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HIGH SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY 2025 RECAP

Arthur L Johnson High School held its sixty-ninth commencement ceremony on the ALJ field on Friday, June 20th, 2025. The event was attended by Clark Board of Education Vice President Thomas Lewis, Clark Board of Education members, Clark Mayor Angel Albanese, Garwood Mayor Jennifer Blumenstock, Clark Superintendent Edward Grande, family members, teachers, administrators, and other community members.

Assistant Principal Katrina Poskay served as master of ceremonies for the event. The processional leaders included Senior Class President Alexa Tavares and Krista Steiner and Lisa Karnaugh, Student Council Co-Presidents. Tavares led the Pledge of Allegiance and Mariana Milara, Isabella Papa, Bryan Ruban, and Daniel Ionin sang The National Anthem, which was also signed by ASL 4 students.

Salutatorian Bradyn Weber reflected on the lessons she learned over the years. Marianna Milara, Bryan Ruban, and Judah Gray performed the song "Vienna" composed by Billy Joel. Alexa Tavares, Senior Class President, reflected on her experience at ALJ talking about change.

Superintendent Edward Grande shared the honors, accolades, and pursuits of the Class of 2025 mentioning that this class received over \$9 million in scholarships. Tara

Oliveira, Principal of ALJ, addressed the graduating class about the importance of relationships. She thanked seven retirees.

The ALJ Alma Mater was then performed by Milara, Papa, Ruban, and Ionin.

Students were awarded diplomas by Board of Education members, Mayor Albanese, and Mayor Blumenstock. Names were announced by students Lisa Karnaugh and Aidan Mazza.

Valedictorian Krista Steiner talked about how everyone in the graduating class contributed to her "mosaic." She stated "You are all pieces of me." She continued, "I have learned something from each and every one of you. She stated, "You will touch every person you meet even if it is just for a heartbeat. Treat people with love, respect, and kindness" and "add to their mosaic meaningfully."

Steiner's speech was followed by Keane's "Somewhere Only We Know" performed by Milara, Ruban, Antonio Triolo, and Matthew Falcon.

Ms. Poskay concluded the ceremony congratulation the students. She stated, "You will always be Crusaders. This will always be your home. Make us proud."

To view the graduation ceremony on YouTube: 2025 ALJ Graduation



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LANDSCAPE WITH BIRDS IN MIND

The Raptor Trust

How many Eastern Screech Owls do we currently have at The Raptor Trust? Apparently ALL of them! Most of these owlets were displaced after the trees that held their nests were cut down.

Cutting down trees and landscaping - especially during nesting season - can destroy active nests, scare off parents, and even injure adult birds during a critical time.

Most birds nest between March and August. Even small projects - like pruning shrubs or pulling out vines - can have a devastating result on a nest.

Here's how you can help:

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- Check for nests before cutting or clearing

- Leave a few brush piles - birds and critters love them
 - Avoid pesticides and non-native plants
- These small steps can make all the difference for birds trying to raise their families nearby—or young birds in the first days of their lives.

The Raptor Trust is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization which provides free medical care to thousands of orphaned or injured birds each year. Our infirmery staff is available seven days a week during daylight hours to admit injured birds, but we must rely on the people who find them to bring them to us for care.

If you find a bird that needs help, please visit our website theraptortrust.org for instructions. We cannot do what we do without the kindness of many – including our visitors!



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POLICE OFFICERS ADOPT LUCKY PUPPIES THEY RESCUED

Best Friends Animal Society

In December 2024, a trio of officers with the Clark Police Department in New Jersey responded to a call from a Good Samaritan about puppies that were abandoned in a five-gallon bucket. When they arrived on the scene, the officers discovered eight tiny puppies, only a couple of weeks old, huddled together for warmth in the freezing winter temperatures.

The puppies were immediately rushed to Associated Humane Society-Newark after hours by their Animal Care Officers (ACOs) for veterinarian evaluation and treatment. They were cold, starving, severely dehydrated, and infested

with fleas. “Deann Bowen, the Manager at AHS’s Tinton Falls location and a veteran vet tech with experience in neonatal care, was able to meet our ACO’s halfway up the Parkway and took them right into foster,” said Danielle Mania, Chief Operating Officer of AHS-Newark.

