Cranford. “Learning about the history of our military, and the sacrifices that our service members have made for our country will only help the Girl Scouts who attended to grow up to be better, more well rounded citizens.”

Post CDR Schwartz and his daughter Maggie, members of Girl Scout Brownie Troop 40891, were one of the many parent-daughter pairs to enjoy Operation Slumber with their fellow Girl Scout sisters.

“When the option became available to go to the Intrepid my girls and I jumped at the chance,” said Kristina King, Girl Scout Junior 40042 Co-Leader. “The Intrepid means something to our family as my dad helped back in the 80’s with the Intrepid’s transition to a museum and there is a plaque with his name on it.” “We come from a large military family and my dad was stationed on two ships during his service. I couldn’t be more proud of my father for his service to our country and I wanted my daughters to experience a piece of his life.”

This Girl Scout program is one of many that offers so many different opportunities for girls to explore and try out new things. One of the many

enthusiastic Girl Scouts of Cranford Operation Slumber attendee’s highly recommended the Intrepid after the overnight.

“It is amazing, “ said Grace of Girl Scout Junior Troop 40042. “There is so much to do and so many stories. So if you come to the Intrepid I hope you hear all the stories and do all the things.”

ABOUT THE GIRL SCOUTS OF CRANFORD

The Girl Scouts of Cranford boasts over 1,000 Girl Scout Members in more than 60 troops and Juliettes making it one of the largest non-profit organizations in town. The Cranford Service Unit is a part of the Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey (GSHNJ) Council which is part of the Girl Scouts of the USA.

If your family is interested in learning more about local Girl Scouts or to find out more information on the Girls Scouts of Cranford, please visit GirlScoutsofCranford.com.



(above) Girl Scout Intrepid Photos



(above) CDR Mark Schwartz and Maggie

Courtesy photos



(above) Girl Scouts of Cranford Service Unit 48 Intrepid Attendees

FOUR FALLEN HEROES TO BE FEATURED ON MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY

Submitted by Don Sweeney

Nine years ago, at the Cranford Memorial Day Ceremony, I stood listening to the words of a World War II veteran. The emotion that was evoked in me, began a mission which grew into what many now recognize simply as “Cranford 86”. The tablets in Memorial Park which bear the names of these brave souls who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom, are powerful symbols of our town’s respect and gratitude for Cranford’s 86. Our team takes great pride in knowing that our research and writing efforts

have brought these heroes’ stories to light. In 2014, when we first started, an internet search of these men’s names would yield little to no information. Today, that same search will lead you to Cranford86.org and the stories and photographs that document the life, service and untimely passing of each serviceman.

Initially, I wrote each story, with facts provided by military veterans Steve Glazer and Stu Rosenthal. Over time, we’ve expanded our team to include other voices which provide different perspectives. Janet Cymbaluk Ashnault, a Gold

Star family member, joined us during the writing of the story of her husband’s brother, Raymond Ashnault, a decorated soldier who died in the Vietnam War. Starting as a skilled proofreader, Janet has since evolved into a co-writer and now a talented storyteller in her own right, bringing a unique empathy that adds to the compassion for which our Cranford 86 stories are known. Vic Bary, a decorated Vietnam veteran who previously served as our military expert, now leads the writing on Vietnam hero profiles. His emotional connection to his fallen comrades gives his stories a distinct and poignant perspective. Lastly, Barry Mazza, our newest team member, has brought us expertise in the latest technologies, providing us with a better platform to deliver the product of our mission to readers.

Each year after Memorial Day, our team gathers to assess the research ahead and the interest in specific stories from our project’s supporters. Together, we decide which of our currently anonymous heroes will be unveiled to our readers in the Cranford Monthly and on our website, Cranford86.org. This year, we found inspiration in the Apple TV series, Masters of the Air, which depicts the WWII flight crews of the Army Airmen of the 100th Bomber Squadron. Remarkably, our list of Cranford 86 soldiers and airmen includes 25 pilots and crew members which includes co-pilots, navigators, bombardiers, aerial gunners, and electronic warfare officers. The series resonated with us not only because it portrays real WWII heroes, but also because it highlights the brotherhood among these men, offering insights into the relationships that our 25 heroes likely experienced.

Masters of the Air also showcases the engineering marvels that these incredibly young airmen had at their disposal, from the B-17 itself to the top-secret Norden bombsight, which has been featured in some of our past stories. We recommend watching the nine hours of this series either before or after reading this year’s stories, as it may provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of the profiles of our 2024-2025 heroes.



