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MUNICIPAL GARDENS STAGED FOR AMERICA'S ANNIVERSARY



Union Garden Club

Members of the Union Garden Club, Cub Scout Pack 68, and students from Union High School gathered in May to plant red and white Vinca flowers, and blue Ageratum flowers to create the theme for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Let's keep Union beautiful.



Courtesy photos

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C.A.R. PROJECT SUPPORTS EQUINE THERAPY FOR VETS

Submitted by Holly Dunbar

The Children of the American Revolution (C.A.R.) is the nation's oldest and largest nonpolitical patriotic youth organization. A new C.A.R. state project that will aid veterans has been announced. The goal of "Operation Horse" is to raise \$2,000 during the next year to fund equine-assisted therapy for two N.J. veterans



(above) The Man o' War Project has helped to develop a standardized protocol for delivering equine-assisted therapy to treat PTSD.

Courtesy photo

with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The therapy is offered through the Man o' War Project of Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

The mission of the Man o' War Project is two-fold. Equine-assisted therapy is used to treat veterans with PTSD while medical staff evaluate the program to develop best practices for administering equine-assisted therapy. This research can have far-reaching benefits for treating veterans and all who suffer with PTSD.

C.A.R. membership is open to girls and boys from birth through age 21 who are descended from a person who aided the cause of independence during the American Revolution.

New Jersey has nine C.A.R. groups known as societies. Activities offered on an age-appropriate basis help members learn about American history, government, community service and more. Members also gain valuable leadership experience conducting meetings and serving as delegates at state and national conferences.

Pis-Cat-A-Qua Society C.A.R., hosted by the Elizabeth Snyder-Continental Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Green Brook, is seeking new members. For more information,

contact ESCchapterDAR@gmail.com or visit nscar.org.



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NJFO PRESENTS STRANGER THINGS: THE 1,000 CANDLES CONCERT EXPERIENCE

The New Jersey Festival Orchestra (NJFO) invites audiences to step into the world of Stranger Things this summer with Stranger Things: The 1,000 Candles Concert Experience, a one-of-a-kind candlelit event combining the excitement of live music, beloved television themes, and the unforgettable sounds of the 70s, 80s, and 90s.

Performed by a live string ensemble and narrated by Maestro David Wroe, this immersive concert experience celebrates the nostalgia and atmosphere of the hit Netflix series while showcasing iconic pop and rock classics that defined a generation. Audiences will hear music inspired by the show's haunting soundtrack alongside recognizable favorites from the decades that shaped its distinctive sound and style.

Illuminated by the warm glow of candlelight, the performance offers a unique blend of cinematic storytelling, nostalgia, and live music, creating an unforgettable evening for fans of Stranger Things, music lovers, and newcomers alike.

"This concert is designed to bring people together through music they know and love," said Maestro David Wroe. "Whether you're a longtime fan of the series, grew up with the music of the 70s, 80s, and 90s, or are simply looking for a memorable night out, this experience offers something for everyone."

Perfect for family outings, date nights, multigenerational gatherings, and summer entertainment, Stranger Things: The 1,000 Candles Concert Experience welcomes audiences of all ages. To encourage younger attendees to experience live music, NJFO is

offering \$25 student tickets for patrons age 21 and under.

The concert will be presented in three performances:

Saturday, July 25, 2026

at 5:00 PM and 7:00 PM

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140 Mountain Avenue, Westfield, NJ

Sunday, July 26, 2026 at 2:30 PM

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ROTC HELPS HONOR FALLEN HEROES IN HOLLYWOOD CEMETERY



(above) In honor of Memorial Day, the Union High School Junior ROTC members joined with the New Jersey Veterans Network, and the New Jersey VFW, to pay tribute to our nation's fallen heroes buried at Hollywood Cemetery in Union NJ. Graves were cleaned, and American Flags were planted.

Courtesy photos



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43RD ANNUAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN

On June 5, 2026, members of the Township of Union Police Department joined police officers and other community members from across the state to be Guardians of the Flame in the 43rd Annual Law Enforcement Torch Run to benefit

Special Olympics of New Jersey. Over 3,000 Police Officers took to their local streets to raise funds and awareness for this incredible organization. They carry the "Flame of Hope" which officially leads into the Special Olympics

Summer Games. This event helps raise awareness and funds to support year-round sports training and competition opportunities for thousands of athletes with intellectual disabilities throughout New Jersey.



