

# Scotch Plains NJ

## WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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### COLLEGE CLUB SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE FEB. 14TH

The College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains 2026-2027 scholarship application forms can be obtained from the SPFHS Counseling Office or at [spfk12.org](http://spfk12.org) or [fspcollegeclub.org](http://fspcollegeclub.org).

This will be the 90th year that female students seeking financial assistance to pursue a four-year college degree have been helped by our club's fund-raising efforts. To date the College Club has awarded approximately \$843,000 in scholarships to approximately 608 women.

In the words of one of our recipients: "From the bottom of my heart, I thank the College Club for investing in my education. It means the world to me that I have a team of female supporters who saw something in me and spent their precious time and energy to raise the scholarship money that will allow me to further my education and pursue my dreams. I hope that one day I can return the favor and share the same generosity with future candidates."

Application materials must be postmarked ON OR BEFORE FEBRUARY 14, 2026 to be considered.

The Scholarship Committee will be ready to begin reviewing applications the first week of March. The list of 2026- 2027 Scholarship Recipients will be finalized in mid-April.



(right) Jane Barnes, one of last year's scholarship recipients, is pictured with College Club member Marie Leppert

Courtesy Photo

### SP-F SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION APPLICATIONS DUE FEB. 6

Graduating High School Seniors and current college students in Scotch Plains and Fanwood are invited to apply for scholarships to support their post-high school educational endeavors.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Scholarship Foundation is currently accepting applications for high school seniors graduating in 2026 who reside in Scotch Plains or Fanwood, and residents currently attending college or other post high school institutions for scholarships. Electronic applications are now available at [spfscholarshipfoundation.org](http://spfscholarshipfoundation.org).

The numerous scholarships offered by the Foundation range in criteria; some awards are need-based, while others have criteria such as the intent to pursue an education in a particular field or participation in certain activities in high school. The major criterion for eligibility is that the applicant resides in Scotch Plains or Fanwood; an applicant need not be a graduate of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. In addition to the application, the Foundation requires a personal essay from the applicant, a letter of reference, and an official high school or college transcript.

The deadline for the Foundation to receive applications - and any supporting documents as indicated - is February 6,

2026 at 5 p.m. Applicants may submit their applications and other supporting documents via our online application.

"The Foundation is proud to uphold the commitment to support the educational endeavors of the students in our communities," says Michelle Wywra, President of the Foundation. "We could not accomplish this without the kindness and generosity of our donors, and the participation and support from the community via our fundraising efforts."

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Scholarship Foundation's Board of Trustees is a 100% volunteer-run 501c3 non-profit organization. To learn more about this year's scholarship offerings, visit [spfscholarshipfoundation.org](http://spfscholarshipfoundation.org).

#### ABOUT THE FOUNDATION:

Since 1966, The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Scholarship Foundation has awarded over \$5 million to thousands local students. In addition to the Dollars for Students awards, the Foundation administers over 85 separate honorary and memorial scholarships. Scholarship assistance is made possible by Scotch Plains and Fanwood businesses, organizations, community members, and other contributions.

For more information visit [www.spfscholarshipfoundation.org](http://www.spfscholarshipfoundation.org).

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Scotch Plains Monthly is published by Renna Media. 9,600 newspapers are printed monthly and mailed to every business and resident in Scotch Plains, NJ. Although great care has been taken to ensure the information contained within is accurate, Renna Media assumes no liability for errors or omissions.

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## PRESENTATION ON KRAMER MANOR - FEB. 24TH

### Historical Society of Scotch Plains and Fanwood

“Kramer Manor” is the captivating history of a Black Community located right here in Fanwood and Scotch Plains. It proudly marked its centennial in 1924 and, less than a year later, it celebrated another historic designation— inclusion in the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail. Kramer Manor, a neighborhood comprising approximately one hundred households, has a rich history. For most of its 100+ years it stood as an all-Black enclave, but today it has transformed into a thriving and desirable multicultural community of single-family homes and green spaces.

The Historical Society of Scotch Plains and Fanwood is honored to have Jill Jackson-Jones, a respected member of our community, share her insights and educate us about Kramer Manor at our upcoming February 24th evening meeting. Jill, who grew up in the Kramer Manor neighborhood in the 1970’s and 1980’s, now resides in her childhood home. Her dedication to preserving the history of Kramer Manor is evident in her roll as a member of the Social Justice Matters (SJM) organization. Alongside Pamela Brooks, another SJM member, Jill spearheaded the process of tracing the history of Kramer Manor. Their efforts culminated in the successful application for Kramer Manor’s

inclusion in the Black Heritage Trail. Beyond her remarkable contributions to SJM, Jill and her husband Felton Jones, own a Southern Catering service on E. 2nd Street, Scotch Plains.

