

Scotch Plains NJ

WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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Issue 124 • January 2026



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ANNUAL CELEBRATION KICKS OFF THE HOLIDAY SEASON

On Sunday, December 7th Scotch Plains held their annual holiday celebration from 1 - 5 p.m. on the Alan M. Augustine Village Green.

The family friendly event featured pictures with Santa, a balloon artist, petting zoo, blow up games, a stage with theatrical performances, face painting, and cookies, cupcakes, and other give aways. The event culminated with a Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony.



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Scotch Plains NJ WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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DONATIONS NEEDED FOR GIFT BASKETS

Scotch Plains Volunteer Rescue Squad Auxiliary

The Scotch Plains Volunteer Rescue Squad Auxiliary is gearing up to host another amazing Pancake Breakfast on Sunday, February 22, 2026. To help make this annual get-together even more fun and exciting, donations are being collected for gift baskets that will be auctioned off during the event.

Only new items will be accepted, and no shoes, clothing, or stuffed animals are needed. Please consider donating items for inclusion in the following themed basket prizes:

Baking – Wellness - Gardening - Sports - Pets - Health - Children - Scrapbooking - Coffee/Tea - Comic Books - Arts and Crafts - Italian Dinner - Games – Vacation – Holiday Items and Crazy Socks. Baskets and ribbon would also be very much appreciated.

We also encourage donors to create their own gift baskets using the themes above. This would be a great project for a family, a scout troop, or other groups looking to contribute to this worthy fundraiser.

The Auxiliary will be collecting donations on the following dates at the Rescue Squad building at 1916 Bartle Avenue, starting January 27, 2026, through February 14, 2026, on Tuesdays and Fridays from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The Scotch Plains Volunteer Rescue Squad Auxiliary meets once a month, and its grassroots



function is to assist the Squad in many capacities – from attending town functions such as street fairs, concerts, and holiday events to connect with the community and promote Squad interests to holding fundraisers and performing outreach to squad and fellow auxiliary members.

If interested in becoming a member of the Auxiliary, come by the Squad building one evening to pick up an application, or email SPRSAuxiliary@scotchplainsrescuesquad.com.

Thank you for your support!

Contributing Author: Susan Baldani, a life member of the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad.

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RSVP and receive a FREE Relocation Guide at the Expo.

TIPS ON E-BIKE SAFETY FROM THE RESCUE SQUAD

Scotch Plains Rescue Squad
On an otherwise beautiful and sunny fall afternoon, a young boy in our town lost his life while riding an electronic bike. Now, many parents and children are wondering what they can do to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

Growing up, many of us had bicycles that could only go as fast as our legs could move us. And while we've known about the importance of wearing bike helmets for quite a long time, that isn't always enough. Some of these bikes can reach speeds of over 60 mph, making them more challenging to stop and control in emergency situations.

According to Columbia University researchers, e-bike injuries rose by 293% nationally from 2019 to 2022. That's a startling number. State Senate President Nicholas Scutari recently announced that he will introduce a bill to make electric bike riding safer for users in New Jersey. However, even if this bill passes, it may take some time to implement. In the meantime, it's imperative that parents ensure that their children are aware of bicycle road safety and how to handle these types of bikes.

HERE ARE SOME GREAT TIPS FROM AAA:

Determine the right electronic bike for your child. There are three classes, with different speed capabilities and controls, and various sizes, so ensure the fit is right for your child and the weight of the bike is manageable. Wider tires provide more stability, and some e-bikes even come with parent-adjustable speed settings and speed

limiters, as well as app-based monitoring.
Ensure your child is responsible and skilled enough to handle an e-bike. Have them become comfortable and proficient on a regular bike first. If possible, ride with them, and make sure they are not easily distracted, have a superior sense of balance and motor skills, and can effectively steer and control the bike. Enrolling your child in an e-bike safety course is also a great option.
Have them wear a properly fitting helmet. Visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and follow its steps to ensure the helmet fits correctly.
Make sure they're visible to others on the road. They should be wearing bright clothing during the day and light-colored or reflective clothing in the evenings. E-bikes should be equipped with headlights, taillights, and a red rear reflector.
Obey the rules of the road & e-bike laws, which are often the same as those for other

