

Scotch Plains NJ


WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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Issue 118 • July 2025

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SERVICE LEAGUE DONATES \$55K IN GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS

The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League (FSPSL) awarded a total of \$55,000 in student scholarships and grants to 18 Union County community organizations, including our local Scotch Plains and Fanwood libraries and rescue squads, the Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA and Resolve Community Attached for your consideration is a press release announcing new officers for the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League, operators of the Thrift Shop.

Included in the 2025 awards was \$20,000 in student scholarships presented to six deserving high school seniors at the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Scholarship Awards Night on May 29. Students were selected based on a combination of their academic records and service to the community. Sharing in a total of \$14,000 scholarship awards were the following recipients:

Sam Valera, an accomplished soccer player and track athlete who used his athletic skills to work with disabled young athletes and to organize a summer wellness camp in the Dominican Republic. Sam plans to study business.

Carolina Conklin, Captain of the Field Hockey team and a dedicated volunteer to youth field hockey camps and clinics. She intends to study business and political science.

Isabella Cocca, a black belt in karate who volunteers to teach and mentor younger kids in these skills, all the while helping to care for an elderly relative. She expects to pursue a career in fashion.

Olivia LaPorta, an aspiring physician's assistant who volunteers as a religious education instructor and has been an active member of the Girl Scouts throughout high school. Olivia plans to study Biology.

Shannon McGuinness, a Girl Scout since kindergarten and lead altar server at Immaculate Heart of Mary church, where she received an Archdiocesan Award for her youth ministry volunteerism.

In addition, **Alexandra Compierchio** received the one-time \$6,000 Evelyn Whitehorne Memorial Scholarship. This award was administered by the FSPSL thanks to the generosity of the Whitehorne family. The award was presented by Jackie Madsen in honor of her mother Evelyn, a long-time FSPSL member. Alexandra is a dedicated Girl Scout who volunteered to work on a service trip to Costa Rica; is a member of the Immaculate Heart of Mary BOLD youth ministry program and recipient of a 2024 Archdiocesan Discipleship Award; Captain of the SPFHS Cheerleading team; and President of the Students Concerned for the Needy.

Congratulations to all of the scholarship winners and to everyone in the community who helps the FSPSL fulfill its mission to "Help Us Help Others." All proceeds for grants and scholarships come from the generous giving of new and/or gently used items donated for sale to the FSPSL Thrift Shop at 1741 East Second Street. The store has been a staple in downtown Scotch Plains for decades, offering good quality, reasonably priced merchandise to customers in need of household goods, toys, clothing for all ages and in all sizes, and much more.

To learn more about types of donations accepted and volunteer opportunities, please call the store at 908-322-5420. You can also visit the Scotch Plains Thrift Shop web site scotchplains thriftshop.weebly.com, or search and follow the "Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League" on Facebook.



(above, l-r) Recipients of The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League 2025 scholarships are Sam Valera, Carolina Conklin, Isabella Cocca, Shannon McGuinness and Alexandra Compierchio. Not pictured: Olivia LaPorta.



(above) Alexandra Compierchio (center), recipient of the Evelyn Whitehorne Memorial Scholarship, stands with Evelyn's daughters (l-r) Colleen Brescia, Michele Rawson, Jackie Madsen and Dawn VanDoren. Courtesy Photo

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Scotch Plains NJ

WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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GIRL SCOUT AWARD PROJECT PRESENTATION

Borough of Fanwood

During a Fanwood Borough Council meeting held On May 5th, Cassidy Fitzgerald, a junior at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, presented her Girl Scout Award Project for an augmentative and alternative communication board at LaGrande Park. She said the board is for kids to communicate with each other on the playground. It is aimed for children with special needs such as Autism. She plans to start a GoFundMe to raise donations to offset the costs, which she estimated at between \$1,000-\$2,000. She said boards can be hung with pillars or can be vinyl signs placed on fences. Cassidy said she would like to have her project completed by the fall.

Mayor Colleen Mahr greeted everyone. Councilwomen Patricia Walsh and Erin McElroy also participated.

Green Team member Laura Lang noted the efforts of the Team including the denim recycling collection they are currently involved with three drop off locations in town for donations of jeans, jackets, shirts and skirts. The Green Team has also initiated recycling projects for crayons, shoes and Legos. Mayor Mahr noted that the borough's Friday E-newsletter has a weekly Green Tip provided by the Green Team.

