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OPERATION WARM COAT DONATIONS TO STUDENTS

Rahway Public Schools

Grover Cleveland School had the distinct privilege of hosting a heartwarming distribution event in partnership with the national non-profit organization, Operation Warm. Through this incredible initiative, every child at Grover Cleveland School received a brand-new, high-quality winter coat just in time for the coldest months of the year.

The school gymnasium was filled with excitement as students lined up to select their own coat, choosing from a variety of colors and sizes. For many children, this brand-new coat provides more than just physical warmth—it offers a boost of confidence and pride that comes with owning a new item.

The success of the event was made possible by an outpouring of support from the community. Volunteers from all over—including local business representatives, district staff, and community members—joined forces to help the students try on and hand out the coats, ensuring a smooth and joyful experience for everyone. The energy in the building was one of shared community spirit and generosity.

"Hosting Operation Warm at our building was a truly special day for our entire school community," said Ms. Garvin, Principal of Grover Cleveland School. "To see the genuine

surprise and pure joy on our students' faces as they picked out their very own coat was incredibly moving. This gift is a wonderful reminder to our children that their community cares deeply about their well-being and success, both inside and outside of the classroom."

The event aligns with Operation Warm's mission to provide warmth, confidence, and hope to children in need across North America, using a brand-new coat as a catalyst for emotional and physical well-being.

Ms. Lee-Ellis, the Vice Principal, emphasized the collaborative effort and the importance of the donation.

"We are profoundly grateful to Operation Warm and all the incredible volunteers who dedicated their time yesterday," remarked Ms. Lee-Ellis. "It takes a village to ensure all our students have the essential resources they need to thrive. These new coats remove a significant barrier for many families and will allow our children to walk to school safely and confidently, ready to learn. It was a beautiful display of community partnership in action."

Grover Cleveland School extends its deepest thanks to Operation Warm and all the volunteers who helped make this day a tremendous success, ensuring that all students are prepared for the winter season ahead.



(above) Grover Cleveland School Wraps Students in Warmth with Operation Warm Coat Donation

Photo by Dyan McMillen

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WINTER CONCERT SUCCESS

Rahway Public Schools

Madison Elementary School filled the Rahway High School Performing Arts Center with sights and sounds of the season as it hosted its highly anticipated Winter Concert. The event brought together a "packed house" of parents, families, and friends for an evening of musical excellence and community spirit.

The concert featured a diverse program that showcased the hard work and talent of students across various grade levels and musical disciplines.

The evening kicked off with impressive instrumental performances and concluded with heartwarming vocal displays. The program included:

The Madison Band & Orchestra: Delivering polished performances that demonstrated the students' technical growth and dedication to their instruments.

The School Chorus: Filling the auditorium with harmonious seasonal favorites.

2nd and 4th Grade Vocal Music: Bringing a special energy to the stage, these young performers delighted the audience with their enthusiastic and choreographed musical numbers.

The festive atmosphere extended beyond the stage. The Madison Elementary PTO was on hand to host a 50/50 raffle, adding an extra layer of excitement to the evening. The proceeds from the raffle will go directly toward supporting future student activities and school resources.

The Winter Concert is a cornerstone of the Madison Elementary arts program, emphasizing the importance of creative expression and performance in a well-rounded education. The school extends its gratitude to the music directors, staff, and parent volunteers who made the evening a resounding success.



(above) Madison Elementary School Hits a High Note with Annual Winter Concert Celebration

Courtesy Photo



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EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT IS A SENSORY CELEBRATION

Rahway Public Schools

Roosevelt School is buzzing with excitement following a heartwarming and thoughtful donation from an extraordinary young community leader! In early September, Dr. Septor and Mrs. Hennessy were approached by Sebastian Nativo, an inspiring Boy Scout of America (BSA) Eagle Scout candidate, and senior at Seton Hall Prep, who was seeking a meaningful project to give back to the community for his final troop requirement. Eagle Scout is the highest rank in the BSA program. Only 4% of



(above) Seton Hall Prep Senior Sebastian Nativo's Eagle Scout project brings Joy and Learning to Roosevelt School Students.