motorists. These include obeying traffic lights and signs, as well as knowing and observing right-of-way laws. Stopping at crosswalks for pedestrians, going with the flow of traffic, riding as close to the right edge of the road as possible, and not blocking traffic on bike trails, paths, and lanes are also critical. Explain the importance of always signaling when making turns, making eye contact with motorists, and avoiding weaving in and out of traffic.
Talk to your kids about responsible riding. Emphasize the dangers of higher speeds, including reduced reaction times and an increased risk of loss of control and serious injury.
Ensure the bike is in top condition & keep up with maintenance. Inspect tires, brakes, controls, and displays on a regular basis.
Contributing Author: Susan Baldani, a life member of the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad.

LOST DOG

\$2,500 REWARD

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CAFE FOR THOSE WITH MEMORY LOSS

Christ Church, Summit, NJ

Too often, those living with memory loss can suffer from social stigma and isolation. A Memory Cafe is a social gathering for those living with cognitive loss, together with their care-partners. It's a welcoming community where all feel safe, accepted, and understood.

"The Gathering Place" is a monthly Memory Cafe hosted by volunteers at Christ Church in Summit. They meet the first Wednesday of every month, from 12 - 2 p.m.

Guests socialize over a light, nutritious lunch and share friendship, information, and often a few laughs. It is non-sectarian and all are welcome. From guests: "It was enjoyable, uplifting, and worthwhile," and "I wish my mother had something like this to participate in while she was able."

A suggested donation is \$5 per person.

RSVP is requested for menu-planning.

Contact Brenda Dodds 908 273-5549

or brenda@ccsnj.org.

Christ Church is located at

561 Springfield Avenue, Summit, NJ.

THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains

Please join us on January 19th for "The Great Backyard Bird Count" presented by Mr. Zachary Rittner. You will learn how to help collect data for ornithologists (scientists who study birds) right in your own corner of town.

The event is free and open to the public. It will be held on January 19th at 7:30 p.m., at Mira Vie, located at 295 South Avenue Fanwood. Come and bring guests to this informative event.

Refreshments will be served.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day community project that will run from February 13-16th 2026. Anyone can assist with this project by using apps like eBird and Merlin during these dates to collect information about local birds that is useful to scientists studying bird populations and trends. Mr. Rittner will present a helpful slide show presentation explaining this important community event.



Courtesy Photo

(left) Zachary Rittner received his B.S. in Biology from Union College in Schenectady, NY, his M.A. in teaching at Montclair State University, and an M.S. in Land Resources and Environmental Science from Montana State University. He is a National Geographic Certified Educator, a Chris Morgan Wildlife Ambassador, a Gideon Hawley Teacher of the Year in 2020 and 2023, a New Jersey Exemplary Educator, a Seasonal Naturalist Certified Educator, and was recently featured for his bird walks at Trailside Museum. In 2023 TV host Chris Morgan invited Mr. Rittner to join him in an Arctic polar bear expedition to Svalbard, Norway. He is also the head of the Environmental Sciences Department at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

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LIONS CLUB CELEBRATING 76TH ANNIVERSARY SERVING THE COMMUNITY

The Scotch Plains Lions Club was chartered in 1949 and is celebrating their 76th anniversary.

The Lions Clubs in NJ continue to serve the area with eyeglass collection boxes, Eye Screening, Lions Club International Foundation assists concerns for Hunger, Disaster Relief, Youth, Pediatric Cancer, Mental Health, Environment and Diabetes. Also we serve Camp Marcella for the Blind and Disabled in Rockaway, New Jersey. Currently, the Lions are seeking like minded individuals who are aware of the needs of the community and have the

advantage to effectively make a difference. Being a Lion empowers you to help others in a way that no one person could alone. Currently our Scotch Plains membership is low. We need to grow our Club again. You can make a difference. Scotch Plains Lions are respected citizens of the community. We give willingly of body, time and energy and extraordinary generosity to assist the community and the needy. We need servant leaders to step forward! Please contact us at 908-565-1694 and let us know you are ready to serve with the largest organization in the world!