Courtesy photos

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PASSING THE TORCH AT 250: HOW NORTH JERSEY'S NEWEST ENLISTEES CARRY AMERICA'S LEGACY FORWARD

*Martha Papson Garcia, Ed.D. (U.S. Army)
Director of Veterans Services, ROTC Liaison,
Fairleigh Dickinson University*

Veteran organizations often serve as the backbone of community support for those who have served in the military. Yet, one group is uniquely transforming how America honors its newest service members—before they even don the uniform. While traditional groups like the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the American Legion focus primarily on veterans returning from conflict, Our Community Salutes (OCS) dedicates its mission entirely to the next generation of patriots: high school seniors stepping into the U.S. Armed Forces.

As communities across the nation prepared for Fourth of July celebrations and looked forward to America's milestone 250th birthday, the work of Our Community Salutes of North Jersey stood as a powerful reminder of what local support truly meant.

Founded in 2009 by educator and Army veteran Dr. Kenneth Hartman, OCS was created to fill an important gap in community recognition. While college-bound seniors receive enthusiastic decision-day applause and student-athletes draw local headlines for signing with sports teams, military enlistees often quietly slip away to basic training without public acknowledgment. Our Community Salutes ensures these young men and women are the first to hear a collective "thank you" from their hometown.

The organization operates on a three-pronged

support model. For enlistees, public recognition ceremonies provide resources, mentorship, and a sense of pride to ease their transition into active duty. For families, educational tools, community connections, and peer networks that help parents and siblings navigate the military journey. For communities, a collaborative platform uniting local business leaders, veterans, educators, and elected officials to honor local defenders.

Each spring, the North Jersey chapter of OCS brings this essential mission into focus. Recently, the group hosted its 10th Annual Enlistee Recognition Ceremony at Fairleigh Dickinson University's Florham Campus in Madison, New Jersey.

At this high-profile event, more than 90 high school seniors from across northern New Jersey were honored as they committed to enlist in the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or National Guard. Surrounded by active-duty military leaders, veterans, local dignitaries, and emotional families, these young patriots received a formal send-off recognizing their induction into the elite "less than 1% club" of Americans who wear the uniform. To further support families, OCS introduced programs like OCS Connect, designed specifically to build community for those at home during their loved ones' military journey.

As America approaches its Semiquincentennial—its 250th birthday—the thread connecting these North Jersey enlistees, today's veterans, and the original patriots of the

Revolutionary War becomes profound. It is an unbroken chain of everyday citizens choosing extraordinary sacrifice.

In 1776, the Continental Army was built by farmers, blacksmiths, and tradesmen who swapped civilian tools for muskets to defend the ideal of freedom. Many marched through northern New Jersey, known as the "Crossroads of the Revolution," enduring hardships such as brutal winters in Morris and Bergen counties. Today's veterans have inherited the responsibility of maintaining peace through decades of global conflict. Now, these high school enlistees—stepping onto the same historic Jersey soil—carry forward that legacy by voluntarily safeguarding American liberty. Just as only about 3% of colonists fought for independence, today's service members represent a committed minority protecting the majority.

Many historical battles that were won long ago are celebrated on the Fourth of July. But organizations like Our Community Salutes remind us that freedom is an active, ongoing relay race. By honoring the new generation of military enlistees, OCS ensures that the legacy of American liberty remains vibrant.

The act of honoring veterans isn't just about looking back - it is an investment in the future of the nation. Through grassroots support and community recognition, these young patriots receive a powerful message: their sacrifice is valued, their service is celebrated, and their legacy is America's ongoing story.



(above) Our Community Salutes of North Jersey 2026, High School Enlistees

JULY EVENTS AT THE UNION PUBLIC LIBRARY

Registration is required for all events. To register visit the library, or online at uplnj.org.

Adult Services at (908)-851-5450 extension 3, or our Vauxhall Branch at (908)-851-5451, or check out our website at uplnj.org or visit us at the Main Library at 1980 Morris Avenue or at our Vauxhall Branch at 123 Hilton Ave.

All American Grilling in the Garden

w/ Chef Jesse Jones (Vauxhall Branch Library)

Wed. July 1st @ 6:00 pm

Chef Jesse Jones returns to the Vauxhall Branch by celebrating America's pastime by doing some grilling. Chef Jesse will prepare his infamous grilled flank steak with chimichurri sauce and herb flat bread!

Senior Zumba Gold

(Main Library)

Thur. July 2nd @ 10:00 am

Zumba Gold is a low-impact, fun dance workout designed for active adults, beginners, or anyone who prefers a gentler pace. The instructor truly enjoys dancing.