With the puppies safely in foster care, which included round-the-clock feedings until they were able to eat on their own, the team at AHS-Newark set about finding their family. They posted the story and photos on social media the next morning, took press interviews, and raised \$40,000 to provide for the puppies’ medical treatment and care.

“We did receive a few tips, but all were unsuccessful,” said Mania. Once they were old enough, the puppies were sent to foster in different foster homes.

The officers were instantly interested in adopting puppies from the litter. With each passing day, they could not stop thinking about the puppies’ wellbeing and regularly checked in on them. When they were all spayed/neutered and ready to adopt in March 2025, there was no need to list them all. Three of the puppies - now named Ozzy, Capri, and Zeus - had already found their loving homes with the three police officers that saved their lives on that cold winter day. Officer Ronny Taborda (adopted Capri), Detective Bruce McDonald (adopted Zeus), and Detective Paul

Sosnowski (adopted Ozzy). “The Clark PD has an adorable group chat to keep in touch with all of the adopters, and they frequently have play dates with each other,” said Mania. “This situation was really a testament as to how we work together as a team across the entire organization to save lives and find pets homes.”

This full circle moment highlights modern animal services practices, and the pet lifesaving work that police and animal control officers do in their communities. It is also a reminder of the importance of microchipping pets and having them wear up-to-date identification tags, so in the event they become lost, they can be quickly reunited with their owners. Data indicates that 52% of lost dogs and two out of every five cats are successfully returned when microchipped, which reduces the amount of time lost pets stay in shelters that often already have limited space.

Best Friends Animal Society, a leading national animal welfare organization working to end the killing of cats and dogs in America’s shelters, is partnering with AHS-Newark to help them achieve their pet lifesaving goals. Best Friends’ most recent data shows that New Jersey is on the verge of becoming a no-kill state with an 89% save rate. There are just ten shelters in the state that need to save less than 100 pets to achieve no-kill. For more information, visit bestfriends.org.



(above) Clark Police Officer Ronny Taborda (adopted Capri), Detective Bruce McDonald (adopted Zeus), and Detective Paul Sosnowski (adopted Ozzy).





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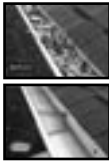
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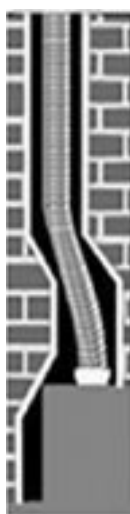
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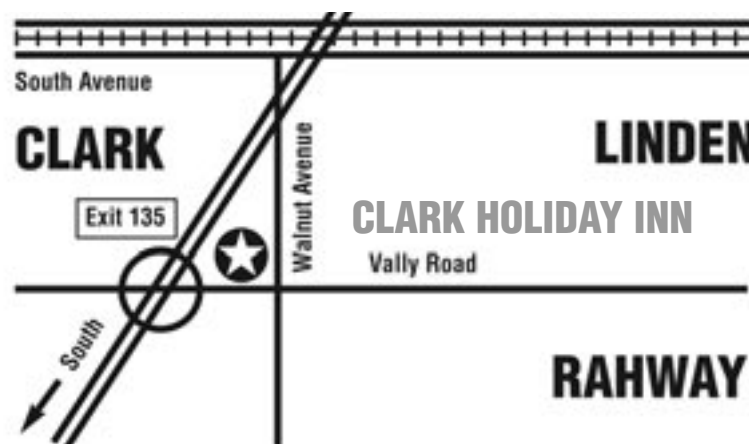
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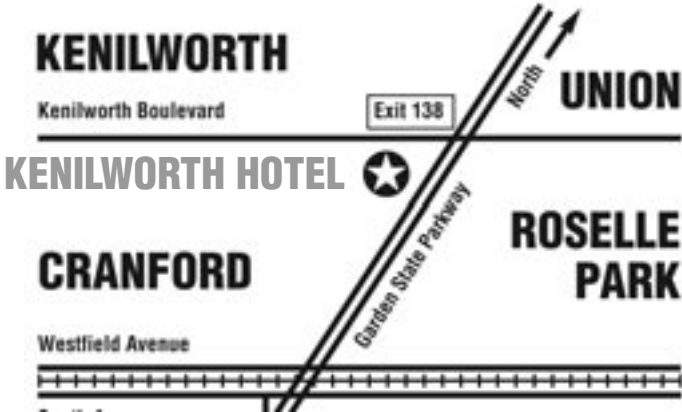
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ARTHUR L. JOHNSON 2025 SENIOR AWARDS CEREMONY

Clark Public Schools

Arthur L. Johnson High School held its 2025 Senior Awards Ceremony on May 29th to recognize outstanding student accomplishments. Seniors were honored with several awards and scholarships recognizing outstanding contributions in the areas of academics, athletics, community service, and beyond.