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Bathrooms

My new Bathroom took less than 2 weeks from start to finish. Love my new heated towel rail.
- Heather H.



Kitchens

"Ryki & his guys did a great job on my mummy's kitchen remodel. He also brought me cookies every day."
- Trinity the Pitbull

Decks & Porches



Big new Composite Deck about 43Ft. x 28Ft., built in fall 2024. Looks Spectacular.
- Anne B.

Windows, Siding & Capping

New Siding and Custom Windows installed and Capped. Good Work and Great Price.
- Dawn S



Indoor & Outdoor Painting

Ryki and his guys painted the outside shakes of the house and capped all exposed wood with PVC coated aluminum. Good for another 20 years. House looks like new. - Tim & Anne R.

Basement Waterproofing & Finishing



Had French drain and 2 sump pumps installed by Ryki's company in a very wet basement 3 years ago. Bone dry ever since. After a month when we were sure basement was dry, the Basement was finished.
- Steven C



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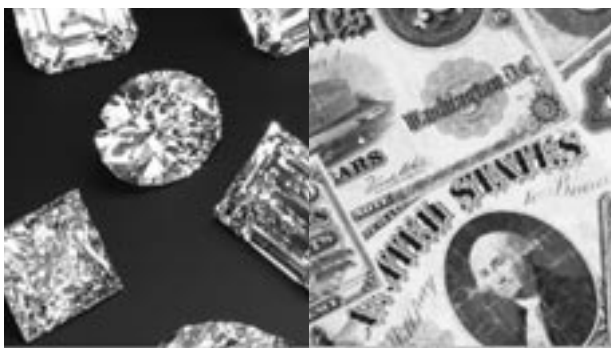
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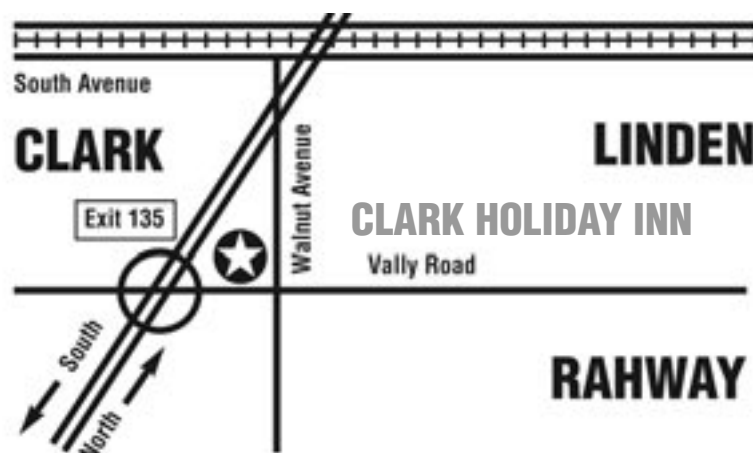
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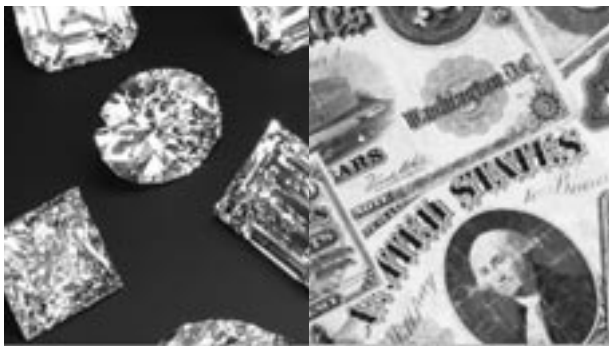
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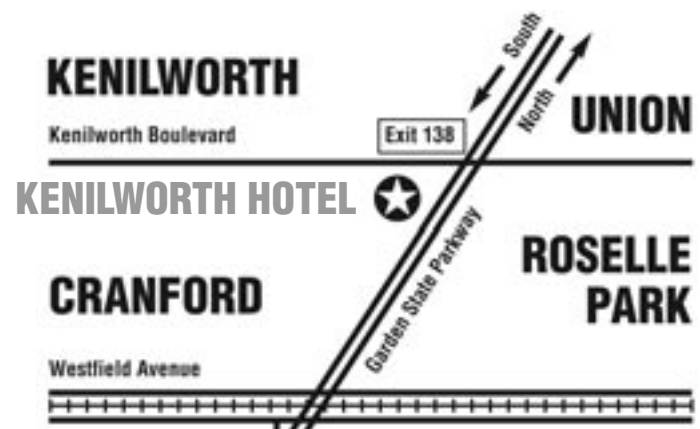
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Alpha is for everybody that wants to discuss seeking answers to life's big questions. Why are we here? Is this all there is to life? Where are we going? How do I attain peace of mind, heart, and soul? Whether you are young or old, have faith or are atheist or agnostic, Alpha provides a safe environment for exploring our big questions about life.

