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LINDEN NJROTC PLACES 3RD AT REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Linden Public Schools

Linden High School, home to the largest Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps unit in the world, added another achievement Feb. 7, 2026, placing third overall at the Area 2 Regional Academic, Athletic and Drill Championship in Pottstown, Pennsylvania.

The all-day competition at Owen J. Roberts High School brought together eight of the top NJROTC units from New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. More than 400 cadets participated, including student volunteers who helped execute the event. The host unit did not compete and was commended for its professionalism and organization.

COMPETING AMONG THE REGION'S BEST

Area 2 includes about 25 NJROTC programs, but only the top five from qualifying regional drill meets advance to the championship. Units must field every drill event to qualify, ensuring only well-rounded programs compete.

Linden's third-place finish reflects months of preparation and reinforces its standing among the region's elite.

"Since I've been the Senior Naval Science Instructor here at Linden, we've competed at every Area Championship," said Cmdr. Boyd Decker. "While we haven't yet advanced to the national level, we've consistently been competitive and have come close on several occasions, often finishing in the top three at the regional level."

Cadets were evaluated in academics, personnel inspection, armed and unarmed basic and exhibition drill, color guard and physical fitness.

(continued on page 2)



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NJROTC CHAMPIONSHIP (continued from page 1)

HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF PREPARATION

Preparation is rigorous. Decker said cadets logged an average of more than 300 hours of training for the event.

“A typical drill team day begins at 0545 to 0730 with morning practice, followed by after-school training that often extends into the evening,” Decker said. “When possible, we also practice on weekends.”

He described the drill team as the unit’s flagship program and a cornerstone of leadership development.

“Drill instills discipline, accountability and work ethic,” Decker said. “Cadet leaders plan, organize and execute training. They learn how to lead, coach and mentor their peers. That’s how we build leaders.”

SUPPORT AND THE ROAD AHEAD

The championship was judged by Navy midshipmen from Penn State, Saint Joseph’s University and Villanova University NROTC programs, along with NJROTC instructors from across the region.

Decker credited families for their support.

“We couldn’t have the competitive drill team that we have without the love and support of our Linden High School parents,” he said.

The overall winner advances to the U.S. Navy JROTC Academic, Athletic and Drill Competition at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida.

For Linden, the third-place finish underscores both consistency and ambition. As the world’s largest NJROTC unit, the program continues to pursue excellence — with its sights set on the national stage.



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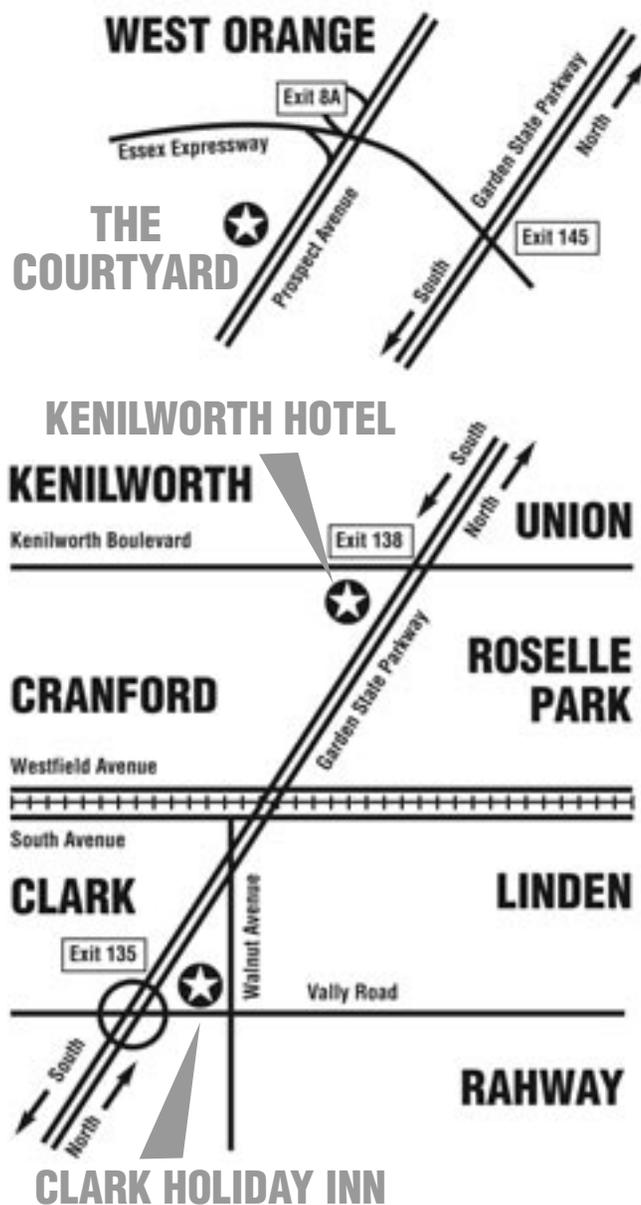
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YOUTH SYMPHONY REHEARSALS FREE AND OPEN TO PUBLIC - MARCH 1-5