The Historical Society of Scotch Plains and Fanwood cordially invites you to join us for this timely meeting on Tuesday evening February 24th, starting at 7:30 p.m. Prepare to be amazed by this remarkable history of this neighborhood of 51 acres. In 1924, it was purchased by a New York City-based real estate firm, Kramer Realities, Inc. The owners, brothers Harry and Hyman Kramer of Russian-Jewish heritage, actively marketed it as a destination for black families.

Join us as we delve into the obstacles faced and overcome by these pioneering buyers. Bring your family, friends and neighbors to this enriching meeting and embark on a. Journey through the captivating story and legacy of Kramer Manor. The meeting is free and open to all, and it is held at the historic Shady Rest Country Club, another significant landmark on the Black Heritage Trail. Located at 820 Jerusalem Road (at the corner of Plainfield Avenue) in Scotch Plains, the club offers a historic setting for refreshments and fellowship after the presentation.

For further information contact Connie Klock at [tonniebeth@verizon.net](mailto:tonniebeth@verizon.net) or 908-337-7735.

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## GOV'S EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR

### Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

Each year, New Jersey school districts nominate their educators for the prestigious Governor's Educator of the Year Award through the New Jersey Department of Education. The program seeks to recognize educators "who have gone above and beyond in their service to New Jersey's students" and to create a culture that recognizes excellence and brings public attention to the work of outstanding educators.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools recently recognized 15 exceptional teachers and educational services professionals nominated for the 2025-2026 Governor's Educator of the Year Recognition Program.

"On behalf of the entire district, congratulations to the 15 teachers and educational services professionals who were recognized for this outstanding honor," said Superintendent Dr. Joan Mast. "Their dedication to student success is noticed and appreciated."

### GOVERNOR'S EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR :

- Anne Guard, Nettingham Spanish Teacher
- Kathleen Daniele, Nettingham Classroom Aide
- Kathy McArdle, Evergreen First Grade Teacher
- Celina Merejo, Evergreen Classroom Aide
- Andrea Karanik, SPFHS Social Studies Teacher
- Richard Dorry, SPFHS Student Assistance Specialist
- Katherine (Kate) Szczubelek, School One Kindergarten Teacher
- Holly Hindin, School One Classroom Aide
- Emily Bentivegna, Brunner Special Education Teacher
- Marissa Kurtz, Brunner Speech/Language Specialist
- Elizabeth Sinnott, McGinn Special Education Teacher
- Kamini Sanghvi, McGinn Classroom Aide
- Kari Weinglass, Coles Special Education Teacher
- Dawn Haligowski, Coles Classroom Aide
- Nora Shalan, Terrill English/LA Teacher

## UNICO MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM DEADLINE MARCH 1

### Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood chapter of UNICO will once again be holding its annual Memorial Scholarship Program. All Scotch Plains and Fanwood high school seniors of verifiable Italian heritage are eligible to apply for a scholarship to help defray costs of their first year of post-secondary education.

While students must be residents of Scotch Plains or Fanwood, they can attend any high school, even if the school is outside the local area. Students will need to provide a wide range of information regarding their academic performance, Italian heritage verification, extracurricular and community involvement, and so forth. Additionally, parents and/or guardians will supply household income information. Once

applicants submit their information, SP-F UNICO members will review all applications - which will be anonymous to ensure fairness - and select their top choices for scholarship awards. The scholarship awards are as follows:

- Four (4) \$2500 scholarships to students attending four-year higher education institution
- One (1) \$1500 scholarship to a student attending a two-year community college
- One (1) \$1500 scholarship to a student attending a vocational, technical, or trade school program

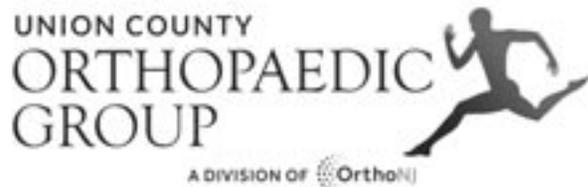
All applications are due no later than 11:59 pm on March 1. To learn more about and submit their applications to the scholarship program, students should visit [tinyurl.com/spfunicoscholarships](http://tinyurl.com/spfunicoscholarships).