Photo by Rahway Public Schools

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scouts earn this rank.

After several insightful conversations and learning about the diverse needs of Roosevelt School's student population, Sebastian zeroed in on an idea that would make a tangible difference: a student-centered project focused on supporting fine motor skills.

Sebastian and his dedicated troop set to work developing and building fantastic mobile sensory boxes! These incredible creations are packed with engaging tools designed to support sensory exploration and fine motor development, featuring fidgets, manipulatives, bells, lights, varied textures, buttons, zippers, and much more! The intention is for these versatile boxes to be utilized during indoor recess and physical education classes as additional learning stations for the self-contained programs.

The culmination of Sebastian's hard work arrived on Wednesday, November 5, when he officially delivered the finished sensory boxes to

the administration. But the celebration didn't end there! To truly commemorate this wonderful creation, Sebastian was invited back to Roosevelt School to unveil his project to the students personally. He enthusiastically presented and demonstrated the boxes, allowing for an immediate session of active play with students from four of Roosevelt School's classes.

The reaction was pure joy! Students immediately explored the apparatuses, filling the rooms with giggles, cheers, and excited engagement.

Roosevelt School extends its deepest gratitude for this incredible donation. Sebastian's thoughtfulness, passion for giving back to the community, and leadership have provided a valuable and joyful resource that will support the students' learning and development for years to come. Congratulations to Sebastian Nativo on a truly impactful and successful Eagle Scout project.

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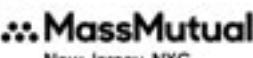
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BENEFIT CONCERT FOR THERAYOUTH

At Drew University, Madison, NJ • Saturday, March 21, 2026 • 4:00 PM

Pegasus: The Orchestra will perform at Drew University on Saturday, March 21 at 4:00 PM for the TheraYouth Foundation's Third Annual Concert fundraiser. Held at the Dorothy Young Center for the Arts, the concert will unite world-class professional musicians with local student performers to raise critical funds for TheraYouth's mission to provide needed physical, occupational, and speech therapy services to disadvantaged children who cannot otherwise access care.

Pegasus: The Orchestra pairs artistic excellence with social impact. Pianist, conductor and composer Karén Hakobyan founded the group in 2017 as a nonprofit dedicated to supporting exceptional musical talent, and to bringing world-class performances to underserved communities. True to its namesake, the ensemble empowers its musicians to soar artistically. Pegasus functions as a collective of artist leaders, resulting in performances that run the range of vibrant, driven orchestral performances alternating with intimate and chamber-like expression. The New York Concert Review calls Pegasus "a truly first-rate ensemble" and a "can't miss" group, urging audiences to "get your tickets right away before they sell out."

As a composer-arranger, Director Hakobyan frequently crafts orchestral works to showcase

the unique musicality of the ensemble's artists, as in this concert which Hakobyan specifically wrote for this performance.

The Chatham High School Chamber Choir, directed by Kenneth Bryson, will perform the Interlude. This ensemble has performed at venues including the White House, the National Anthem at Citi Field to open a Mets game, the Empire State Building, and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and appreciated for their musical excellence.

The proceeds from this concert will support the TheraYouth Foundation, whose mission is to ensure that children are never denied critical physical, occupational, or speech therapy simply because their families cannot afford it. TheraYouth serves disadvantaged youth with treatable conditions, helping them gain strength, communication, and independence. Funded entirely through donations and fundraisers, every dollar raised supports life-changing therapy sessions for children who might otherwise go without the care they need to thrive.

"Every child deserves the chance to reach their full potential," said TheraYouth founder, Dr. Irina Marcoff, DPT. "This concert not only raises vital funds but brings the community together around the belief that early, high-quality therapy can change the course of a child's life."

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This fast-paced ensemble comedy celebrates acceptance, forgiveness, and the true meaning of family. At the Steinberg wedding, nothing is what

it seems; religions collide, Machiavellian plots are revealed, promises are broken, secrets are exposed and hope springs from the most unlikely of places. The charming, funny musical, *It Shoulda Been You*, invites you to a wedding day that you'll never forget, with blushing brides, nervous grooms, overbearing moms, unexpected guests and plenty of crazy twists and turns. Anything that can go wrong does, and love pops up in mysterious places.