The New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS), a program of Wharton Arts, invites young musicians and their families to experience the excitement of ensemble music-making during the NJYS Open Rehearsals Week, taking place March 1-5, 2026.

Throughout the week, visitors are welcome to observe live rehearsals of any of NJYS's 15



ensembles, offering a rare behind-the-scenes look at how young musicians collaborate, learn, and grow under the guidance of NJYS's accomplished artistic staff. Open Rehearsals Week is designed for students in grades 2-11 who are curious about joining a youth orchestra or expanding their musical journey.

Attendees will have the opportunity to meet NJYS conductors, experience the rehearsal process firsthand, and explore how NJYS nurtures musical excellence, teamwork, and confidence in young performers.

Said Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Helen Cha-Pyo, "At the New Jersey Youth Symphony, we hold our students to the highest standards of musical excellence and artistry because they are capable of extraordinary things. At the same time, our core mission goes beyond performance. We want our students to experience the profound connection between music and life, and to understand the power of music as a force for service, empathy, and community building. Open Rehearsals Week is an open invitation to parents, educators, and students to step inside our rehearsal rooms, feel the joy of our community, and witness the 'serious fun' that happens when young people make music together with purpose, passion, and heart."

NJYS is one of New Jersey's premier youth orchestra programs, serving talented young musicians from across the region through a

comprehensive range of ensembles and educational experiences. Open Rehearsals Week reflects NJYS's commitment to access, education, and artistic excellence.

Attendance is free, but advance registration is encouraged. Registration and additional information available at NJYS.org.

ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY YOUTH SYMPHONY

The New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS), a program of Wharton Arts, provides exceptional orchestral and ensemble training to young musicians in grades 2-12. Through a wide range of ensembles, performances, and educational opportunities, NJYS fosters musical excellence, collaboration, and a lifelong appreciation for the arts.

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 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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A CELEBRATION OF LOVE, SERVICE AND COMMUNITY

Linden Public Schools

Before the tea was poured and before the plates were passed, the students took the stage.

On Feb. 11, inside the School No. 4 cafeteria, 24 members of the Kiwanis Kids chapter led their annual pre-Valentine's Day "K-Kids Heart-Tea" Breakfast — a cherished tradition that brought together nearly 60 senior residents from the Edward J. Murawski Towers and the adjacent Ann J. Ferguson Towers.

The event, now approaching two decades, continues to strengthen the bond between the elementary school and its senior neighbors located directly across the street.

Before staff served a hearty breakfast of tea, coffee, pastries, eggs, French toast and potatoes, students entertained their guests with a lively Valentine-themed program.

They opened with playful jokes that quickly filled the cafeteria with laughter.

"Did you hear about the shoes that got engaged? They're soulmates," one student said,

drawing applause from seniors seated at tables decorated in red and pink hearts.

Students then shared original acrostic poems centered on kindness, friendship and love — values that define the K-Kids mission throughout the school year. The celebration concluded with an energetic dance performance to "Crazy Little Thing Called Love," as seniors clapped along and smiled at their young hosts.