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# THE TURTLES RECEIVE HANOVER DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

## Whippany Fire Department

Congratulations to the Whippany Fire Department Swiftwater Rescue Team (aka the TURTLES)! They were recognized during a Hanover Township Committee meeting, for responding to calls for mutual aid in Scotch Plains Township during intense, sudden floodwaters.

We are incredibly proud to celebrate the members who were recognized at the Hanover

Township Committee meeting held on Dec. 11, 2025.

Deputy Chief Derrick Shearer and the entire Whippany Fire Department Swiftwater Rescue Team were presented with the Hanover Township Distinguished Service Award for their meritorious acts of courage, bravery, and valor.

The award recognizes the team's actions on the evening of July 14, 2025, when they responded to multiple calls for mutual aid in Scotch Plains

Township during intense, sudden floodwaters. Their heroic efforts resulted in the rescue of numerous people trapped by the rising water.

Each team member received a plaque, recognizing their dedication to service every day.

We are so fortunate to have such highly-trained, courageous, and dedicated volunteers protecting our community and helping our neighbors when they need it most. Congratulations to all!



(above) Whippany Fire Department Swiftwater Rescue Team (aka the TURTLES) were recognized during a Hanover Township Committee meeting, for responding to calls for mutual aid in Scotch Plains Township during intense, sudden floodwaters.

Photo by Hanover Township

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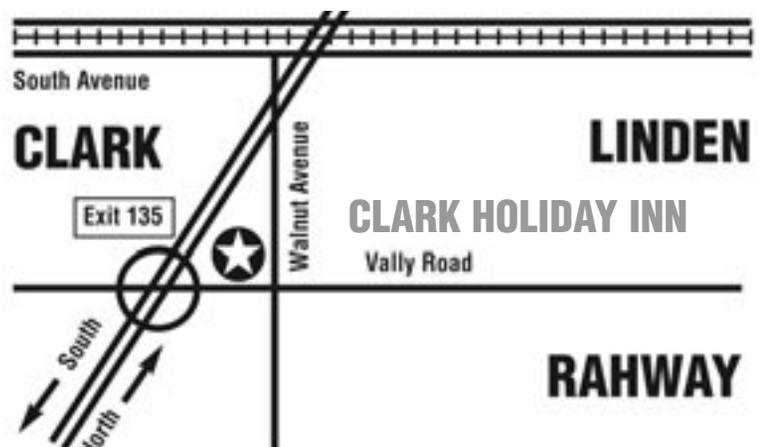
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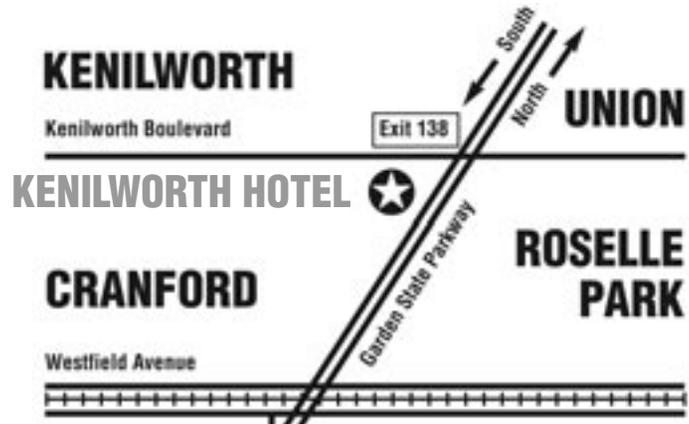


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(above) Ryan Ramo

Courtesy Photo

## RYAN RAMOS HONORED FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

### Scotch Plains Township

The Scotch Plains Township Council recently recognized five-year-old resident Ryan Ramos for his compassion and dedication to community service, inspired by lessons he learned in school about former President Jimmy Carter and his humanitarian work with Habitat for Humanity.

Motivated by Carter's legacy, Ryan expressed a desire to volunteer and help build homes for families in need, celebrating his admiration with a Jimmy Carter-themed birthday.

While age restrictions prevent young children

from participating in home construction, Ryan found another way to give back by joining Greater Middlesex & Morris Habitat for Humanity's Carpenter's Club volunteers in Randolph.

On November 6, he helped build a playhouse that will be delivered to a Habitat homesite and presented to a future homeowner family in spring 2026. Township officials praised Ryan and his family for exemplifying kindness, civic responsibility, and the spirit of volunteerism that strengthens the Scotch Plains community.