The American Revolution

at Liberty Hall (Main Library)

Mon. July 6th @ 6:00 pm

What really happened at Liberty Hall during the

American Revolution? Where did the Livingstons go when they had to flee the British? What did Livingston's children do to support the war effort? Was John Lawrence

Livingston really lost at sea? Discover the answers to all your Revolution-era questions and more with this lively talk full of images, documents, letters, and stories from the past!

Policing of Black America: Film & Community Discussion

(Vauxhall Branch Library)

Mon. July 6th @ 6:00 pm

Please join us as we watch a documentary that delves into the fatal encounters in America like George Floyd, Philando Castile, Eric Garner and others who have been killed by the police.

Self-Care That Shows: Simple Daily Habits for Energy, Vitality, & Confidence

(Main Library)

Wed. July 8th @ 11:00 am

Please join us for a practical and encouraging wellness talk about how simple daily habits can support energy, healthy aging, confidence, and more radiant-looking skin. Yolanda Russo will share easy-to-follow self-care practices related to daily rhythm, posture, circulation, and skin-supportive habits that participants can begin using right away.

Vauxhall Negro League Baseball Club

(Vauxhall Branch Library)

Mon. July 13th @ 6:00 pm

Are you a baseball fan and love history? Perhaps you are a fan of Satchel Paige or the Kansas City Monarchs? Come join us where our goal is to preserve the history of Negro League Baseball. Our meetings will consist of presentations, discussions, film viewings, book talks, and much more.

The Advance Care Preparedness Workshop

(Main Library)

Tues. July 14th @ 6:00 pm

Join us for an interactive workshop designed to help individuals and families thoughtfully prepare for future healthcare decisions. This workshop provides clear guidance on advance

directives, healthcare proxies, living wills, while creating the space for meaningful conversations about personal values, goals of care, and end of life preferences. The goal of this workshop is to have attendees leave empowered, organized, and confident in their ability to advocate for themselves and their families during times of serious illness or crisis.

Build Your Balance

(Main Library)

Wed. July 15th @ 10:30 am

It's more important than ever to avoid the risks of falling as we age. Through gentle strength exercises, and stepping strategies, learn to keep your body balanced in different situations.

Adult Game Night

(Vauxhall Branch Library)

Wed. July 15th @ 6:00 pm

Are you a game enthusiast? Do you want to meet new people? Come join us as we play classic games for a fun and relaxing night.

Chair Yoga at Vauxhall

(Vauxhall Branch Library)

Thur. July 16th @ 9:30 am

Take a deep breath with friends and stretch! From beginners to professionals, join this popular class as a bi-weekly series. Presented by the Gateway Family YMCA.

Senior Zumba Gold

(Main Library)

Thur. July 16th @ 10:00 am

Zumba Gold is a low-impact, fun dance workout designed for active adults, beginners, or anyone who prefers a gentler pace. The instructor truly enjoys dancing. Our goal is to bring pure joy and sparkling excitement to the senior community - lifting spirits, boosting confidence, and improving the overall quality of life.

Adult Dance Fitness

(Vauxhall Branch Library)

Mon. July 20th @ 6:00 pm

Get your exercise in with a fun cardio workout featuring hip-hop inspired dance moves, presented by Tiffany Steele!

Black Mothers & Daughters: A Film & Community Discussion

(Vauxhall Branch Library)

Wed. July 22nd @ 6:00 pm

The relationship between Black mothers and daughters is a complex, deep-rooted bond often defined by profound love, survival, and the intergenerational transmission of strength. Please join us as we watch a film that pays homage to Black maternal ancestors while examining the immediate and critical importance of self-care, and the healing tools necessary for Black communities to thrive.

Union Public Library's Silent Book Club

(Main Library)

Mon. July 27th @ 6:00 pm

Join us for Union Public Library's Silent Book Club. There's no assigned reading. All readers are welcome to join in, from fiction and non-fiction to ebooks and more! Bring your own

book and join us as we read in quiet camaraderie.

Vauxhall Vinyl Music Club: Stevie Wonder Songs in the Key of Life

(Vauxhall Branch Library)

Mon. July 27th @ 6:00 pm

Do you collect records? Are you an avid music fan? Please join us at the Vauxhall Vinyl Music Club. Not only will we play the music, but we will go in depth on important tracks and the making of an album. July's selection will be one of the greatest and most influential albums Stevie Wonder Songs in the Key of Life.