Only after the final bow did staff begin serving breakfast, creating a warm atmosphere of fellowship and conversation.

The morning also highlighted the deep community support surrounding School No. 4.

Among those in attendance were former principals Mr. Anthony Cataline and Mrs. Dolores Maslo. The Kiwanis Club of Linden, sponsor of the K-Kids chapter, was present alongside community and corporate partners, including representatives from Just In Time Chemical Sales, Lisa Barra, Public Affairs Advisor for Phillips 66, and Bruce Bakos, retired

from Phillips 66 and a former Junior Achievement presenter at the school.

Members of the Linden Police Department attended with Chief of Police David Hart, while Derek Armstead and Board Vice President Marlene Berghammer joined the celebration, underscoring the strong partnership between school and city leadership.

Principal Sue Olivero said the event reflects the heart of the school's mission.

"This breakfast is about more than food," Olivero said. "It's about relationships. It's about showing our students that even at a young age, they can make a meaningful difference."

As the morning concluded, students moved from table to table offering hugs, handshakes and thank-yous — small gestures that carried a powerful message.

At School No. 4, love is not just celebrated on Valentine's Day. It is practiced through service, shared across generations and lived out in community.



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The New Jersey Festival Orchestra (NJFO) invites patrons and music lovers to "Music for a Matador," an unforgettable operatic fundraising gala featuring highlights from Bizet's Carmen. The event will take place Friday, April 10, 2026, from 6:00–10:00 PM at The Gran Centurions in Clark, NJ.

The evening will showcase electrifying excerpts from Bizet's iconic opera, narrated by Maestro David Wroe and brought to life by NJFO musicians alongside acclaimed guest artists. Featured performers include Lisa Marie

Rogali as Carmen, Dane Suarez as Don José, Sara LeMesh as Micaëla, and SeungHyeon Baek as Escamillo. Guests can expect an immersive operatic experience filled with drama, romance, and unforgettable musical moments.

In addition to the performance, attendees will enjoy a beautifully curated dinner and have the opportunity to participate in both live and silent auctions, featuring exclusive experiences, gifts, and collectibles.

Proceeds from "Music for a Matador" support NJFO's ongoing education and community outreach programs, including Listening is Healing, which brings live classical music to hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and community settings. Recently, NJFO has expanded this program to Overlook Medical Center in Summit, NJ, offering patients and staff moments of reflection, calm, and inspiration through music. Funds raised at the Gala help sustain these programs and ensure that NJFO's artistry and educational initiatives remain accessible to communities across New Jersey.

"Music for a Matador" offers a unique blend of operatic performance and gala celebration, providing patrons with an evening that is both culturally enriching and socially impactful. Sponsors and guests play a vital role in sustaining NJFO's mission to bring world-class music to audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

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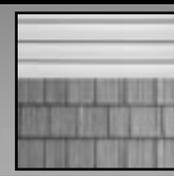
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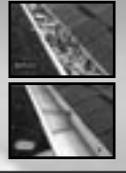
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- 3/20 at 10 am, Spanish Storytime*
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- 3/25 at 4 pm, Chess Club*
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- 3/16 at 4 pm, St. Patrick's Day Slime*
- 3/23 at 4 pm, Ember Games*
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ADULTS:

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 - 3/5 at 10 am, Cricut Mugs: An Introduction*
 - 3/10 at 7 pm, Trivia
 - 3/11 at 6:30 pm, De-Stress Fest
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 - 3/18 at 10 am, Morning Makers Craft Club: Book Page Picture Frames* (registration opens 3/1)
 - 3/25 at 6:30 pm, Going, Going, Gone: What the Next Generation Won't Remember
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WHEN THE BEAT DROPPED, HISTORY MOVED

Linden Public Schools

The gymnasium at School No. 2 didn't just host an assembly on Monday, Feb. 9, it became a living, breathing celebration of Black history, culture, and connection.

As part of the school's Black History Month observance, students in grades 3-5 participated in an assembly titled "The Principles of Hip Hop: Peace, Love, Unity and Having Fun," an experience that blended movement, music, history, and social-emotional learning into one unforgettable morning.

