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Bangor High School Hosts Student Athlete College Recognition Ceremony



The Bangor Athletic Department held a Student-Athlete College Recognition ceremony for those who plan on continuing their athletic careers at the collegiate level. The ceremony was held in the Slater Media Center at Bangor High School on May 18th. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Faith Christian School Proudly Announces Their 2026 Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Faith Christian School is proud to announce Jakob Aaron Joshua Gillow as this year's Valedictorian, and Katy Rose Erwin, as this year's Salutatorian.

Valedictorian, Jakob Gillow, the son of Joshua and Bryn Gillow, has attended Faith Christian School since ninth grade. He has served on the yearbook staff during his freshman year and has been a member of National Honor Society since his sophomore year. He played volleyball during his junior and senior years, serving as team captain his senior year. In addition to attending Faith Christian School, Jakob studied Drafting and Design at Monroe Career and Technical Institute during his junior and senior years, where he earned his NOCTI and OSHA certifications. Jakob is the founder of J Visual Design, his own website



Left: Valedictorian, Jakob Gillow. Right: Salutatorian: Katy Erwin

and graphic design business, which he launched during his sophomore year. He also works as the website designer and manager for Tekton Growth, an online marketing agency, where he oversees upwards of twenty-five client websites. He has a passion for creativity, problem solving, and technology. Outside of school, he enjoys traveling, reading, listening to music, and attending concerts. He was named valedictorian

of the Faith Christian School Class of 2026. After graduation, Jakob plans to continue growing his business and accept a full-time position with Tekton Growth. Salutatorian, Katy Erwin, the daughter of Caleb and Amy Erwin, has attended Faith Christian School since kindergarten. She has served in student council as class secretary since freshman year. Katy has been a member of yearbook *GRAD cont'd on pg 2*

Blairstown, NJ, Honors Those Who Were Lost During Annual Memorial Day Parade



Blairstown Memorial Day Parade, which was hosted by American Legion Post 258, was held on May 24th. The Ceremony started in Cedar Ridge Cemetery at noon, with the parade starting at 1pm and ending with Memorial Day festivities in Footbridge Park. Pictured above is Norman Beatty who was gifted a 2026 Quilt of Valor from the Evening Star Quilter's Guild. Photo by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press

Warren County, NJ, Showcases Excellence at 75th Annual NJAC Conference



Warren County is among the smaller counties in New Jersey but it had outsized prominence at the 75th Annual Celebration of County Government conducted by the New Jersey Association of Counties in Atlantic City May 6-8, 2026. Warren County Commissioner James R. Kern III, who was sworn in as the 85th President of NJAC in January, was a constant presence at the conference podium throughout the three-day event, making speeches, presenting awards, and introducing Gov. Mikie Sherrill for her remarks to the conference, which was attended by more than 750 people coming WAR-



GRAD

Continued from page 1

since her freshman year and has served as editor for her junior and senior years. She also joined the high school chorus her senior year. She was a part of the volleyball team her sophomore and junior years and joined soccer her senior year as well. She currently attends Life Church where she assists in the kids' life for the nursery and toddler rooms. Katy plans to attend East Stroudsburg University to study psychology.

Class of 2026 Graduates Include: Gabriel Attilano, East Stroudsburg, PA; Nathaniel

Calder, Pen Argyl, PA; Katy Erwin, Salutaritan, Bangor, PA; Kayce Foist, Stroudsburg, PA; Daniella Fortuna, Stroudsburg, PA; Ethan Fox, Easton, PA; Jakob Gillow, Valedictorian, Brodheads ville, PA; Jeffrey Hazelton, Saylorsburg, PA; Christopher John, East Stroudsburg, PA; Seth Magnin, Bartonsville, PA; Savanna Morrison, Blairstown, NJ; Moelani Roometua, Stroudsburg, PA; Athena Santiago, Stroudsburg, PA; Falon Schaefer, Kunkletown, PA; and Sydney Todd, Stroudsburg, PA. Graduation will be held on Friday, June 5, 2026 at 4:30pm at the Slate Belt Church, 1640 Church Road, Pen Argyl, PA

Congressman Kean Secures \$365k for Mountainside Emergency Operations Center, Delivering on All 15 District Funding Requests

Congressman Tom Kean, Jr. (NJ-07) announced that he secured \$365,000 in federal funding to establish a new Emergency Operations Center for the Borough of Mountainside. This investment will transform the second floor of the former Department of Public Works garage into a modern Emergency Operations Center, strengthening emergency response capabilities and bolstering public safety across the community.