Performances are Fridays and Saturdays from February 13th- 28th at 8pm, and Sundays February 22 and March 1 at 2pm.

CDC Theatre is happy to announce that as part of a new pilot program, the February 22nd matinee performance will be ASL interpreted. For tickets and more details, visit cdctheatre.org.



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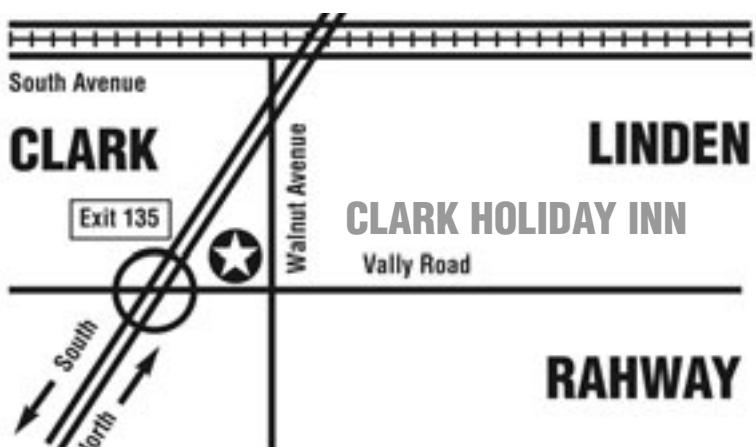
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Silver Screens

Friday 2/6 @ 12 noon

Bring a snack, pack a lunch THEN feature "Fame" (1980) in the Library Auditorium.

Library Cafe

February 7 at 2:00 p.m.

for our Mardi Gras Show with a special performance by actor, musician, singer, storyteller, and tap dancer, Richard Stillman. Open to the public and free to attend. No registration required.

Meet us for Crochet Club

February 9 & 23 at 6:00 p.m.

in the Discovery Studio Bring your own projects or learn a new pattern! Recommended for ages 16+.

Our Voices book group

Wednesday 2/11 at 6:00 pm

discussion of suspense novel "Yellowface" by R.F. Kuang in the Library Cafe.

Celebrate Black History Month

Poetically Speaking Open Mic Night

Wednesday 2/18 at 6:00 p.m.

with our in the Library Cafe Hosted by Ronald C. McCray and Terry Benjamin. All are welcome to participate.

Silver Screens

Friday 2/27 @ 12 noon

Bring a snack, pack a lunch THEN feature "Fame" (1980) in the Library Auditorium.

Celebrate Black History Month

"Every Stitch Tells a Story"

Saturday 2/28, Displays start at 11:00 a.m. and discussion at 1:00 p.m.

The Nubian Heritage Quilters Guild will display and discuss their African American quilts.

Discovery Studio

February 25 at 4:00 p.m.

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THREE KINGS DAY CELEBRATION

Rahway Public Schools

Ms. Morales's 8th-grade Spanish classroom recently transformed into a cultural hub to celebrate El Día de los Reyes (Three Kings Day). Observed on January 6, the event served as both a festive conclusion to the holiday season and an immersive educational experience for students.

The celebration began with a multimedia exploration of the Spanish-speaking world. Students analyzed the diverse customs associated with the holiday, viewing curated footage of celebrations ranging from the grand parades of Spain to the intimate family gatherings in Mexico. This comparative study highlighted the unique cultural threads that unite and distinguish different Hispanic nations.

The highlight of the event was the tasting of the Rosca de Reyes, a traditional Mexican sweet bread characterized by its ring shape and candied fruit toppings. Provided through a generous partnership with the Rahway Academy PTO, the

authentic treats allowed students to engage directly with the culinary traditions they had been studying.

In keeping with centuries-old tradition, students searched their slices for the small, hidden figurine tucked inside the bread. According to custom, finding the surprise symbolizes good luck for the recipient in the New Year.