(above, l-t) CPT. Anthony K. Johnson, 1st LT John A. Prescott, TSgt James G. Lascelles, 2nd LT Robert R. Tuttle

CRANFORD 86 URGES ALL TO “FOLLOW THE PARADE TO THE CEREMONY”

There were 86 young men from Cranford, who left home during the most critical times in our country’s history and never returned back to us. These boys walked the halls at Cranford High School, played on our sports fields and fished and canoed in the river. They had part time jobs downtown and took their dates to the Cranford movie theater.

On the one day in America reserved to honor our fallen military, grateful people will gather along route of Cranford’s iconic, 104-year-old Memorial Day Parade to visibly express their appreciation and understanding of the ultimate

sacrifice made by each of these 86 men, and all of America’s fallen. Those who follow the parade to the ceremony will see Memorial Park on Springfield Avenue bursting with solemn patriotism with a one-hour program that never fails to provoke one’s thoughts regarding the true meaning of this federal holiday.

In our opinion, there is no better place than Cranford, NJ, in which to pay your respects to those who gave their tomorrows, so we could live a life of freedom today. Parade steps off at 9:00 am, the ceremony begins at 10:00 am in Memorial Park.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL RYAN HARTY NAMED GRAND MARSHALL MEMORIAL DAY PARADE

Cranford VFW Post #335 has announced that the Grand Marshall of this year’s Memorial Day Parade will be town resident Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Harty. Colonel Harty is currently the Armor Officer in the 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team in the New Jersey National Guard.

A member of the New Jersey National Guard since 2005, Colonel Harty’s recent return from overseas deployment, prompted Cranford VFW Commander Mark Schwartz to remark, “After successfully leading his NJ National Guard troops through a very tough deployment in Syria, the least we can do to honor such a deserving long time Cranford resident is make him our Grand Marshall.”

Besides Syria in 2024, the Colonel has seen

duty in Iraq from 2008 to 2009 and Jordan in 2019. During his service he has received two Bronze Stars, two Meritorious Service Medals, two Army Achievement Medals and a host of other awards.

This year’s parade will be held on Monday, May 26th, with the lineup for the parade beginning at 8:30 a.m. at the Community Center at 220 Walnut Avenue and the step off at 9:00 a.m.

The traditional Memorial Ceremony will be held at the parade’s end at Memorial Park on Springfield Avenue at approximately 10:00 a.m. Should there be inclement weather, the Memorial Service (only) will be held inside the Community Center at 10:00 a.m.



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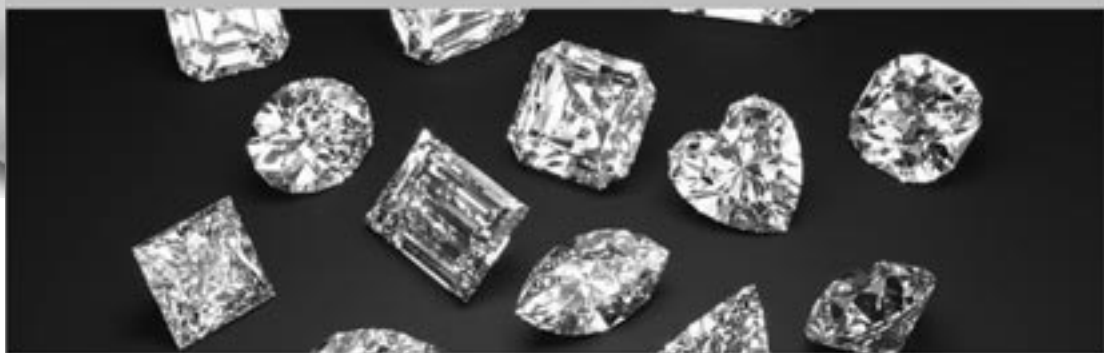
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CRANFORD VOLUNTEERS SHOW LOVE THROUGH FOOD

Cranford Family Care

At Cranford Family Care, we are incredibly grateful to be part of a community that shows love through food.

Teens and adults alike have been stepping up to cook and bake for our Senior Citizen Meals Program, and their efforts are making a real difference. Not only do these home-cooked meals save our organization hundreds of dollars, but they also bring comfort, nourishment, and joy to the seniors we serve. From hearty dinners to fresh-baked cookies, every dish is a reminder that someone cares — and that kindness truly lives in the heart of our community.

Here are just a few recent highlights:

The Junior League of Elizabeth & Plainfield recently hosted a “Chop & Chat” evening. A hostess planned the menu, members each brought an ingredient, and they spent the evening preparing meals together. They thoroughly enjoyed themselves and are already planning their next session!

Nicole and Chris Consorte deliver delicious meals every Friday, bringing consistency and care to our seniors.