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

The series runs for 12 weeks on Monday nights beginning at 7:30 p.m. and ending at 9:00 p.m. It will begin February 2nd, 2026, and end May 4th, 2026. Five of the sessions are live in person and the remainder are on Zoom. There is



no cost to participate. You will need a desire for frank discussion, a willingness to participate and a commitment to attend. You will also need a computer or smartphone capable of Zoom sessions.

The live in person sessions will be held at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, 1571 S. Martine Ave., Scotch Plains, NJ.

To register go onto IHMParish.net/Alpha.

If you have any questions, please call 908-889-2100.

LYDIA MASTERSON CELEBRATES 10 YEARS AS A LITERACY VOLUNTEER

Speaking with a teacher at a parent-teacher conference. Scheduling a medical appointment over the phone. Writing an invitation to a baby shower. If you speak English, these tasks are probably easy for you. But if English is not your native language, these tasks can be monumentally challenging.

That's where Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County (LVSC) comes in. LVSC promotes literacy throughout the community by providing student-centered tutoring and literacy programs for adults who struggle with English as a Second Language (ESL). The organization matches students with trained volunteer tutors, tutors like Watchung resident Lydia Masterson.

Noting that the "winter doldrums" were starting to take effect, Masterson signed up to become a volunteer tutor in January of 2015. "I had recently retired from teaching high school history and jumped at the opportunity to learn how to teach literacy. The training provided eased all fears," said Masterson. She has since tutored students from Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, South Korea, China and India.

Commenting on her LVSC experience Masterson said: "I've gained a deeper

appreciation for cultures other than my own and truly respect the motivation and determination of my students. To talk with others about life enriches my own journey."

LVSC is actively recruiting volunteers, like Masterson, to help meet the needs of the local community. An hour or two a week is all it takes to make a difference, and you don't have to be a teacher to be a tutor.

For more info, visit literacysomerset.org, email info@literacysomerset.org.



(above, l-r) Lydia Masterson, right, and student Catherine.

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NEW JERSEY YOUTH CHORUS TO HOLD MID-YEAR AUDITIONS

The New Jersey Youth Chorus (NJYC), a program of Wharton Arts, will hold mid-year auditions for select ensembles in January 2026 for singers in grades 3–12. Auditions provide young vocalists with the opportunity to join a vibrant choral community rooted in musical excellence, collaboration, and belonging. To register for an audition for NJYC’s Primo Coro, Cor Amici, Sola Voce, and Camerata, visit NJYC.org.

“At NJYC, singing is just the beginning,” said Trish Joyce, Founder and Director. “Through music, we cultivate connection, teamwork, and a deep sense of belonging, and our directors are excited to welcome new singers into our choral family.”

