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May 21, 2026

REMEMBERING THOSE WHO SERVED

Vol. 53, No. 41

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Jacob Smith of Bangor High School Awarded 2026 Student of the Year Scholarship



The Exchange Club of Bangor awarded their annual Student of the Year Scholarship to Jacob Smith, a Senior at Bangor Area High School. A dinner was held to honor Jacob on Tues., May 12. Jacob was accompanied by his parents, Charlene and Matthew Smith. Jacob is planning to attend St. Joseph's University to study Business. The Student of the Year Scholarship is chosen from applicants at Pen Argyl H.S., Faith Christian School, and Bangor Area H.S. Jacob is also an Eagle Scout.

Blairstown, NJ, Hosts Fishing Derby For First Time In Years



The Blairstown Fishing Derby was held on May 16th at Footbridge Park. This was the first fishing derby held in Blairstown in Many years, and was a huge success thanks to the Blairstown Enhancement Committee. Winners were, Kids Group Boys (up to age 10): 1st Place - #87 - Rheigh C. 13"; 2nd Place - #35 - Adam T. 11"; and 3rd Place - #98 - Connor O. 11". Kids Group Girls (up to age 10): 1st Place - #99 - Ellie O. 12". Teen Group Boys (age 11-15): 1st Place - #27 - Balbi ,19" Golden Trout; 2nd Place - #34 - Colton K. 12.5"; 3rd Place - #4 - Frank T. 12". Teen Group Girls (age 11-15): 1st Place - Eliana M 12"; Adults (age 16+): 1st Place - #72 Nic K. 18"; 2nd Place - #104 Teddy H. 17"; and 3rd Place - #86 John V. 14.5". Largest Non-Trout: TIED #104 - Teddy H. 17" Suckerfish and #108 - Gavyn R. 17" Suckerfish. Smallest Non-Trout: #43 - Evan F. 7.25" Rock fish; #88 - Jay F. 7.50" Blue Gill. Youngest Participants: #71 - Henry S. - Age 3; #11 - Quinn F. - Age 4. Best in Paulinskill (Largest overall): #138 - Mark M. 22.5" (Photos by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press)



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NORTH WARREN (4) VS BELVIDERE (3) BASEBALL ACTION SHOTS



Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press
More Photos & Videos can be found on our Facebook page

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NORTH WARREN (4) VS BELVIDERE (3) BASEBALL SENIOR NIGHT



Senior Stat Girls (l-r): Hayley Dato and Jocelyn Considine



Arthur Coricelli Jr. with his parents, Arthur and Sally, and brother, Michael



Philip Baguley with his father, Phil and his sister, Marisa



Vladys Unick with his mother, Jennifer, and his little sister



Jackson Foehr with his parents, Jamie and Jacob, and step mom, Becky



Tyler Newport with his parents, Erin and Kevin, and his sisters, Emma and Lilly

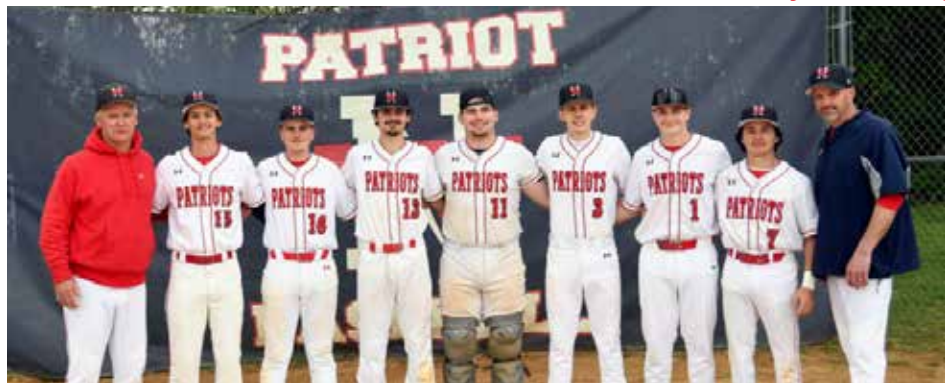


Kevin Roof with his parents, Gregory and Jennifer and siblings, Connor and Emily



Brody Mantz with his mother, Kim

Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press



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New to the Bangor Public Library

Adult Fiction:

The Forgotten Midwife by Laura Anthony; Clara & the Devil Vol. by Olivie Blake; Good Joy, Bad Joy by Mikki Brammer; A Murder in Hollywood by Michael Crichton; Broken Dove by Dani Francis; Robert B. Parker's Booked by Alison Gaylin; The Daisy Chain Flower Shop by Laurie Gilmore; The Island by Nicola Harrison; Summer State of Mind by Kristy Woodson Harvey; The Foursome by Baker Kline Christina; The Radiant Dark by Alexandra Oliva; The Last Mandarin by Louise Penny; Seek the Traitor's Son by Vernica Roth; A Woman's Place by Danielle Steel; This is Happiness by Niall Williams