Olivia Quinty, a student at Cranford High School, has gone above and beyond this past school year, contributing an impressive 122 volunteer hours since September. She’s regularly cooked and baked meals for seniors and families, and her passion for service has inspired others to get involved.

What began as a solo effort has grown into

something even greater. Olivia’s enthusiasm has motivated her friends to join her in cooking, baking, and spreading awareness about CFC. Now, they’re taking the next step by launching a new student-led initiative at Cranford High School called Cranford Cares.

“We’re in the process of creating a club that will allow more students to learn about Cranford Family Care and get involved,” Olivia shared. “The club will help run item drives, organize meal prep sessions, and educate our peers about the challenges facing families in our community.”

Their dedication not only provides meals but also creates a ripple effect of compassion that reaches far beyond the kitchen. The impact they’re making is already visible, and with Cranford Cares, their reach is only growing.

“Volunteering with Cranford Family Care has shown me how important it is to understand and support your neighbors,” Olivia said. “I’m grateful for the opportunity to help and excited to keep making a difference.”

We are truly fortunate to have such thoughtful and generous volunteers. Their time, talents, and kitchen creativity help us continue to provide nourishing meals.

If you or your organization would like to cook or bake for our seniors or if you or someone you know would like to receive meals, please reach out to us at cfamilycare@gmail.com.

We look forward to sharing more photos and stories in the coming months as we continue to celebrate the amazing volunteers who make this work possible.



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KENILWORTH STREET FAIR

The 2025 Kenilworth Street Fair and Classic Car Show, hosted by the Borough of Kenilworth, will take place on Sunday, May 18th.

The Boulevard will be closed to vehicle traffic from 14th St. to 24th St. and transformed into a giant block party from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

This event will feature quality exhibitors, a special crafter's section, lots of great food, kiddie rides, and kids area, live music and performances, and local merchants and civic organizations.

SHOPPING

Shop til you drop along the Boulevard with over 100 quality exhibitors selling their merchandise such as jewelry, handbags, sports collectibles, clothing, home decor, and much more. There is a special section with handmade crafts from local and nearby crafters and artisans with unique one-of-a-kind items.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

This year we have 2 exciting bands. Performing first will be the Green Planet Band from 10am-1pm. They are a family band comprised of teen siblings Kylee, Tyler and Grey, along with Mama Lisa playing all cover music. Performing from 2pm-4pm will be a very seasoned band called Ladies of the Eighties. Their cover music is from the 1980s and beyond. They put on a great show.

There will also be demonstrations from the 2 local karate clubs: Twin Kicks at 11:30am and Karate World at 1:30pm in front of the stage. In the music area you will find tables and chairs for you to sit, eat and watch the show. The music is located on the corner of the Boulevard and 21st Street.

KIDS ZONE

The children will enjoy this section filled with kiddie bounce rides, slides, and interactive blow-ups, face painters, sand art & kids games, temporary tattoos, and face painting, just to name a few things.

FOOD TRUCKS

Come hungry! As you stroll along the Boulevard stop to have a bite to eat and sit at tables in our live music area. With over 20 gourmet food trucks there will be plenty of items to choose from. Here is a list of just some of the food that will be there: Cousin's Main Lobster, Magic Mike's Smoked Meats, Dymski's Perogies, Empanada Guy, Cold Stone Creamery, Jersey Pickles, Pat's Italian Sausages and Zeppolees, and so much more.

CAR SHOW

This year's event will again feature a car show of Custom . . . Classic . . . Street Rod . . . Muscle Cars in front of Harding School. Set up starts after 10 a.m. Registration - Day of Show. Cars must be registered by 1:00 p.m. to be judged. Trophies for Winners! All Proceeds go to Pride in Kenilworth Committee. For more Car Show. Info send email with your questions to: rprflocal3@gmail.com

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REMEMBERING OFFICER ROBERT HAND - 50 YEARS LATER

Cranford Police Department

It has been 50 years since the death of the only Cranford Police Officer to lose his life in the line of duty. Patrolman Robert F. Hand sacrificed his life protecting and serving the citizens of Cranford on February 11, 1975, following a motor vehicle pursuit. To commemorate his sacrifice members of the department wore mourning bands over their badges starting on February 5th through Wednesday February 12th, 2025. These bands along with our yearly Memorial Day service will ensure his sacrifice is not lost on the new generation of officers.