Public Works Director Clint Dickson invited volunteers to break off into groups to begin the cleanup. Volunteers were divided into groups, led by a DPW staff member, to remove trash in a

dozen or so areas of the borough including the Southside and Northside Train Station, Carriage House Park and around Borough Hall, LaGrande Park, Forest Road Park, North Martine and Midway Avenues, and the municipal parking areas. Clean up of Nature Center was led by members of the Fanwood Environmental Commission and the Green Team, where volunteers helped clean up the brook at the center.



(above) Cassidy Fitzgerald

Photo by Paul Peyton

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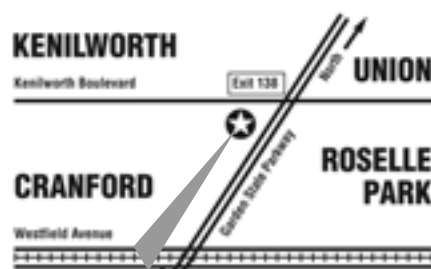
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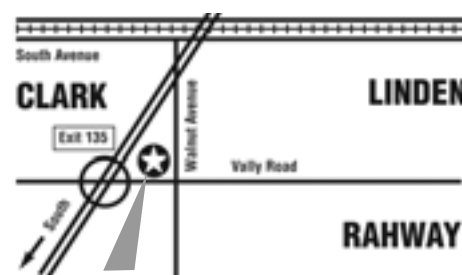
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POLICE OFFICERS HONORED AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS CEREMONY

Scotch Plains Township

Police Chief Jeff Briel presented more than a dozen officers with awards and recognitions at the Township Council meeting on May 20 as part of the annual Police Awards Ceremony.

The event was part of National Police Week, recognized May 15-21.

Some highlights of the ceremony included:
The honoring of Sgt. Michael Baltazar and Officer Vincent Conti with a Life Saving Award for their response to a report of a 57-year-old man in cardiac arrest;
Recognizing Det. Stephanie Mirabile with the Chiefs Achievement Award for her outstanding service as high school resource officer and for organizing the annual Junior Police Academy
The honoring of Sgt. David Belford with the

Father Nelligan Officer of the Year Award, given to an officer who continually performs at the highest level of expectation.

Scotch Plains leaders thanked the recognized police officers, as well as the entire police force, for their dedication and sacrifice to Scotch Plains.



(above, l-r) Sgt. Michael Baltazar and Officer Vincent Conti received the Life Saving Award; Det. Stephanie Mirabile received the Chiefs Achievement Award; Scotch Plains Police Sgt. David Belford received the Father Nelligan Officer of the Year Award.

Courtesy Photos

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Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish

All families are invited to register now for Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish 2025–2026 Faith Formation programs. All children preparing for First Eucharist should begin formation in 1st grade. All young people seeking Confirmation should register for 8th grade, even if they've been away for a while. Optional programming is also available for Pre-K and Kindergarten children to begin their faith journey early.

**FAMILIES CAN CHOOSE BETWEEN TWO ENRICHING PROGRAM OPTIONS:
FAMILIES OF FAITH**

This monthly program meets twice a month on Sundays and includes faith formation, fellowship, prayer, and service opportunities. The new program year begins Sunday, September 21st, the third Sunday of the month.

SUMMER ACADEMY

For families seeking a summer start, this intensive, two-week experience begins with a kickoff family session on Sunday, June 29th, from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM, followed by Mass and the Parish Picnic.

INSTRUCTIONAL SESSIONS WILL CONTINUE:

Week One: Monday, June 30 – Wednesday, July 2, from 8:45 AM–1:00 PM
Week Two: Monday, July 7 – Friday, July 11, from 8:45 AM–1:00 PM

Each day of Summer Academy includes faith instruction, arts and crafts, music, the sacraments, and daily Mass. This year's theme is "The Jubilee of Hope", inspired by the Holy Year called by Pope Francis.

HOW TO REGISTER

To learn more and register, families should visit ihmparish.net/familiesfaith. New families are asked to complete the New Family Form. Cost is \$225 for one student, \$325 family maximum.

Questions? Contact:

John McGuire at johnmcguire@ihmparish.net.