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## ALL YOU CAN EAT PANCAKE BREAKFAST - FEB 22

Submitted by Susan Baldani, a life member of the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad.

The Scotch Plains Rescue Squad's 16th annual Pancake Breakfast will take place on Sunday, February 22, 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at its building located at 1916 Bartle Avenue. This event is hosted by the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad Auxiliary, which raises funds for the volunteer squad.

All-you-can-eat pancakes and sausage, along with coffee and juice, will be offered for just an \$8.00 per person entry fee (children 5 and under eat free). There will also be a raffle for baskets filled with gifts and goodies donated by the community and area businesses.

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.

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 through February 14, on Tuesdays and Fridays from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., and on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The drop-off location is the Squad building at 1916 Bartle Avenue.

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](mailto:SPRSAuxiliary@scotchplainsrescuesquad.com).

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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](http://cdctheatre.org).

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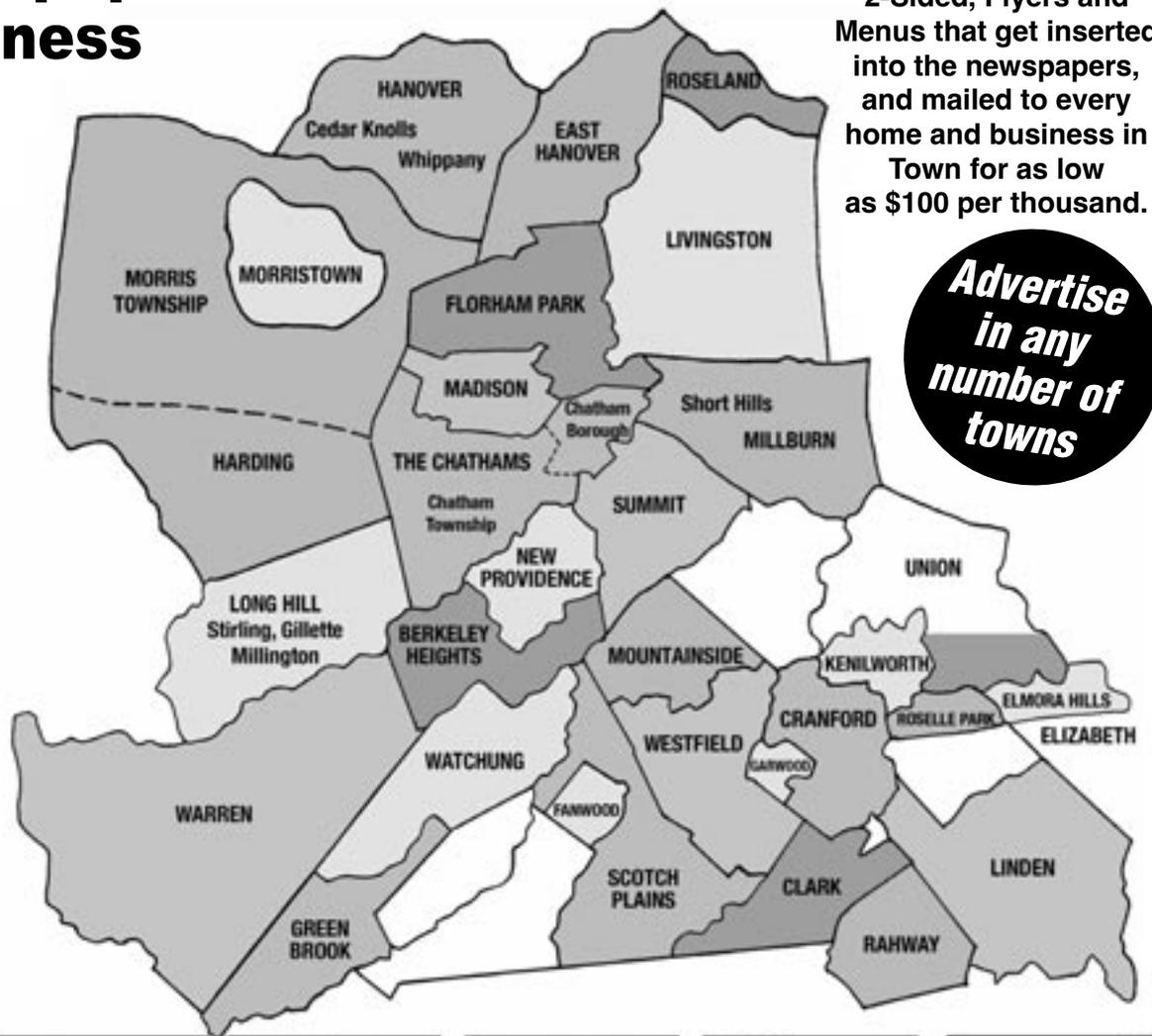
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# SCOTCH PLAINS MOURNS THE PASSING OF FORMER MAYOR GABE SPERA

## Official Obituary of Gabriel A. Spera

Gabriel A. Spera passed away on January 9, 2026, at the age of 90.