The funding was awarded through Congressman Kean's FY2026 Community Project Funding (CPF) submissions. As part of the CPF process, Congressman Kean submitted 15 projects to the House Appropriations Committee for consideration in the FY2026 appropriations bills. The Mountainside Emergency Operations



the finish line, bringing home more than \$13 million to our district."

"We are incredibly grateful to be awarded \$365,000 through the Community Project Funding grant from Congressman Tom Kean, Jr.," said Mountainside Mayor Paul Mirabelli. "This marks an important step forward in enhancing Mountainside's emergency preparedness capabilities. We thank Congressman Kean for recognizing the importance of investing in small towns and keeping Mountainside's residents safe."

"This \$365,000 Community Project Funding grant from Congressman Tom Kean Jr is a tremendous win for our community. It will allow us to give our first responders and emergency personnel the tools and resources they need to effectively coordinate, communicate, and respond during critical situations to protect Mountainside residents," said Mountainside Council President Steve Matejek.

All 15 of Congressman Kean's CPF requests have now received funding through the FY2026 appropriations bills, delivering more than \$13 million in federal investments for NJ-07 communities. The full list of projects can be viewed in the map below or on his website at: kean.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/kean.house.gov/files/evo-media-image/fy2026-all-cpf-projects.png

Center project was included in the Homeland Security and Further Additional Continuing Appropriations Act of 2026 (H.R.7147), which was signed into law on April 30, 2026.

"When seconds matter, our first responders deserve a command center

that is built for the mission, and that is exactly what this \$365,000 investment delivers for Mountainside," said Congressman Tom Kean, Jr. "With this final approval, every single one of the 15 projects I advocated for in FY2026 has crossed

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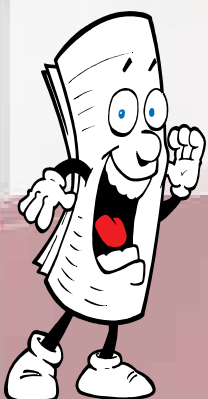
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Senator Boscola and Representative Flood Announce \$475,762 in Grants for Slate Belt Projects



State Senator Lisa Boscola and Representative Ann Flood announced funding totaling \$475,762 for projects in the Slate Belt through the Local Share Account – Northampton and Lehigh Counties and the Local Share Account-Monroe County.

public safety through funding to local police, fire and EMS,” Boscola stated. “Reliable emergency services and strong local infrastructure are essential to keeping our communities safe and connected,” said Flood. “These grants will help municipalities across the Slate Belt make important upgrades that directly benefit residents.”

Representative Flood were pleased to work collaboratively to fund the following projects in the shared portions of their districts through the Local Share Account funded by gaming revenues paid into Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA):

- East Bangor Borough - \$75,000 Public Safety Radios
- Lower Mount Bethel Township- \$74,231 Riverton Park Amphitheater/Bandshell
- Pen Argyl Borough - \$20,955 Emergency Pre-emptive Device
- Pen Argyl Borough - \$75,000 Slate Belt Regional Police Department Police Vehicles
- Plainfield Township - \$110,000 Plainfield Township Fire Department P25 Radios

- Portland Borough - \$25,000 Police Vehicle
 - Roseto Borough - \$45,576 Police Radios
 - Upper Mount Bethel Township- \$50,000 Public Works Tandem Truck
- The Local Share Accounts (LSA) were established by the Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act. The funds are generated by the state’s gaming facilities and may be used for economic development, community development and public interest projects in Northampton, Lehigh and Monroe County and its contiguous counties.

The grants were approved by the state Commonwealth Financing Authority Board in Harrisburg.

Cutting Costs for PA Families by Ending Outdated Emissions Testing



Taking legislative action to do away with an outdated and unnecessary mandate, the Senate voted to eliminate the vehicle emissions testing requirement across the commonwealth. The measure will save Pennsylvanians an estimated \$160 million annually. Senate Bill 1298 would remove all

25 counties currently subjected to annual emissions testing. It also clarifies that no additional counties can be added into the program, protecting Pennsylvania vehicle owners. The bill was sent to the House of Representatives for consideration. Read more about Senate Bill 1298 here.