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Scotch Plains Fanwood High School

Saturday, May 3rd, may have been a dark & stormy night but nothing was stopping our Moonglowers from glowing their way to becoming the 2025 NJAJE Division II State Jazz

Band Champions! Under the leadership of Mr. Durand Thomas, the Moonglowers took top honors at the NJAJE Finals capturing a 1st Place title while also securing Best Overall Rhythm Section. Ellie Agnello secured one of the

outstanding soloist awards and Audrey Coyne also took home the Rick Kerber Scholarship Award! It was truly a night of pride and excellence for our SPFHS Music Department!!! Congratulations to everyone! #SPFProud!!



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UNICO FOOD DRIVE SUPPORTS IHM FOOD PANTRY

Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO

As part of UNICO National's Community Service Day, Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO collected and donated food items for the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church (IHM) Food Pantry in Scotch Plains. The food drive, coordinated by SP-F UNICO member Joe Schiavo, began with members and residents dropping off items at locations in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood area over the span of a couple of weeks. When April 26 arrived, UNICO members and Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School National Italian Honor Society students brought the food to IHM, unpacked it, and placed it on the pantry shelves while organizing the pantry to ensure everything was in the right place.

By the end of the day, the pantry was stocked with several full bags of food, all of which will

help those experiencing food insecurity or needing food for themselves and/or their families. In addition to the food donations, SP-F UNICO donated \$200 to the food pantry for future needs.

IHM Food Pantry coordinator Mary Kate Schiller was very appreciative of SP-F UNICO for the food and service donations. The chapter honored its motto of "Service Above Self" and was proud to support the efforts of IHM to provide food for the community.

ABOUT SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD UNICO

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Chapter of UNICO was chartered in 1973. Our chapter has raised and donated thousands of dollars annually to support scholarship programs, organizations, and individuals in the New Jersey area. Since 1974, we have co-sponsored the St.

Barts/UNICO Italian Festival, which attracts thousands of visitors over Labor Day weekend. Our local chapter also has been recognized as "Volunteer of the Year" and has earned its place in our community for service to others and charitable contributions since its inception. For more information on Scotch-Plains Fanwood UNICO, visit unicospf.org or email spfunico@gmail.com.

ABOUT UNICO NATIONAL:

UNICO is the largest Italian-American service organization in the United States. The organization's objectives are to promote the image of Italian Americans, to serve the community, and to contribute to charitable, cultural and educational organizations and projects. UNICO takes great pride in its rich history, cultural heritage, and dedicated membership.



(above) Rev. Michael Ward the pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary church, with UNICO members and student volunteers.

Courtesy Photo

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POLICE CARRY THE TORCH FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Members of the Fanwood & Scotch Plains Police Departments joined police officers from across the state in the 42nd Annual Law Enforcement Torch Run to benefit Special Olympics New Jersey. Over 3,000 police officers took to their local streets to raise funds and awareness for this incredible organization.

ABOUT THE ANNUAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS NEW JERSEY:

Torch Run began in New Jersey in 1984 as a way to raise funds and awareness for Special Olympics New Jersey. The run is a day-long event, split into 26 legs (or starting points) with

some legs beginning as early as 4:45 a.m. The run travels through more than 300 towns, covering 750 miles on-foot. About 3,000 runners participated in 2025. Representing over 450 police departments.

To learn more, visit NJTorchRun.org.



(above) Members of the Fanwood & Scotch Plains Police Departments participated in the 42nd Annual Law Enforcement Torch Run.

Courtesy Photo

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY / PARADE

Scotch Plains Township

Scotch Plains residents gathered under sunny skies on Monday, May 26 for the annual Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade. The event, in partnership with Fanwood, began at 10 a.m. and featured a heartfelt dedication to the fallen heroes of the community. Following the ceremony at town hall, the parade stepped off down Park Avenue featuring hundreds of participants and local community groups.



(above) The grand marshal of this year's parade was Greg Ruffa, a 100-year-old WWII veteran and artist who designed the instantly-recognizable PSE&G logo.