Throughout the season, NJYC choristers participate in exceptional performance and educational opportunities at the local, regional, and national levels. Highlights this season include:

- Life of Song Festival in Washington, DC, for Sola Voce and Cor Amici
 - “The Vocal Edge” Middle School Boys Festival
 - “Together We Sing” Festival for Primo Coro
 - Collaboration with the Maplewood Glee Club for Camerata
 - Performance of the National Anthem for the New York Mets, featuring all NJYC choirs
 - Choral Festival at Carnegie Hall for Camerata
 - Sing a Mile High Festival in Denver, Colorado, for Sola Voce and Cor Amici
- For more information, call (973) 998-5670 or



email info@njyc.org.
Wharton Arts’ mission is to offer accessible, high quality performing arts education that sparks personal growth and builds inclusive communities.
Wharton Arts’ vision is for a transformative performing arts education in an inclusive community to be accessible for everyone.
Wharton Arts is New Jersey’s largest independent non-profit community performing arts education center serving nearly 2,000 students through a range of classes and ensembles. The 5 ensembles of the New Jersey

Youth Chorus, an auditioned choral ensemble program for students in grades 3–12, encourage a love and appreciation of choral music while nurturing personal growth and creative development. The 15 ensembles of the New Jersey Youth Symphony, which serve over 500 students in grades 3–12 by audition, inspire young people to achieve musical excellence through high-level ensemble training and performance opportunities. Based in Paterson, the Paterson Music Project is an El Sistema-inspired program of Wharton Arts that uses music education as a vehicle for social action by empowering and inspiring young people to achieve their full potential through the community experience of ensemble learning and playing. From Pathways classes for young children to Lifelong Learning programs for adults, the Wharton Performing Arts School has a robust musical theater and drama program and offers both private and group classes for instruments and voice for all ages and all abilities. With the belief in the positive and unifying influence of music and that performing arts education should be accessible to all people regardless of their ability to pay, Wharton Arts offers need-based scholarships.

Wharton Arts is located in Berkeley Heights, New Providence, and Paterson, NJ and reaches students from 12 counties. All of Wharton Arts’ extraordinary teaching artists, faculty members, and conductors hold degrees in their teaching specialty and have been vetted and trained to enable our students to achieve their personal best.



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JANUARY SPEAKERS PROGRAM FOR THE SUMMIT AREA OLD GUARD

The Summit Area Old Guard is a social, educational, and recreational organization that serves men of retirement age. We meet Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m., at the New Providence Presbyterian Church located at 1307 Springfield Ave – we encourage visitation, and all are welcome. Our motto is “Come for the Programs. Stay for the Friends.” The organization was founded in 1930. Our website address is summitoldguard.org.

In January, we will have four speakers:

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6TH: RICHARD LANDER

Shares a deep, personal connection to the Civil War as the great-grandson of John R. Lander, a Union soldier. John emigrated from Germany and enlisted with an Illinois regiment at the remarkably early age of fourteen, serving for the entire duration of the war. This military service instilled a generational interest: members of the Lander family have continuously studied the Civil War and maintained membership in the Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW). In his presentation, Richard will detail the complex tapestry of events that led to the conflict, covering the cultural, political, economic, and military factors at play. Attendees are encouraged to note the striking parallels between these historical forces and current events.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13TH: DR. DEAN EPLER

Though the Apollo Program was a revolutionary 20th-century achievement, many of its difficulties and successes have faded into

historical obscurity. Dr. Dean Eppler, a retired NASA scientist with over 35 years in human spaceflight, possesses the breadth of experience to bring the mission into focus. His background includes Apollo Program history, advanced space suit engineering, ISS facility development, and training/selecting astronauts (1990, 1996, and 1998 selections). Dr. Eppler will identify the key areas of the mission's success and discuss Apollo's enduring contributions to human spaceflight.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20TH: HOWARD MEYER