Adult Non Fiction:

Maintain the 3 Simple Shifts that Turn Temporary Weight Loss into Lasting Freedom by Susan Peirce Thompson; Birth Vibes: Stories and Strategies for an Empowered Birth by Jen Hamilton; American Rambler: On the Trail with Johnny Appleseed by Isaac Fitzgerald; The Case for American: An Argument on Behalf of Our Nation by Bret Baier; True Crime: A Memoir by Patricia Daniels Cornwell; American Patriarch: The Life of George Washington by H.W. Brands

Large Print Fiction:

Last One Out by Jane Harper; The Last Mandarin by Louise Penny; The Calamity Club by Kathryn Stockett

Easy Non Fiction:

Boy, Were We Wrong About Dinosaurs! By Kathleen V. Kudlinski

Junior Fiction:

Sweet Valley Twins: First by Nicole Andelfinger

Young Adult Non Fiction:

Every Falling Star: The True Story of How I Survived and Escaped North Korea by Sungju Lee

NORTH WARREN (12) VS LENAPE VALLEY (9) SOFTBALL SENIOR NIGHT



Isabella Cardona with her parents, Angelica and Diego



Riley Grandin with her parents, Amy and Kyle



Katelyn Galante with her parents, Stacy and Michael, and her sister, Megan



Anna Haselmann with her parents, Ron and Heather



Hannah Allen with her mother, Kelly and her Grandparents, Thomas and Deborah



Tayech Yawger with her parents, David and Renee and her brother, Jackson



Senior Statistician: Alana Philhower



Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

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PEN ARGYL HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE COMMITMENT CEREMONY



Pen Argyl High School held their College Commitment ceremony on May 11th. The following students have signed with the following colleges: Luca Albanese, wrestling, Delaware Valley University; Jasmine Holland, Volleyball, Cedar Crest; Morgan Kemmerer, acrobatics and tumbling, Manhattan University; Blayke Lacey, Wrestling, Eastern University; Zachary Metzgar, football, Ursinus College; Ashlyn Oessenick, volleyball, Ursinus College; Collin Ramsay, wrestling, East Stroudsburg University; and Cayden Vishnesky, baseball, East Stroudsburg University. Congratulations and best of luck!

Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

New to the Blue Mountain Community Library

Blue Mountain Community Library News for Early May: The library is located at 216 S. Robinson Ave. in Pen Argyl. Open hours are Monday-Saturday 10am-12pm and Monday & Thursday 6-8pm. Questions? Call 610-863-3029 or email info@bmcl.org.

We have been chosen as a recipient of a 2026 United for Libraries & Penguin Random House Grant for Small & Rural Libraries! This means that we will receive an in-kind book donation grant of \$500 to purchase Penguin Random House titles! We will also receive complimentary eLearning from United for Libraries.

By popular vote, our new mascot's name is Bubbles! Thank you to everyone who suggested a name and who voted.

The library is starting a small "hygiene bank" (sample size tissues, toothpaste, soap, etc.) Give what you can and take what you need.

Congratulations to Mikayla Ferrara-Garval, winner of the April scavenger hunt for adults and young adults! Mikayla won fuzzy slippers, a reading journal, bookmarks, and snacks. Great job to all who entered.

Have you tried the new May scavenger hunt for children, with lots of new prizes in the prize basket? The theme is "sea creatures," and they are hidden throughout two rooms this month.

The library will discuss *A Marriage at Sea* by Sophie Elmhirst on Tuesday, June 9 at 6:30pm. Email info@bmcl.org to RSVP.

It's almost time for the BMCL Summer Fun with Reading Program (SFRP) 2026: Words and Wonders!

- Win big with reading challenges for all ages! Throughout June, July, and August, ALL ages can win amazing prizes (like passes to the North Summit Climbing Gym and Quiet Valley Living Historical Farm, PA Shakespeare Festival tickets, and gift cards to Sparkle Car Wash and the Gap Diner - plus MANY more) by keeping a reading log.

- ALL ages can enter our "Reader's Raffle" to win gift certificates for large pizzas from area restaurants just by using their library card!

- Children ages 3-6 can register for "Two Stories and a Craft" storytime.

- Children ages 3-6 are invited to wear their coziest pajamas and come to "Books and Bedtime" storytime; no registration required.

- In addition, children ages 4-9 can register for a series of six special Wednesday morning educational programs at the municipal parks.

Specific dates and times to be announced very soon!