The energy was immediate and contagious.

From the first beat drop, the gym echoed with thunderous applause and deafening cheers as instructors hit the floor with precision footwork, spins, and freezes. Students jumped to their feet, clapped in rhythm, and erupted with excitement, especially when an instructor -- and later, a fearless teacher or classmate -- stepped into the front of the room and busted a move, sending the crowd into a frenzy of joy.

Learning in Motion

Hosted by Hip Hop Fundamentals, a Philadelphia-based collective, the assembly went far beyond performance. Led by instructors Mach Five, Ospreley, and Old Dirty Wizard (their stage names), the program introduced students to the culture and soul of hip hop through the fundamentals of breaking, commonly known as breakdancing.

"This is about more than dance," said Mach Five, one of the group's lead instructors. "We're teaching discipline, exploration, and self-expression -- the same way hip hop was learned before YouTube. You saw something once, went

home, practiced it, and made it your own."

The session was highly interactive, filled with student-driven Q&A, live demonstrations, and moments where groups of students eagerly took the floor themselves, modeling moves, mirroring techniques, and showing what they learned in real time. Every attempt was celebrated. Every question was welcomed. Every student felt seen.

Hip Hop as History—and Healing

Hip Hop Fundamentals works with schools across the tri-state area, including New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and its programs also reach California and Detroit. During the school year, the collective often sends multiple teams each day to bring assemblies and workshops to students nationwide.

At the core of their work is social-emotional learning -- creating safe, affirming spaces where students can explore creativity, identity, and connection through movement.'

"You feel safe here," Mach Five explained. "You're learning with other people. That's where the growth happens."

That mission is deeply aligned with Black History Month.

"The civil rights movement and the hip hop movement happened in tandem," Mach Five said. "As Black people fought for dignity, equality, and space in society, hip hop was fighting for space in culture. Even in environments we created, we still had to make our way."

Through storytelling, movement, and shared experience, students learned how hip hop emerged as both a voice and a bridge, a cultural force rooted in resilience, expression, and unity.



(above) Hip Hop Fundamentals brings Black History Month to life at School No. 2 through rhythm, unity, and joy

Photos by Linden Public Schools





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YOU HAVE A BUSY LIFE. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HIT "PAUSE"?

The parishes of St. Bartholomew the Apostle, Immaculate Heart of Mary in Scotch Plains along with the Church of the Little Flower Berkley Heights and St. James the Apostle Springfield are inviting men of all ages to attend this year's Men's Cornerstone XVII retreat. It will be on Friday March 6th and Saturday March 7th and held at St. Bartholomew in Scotch Plains.

MEN'S CORNERSTONE XVII
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WHAT IS CORNERSTONE?

Cornerstone is an opportunity to hit the "pause button" in life and a chance to renew and strengthen your faith and grow in your experience in the Christian faith. It is led by a team of parishioners from various backgrounds and ages who themselves have experienced an increased presence of Christ in their lives.

WHY SHOULD I ATTEND CORNERSTONE?

You will have a unique opportunity to meet other men of the community and together listen, reflect, and share real life experiences. Taking the time to retreat from daily routine and stress is both a necessary and rewarding experience.

WHAT DOES "CORNERSTONE" MEAN?

The word "Cornerstone" describes Christ as the main foundation ("the cornerstone") of our lives. His presence within us allows us to live, grow, and become more loving and vibrant people of God.

WHAT HAVE OTHER MEN WHO HAVE ATTENDED CORNERSTONE EXPERIENCED?

"It gave me a chance to connect with God." David D.

"Cornerstone helps me to realize that we are all in this together, and we are not so different from one another." John O.

"Cornerstone helped me see all the times God's grace has been bestowed on me and my

family." Jim B.

"I was initially uncomfortable about attending but I am so glad I took that first step to renew my faith. It was such a satisfying experience and was exactly what I needed to refocus my life priorities." Colm K.

"Cornerstone helped me to make new friends and put some of my troubles in perspective since they are shared by others." Glenn R.