A long-time leader in New Jersey volunteer EMS. He is the past president of the EMS Council of New Jersey, the country's largest volunteer squad association, and served as its volunteer legislative director for over 20 years. Since 1971, he has served in leadership roles, including president and chief, across all types of New Jersey environments—rural, suburban, and urban. Howard will detail the history and

evolution of the volunteer EMS system, highlighting its critical importance to the state. His talk will cover key events and the major challenges volunteer squads face moving forward.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27TH: BOB GULA

The Forgotten Victory Trail explores one of America's most overlooked Revolutionary chapters in the brutal campaigns of 1780 in NJ, when burning towns, secret networks, and fierce local resistance helped turn the tide of the war. The Battles of Springfield and Connecticut Farms in June 1780 were critical in the defense of New Jersey (and Washington's forces in Morristown) and in the weakening of the British Forces ahead of the Battle of Yorktown. Our speaker will be Bob Gula, Education Officer –West Fields Chapter of Sons of the American Revolution Patriotic Instructor, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Member and General Society of Mayflower Descendants.



(above, l-r) Richard Lander, Dr. Eppler, Howard Meyer, Robert Gula

HICKORY TREE CHORUS INVITES ACAPPELLA SINGERS TO OPEN AUDITIONS

The award-winning Hickory Tree Chorus is calling singers in the soprano, alto, and contralto ranges to join their harmonious sisterhood!

Performing in communities throughout northern and central New Jersey, the chorus enjoys singing recognizable popular songs - arranged in rich four-part harmony.

Fresh off their top-scoring performance at the 2025 Sweet Adelines Region 15 competition, the

chorus has earned a coveted spot in the Harmony Classic at the 78th Annual Sweet Adelines International Competition in Columbus, Ohio, October 2026. Now, they're building their sound for the world stage.

Open auditions will be held in Stirling between 6:30-7:00 p.m. on Wednesday evenings in January 2026 and take less than 10 minutes (flexible scheduling is available). Singers are

asked to perform a brief acappella song of their choice. No experience required, just a love of singing and a desire to grow.

This is more than a chorus—it's a sisterhood, a mission, and a moment. Will your voice be part of it?

For details and to schedule your audition, email us at info@hickorytreechorus.org or call 908-377-1399.



(above) The award-winning Hickory Tree Chorus invites you to join the sisterhood. For details and to schedule your audition, email us at info@hickorytreechorus.org or call 908-377-1399.

BROOK ARTS CENTER ANNOUNCES IT 2ND SPEAKEASY SOIREE AND SILENT AUCTION.

The historic Brook Arts Center is proud to announce its Second Annual Speakeasy Soirée & Silent Auction, Friday, January 23, 2026, at 7:00 PM. This Roaring '20s-themed evening promises an unforgettable night of glitz, glamour, entertainment, and support for one of Somerset County New Jersey's, historic landmarks.

Guests will be transported back to the golden age as they enjoy live music, period-inspired entertainment, and a lavish buffet.

The evening's highlight is a silent auction featuring more than 100 exclusive items, including a cruise getaway, a Bradford Portraits gift certificate with a private photo session, a 20-inch framed wall portrait and luxury hotel stay, four VIP tickets to Meadowlands Racing with dinner and winner's circle photos, designer handbags, sports memorabilia, dining and spa packages and so much more.

Tickets are \$50 per person or \$80 per couple and include buffet dining, live music, live

entertainment, and a cash bar.

Attendees are encouraged to dress in their finest 1920s-inspired attire to fully embrace the spirit of the evening.

The Speakeasy Soirée is the Brook Arts Center's largest fundraiser of the year.

As a fully volunteer-run 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the Brook Arts Center relies on community support to continue with the preservation and restoration of the facility and its mission of providing high-quality entertainment, inspiring creativity, fostering community partnerships, and nurturing education and growth through the arts.

Tickets are on sale now through January 16, 2026.

To purchase tickets or learn more, visit www.brookarts.org.

Reserve your tickets today and be part of a glamorous night that helps keep the arts alive in our community.