Below is a short biography and summary of the events leading to his sacrifice. Lt. Stephen Wilde put together this summary:

On February 11, 1975, at about 8:45 p.m. Patrolman Robert F. Hand, a 19-year veteran with the Cranford Police Department, attempted to stop a vehicle driven by David Van Pelt, an 18-year-old resident of Clark. The one-mile car chase started on Walnut Avenue and continued south onto Broadway in Clark. From Broadway the chase continued to Schindler Road from which the suspect's car turned right and proceeded west on Westfield Avenue in the direction of Clark Police Headquarters. At the intersection of Westfield and Branch Avenues in Clark Officer Hand swerved to avoid a vehicle coming into his path, causing the police car to leave the roadway and crash into the D&B Glass and Mirror storefront at the southwest corner. The suspect continued through Clark, returned to Westfield Avenue and was heading into Rahway where Rahway Police had set up a roadblock. He stopped and was arrested by Clark and Rahway Police officers.

According to Van Pelt's statement, he panicked and led the officer on a chase into Clark. Witnesses stated that Van Pelt's vehicle drove recklessly, forcing cars out of his way, constituting a hazard that Officer Hand was required to subdue. Van Pelt was later charged with causing death by auto, reckless driving, and eluding a police officer. He was released on \$10,000 bail.

As a result of the crash, Officer Hand suffered

contusions of the lungs and was taken to Rahway Hospital where he died at approximately 10:30 p.m. at the age of 45. More than 700 police officers and almost 140 police cars made a final tribute to Hand by participating in a procession from Dooley Funeral Home on North Avenue to St. Michael's Church on Alden Street where a funeral mass with full police honors was held. The procession, over a mile long, then went past police headquarters and proceeded to the burial at Graceland Memorial Park Cemetery in Kenilworth.

The Reverend Joseph Derbyshire, Cranford Police Chaplain and former assistant pastor at St. Michael's, was the celebrant of the mass. Monsignor John Davis, pastor of St. Michael's, gave the eulogy and Reverend John Oates assisted in the service. Police Chief Matthew Haney presented the flag from the casket to Patrolman Hand's 17-year-old son, Brian. Hand's other children were Margaret, Timothy, and Mary.

The police pallbearers were Lieutenants Myron Cymbaluk and Henry Polidoro, Sergeants Gerard Haney and John Korsch, and Patrolmen John Herzer and Robert Nysten.

Fourteen members of the Cranford Police Auxiliary handled traffic control during the funeral and police officers from Garwood, Roselle Park, and Clark were on duty for calls in Cranford.

Patrolman Robert "Bobby" F. Hand was born in 1930 and was a native of Jersey City before moving to Cranford. He attended St. Benedict's High School and in 1947 joined the United States Air Force, attaining the rank of Corporal and serving in the Korean Conflict. He received an Honorable Discharge in 1950. Robert was appointed to the Cranford Police Department on July 1, 1956, and was assigned to the Patrol Division. Hand received a number of commendations during his career. In August 1968 he was commended for breaking up a narcotics ring where 10 people were arrested. Rahway Police commended him in March 1969 for his help in the arrest of a child molester and Army deserter.



During his time with the police department, Patrolman Hand was affectionately nicknamed "The Senator" by fellow officers because he couldn't walk more than a few blocks without stopping to greet a dozen people. He always took the time to stop and say hello to people. Bobby always put others' needs before his own and was notorious for his willingness to help those in need.

Robert was a member of the local Elk's Club and of VFW Post No. 335. He was also a very active member of Policemen's Benevolent Association, Local #52 and had been elected President the prior spring. He was instrumental in establishing the PBA collective bargaining unit which then resulted in the first labor contract between policemen and the township. After his death, the PBA established the Robert F. Hand Memorial Brotherhood Award which is given to the PBA member who best exemplifies the tradition of brotherhood that Officer Hand stood for. The first recipient of the honor was Lieutenant Myron Cymbaluk in 1980.

On June 30, 2010, the portion of Springfield Avenue fronting police headquarters between North Union Avenue and North Avenue was dedicated as Patrolman Robert F. Hand Plaza. Also in 2010, the Cranford PBA Local #52 announced a scholarship fund in Hand's honor for Cranford residents looking to attend college. In 2015, the memorial stone that had been first placed near the police department front door entrance was moved to its new location near the police only entrance of the building under a Cherry Tree that was planted in his memory by the Cranford Garden Club during their 1975-1976 year.

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Decoding the Mysteries of Cats

Thursday, May 1, at 7pm

(Zoom program)

Join cat behaviorist, Stephen Quandt, Feline Behavior Associates, LLC, for this informative and engaging program all about cat behavior! After the presentation, there will be plenty of time for Q&A if you have questions about your own cats! Please visit our website to register for this Zoom program. Sponsored by the Friends of the Cranford Public Library.