This year's SFRP is sponsored by CJ's Heating & Cooling, Sabatino Insurance Agency, and State Farm (Debbie Pettinari). Additional sponsors for 2026 include CJ's Heating & Cooling (for Sundaes in the Park), Deer Foot Auto Parts (for an America on Wheels pass, which is coming soon!), and Sabatino Insurance Agency (for our author luncheon and Sundaes in the Park). Please utilize the services of these generous community partners!

New to the circulating collection:

Adult fiction:

Girl in the Creek (Wendy Wagner); Proof (Jon Cowan); Executive Power (Brian Andrews); Quantum Tempest (Mike Maden); The Devil's Daughter (Danielle Steel); For Richer for Poorer (Danielle Steel); Beautiful Villain (Rebecca Kenney); All Our Beautiful Goodbyes (Julianne MacLean); This Promised Land (Cathy Gohlke)

Large print fiction:

The Housemaid (Freida McFadden); The Stolen Queen (Fiona Davis); The Frozen River (Ariel Lawhon); The Sicilian Inheritance (Jo Piazza)

Large print nonfiction:

Be Ready When the Luck Happens (Ina Garten)

Juvenile fiction:

What about Worms!? (Ryan Higgins); Arlo Needs Glasses (Barney Saltzberg); The Book with No Pictures (B.J. Novak); The Pinkamazing Storybook Collection (Victoria Kann); Giraffe Problems (Jory John); The Curious Case of the Missing Mammoth (Ellie Hattie)

Juvenile nonfiction:

The Worm (Elise Gravel); What's the Point of Math? (Ben Ffrancon Davies); Wonders of Our World (Carron Brown)



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Northampton County Seeking Residents Interested in Serving on Human Relations Commission

Northampton County is seeking between seven and 13 Northampton County residents interested in being considered for appointment to the newly established Northampton County Human Relations Commission.

The Human Relations Commission was created to support education, outreach, dialogue, and review of matters related to human relations within Northampton County, as outlined in the ordinance establishing the Commission.

Commission members will serve in a volunteer capacity and will play an important role in help-

ing guide discussions, outreach efforts, and community engagement related to human relations issues throughout Northampton County.

Northampton County residents with an interest in public service, community engagement, civil rights, human relations, education, advocacy, mediation, or related fields are encouraged to apply for consideration.

The initial Commission appointments will include staggered one-year, two-year, and three-year terms to establish continuity for future appointments.

Individuals interested in being considered should

submit:

- A current resume
- Home address, for purposes of confirming Northampton County residency requirements

Materials should be submitted no later than Wednesday, May 27, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. to: Jessica Berger, Deputy Director of Administration, County of Northampton, JBerger@norcopa.gov

Additional information regarding the Commission and the establishing ordinance may be provided upon request. For questions regarding the appointment process, please contact the County Executive's Office at 610-829-6250.

Norwescap is Among Those Celebrated by Russell Berrie Foundation

Thirty years ago, Russ Berrie, CEO of the New Jersey based toy and gift company that bore his name, gathered friends, family, and colleagues around his dining room table to share his vision of celebrating and investing in unsung heroes who make a difference around the state. The program he established, The Making a Difference Award, had a ripple effect over the years, honoring hundreds of individuals making an impact. Together, they have driven meaningful change on issues ranging from youth development and environmental protection to food security and community-based initiatives, touching millions of lives.

This year, Mark Valli and Norwescap, which serves families and children throughout North-west New Jersey, was among those recognized at the Foundation's Making a Difference Awards Ceremony on May 8 at Ramapo College of New Jersey in Mahwah.

Valli, CEO of Norwescap, was honored with a Select Grow the Ripple of Positive Change award. Nominated by 2025 recipient Peg Wright, it was noted that Valli "leads Norwescap in delivering wraparound services that support housing, job training, and long-term stability for more than 30,000 individuals and families." Norwescap was also recently honored by the Sussex County Chamber of Commerce.

"It is a thrill to be recognized by the Russ Berrie

Foundation and be highlighted among such great nonprofits and their leaders from around the state. "This is truly an honor," said Valli. "We strive to make a difference in people's lives and to be recognized for our work in the community is an affirmation that we are doing our best. It's nice to know that others see the work we do and recognize the impact we have. I am proud to accept this award on behalf of our team at Norwescap. We are committed to helping people. It's a group effort."

Since its founding in 1997, the Russ Berrie Foundation has recognized 485 individuals from all 21 counties of New Jersey and provided more than \$4.7 million to support their work. Norwescap was the only recipient from Northwest New Jersey this year.