ESL Conversation Group

(Main Library)

Tues. July 28th @ 6:00 pm

Join us at the Union Public Library for our English Conversation Group. English is a major barrier to health for many within our community. This ESL-adjacent program offers monthly, 2-hour group sessions to support English speaking, writing, and listening skills. While loosely structured, sessions are informal and use ESL books, games, audio lessons, and role play to build proficiency with the English language.

UCNJ Express Application Day

(Vauxhall Branch Library)

Wed. July 29th @ 6:00 pm

Please join us as an admissions counselor from Union College of New Jersey will assist attendees with the admissions process whether that be inquiry, application, or transcript request. The application is free for those who complete it onsite with the counselor.

Chair Yoga at Vauxhall

(Vauxhall Branch Library)

Thur. July 30th @ 9:30 am

Take a deep breath with friends and stretch! From beginners to professionals, join this popular class at our Vauxhall Branch! Presented by the Gateway Family YMCA.

Meditation (Virtual on Zoom)

Mondays @ 6:30 pm starting July 6th

Join Bindu Bhatt for any of her virtual evening meditation sessions. No prior experience is necessary. Bindu has practiced meditation for over 30 years and wants to share her insight. Mobility Club with Jon Leslie (Main Library)

Wednesdays in July @ 10:00am

Looking to fix shoulder pain? Join the club! Restore your body to its natural state using the functional movements of a mobility club. It will help improve your mobility, flexibility, strength, balance and posture. Move better. Feel better. Try exercising with a Mobility Club with

Jon Leslie.

Chair Yoga

(Main Library)

Tuesdays in July @ 9:15 am

Take a deep breath with friends and stretch! From beginners to professionals, join this popular class as a weekly series. Presented by the Gateway Family YMCA. Space is limited, please register to secure your chair!

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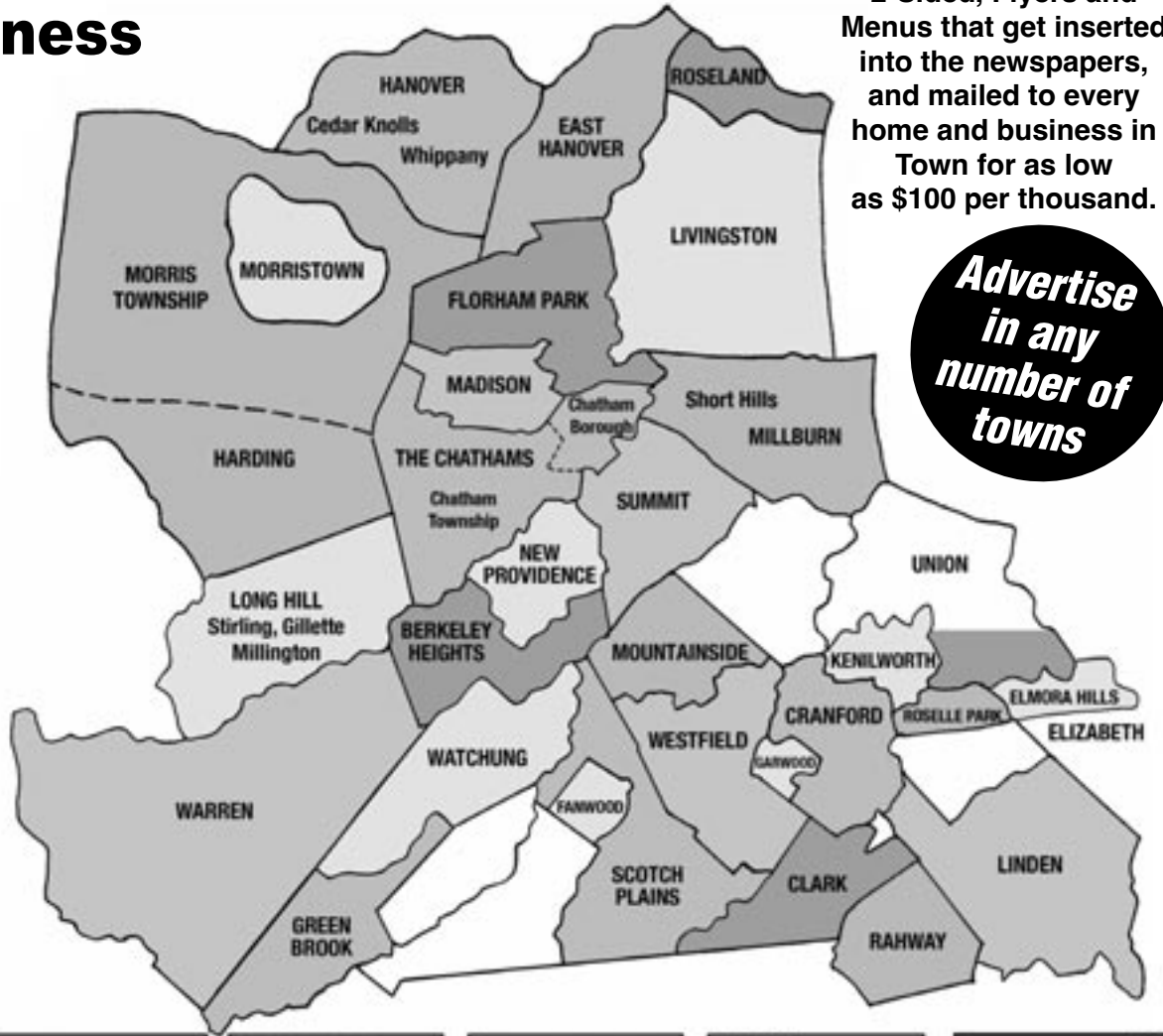
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VOLUNTEERS SWORN IN TO ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