New to the Bangor Public Library

Adult Fiction:

The Fourth Option: A Thriller by Jack Carr; *The Shippers* by Katherine Center; *The Anniversary: A Thriller* by Alex Finlay; *A Violent Masterpiece: A Novel* by Jordan Harper; *Under the Southern Sky: A Novel* by Kristy Woodson Harvey; *The Mistake* by Elle Kennedy; *The Score* by Elle Kennedy; *The Deal: Off-Campus* by Elle Kennedy; *A Game of Thrones: The Graphic Novel Vol. 2* by Daniel Abraham; *The Dinner Party: A Pick Your Poison Adventure* by Freida McFadden; *The Mountains We Call Home: The Book Woman’s Legacy: A Novel* by Kim Michele Richardson; *The Perfect Ruin* by Shanora Williams

Adult Non Fiction:

Pests & Other Friends: Discover the True Nature of the Most Maligned Animals by Halsey Berryman; *The Fallen: The Lost Girls of Ireland’s Magdalene Laundries and a Legacy of Silence* by Louise Brangan; *Dress Your Baby in Sage and Taupe: A Handbook for the Sad Beige Parent* by Hayley DeRoche; *The Goth Garden: The Mystery, Beauty, and Lore of Dark Gardening* by Felicia Feaster; *The Family Man: Blood and Betrayal in the House of Murdaugh* by James Lasdun; *The Dark Night: Emily Bronte, A Life* by Deborah Lutz; *Victoria in Love: The Private Passion of a Queen* by Fern Riddell; *The Creative Container Garden: Grow & Vibrant, Year-Round Mix of Flowers, Food, Herbs, and More* by Anders Royneberg; *Liturgies of the Wild: Myths That Make Us* by Martin Shaw

Easy Fiction:

Mama Won’t Mind by Kathleen Bahr; *Gigantic* by Rob Bidulph; *Is It Spring?* By Kevin Henkes; *The Art of how Dogs Sleep* by Alison Kim; *Crouton: One Cat’s Adoption Tale* by Kristine A. Lombardi; *The Wildest Thing* by Emily Winfield Martin; *Arroyo: The Dog that Loves to Dig* by Gwen Olivier; *Dad* by Christian Robinson; *Judgy Bunny and the Terrible Beach* by Scott Rothman; *If You Make a Call on a Banana Phone* by Gideon Sterer; *Uh-oh, Hugo!* By Jonathan Stutzman; *It’s My Bird-Day* by Mo Willems

Junior Non Fiction:

Dig!: Uncover the Secrets of the Past With Archaeology by Ruth Hatfield; *Heroes of 1776: The Story of the Declaration of Independence* by Neil M. Gorsuch



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PEN ARGYL GIRLS & BOYS TRACK & FIELD SENIOR NIGHT



Isaiah Adams with his mother, Diana



Andrea Ahner with her parents, Jason and Michelle



Carlena Alfred with her parents, Anne and Jared



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Jaden Hunter with his parents, Brian and Donna



Blayke Lacey with his father, Brad, his sister Hayley, and his nephew, Brantley

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Katie Wilgus with her parents, Summer and Jason

Photos by Dale Young/
The Free Weekly Press

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PEN ARGYL GIRLS & BOYS TRACK & FIELD SENIOR NIGHT



Ella Mamana with her parents, Chris and Kirsten



Zachary Metzgar with his parents, Chrissa and Michael



Natosha Morrison with her parents, Brett and Aundrea



Jakob Pietraszkiwicz with his father, Matthew



Antwon Reese with his parents, Marissela and Joshua



Arseniy Topa with his parents, Yana and Stanislav

Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Blue Mountain Community Library News!

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.

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!

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From Wind Gap: 3rd St., make left onto Delabole Rd., Right onto Merwarth Rd., Left onto Gum Rd.