What can I expect at Cornerstone? It will begin on Friday evening March 6th at 6 p.m. and end on Saturday evening March 7th after Mass and dinner. There will be talks, followed by small group discussions, time for quiet personal reflection, Reconciliation, and Eucharist. There will also be ample time to interact with others who are looking to grow spiritually.

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.

Please visit the web sites of either St. Bartholomew the Apostle at stbartholomewchurch.org/mens-cornerstone or Immaculate Heart of Mary at ihmparish.net. You may also reach out to the co-directors: Jim Brennan 908-337-6874, jpbrennan1946@gmail.com; Jose Montero 201-310-4278, josergomezmontero@hotmail.com; or Pat Cetera 908-230-7282, ceteras4@verizon.net.

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SHARP-SHINNED HAWK RELEASED BACK TO WILD

This feisty Sharp-shinned Hawk was admitted on 12/22 after being found in a yard in Warren following a window strike. On intake, the hawk had bloody nares and mouth, consistent with head trauma often seen after collisions. The nares are a bird's nostrils, located near the base of the beak, and bleeding there often points to head or facial trauma from collisions.

With supportive care and time to heal, this "Sharpie" as we call them, made great progress and was moved to an outside flight cage on 12/28/25. After proving strong, steady flight and good awareness, the hawk was successfully released back to the wild on 1/2/2026.

Sharp-shinned Hawks are incredibly fast and agile forest hunters, built to weave through dense trees while chasing small birds. That same speed and focus, however, can make them especially vulnerable to window strikes when reflective glass looks like open sky or habitat.

Remember, small changes matter, adding window decals is a simple way to help protect avian wildlife.



ABOUT THE RAPTOR TRUST

The Raptor Trust is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization located at 1390 White Bridge Rd., Millington, NJ. They provide free care and assistance to injured, sick, or orphaned wild birds. They offer educational programs to the public about wild birds, especially birds of prey. They strive to provide a human example for others. For more information, or to make a donation visit info@theraptortrust.org. To report an injured bird call 908-647-2353.

RAPTOR TRUST SUMMER SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Each year from mid-May through August, The Raptor Trust receive hundreds of injured, orphaned, or displaced nestling and fledgling songbirds found by citizens. We see this time as a perfect opportunity to provide experience and education to students who wish to learn about wildlife care and rehabilitation.

POSITION DATES: MAY THROUGH AUGUST 2026

Scheduling: Approximately 24-40 hours per week, including some evenings and weekends

Location: The Raptor Trust. 1390 White Bridge Road, Millington, NJ 07946

This is an unpaid, volunteer position. College students committed to this position may meet the criteria for eligibility to apply for our volunteer scholarship. This opportunity can also be modified to meet most schools' criteria in qualifying for an academic "internship" or experience credit.

While students in all areas of study are welcome to apply, preference may be given to students who have completed or are currently enrolled in relevant coursework including Ecology, Biology, and Animal Science related studies.

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY FEB 6TH, 2026.

To apply, please submit an application, resume, and cover letter through our website at theraptortrust.org/summer-scholars-program. A selection of 2-3 references whom we may contact is optional. Contact Amanda Cannizzo at acannizzo@theraptortrust.org

If you are interested, Visit theraptortrust.org or email volunteers@theraptortrust.org