"This award has always been a reflection of Russ's belief in ordinary people doing extraordinary things. He knew that when you invest in one person, the impact doesn't stop, it grows. The Making a Difference Award has created a network of hundreds of individuals whose work continues to ripple through New Jersey and beyond," said Angelica Berrie, President of the Russell Berrie Foundation. "This year, to move the program into the future, we are honoring our first ever group of Gen Z changemakers as well as individuals nominated by past honorees. This is Russ' lasting legacy: to connect the past to the future and create a

community of individuals who, together, are making a positive impact."


For the first time, 15 Gen Z Making a Difference Awards were also presented to young leaders whose work is already shaping our future. A collective spirit is at the heart of this year's 15 Grow the Ripple of Positive Change honorees, who were nominated by the network of 450+ past recipients.

"Very impressive group of future leaders," said Valli.

These honorees represent community activation, where one person's work sparks another's, and where past and present honorees can connect, share progress, and continue making a difference together.

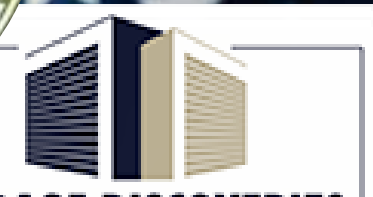
"This program has always been about the power of one person to make a difference, and over 30 years, we've seen that impact grow far beyond what my father ever imagined," said Scott Berrie, Vice President of the Russell Berrie Foundation. "What makes this moment so meaningful is not just the individuals we honor, but the community they've built together. We're seeing honorees lift one another up, share their experiences, and create a ripple effect that continues to expand. As this chapter closes, we're not ending that work, we're passing the torch to the next generation of community leaders."

For more information about Norwescap and its myriad programs, visit www.norwescap.org.




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NORTH WARREN (15) VS LYNDHURST HS (2) BOYS LACROSSE SENIOR NIGHT



Anthony Fredda with his father, Brian



Trey Zebrun with his parents, Mike and Brooke, and his brother, Zach



Missing from Photos is Senior, Nathaniel Sugrim Singh



Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press. More Photos & Videos can be found on our Facebook page



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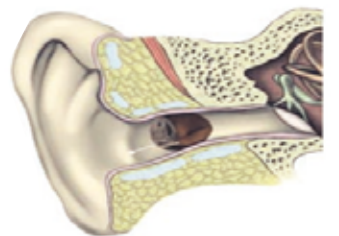
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Senior Farmers Market Vouchers to be Available Again in Northampton County

Vouchers worth a total of \$25 will be available to Northampton County residents age 60 and over who meet income eligibility criteria thanks to continuation of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The vouchers are distributed by the Northampton County Area Agency on Aging. 2026 distributions will be strictly in-person, no paper applications will be accepted.

Northampton County residents age 60 or over who meet income eligibility (example: \$29,526/yr. for a single person in 2026, and \$40,034 for a couple) may receive the vouchers in June 2026. For married couples, both spouses may obtain vouchers. Proof of age and residence must be presented by all persons wishing to receive vouchers.

Program policies allow a person to obtain vouchers for another person only if they have a completed and signed proxy form. Additionally, a person may only serve as proxy for up to four other participants and identification with date of birth and address, of the older adult, must be shown when presenting a proxy.

This form will be available for pick-up at the Area Agency on Aging office, 2801 Emrick Boulevard, Bethlehem, at all senior centers, and will also be available on the Area Agency on Aging's website, northamptoncounty.org. Persons may only receive vouchers once during the program, which runs from June 1, 2026 until September 15, 2026. Vouchers will be issued between June 1, 2026 and September 15, 2026. Vouchers may be redeemed between June 1, 2026 and November

LOCATION	DATE	TIME
SLATE BELT SR. COMM. CTR. 707 AMERICAN BANGOR RD, BANGOR	June 1	10:00 a.m.-NOON
PARK PLAZA SR. COMM. CTR. 1800 SULLIVAN TRAIL, EASTON	June 2	10:00 a.m. - NOON
NAZARETH SR. COMM. CTR. 15 WOOD ST, NAZARETH	June 3	9:30 - 11:00 a.m.
OLD YORK ROAD SR. COMM. CTR. 720 OLD YORK ROAD, BETHLEHEM	June 5	1:00 - 2:30 p.m.
NORTHAMPTON SR. COMM. CTR. 902 LINCOLN AVE, NORTHAMPTON	June 10	9:30 - 11:00 a.m.
CHERRYVILLE SR. COMM. CTR. 4131 LEHIGH DR, CHERRYVILLE	June 10	12:30 - 2:00 p.m.
EASTON AREA COMMUNITY CENTER 901 WASHINGTON ST., EASTON	June 11	11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
HISPANIC CENTER LEHIGH VALLEY 520 E. 4 th STREET, BETHLEHEM	June 17	9:00 - 10:30 a.m.
SAUCON VALLEY SR. COMM. CTR. 323 NORTHAMPTON ST, HELLERTOWN	June 25	1:00 - 2:30 p.m.
ROONEY SR. COMM. CTR. 4 EAST FOURTH ST, BETHLEHEM	June 26	9:00 - 10:30 a.m.
Rep. Samuelson's Senior Fair First Presbyterian Church 2344 CENTER ST, BETHLEHEM	JULY 23	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

30, 2026. Northampton County is doing in-person distributions for 2026. Emailed or mailed applications will not be processed.