Romance Readers Book Club

Monday, May 5, at 7pm

Join us for May's Romance Readers Book Club. Please keep an eye on our website for the book title. If you don't want to read that book, or for some reason can't find a copy, feel free to come anyway to discuss whichever romance you've recently read.

Movie Night

Wednesday, May 7, at 7pm

Join us the first Wednesday of the month for a screening of a recently released DVD! Please visit our website or contact the library for film titles.

Richard Baratta Trio:

Through the Ages/Music in Film Concert

Thursday, May 8, at 7pm

Join jazz musician and former Marvel film producer, Richard Baratta and trio, for this concert featuring old favorites plus iconic tunes from popular movies! Sponsored by the Friends of the Cranford Public Library.

Lit Cafe

Saturday, May 10, at 10:15am

Literary Café is a book chat program. Bring a few of your recent favorite books and tell the other members of the group what you like about them. There is no required reading, and you will have the opportunity to learn about books recommended by other group members. Admission is free and all are welcome. Light refreshments provided by the Friends of the Cranford Public Library. Attend in person or on Zoom, (contact library for link).

International Film

Monday, May 12, at 12:30pm and 7pm

Join us for an International film screening. The same film will be shown at 12:30pm and 7pm. Please contact the library for the film title. Please note the new start time for the afternoon showing.

Adults Create

Tuesday, May 13, at 7pm

Join us the second Tuesday of the month for crafts! This month we are making faux stained-glass jars. Space is limited; please visit our website to register. Sponsored by the Friends of the Cranford Public Library.

Theater Project

Saturday, May 17, at 2pm

New Jersey's own Theater Project will present a reading of an original short play. The reading will be followed by a question and answer session with the audience, director, playwright and cast. Funds have also been provided by the Friends of the Cranford Public Library. No registration needed.

Readers Forum

Monday, May 19, at 7pm

All are welcome at the Readers Forum Book Discussion Group! This month's book is Tom Lake by Ann Patchett (2023). Additional copies are available to check out and can be picked up at the Circulation Desk.

Wednesday Morning Adult Craft

Wednesday, May 21, at 10am

Registration is required and can be done through our website. Sponsored by the Friends of the Cranford Public Library.

Trivia Night

Wednesday, May 21, at 7pm

Join us for another fun evening of trivia! This free event is hosted by the Friends of the Cranford Public Library! Join us in the Community Room on the first floor of the Community Center! Feel free to bring your own snacks and (non-alcoholic) drinks. Prizes awarded to the winning team. Please visit our website or contact the library to register.

Poetry in Motion

Thursday, May 22 @ 7pm

If you're interested in poetry of any kind and from any era, this is the club for you! The first half of the meeting will be a brief, informal class highlighting the history of poetry along with some of its major types and techniques. The second half will be in the style of a book club, with poems that we will discuss and interpret together as a group.

Create in Community crafting group

Friday mornings 10:00 – 12:00

Working on an amazing afghan, cozy cardigan, or joyful junk journal? Want to see what other crafters in the community are doing and maybe get some tips and inspiration along the way? Join the new drop-in 'Create in Community' group at the Cranford Public Library on Friday mornings from 10:00-12:00. We will have coloring pages and colored pencils available so that you can keep your hands busy while you build community here at the library.



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CRANFORD RIVER CLEANUP

Saturday, May 17

9 am - 12 pm

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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!

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



(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.



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6 Units	6.5"x6.25" or 10"x4"	320	760	1200	1400	1600	1800	2000	2200	2400	2600	2800
9 HALF PAGE	6.5"x9" or 10"x7"	360	860	1300	1600	1900	2200	2400	2600	2800	3000	3200
12 Units	6.5"x14"	400	960	1400	1800	2100	2400	2700	3000	3300	3600	3900
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SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The West Fields Chapter of the New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) recently held its quarterly meeting at the Westfield Recreation Room located in the town hall. After a short business meeting and awards presentation, Steven Santucci gave a lecture on Jockey Hollow encampments.

The Sons of the American Revolution is the largest male lineage organization in the United States and consists of 50 state-level societies with more than 590 local chapters, several international societies including Canada, France, Germany, Spain, and an International Society, and over 37,000 members.

For more information on joining the NJSSAR email chrissands44@aol.com.

(right) West Fields member James Sanford is Presented with the SAR 250th Bronze Medal.

Courtesy photo



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It would not be a stretch to say that the New Jersey economy is built on the backs of the small businesses that call the state their home. Nearly one million SMB enterprises are registered in the state as of 2024, a sector of the economy that now accounts for half of all employment in the state. Things are competitive, to say the least. So, how do you, as a business owner, stand out?

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