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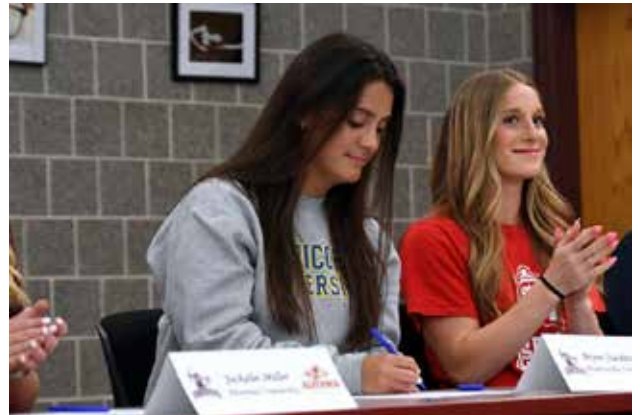
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BANGOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ATHLETE COLLEGE RECOGNITION CEREMONY



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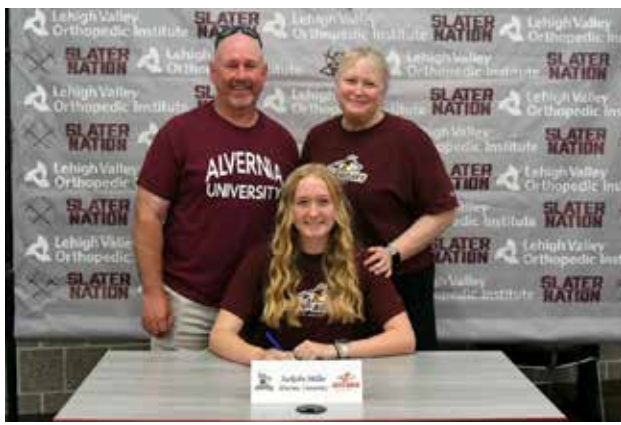
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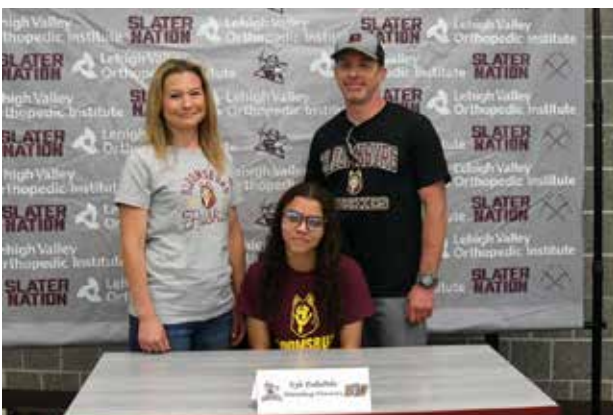
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The Pennsylvania Graduation Edition for Bangor, Faith Christian and Pen Argyl will be June 3rd, and North Warren's Graduation Edition will be June 17th! Please email Melissa at thepressads@gmail.com for additional details



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BANGOR HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE RECOGNITION CEREMONY CONTINUED



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Mary E. Stone
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Hello fellow readers, We are in full gear now, planting our vegetable gardens and adding annuals to our flower beds and pots. The Old Farmer's Almanac offers a nifty planting calendar for vegetables and edible annuals such as marigolds. While many folks consider Mother's Day the safe signal to plant annuals and vegetable starter plants outdoors, I prefer waiting until around May 22. Remember that surprise two-night frost around Mother's Day a few years ago?

And if later-season vegetable seeds are sown too early, before the soil has properly warmed, they may rot before germinating.

I rallied Friday to purchase annuals for a local client and discovered a grower I never knew existed tucked right here

in our region — Stonehedge Growers, a wholesale greenhouse operation producing plants since 1997 using natural growing techniques.

Later that afternoon, I returned to shop for my own gardens, purchasing familiar favorites, including Pacifica White Vinca, Sonata White Cosmos, Aloha Blue Ageratium, Durango Tangerine Marigold, and Coleus' Bright Ruffles' with iconic chartreuse edges.

Then came the "dangerous" part — wandering.

That's when the treasures revealed themselves, thanks to owner Steve Oken, who kindly gave me a tour through the sea of greenhouses and greeted me on a bicycle.

"Saving steps," he said, making me smile as I watched him rally all around the sprawling greenhouse operation.

Steve showed me flats of vegetables I have never heard of and gifted me a few. Malabar spinach, a beautiful edible vine with glossy leaves often used fresh in salads or stir-fries. Nearby sat cucuzzi, an Italian heirloom squash also known as snake gourd, growing with the enthusiasm of Jack's beanstalk. One plant had already stretched dramatically from its tiny pot.