"This celebration is about more than just food; it's about providing students with a tangible connection to the languages and cultures they study," said Ms. Morales. "It was a wonderfully delicious way to wrap up our cultural unit and kick off the 2026 school year with a sense of community and global awareness."

The event marks the continued commitment of the Rahway 7th & 8th Grade Academy in fostering global citizenship and hands-on learning through its world language program.



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LOCAL DAR PREPARES FOR AMERICA'S 250TH

Members of Elizabeth Snyder-Continental Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) are readying to observe America's semiquincentennial. There are plans for public programs, a monument rededication, and several service projects.

America's 250th birthday was the theme of the chapter's entry in the Somerset County Park Commission's Festival of Trees in December and

the chapter's 130th Anniversary Luncheon and Winter Meeting in January.

"It is a great time to be a member of DAR and participate in this historic celebration," said Regent Nancy Stoll. "There will be events hosted by the DAR state and national societies."

The mission of the DAR is to foster patriotism, historical preservation, support education and community service. In 2025, DAR members

logged 7.4 million service hours.

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(above) DAR members with their America 250 entry in the Festival of Trees. The DAR tree featured profiles of members' patriot ancestors.

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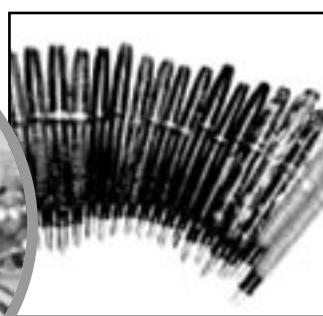
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THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE – A CHRONOLOGY (PART 2)

JUNE 22, 1776 – OCTOBER 26, 1776

Submitted by Al Shipley, City Historian and Rahway Library Research Consultant

By the start of 1776 passions had reached a boiling point as more and more Americans were embracing the ideals of liberty and freedom and were calling for complete independence from the British crown. The years of grumbling had become louder, sides had been taken, armies had been formed and shots had been fired. For some time, American statesmen and legislators had been pressing the ideas of liberty and advocating a union of the colonies that would be self-governed. It was now time for them to affirm their position before the American people and before the eyes of the world. On June 22, representatives were chosen from the thirteen colonies to attend a meeting of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia to debate the question of independence.

The representatives who attended the meeting were a diverse group: many were outspoken proponents of independence while others, who were concerned with issues important to their individual colonies, were skeptical about breaking away from the crown. The New Jersey delegation included Abraham Clark who represented the area encompassing Rahway. Along with Clark, the other New Jersey representatives included Richard Stockton, John Hart, Francis Hopkinson, and Jonathan Witherspoon. The New Jersey Legislation selected these five men with the clear purpose of voting for independence once they reached Philadelphia.

One of the first orders of business taken up by the Congress was the selection of a committee to write a document that would express the idea of independence acceptable to the entire body. The selected committeemen included John Adams (Massachusetts), Benjamin Franklin (Pennsylvania), Thomas Jefferson (Virginia), Robert Livingston (New York) and Roger Sherman (Connecticut). Thirty-three-year-old Thomas Jefferson, considered to be the most objective and most erudite, was chosen to create the initial draft. After much discussion and editing, the document was presented to the full body of Congress.

The document was constructed in three parts: an introduction, a list of 27 complaints against the king, and a statement declaring independence.

The introduction asserted that the time had finally arrived when the colonists could no longer remain under the king's rule. Breaking from the mother country was a huge step, but the selected representatives were sure their reasons were undeniable and confident fellow colonists and citizens throughout the world would concur.

The middle section, the longest part, presents the list of 27 grievances against the king in specific detail to validate the momentous decision. The reasons to make the separation and go to war had to be great. The representatives were all prominent and prosperous gentlemen who had a great deal to lose if the cause was lost. The following sampling of 12 of the 27 abuses enacted by the king illustrates that the issues that



drove these patriotic men to put their lives and fortunes on the line were certainly intolerable.