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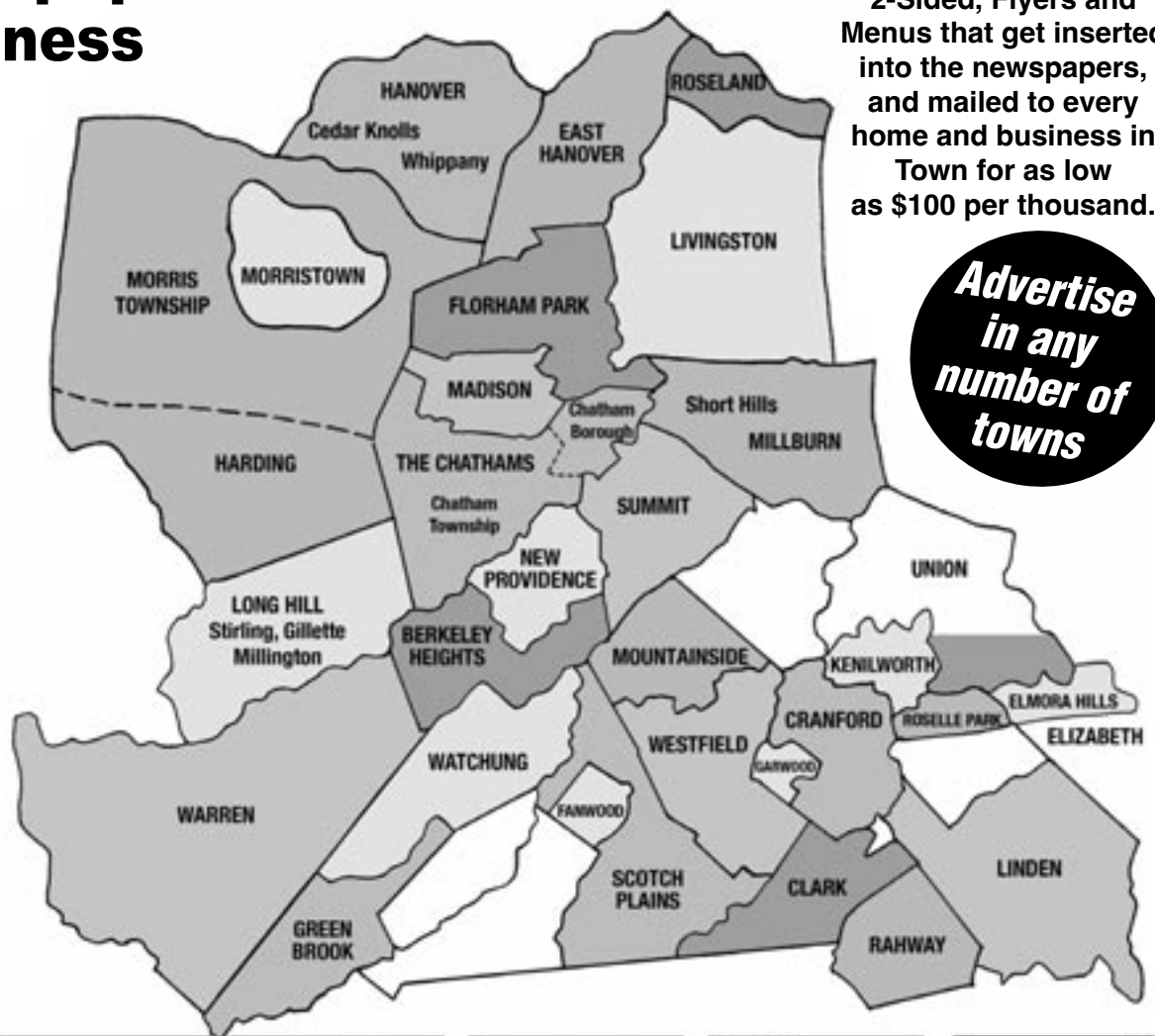
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EDUCATORS RECOGNIZED AS COUNTY 'TEACHERS OF THE YEAR'

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

Eight educators from Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools were recognized as Teachers of the Year for their schools at the 2025 Union County Teacher Recognition Program, sponsored by the Union County Superintendents' Roundtable.

On Wednesday, May 28, the eight teachers, as well as the 2024-2025 Milken Educator Award Recipient Emily Litz, were honored at a ceremony at Kean University in recognition of

outstanding teachers from districts across the county.

They were joined at the ceremony by Superintendent Dr. Joan Mast and Board of Education Vice President Tonya Williams. "Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools are incredibly lucky to have extraordinary teachers who are dedicated to their profession and to their students," Mast said. "Congratulations to this year's Teachers of the Year for going above and beyond to make an impact in our schools!"

Scotch Plains-Fanwood's honorees included:

- Marina Beirne
- Ellen Christiano
- Lorissa Clark
- Alexandra Graham
- Paige Kovacs
- Jessica Mandy
- Katelyn Washuta
- Kristen Zmuda
- Emily Litz (2024-2025 Milken Educator Award Recipient).



(above) Scotch Plains-Fanwood educators recognized as 2025 'Teachers of the Year' for Union County.

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