TRY DRY JANUARY

The CDC defines drinking in moderation by limiting intake to 2 drinks or less in a day for men or 1 drink or less in a day for women. Heavier drinking and long-term drinking can increase physical and mental problems. The concept of Dry January, wishing to cut down on your alcohol intake, or simply wanting to begin the new year with a clean slate by choosing not to drink beer, wine, or spirits for one month, appeals to someone who may have noticed a pattern that they're drinking a little bit more than they should, especially during the holidays.

THERE ARE BENEFITS TO DRY JANUARY:

- You'll get a mood boost.
- You'll sleep more soundly.
- You might feel less bloated or even drop a few pounds.
- You'll save money.
- Your skin might look brighter.
- You'll have a stronger immune system.
- You'll feel better in the morning.
- You'll have a new relationship with alcohol.

A month may seem like a long time, but most people can be successful. Here are some tips for a successful Dry January:

Find a substitute non-alcoholic drink. For social situations, or when you crave a cocktail after a long day, reach for alcohol-free beverages like sparkling water, soda, or virgin beverages (non-alcoholic versions of alcoholic drinks.)

Non-alcoholic beer or wine also is an option, but some brands still contain up to 0.5% alcohol by volume, so check the label.

Avoid temptations. Keep alcohol out of your house. When you are invited to someone's home, bring your non-alcoholic drinks with you.

Create a support group. Let friends and family know about your intentions and encourage them to keep you accountable. Better yet, enlist someone to do the challenge with you.

Use the Try Dry app. This free app helps you track your drinking, set personal goals, and offers motivational information like calories and money saved from not drinking. It's aimed at cutting back on or cutting out alcohol, depending on your choices.

Don't give up. If you slip up, don't feel guilty. Just begin again the next day.

If you found Dry January to be a positive experience, why not consider extending it a little longer or gradually decreasing your alcohol consumption? Embracing these small changes could lead to lasting improvements in overall health and well-being.

Written by Amy Lewis, MPH, MCHES, Health Educator, Westfield Regional Health Department, on behalf of the Mayors Wellness Campaign.