Gabe was born to Theodore and Rose (Miserendino) Spera and grew up on a dirt road in Canarsie, Brooklyn, an Italian immigrant neighborhood. He attended Brooklyn College before enlisting in the United States Army, where he served honorably for two years.

After his discharge, he began a life-long career in sales, initially selling typewriters for Smith Corona in New York City. A naturally gifted salesman, he assumed roles of increasing prominence, eventually rising to the rank of Vice President of Sales for Hunt Imaging. He never truly retired.

Gabe met the love of his life, Marilyn Collins, at a friend's wedding. Their first date was a trip to an ice cream parlor, followed by a movie. They were married within a year—a bond that would last for more than 63 years.

Gabe's early career path took them through various locales. From Brooklyn, they moved to Richmond, Virginia, and then Baltimore, Maryland, where they welcomed their first two children, Cynthia and Theodore. Later, they purchased their first home on Staten Island, where their third child, Gabriel, was born. In 1971, they moved to Scotch Plains, motivated in part by a desire to find a suitably enriching environment for their children.

Gabe was passionate about preserving the natural environment, maintaining local identity, and upholding cultural traditions. In support of these ideals, he ran for and won a seat on the Scotch Plains Township Council in 1982, ultimately serving for eight years. He was honored to be named mayor twice during that time. He helped revitalize downtown Scotch Plains while successfully fending off rampant development. His efforts served to foster a greater sense of civic pride and community.

Gabe merged his love of family, community, and heritage. He was active in UNICO, the Boy Scouts, and both the North Plainfield and Westfield Italian American Clubs. He could



(above) Gabriel A. Spera, July 5, 1935 - January 9, 2026

Courtesy Photo

always be seen cheering on his children—and everyone else's as well.

In 2016, Gabe and Marilyn moved to the Lantern Hill retirement community in New Providence, where his warmth and sociability continued to flourish. He served as a Resident Advisor (advocating for world-class food service), participated in Tuesday night poker games, played chess, and became a member of the New Providence Republican Club. He was active with the local Lions Club—and was affectionately known as “Mr. 50-50” for his astounding success at promoting the club's annual fund-raising raffle. In recognition of his exceptional civic contributions, he was named Grand Marshall of the 2023 Columbus Day Ceremony in Westfield.

Gabe was a man of many passions and talents. His garden was legendary, as was his kitchen. He spent his summers tending his garden, where he grew fresh ingredients for his dishes. He particularly loved canning tomatoes and picking fresh figs from his tree. He also took pride in

wine making: From crushing to bottling, Gabe took great care in producing enjoyable wine, which he shared liberally. Above all, Gabe cherished quality time with his loved ones. He delighted in spending time in Stone Harbor, traveling internationally (especially to Italy), playing rounds of golf at Fiddler's Elbow Country Club, attending New York Giants games, singing karaoke whenever the opportunity arose, and passing down family recipes and traditions to his children and grandchildren (though thankfully, he did not pass on his skills with the accordion).

Gabe was a devoted husband and father, a loyal friend, and a beloved neighbor. He had a quick wit, a great sense of humor, and a natural charisma that commanded attention and affection. His life was defined not only by what he did, but by how generously he gave of himself to others. In both public and private life, Gabe exemplified the highest qualities—honesty, sincerity, empathy, and service.

Gabe is survived by his beloved wife, Marilyn; his children, Cynthia Neff (Robert Neff, Jr.), Theodore (Maria Fernanda), and Gabriel (Rachel Lee); his grandchildren, Tomas, Carey (Caroline), Teddy (Star), Laura, Kate, Sophia, Paloma, Raven, and Phoebe; and great-grandchild, Hazel Grace. Gabe is also survived by his brother, Paul, several cousins, nieces, and nephews, and numerous friends and community members who were better for having known him. His children, grandchildren, and great-grandchild were the light of his life and a true source of pride.

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