Superintendent Edward Grande stated, "Getting to see our seniors honored for their successes, coupled with the outpouring of support from the larger communities of Clark and Garwood, makes this evening one of the best of the entire school year."

• MICHAEL T. SOT MEMORIAL SERVANT LEADERSHIP AWARD:

Michael Sot, Alexa Tavares, Ines Justino,

• ALJ ALUMNI ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIPS

30 scholarships in total given out.

• ALJ PTA SCHOLARSHIPS

Amanda Machado, Hailey Fizer, Allison Biondi, Krista Steiner, Ryan Volmut, Lisa Karnaugh, Dean Warnick, Katelyn Crowley, Robert Gallagher

• NICOLE MARZANO MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP:

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• UNION COUNTY SCHOOL NURSES ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP:

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• CLARK UNICO SCHOLARSHIP

Jamie Rinaldo, Anthony Risoli, Isabella Serrano, Gabriella Romano, Allison Biondi, Joseph Smeraglia, Valentina Restaino, Lisa Karnaugh



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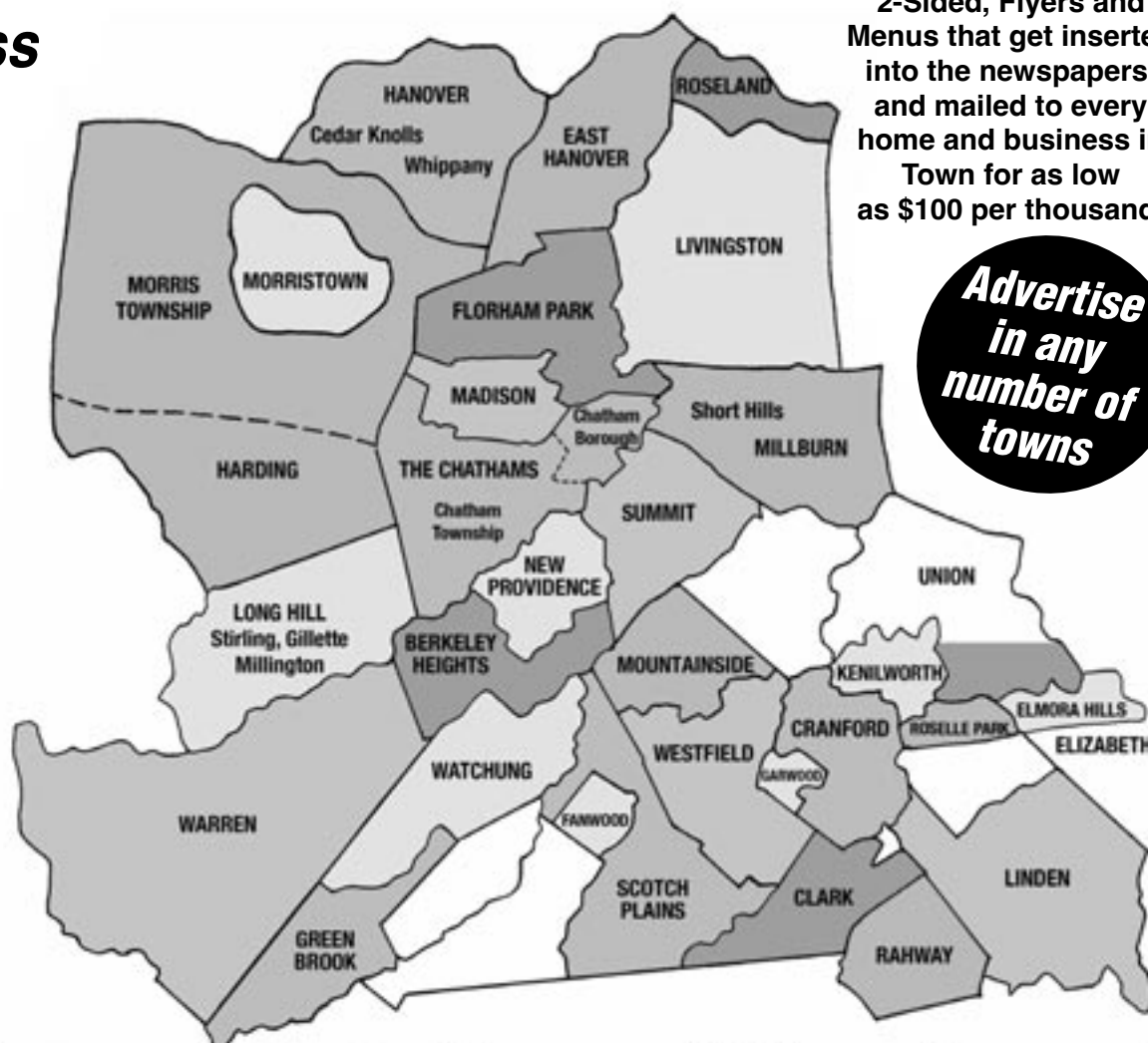
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NEW POLICE CHIEF JONATHAN PRIDY SWORE IN