He has refused to create laws that would be most wholesome and necessary for the public good. He abolished our most valuable laws and altered fundamentally the forms of our governments. He subjected us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution and unacknowledged by our laws. He elected a multitude of new offices and sent swarms of new officers to harass our people. He obstructed the administration of justice. He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies without the consent of our legislatures. He excited domestic insurrections amongst us. He made judges dependent on his will alone and for the tenure of their offices. He obstructed laws for naturalization of foreigners refusing to pass laws to encourage migration. He deprived us the benefits of trial by jury. He transported us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences. He cut off our trade with all parts of the world.

The final section is the declaration that the colonies were no longer under the king's rule, but instead, a new, free and independent country. And as such, could therefore make its own rules and laws and choose its own destiny. It was within this final section that the name "The United States of America" is first used.

The official vote to accept the contents of the document and send it to the king was taken on July 2nd and adopted unanimously on July 4th. Of the 56 men who ultimately sign the Declaration, only John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, signed on the 4th. Forty-nine representatives signed on August 2nd and six at later times.

The next day, copies of the Declaration were given to riders with orders to deliver them to all colonial assemblies, top officers of the Continental Army, and all militia posts.

The king's response to this "act of treason" came eight days later, on July 12 when the British fleet entered New York Bay. On August 27 American forces were badly beaten at the Battle of Long Island forcing 10,000 of Washington's soldiers to evacuate across the East River. The British Army captured New York City a week later.

On October 26, Benjamin Franklin, serving as a representative of the new United States, sailed for France with a copy of the Declaration of Independence. Ambassador Franklin was sent to negotiate with the French with the goal of garnering financial and military support to the American war effort.

Five years of war would follow the signing of the Declaration as the new country had to fight to make independence a reality. New Jersey, the colony situated between New York City, the British command center, and Philadelphia, the American stronghold, would be the site of 3/5 of the battles of what came to be known as the Revolutionary War. It would mean trouble for much of the area in and around Rahway.

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OVER-WINTERING ANIMALS HIBERNATION AND BRUMATION

Around the world, wild animals including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians to name a few have many strategies for coping with winter. Some hibernate, some migrate, and others stay put.

Worldwide, some birds and a variety of amphibians, reptiles, and insects also exhibit hibernation-like states. There is even at least one fish, the Antarctic cod that slows down its metabolism in winter, becoming 1/20 less active.

Dwarf lemurs of Madagascar are the only primates that hibernate on a regular schedule.

Over-wintering bats and large rodents like woodchucks are New Jersey's true hibernators. These mammals slow their metabolism to a lazy, cold, inactive state. Woodchucks spend many months with a constant body temperature of just 38 degrees Fahrenheit! Almost never would a woodchuck wake up as early as Groundhog Day on Feb. 2, unless they're living in Punxsutawney, Pa.

Hibernation is more than a long winter's nap. Animals that hibernate including bats, woodchucks or groundhogs, bears and snakes employ an amazing variety of physiological strategies.

Despite what you may have heard, species that hibernate don't "sleep" during the winter. Hibernation is an extended form of torpor, a state where metabolism is depressed to less than five percent of normal. "Most of the physiological functions are extremely slowed down or completely halted," says *Marina Blanco.

If these true hibernators wake up in mid-winter, their metabolism and body temperatures go up and costs them a loss of energy.

This is why white-nose fungus has taken such a heavy toll on our smallest bats. The fungus disrupts their sleep and causes them to wake up and fly, burning up precious fat reserves needed to get them through winter.

Black bears are famous for hibernating, and like to stuff themselves into cramped places like caves, rock crevices and hollowed-out trees. But bears don't drop their body temperature much. They're too big to allow their bodies to get really cold, and they need to be able to wake up quickly in an emergency. They enter a state of low metabolic activity and can recycle proteins so they don't have to wake up to urinate.

While bears might be the first that come to mind, for years questions have surrounded whether bears are true hibernators. Unlike animals that stir regularly during hibernation, bears can go for 100 days or so without needing to wake to consume or pass anything, and they can be aroused much more easily than typical hibernators. The U.S. National Park Service suggests they are super hibernators.