Breast Cancer Survivors Invited to Celebration



Local NJ breast cancer survivors celebrate during a previous Survivor Event at Project Self-Sufficiency.

Breast cancer survivors are invited to a unique celebration of life at Project Self-Sufficiency on Saturday, June 6th, from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. The Survivor Celebration will feature a keynote presentation by author, life strategist, and motivational speaker Diana Perez, along with breakout sessions, lunch, music by pianist Anita Raisch, and interactive exhibits. A Question-and-Answer session will be facilitated by medical oncologist Dr. May Abdo-Matkiwsky and breast surgeon Dr. Priya Jadeja, along with a panel of medical experts. A presentation on movement will be offered by Peggy Pak of the Sussex County YMCA Live Strong program. Breakout sessions will highlight yoga, healthy eating, and regaining strength following a breast cancer diagnosis. Raffles and other prizes will be awarded throughout the event. The free celebration is open to breast cancer survivors. Interested participants must call Project Self-Sufficiency at 973-940-3500 to register. "We are delighted to gather to applaud the lives of these remarkable breast cancer survivors," noted Project Self-Sufficiency Executive Director Deborah Berry-Toon.

"This celebration teaches women how to maintain their well-being, gives them the opportunity to get the latest facts about breast cancer, and most importantly, invites them to relax and have some fun. We are grateful to all the individuals and organizations who have agreed to join in this special celebration of life." Attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about the upcoming walkathon Miles for Mel, held in remembrance of former Project Self-Sufficiency Leadership Council member Melissa Sacerro. In addition, numerous vendors will be available to offer tips on nutrition, health, wellness, fashion, and exercise. In addition to Project Self-Sufficiency, attendees will be invited to peruse exhibits from Atlantic Health, Kessler Rehabilitation/ReVital Cancer Rehab, La Roche-Posay Dermatological Skincare, Mary Kay Cosmetics, NJ Cancer Education and Early Detection, Regional Cancer Care Associates, Sparta Cancer Center, Sussex County Arts and Heritage Council, and the Sussex County YMCA/Live Strong Program.

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Garden Dilemmas? Ask Mary?



Mary E. Stone
Stone Associates
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Hello fellow readers,

A few weeks ago, we spoke about rhubarb—edible versus ornamental—and how kindness helps heal. I shared how dear friends offered to care for Jolee while I served as a Big Buddy to a child at the annual Comfort Zone Camp for children grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide.

I've just returned from the weekend, exhausted yet deeply grateful. And Jolee was well cared for, greeting me home with joyful enthusiasm.

Susan and Don, the loving friends who watched her, told me she refused to take a road walk while I was away. Each time they tried to walk her, she would "put on the brakes."

It brought me back to Jolee's earliest days after adoption.

You may recall

her story. Jolee came from Mississippi, rescued from a kill shelter. When she first arrived, fear filled her spirit. On walks, she would stop every few feet, uncertain and afraid. I'd carry her a short distance before setting her down. Slowly, over many weeks, she'd walk farther on her own, gathering courage with each step.

Healing often happens that way.

At camp, while walking with our Healing Circle group, my Little Buddy came upon a patch of Mayapple growing beside the trail. This is my third year being her Big Buddy, and I learned she has taken up gardening, so I asked if she knew the plant. She didn't.

Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*) is one of my favorite native woodland plants. This time of year, they line shady paths like green umbrellas unfurling across the forest floor. Hidden beneath those umbrella-like leaves are delicate, waxy, white flowers you only notice if you slow down enough to look underneath. That's part of their charm.

A poem by Minnie Curtis Wait (1901) describes them as "a host of green umbrellas" that might shelter fairy people from sudden showers. I love that image. Even the name Mayap-



ple is endearing, reminding me of the old-time expression "the apple of my eye," something precious and dearly adored.

When I explained the meaning to my Little Buddy, she smiled and announced that she now had a boyfriend.

The Mayapple also carries a lesson. Though charming, much of the plant is toxic. Yet hidden beneath the leaves are beauty, usefulness, and eventually fruit. It reminded me how often healing and hardship grow side by side in the garden of life.