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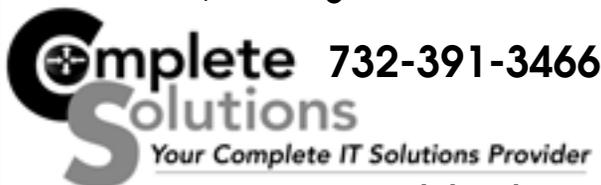
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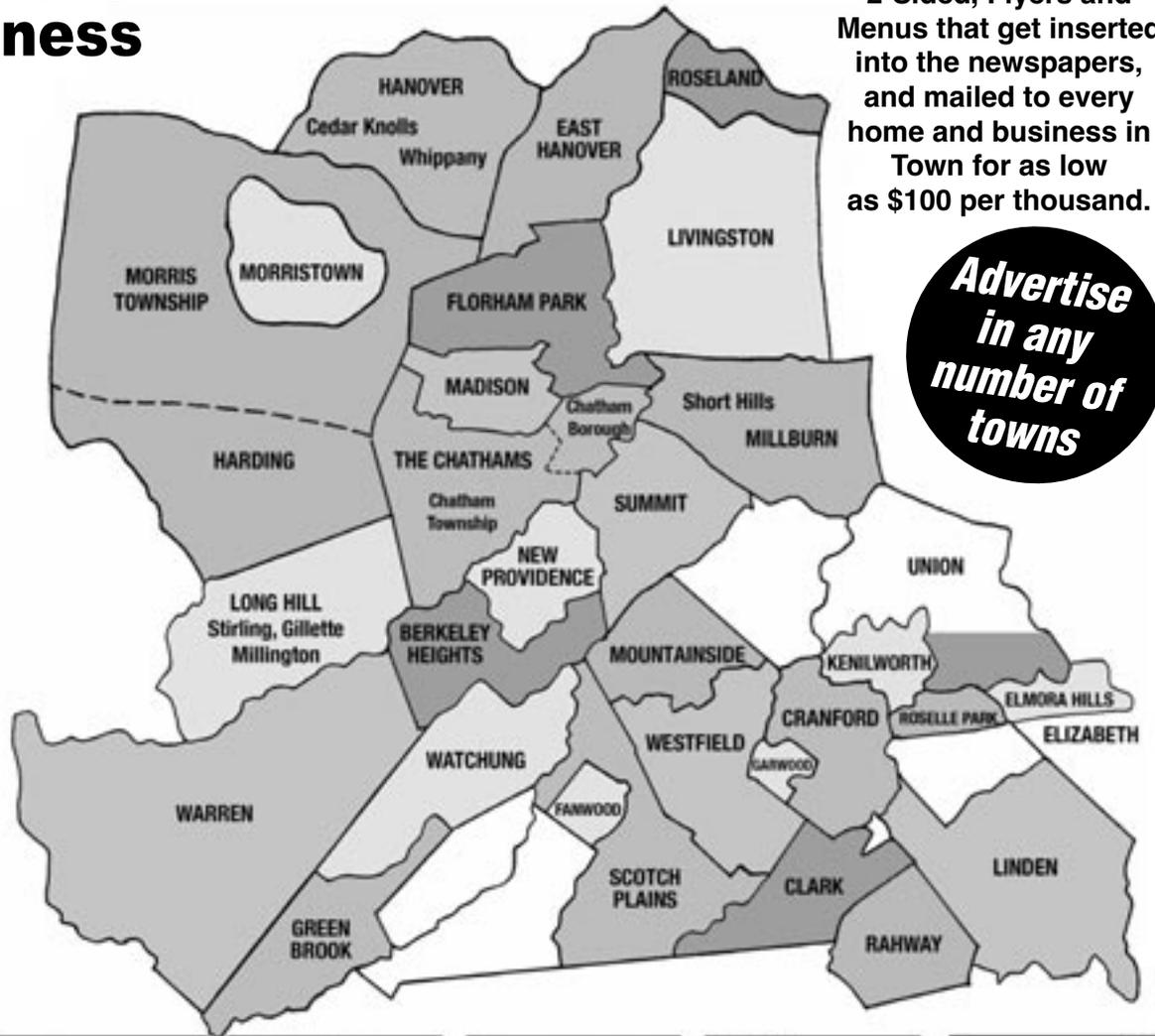
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4 Units 3.25"x8" or 6.5"x4"	240	560	900	1000	1300	1600	1700	1800	1900	2000	2100
6 Units 6.5"x6.25" or 10"x4"	320	760	1200	1400	1600	1800	2000	2200	2400	2600	2800
9 HALF PAGE 6.5"x9" or 10"x7"	360	860	1300	1600	1900	2200	2400	2600	2800	3000	3200
12 Units 6.5"x14"	400	960	1400	1800	2100	2400	2700	3000	3300	3600	3900
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