The hibernation-like state used by cold-blooded reptiles and amphibians is called



I would rather be hibernating.

"brumation." While hibernating mammals are in a deep sleep, brumating creatures move around on warmer winter days. One interesting example is the timber rattlesnake. In northern New Jersey, they brumate in deep, rocky mountain crevices with southern exposure. But in the Pine Barrens, they brumate in cedar or maple swamps beneath the roots of old trees, where the water never quite freezes.

Amphibians and turtles also brumate. They bury themselves in mud at the bottom of ponds and swamps, surviving in extremely low oxygen conditions. Fish enter a torpid state as water gets cold, but can also become active when the water warms.

Squirrels may be the ultimate survivalists, spending most of the fall collecting acorns and pinecones and stashing them away. On especially cold days in winter, they'll huddle together in nests for shared warmth.

Deer also gather together for warmth in winter, often seeking out sheltered areas like groves of conifers. They conserve energy by not moving as much. When snow prevents them from reaching grass and plants, they'll eat twigs and bark.

Foxes and coyotes, which feed largely on small rodents, don't change their behavior much in winter. Their thick, insulating winter coats allow them to hunt and sleep in relative comfort.

Chipmunks, raccoons and skunks don't hibernate, but are far less active in cold weather. They enter a state of torpor, with a lower body temperature and heart rate, more like napping than a deep sleep.

Recent studies have even suggested a third reason for hibernation, protection. When hibernating, "you don't smell; you don't make any noise; you don't make any movements; so you are very hard to detect for predators," says **Thomas Ruf.

To slow their metabolism, animals cool their bodies by 5° to 10°C (9° to 18°F) on average. The Arctic ground squirrels can take this much further, supercooling to subfreezing temperatures.

Research has shown that cooling is likely regulated by levels of a chemical, adenosine in



(above) Past President of The Rahway Garden Club, James Keane, has been researching and answering garden questions since 1995.

Visit 'Keane Gardener' blog at:
keanegardener.blogspot.com

the brain. Not only does adenosine ramp up in winter in ground squirrels, the receptors for the molecule become more sensitive to it.

But species don't stay in their cold, comatose state for the duration of their dormant period. About 80 percent of their energy is spent intermittently waking and warming up.

Why they do this is "one of the greatest mysteries" of the field, Ruf says. Some environmentalist think they need to turn back on their immune systems to fight disease, while others think they may simply awaken so they can sleep.

Thanks to both National Geographic and Smithsonian for all the information in this article.

*Marina Blanco is a postdoctoral associate at the Duke Lemur Center in Durham, N.C., who studies the dwarf lemurs of Madagascar.

**Ruf is a professor of animal physiology at the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna, Austria.

Enjoy nature in winter too,

James



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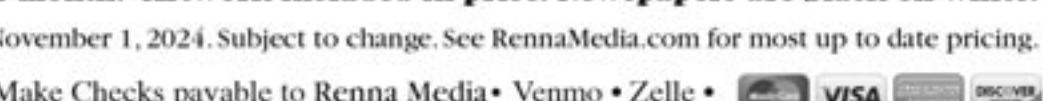
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Mobile Meals of Westfield's new President, Solange Bueno, continues the non-profit organization's annual appeal solicitation to raise capital from supporters and organization volunteers to help fund the food program for those individuals unable to prepare or shop for food for themselves. Mobile Meals has served the communities of Clark, Cranford, Fanwood, Garwood, Mountainside, Scotch Plains and Westfield in providing hot, affordable, prepared meals delivered to client residences since 1968. The non-profit receives no government funding

and relies on contributions from donors and grants to sustain the cost of food and operations.

Mobile Meals of Westfield continues to seek donations from the community now. A \$55 donation will provide lunch and dinner for one person for one week. A \$220 donation provides lunch and dinner for 20 people. Donations in any amount are most sincerely appreciated.

For anyone interested in donating to Mobile Meals of Westfield, please call 908-233-6146, or visit mobilemealsofwestfield.org/donate, or scan this QR code.



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