The volunteer therapist and leader of our Healing Circle shared an

analogy I will not forget. He spoke of the emotions we carry through life—the grief, trauma, anger, and heartbreak we sometimes bury while convincing ourselves we are "fine." He compared those unspoken feelings to air building inside a balloon. Eventually, if ignored, the pressure becomes too much, and it bursts.

But healing can begin by slowly letting the air out. Gradually. Carefully. One conversation, one memory, one truthful moment at a time.

As he spoke, tears softly welled in my eyes as I recognized how easily we can carry such bal-

loons without fully realizing it. I suspect many of us do.

The memorial service, which concludes each Comfort Zone Camp, is a celebration of love and remembrance rather than sorrow. Our group was called the Grasshoppers. One by one, each child stood before the crowd and shared what they had learned about suicide during the weekend.

"It's complicated," one child said.

Another explained that mental illness is often involved.

And perhaps most heartbreakingly wise of all: "A person doesn't

want to die. They just can't handle the pain anymore."

Then, two campers simultaneously blurted out, "Suicide sucks," drawing laughter, tears, and heartfelt applause from nearly everyone in the audience.

Indeed, it does. As does silence, fear, and carrying pain alone.

Perhaps that is why healing—like the shy flower hidden beneath the Mayapple leaf—so often begins when someone feels safe enough to finally be seen.

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Safety Reminder: Police Presence Across Morris, Sussex And Warren Counties Increase For Memorial Day Weekend Traffic Enforcement

Police departments from Morris, Sussex and Warren counties will increase traffic enforcement efforts throughout Memorial Day weekend as part of a regional initiative targeting dangerous driving behaviors. Several law enforcement agencies will conduct high-visibility traffic enforcement during one of the busiest travel weekends of the year. Participating agencies include the Hackensack, Roxbury

Township, Washington Township, Mount Olive Township, Stanhope Borough, Chester Township, Byram Township and Netcong Borough police departments, along with the Morris County Sheriff's Office. Authorities said enforcement efforts will focus on aggressive driving, speeding, distracted driving and driving while intoxicated. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration,

Memorial Day weekends historically see a rise in fatal crashes compared with non-holiday weekends. Officials cited statistics showing the holiday period averages approximately 449 traffic fatalities nationwide, with about 40% involving alcohol-impaired drivers. Police also noted that the period between Memorial Day and Labor Day is often referred to in New Jersey as the "100 Deadliest Days of



Summer" because of crashes, impaired driving increased rates of fatal incidents and crash-

es involving young drivers. As always, motorists are being urged to avoid impaired driving, obey speed limits, eliminate distractions and always wear seat belts. (Article by Jay Edwards, NRNJRadio.com. Full Article link: wrnjradio.com/police-across-morris-sussex-and-warren-counties-increase-memorial-day-weekend-traffic-enforcement)



PA Senator Rosemary Brown Announces Enactment of Greg Moyer's Law

After more than a decade of advocacy and my work alongside the Moyer family, I'm proud to share that Greg Moyer's Law, Senate Bill 375, has officially been signed into law as Act 17 of 2026. Greg Moyer tragically passed away at just 15 years old after suffering sudden cardiac arrest during a high school basketball game. By the time EMS arrived with an AED nearly 20

minutes later, it was too late to save him. Sudden cardiac arrest remains the leading cause of death among young athletes, and we know that immediate access to an AED can save lives. This new law requires AEDs to be present at all PIAA-sanctioned athletic events and practices and ensures schools have emergency action plans in place for sudden cardiac ar-



rest situations. Sudden cardiac arrest remains the

leading cause of death among young athletes, and we know immediate access to an AED can save lives. This legislation honors Greg's legacy and represents years of dedication from his parents, Rachel and John Moyer, his sisters, advocates, medical professionals, educators, and many others who helped move this important initiative forward.

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A Sunday Sermon, By Michael Nelms

The Ephesians were people steeped in ancient Greco-Roman culture that prized education as the means to wisdom, equating knowledge with wisdom. Plato said, "To know the good is to do the good," which any parent of a three-year old can offer ample evidence to the contrary. (And any half-conscious adult reflecting inwardly can do the same.) British journalist and musician Miles Kington said, "Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad." In this reading, wisdom and revelation, not wisdom and knowledge, are bound together, and both are seen as a gift from God, not things we acquire by our own education and efforts. Let us listen for the Word of God. Ephesians 1:15-23: I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers, that the God

of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may perceive what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