CASA of Passaic and Union Counties

Seven local community members recently took an oath to stand beside children in foster care as advocates during some of the most uncertain moments of their lives. Union County Superior Court Judge Rosalba Comas presided over the swearing-in ceremony for the newest Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) with CASA of Passaic and Union Counties. Each volunteer will be assigned to advocate for a child or sibling set in foster care.

Among the newest child advocates are Crystal Coleman of South Plainfield, Maria de Gannes of Linden, Rachel Hajjar of Cranford, Julie Harnisher of Westfield, Elizabeth Maher of Summit, and Barbara Monaghan of Westfield.

For children navigating foster care, CASA volunteers are often the one consistent adult focused solely on their best interests both inside and outside the courtroom. Now equipped to advocate for infants, children, and teens who

have experienced abuse or neglect, the volunteers join a network of dedicated advocates serving children across Passaic and Union counties. CASA volunteers provide consistent support, gather information from the adults in the youth's life, and make informed recommendations to help ensure their needs and well-being remain at the forefront daily and in court decisions.

Said Erica Fischer-Kaslander, Executive Director of Child Focus, the nonprofit organization that oversees the CASA program, "Every child deserves at least one adult who shows up consistently, listens carefully, and refuses to let them fall through the cracks. These seven volunteers have made an extraordinary commitment to children who urgently need stability, encouragement, and someone wholly dedicated to their future. Their advocacy can, and will, change life trajectories."

No prior knowledge of child welfare is required to become a CASA volunteer;

comprehensive training equips volunteers with the skills necessary to advocate effectively. Volunteer advocates – all of whom bring their own unique life experiences – visit their assigned child regularly and communicate with caregivers, educators, caseworkers, and others before making informed recommendations to the court.

More volunteer advocates are still urgently needed across Passaic and Union counties to help ensure every child in foster care has a dedicated voice in court and the community.

CASA of Passaic and Union Counties is a program of Child Focus, which prioritizes the needs and well-being of infants, children, and teens impacted by, or at risk of, abuse or neglect.

For details about becoming a CASA volunteer, call 973-832-4002, e-mail info@casapassaicunion.org, or visit CASA of Passaic and Union Counties' website at www.casapassaicunion.org.



(above) Judge Rosalba Comas with Newly Sworn CASAs

Courtesy Photo

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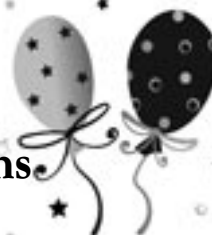
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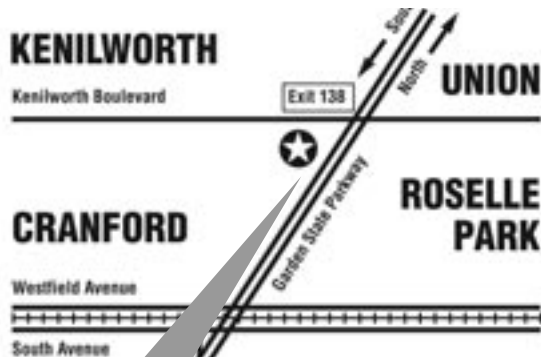
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