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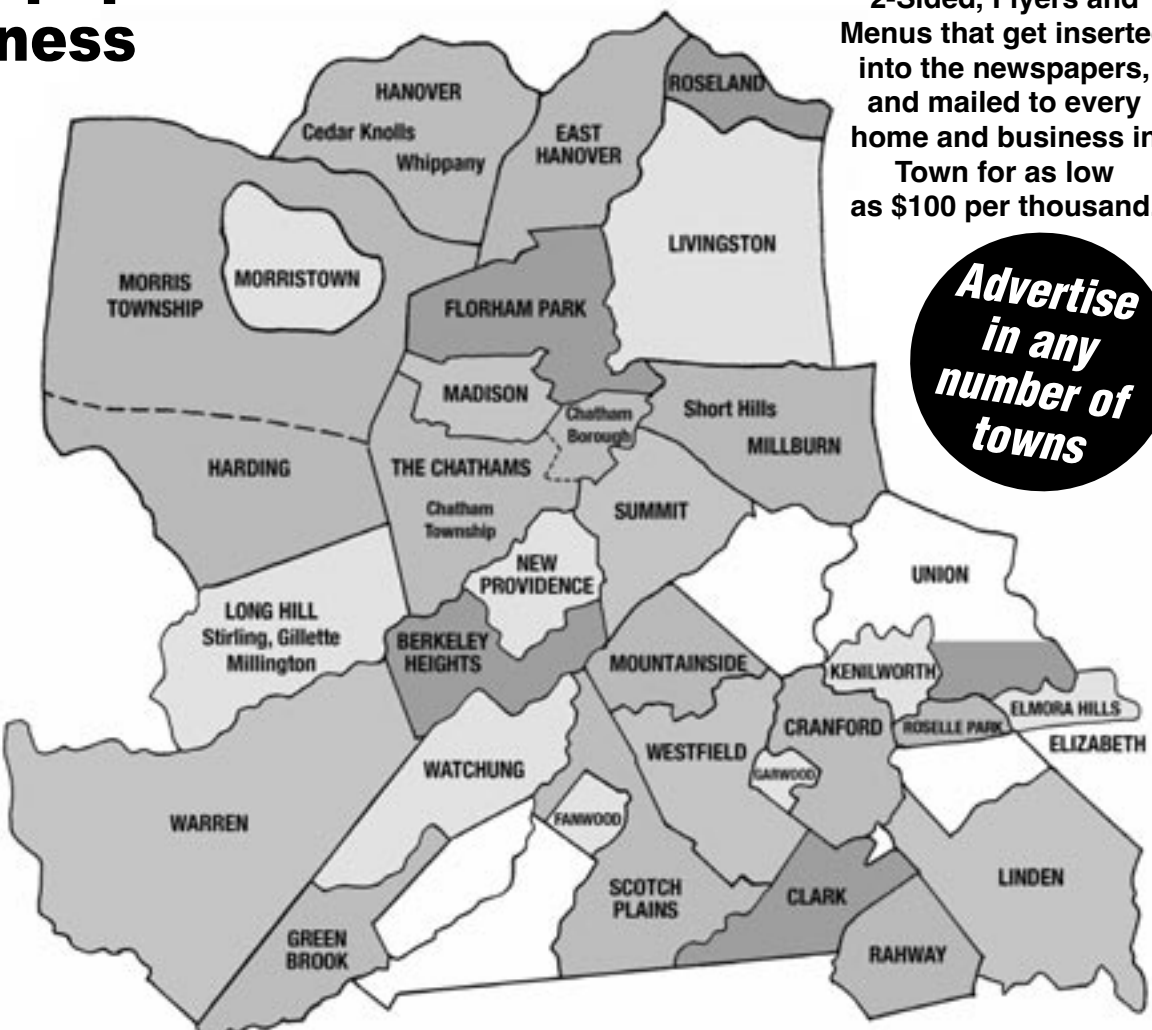
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Long Hill LEADER NJ Qty: 3,500 Zips: 07933, 07946, 07980	MADISON MONTHLY NJ Qty: 6,300 Zip: 07940	Short Hills MILLBURN MONTHLY NJ Qty: 8,200 Zips: 07041, 07078	MORRIS TOWNSHIP TIMES NJ Qty: 13,500 Zip: 07960, Harding 07976	MORRISTOWN MONTHLY NJ Qty: 7,000 Zip: 07960	MOUNTAINVIEW NJ Qty: 3,000 Zip: 07092	New Providence NEWS NJ Qty: 5,100 Zip: 07974	OUR TOWN Rahway, NJ Qty: 13,100 Zip: 07065
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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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STATE CANCELS LEGAL NOTICE MANDATE

We rarely ever hear about the government reducing taxes but it happened this year when New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy eliminated the mandate that legal notices must be printed in a newspaper.

The antiquated mandate is decades old and the cost for the advertng was paid for by public funds from municipalities, counties, school districts, and independent authorities. It was a lucrative business for the publications and more recently the majority of their revenue. Without the mandate the fear in the newspaper industry was that the publications relying on the legal advertising income will not survive.

In some cases the majority of content in the newspaper had been the legal ads. In question was the criteria for the mandate, i.e., were the publications meeting the required numbers of

paid subscriptions, and circulation.

The idea of doing away with the mandate, though practical, was considered political poison. No lawmaker wanted to be deemed responsible as the cause for newspapers' closures and people losing their jobs. During the Governor Christi administration the Star Ledger warned that doing away with the mandates would cause 250 weekly newspapers to close.

What brought about the change is a successful lawsuit filed by the County of Warren which named the Star Ledger and Daily Record as defendants. The suit may have been the last straw in the Ledger's decision to stop printing the newspaper in January of 2025.

Local governments will now be required to publish their legal notices on their websites.



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