From what we can gather from the four Gospels,

the twelve disciples Jesus hand-picked were a diverse lot in terms of education, socio-economic class, and political persuasion, including among the twelve an educated, well-to-do Roman tax collector (and therefore supporter of Rome), to at least one anti-Rome political radical, to several illiterate and poor Galilean fishermen who resented Rome less passionately than the radicals, to middle-class carpenters who studied Jewish Torah under fig trees and eschewed political involvement. And yet Jesus did not need to start a Presbytery book discussion group on how to successfully navigate such diversity "in such a time as this." Let us listen for the Word of God. Luke 24:44-53: Then Jesus said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you--that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened

their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

"Gift, not Achievement"

We recently invested in a home in Hardwick that has a partially below ground family room, and given the partially

below ground aspect, I purchased a small, \$10 battery-operated gadget that reads the interior humidity percentage. The gadget arrived with the necessary triple-A battery for operation. I took off the back cover of the gadget, inserted the triple-A battery and the gadget failed to turn on. I took the battery out, made sure I had inserted it the correct way, and tried it again. Still nothing. I repeated this procedure a couple more times. Nothing. My first thought was the gadget was broken. Before taking the time to re-package the gadget, download, print and fill out a return form, and then mail it back, I decided to try another battery. We had a box of triple-A batteries in the kitchen. I tried a new battery, and wha-la, the gadget turned on. I thought to myself that for \$10 I guess the company decided providing a working battery was overly-generous.

A few days later I noticed that the triple-A battery that had come with the gadget was still on the dining room ta-

ble, so I picked it up, walked into the kitchen, on my way to the bin for battery recycling. As I walked into the kitchen, with the small battery in my fingers, I suddenly felt something for the first time: the battery was encased in plastic-wrap to protect it during shipping. The battery would have worked just fine had I taken the plastic off. Notice my immediate judgments were negative about the company, that the gadget itself did not work, and then the battery as "defective." We, members of the not-yet-human species, are evolutionarily wired for negativity through a mechanism known as negativity bias, which prioritizes negative information over positive. This ancient survival mechanism causes the brain to imagine, focus on, react to, or remember negative experiences or threats more strongly than positive ones. This is why small children are afraid of shadows. This is why television news focuses on the negative: they know it will get **SERMON Cont'd on pg 14**

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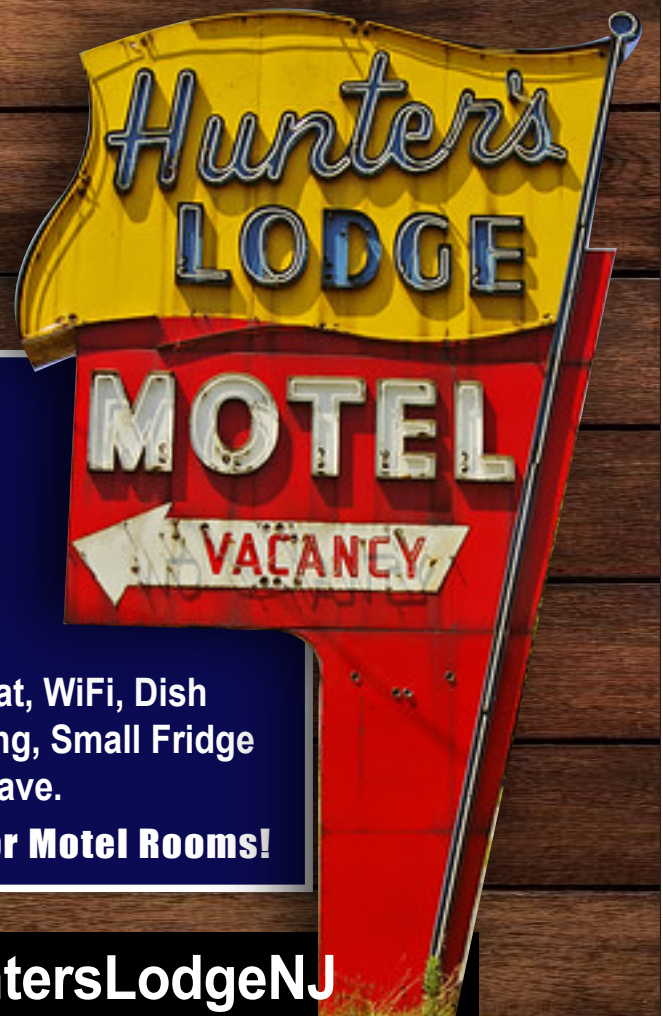


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A Sunday Sermon Continued from Page 13

and retain more viewers. This is why most politicians, instead of speaking positively about what they will do, speak about how bad their opponents are. We are wired for such negativity.