At the June 12th Council meeting, Mayor Jen Blumenstock swore in new Garwood Police Chief Jonathan Pridy, as well as Captain Philip Lewis and Sgt. Christopher Czachorowski.

Chief Pridy spoke about continuing the legacy of his predecessor and ensuring continued community engagement with the new officers in the Garwood Police Department.



(above) Captain Philip Lewis and family



(above) Sgt. Christopher Czachorowski and family



(above) Chief Jonathan Pridy and family with Mayor Blumenstock

Courtesy Photo

ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE TRAINING BEGINS IN SEPTEMBER

CASA of Passaic and Union Counties

At just nine years old, Jayden has endured years of neglect due to his parents' substance use and mental health challenges. After they lost their apartment, the family began living in their car in various parking lots, and Jayden often went without food or basic care. Before things reached that point, Jayden had been enrolled in school and enjoyed it. Math was his favorite subject and he loved weekly math club and seeing friends. One night, police were called after Jayden was found alone and barefoot at a gas station. He was removed from his parents and is now living in foster care. A judge assigned a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer to Jayden — and now he has someone who listens, shows up, and stands up for him.

Jayden is one of more than 500 children removed from home in Union and Passaic counties due to abuse and neglect. Living in foster care and separated from all they've known, each child needs a caring, consistent adult in their corner to protect their best interests while in care. Is that you?

Fall training to become a CASA volunteer starts mid-September and will be held at the Linden Library. The first step is to attend an information session. Register now at casapassaicunion.org/info-session for one of the following: Friday, August 1 and Wednesday, August 6, both at 12 pm at the Child Focus office in Elizabeth, 1143 East Jersey Street, 2nd Floor;

Wednesday, August 6 at 5:30 pm at the Linden Library; Monday, August 11 at 5:30 pm, Rahway Library; Wednesday, August 13 at 12 pm at the Child Focus office in Elizabeth, 1143 East Jersey Street, 2nd Floor; Wednesday, August 13 at 5:30 pm at the Plainfield Library; Monday, August 18 at 12 pm at the Child Focus office in Elizabeth, 1143 East Jersey Street, 2nd Floor; Monday, August 18 at 5:30 pm at the Colleen Fraser Building in Westfield; and Wednesday, August 20 at 5 pm, Mountainside Library.

CASA volunteers are trained advocates who visit the child monthly and have court-ordered access to all parties in the case. Supported by CASA staff, advocates make fact-based observations about outstanding needs or concerns and make recommendations to the court. The CASA volunteer is often the only consistent person in the child's life. Applicants must be at least 21, be able to communicate effectively both orally and in writing, have computer skills, pass a background check, and complete the 36-hour training. View the training dates at casapassaicunion.org/casa-training.

CASA of Passaic and Union Counties is a program of Child Focus, which prioritizes the needs and well-being of infants, children, and teens impacted by, or at risk of, abuse or neglect. For details about CASA of Passaic and Union Counties, call 973-832-4002, email info@casapassaicunion.org, or log on to casapassaicunion.org.

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