In 1941, while taking a walk through the woods, Swiss electrical engineer George de Mestral discovered the cocklebur is comprised of hundreds of tiny hooks that cling tenaciously to clothes. Inspired by this, over the next ten years he developed and patented Velcro, which comes from the combining of two French words for velvet and crochet. Velcro had limited success for engineering and scientific purposes, but once the patent expired in 1980, others developed it as a shoe and wallet fastener after which it became highly successful. Negative thinking sticks to us like Velcro, whereas positive thinking slides off us like Teflon, Teflon having been accidentally invented in 1938 by American Chemist Roy Plunkett while working for Dupont. The stickiness of negativity to our way of being, our way of thinking and perceiving, is a reality of our evolution, "our" meaning everyone alive. This is negativity bias is true of everyone without regard to culture,

religion, gender, race, or socio-economic class, everyone whether Republican, Democrat, American, Russian, Chinese, or Chilean. Yes, there is such a thing as neuroplasticity wherein we can make some intentional improvements to counteract this negativity bias by practicing habits of gratitude and mindfulness, but, our present-day efforts are limited in their ability to overcome hundreds of thousands of years of evolutionary biology. This negativity bias is not just about the people and things outside of us. It is also something we do to ourselves, negative thinking about our looks, our status in the world, our abilities.

There's a famous psychology experiment that goes back to Dartmouth University in the 1980's. A group of people were told that they would be interviewed, and before the interview they would be given a sizeable facial scar created by professional makeup-artists. Each person in the group was given such a facial scar, and they were given time to see it in a mirror, to see how sizeable and realistic it was. Then, just before they were to be interviewed, the makeup-artist told them they needed to touch-up the scar, but, unbeknownst

to these people, instead of touching-up the scar, the scar was removed.

Therefore, the people went into the interview thinking they had a sizeable, facial scar when they did not. The result of the experiment was those being interviewed reported being discriminated against. They felt like the person interviewing them was judging because of their facial deformity even when no such deformity existed. If we believe we have a scar, we will be convinced others will view us differently. If we believe we are not as good as someone else, we will feel judged by that person whether they are judging us or not. If we feel insecure about our clothes or our looks, we will feel judged by others if when others may care less about such things. As Abraham Maslow said, "What [A] says about [B] says more about [A] than [B]." John Doe saying that Jane Doe thinks he is ugly, may reveal more about John Doe than Jane Doe. Jane Doe saying

Susan Smith thinks she is better than her because Susan and her husband have more money and live in a bigger house may say more about Jane Doe's feelings of inferiority than it does Susan Smith. The



negativity bias is within us as well as directed to the people and things outside of us.

Notice in the reading from Ephesians it said, "...the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know God," and then add what was said in the reading from Luke's Gospel, "Then Jesus opened their minds to understand the scriptures." In both cases a gift beyond us, a gift outside of us, a gift from above is given to us in order for us to see things wisely, to see ourselves, and the Scriptures, and other people and the world accurately. Recall also when earlier I spoke about the evolution of our species I intentionally said, "not-yet-human species." We are not yet Human. Becoming Human is a gift from beyond us, a gift from God. We do not achieve humanness through the very real and very long and very biolog-

ical evolutionary process even when aided by our own individual efforts at education and civilization. We become Human as a result of the spirit of wisdom and revelation that is a gift from God. We become Human, and understand the Scriptures, not because we opened a Bible, but because Jesus, who was fully Human, opens our minds. It is a gift, not an achievement.

Alexander Pope's famous adage that to err is human is utterly wrong. We err because we are not yet Human. It is our lack of humanity that is the problem, our lack of humanity characterized by, among other things, our negativity bias towards others and ourselves. This lack of humanity will not be corrected by education, laws, social engineering, individual will power or any other not-yet-human endeavor, no matter how well intentioned. Becoming Human is a gift that must come from beyond

ourselves. Jesus opened their minds, and before Jesus did this, they had no possibility of understanding the Scriptures or Jesus, or the God Jesus embodied, as before this gift their reading of Scripture said more about themselves than God, revealing their own fears, insecurities, prejudices, and self-centered desires for personal, national and military success. Until Jesus opens our minds, opening the Bible is utterly useless.

So, what are we left to do? Did not Jesus say prior to his ascension, "Wait until you are endued with power from above"? Waiting on the gift of God was and is our only hope, knowing from the Gospels that this God gives such a gift even to those who deny him three times and who abandon him out of fear for their own lives. This God, made known in Jesus, is the kind of God who after being denied, betrayed, and abandoned—and with his Human arms stretched out and nailed to a cross—cried out with his human heart saying, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Waiting on the gift from this kind of God was and is and forever will be our only hope.

Sermon by Michael Nelms, Yellow Frame Presbyterian Church

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