"One self-seeded last



year and climbed all the way up this pole," Steve said, pointing to a greenhouse support post high overhead.

Then there was bitter melon, its deeply cut foliage twisting around delicate tendrils. While bitter melon is admittedly an acquired taste, it is treasured in many cultures and valued for both culinary and medicinal uses.

Long beans caught my eye too — sometimes called asparagus beans or yard-long beans because the pods can grow remarkably long. I could already picture them climbing rustic supports in the vegetable garden like living green ribbons.

And then there was Cuban oregano, with thick velvety leaves carrying the most delightful fragrance somewhere between oregano, thyme, and menthol. One touch of the foliage and the scent lingered on my hands. It made me think of my dear friend Elsa, who immigrated to the United States from Cuba as a young girl.

Shopping for annuals and vegetables can feel a bit like treasure hunting crossed with impulse-control therapy. The frenzy of grabbing carts, swooning over color combinations, and discovering unusual plants can lead even seasoned gardeners astray. Over the years, I've learned a



few things worth remembering before tossing everything into the wagon.

Rather than choosing plants already in full bloom, select those just beginning to flower or still in bud. Younger plants adapt faster and usually provide a longer season of beauty and harvest.

Look for sturdy, well-shaped plants rather than tall, stretched, leggy ones. Healthy foliage matters too. Avoid spotted, yellowing, or hole-riddled leaves that may signal disease or insects hitchhiking home with you.

And don't forget compatibility. Plants sharing the same container or garden bed need similar growing conditions. Sun lovers paired with shade lovers rarely have a happy-ever-after. Nurseries

don't always organize plants accordingly, so reading labels matters.

Why not mix vegetables and herbs into ornamental gardens and containers? Vegetables, herbs, and flowers together create abundant spaces full of texture, fragrance, pollinators, and unexpected beauty. Kitchen gardens, also called potagers, may sound fancy, but they're really gardens meant to nourish both body and spirit.

Perhaps that's one of life's lessons in the garden — leave room for wandering, for surprises, and for the unexpected treasures waiting just beyond the plants you came to buy.

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Together, we celebrate **250 years of American freedom** by giving back to those who protected it.

WARREN

Continued from page 1

REN cont'd on pg 11 from all 21 counties in the state.

Kern also was one of four commissioners interviewed by NJ 101.5 Senior Political Director Eric Scott during the Nick Acocella County Leadership Showcase.

Meanwhile, Warren County Planning Director Ryan Conklin was moderator of the breakout session "County Planning: How It Impacts County Government and Policy" and a panelist for the session "The New NJ State Plan and Counties: Perfect Together."

Warren County Public Information Director Art Charlton received a County Service Award, which NJAC announced was "for being brilliant at his craft and a remarkable career in public service that spanned three impactful and meaningful decades."

Noting that Charlton is in his 27th year as Warren County's public information director, Kern said that the long-time county spokesman, who also directs the Explore Warren tourism program, is "passionate about his work, and deeply engaged in the community. His impact has been felt not only here in Warren County, but throughout New Jersey. His dedication to public



service and commitment to excellence make him truly deserving of recognition and gratitude for a remarkable career."

Charlton also helmed the annual meeting during the conference of the NJAC Public Information Officers after serving as president of that association for the past year.

In the final event of the conference, culinary arts students from Warren County Technical School wowed the crowd during the 13th Annual County Vocational Technical School Cook-Off Challenge with their competition entry of Sweet and Smoky Duck Breast on a Sourdough Cracker, served with a hunting theme by the students wearing camouflage aprons and orange hunting caps.

"With Commissioner Kern serving as president, Ryan Conklin being part of two different presentations, Art Charlton receiving a County Service Award, and our talented

Warren County Technical School students competing in the annual cook-off, Warren County was well represented at the annual NJAC conference. We had several members of our dedicated county staff learning how to better serve residents and we were able to workshop solutions to pressing issues facing counties across the state," Commissioner Jason J. Sarnoski said.

Commissioner Director Lori Ciesla remarked, "Under Commissioner Kern's leadership the 75th NJAC conference was a huge success. The needs of New Jersey counties are unique and coming together with other elected officials and county professionals in a nonpartisan manner to share ideas and experiences is always a great learning experience."

As county governments serve as innovators in delivering essential services in a cost-effective manner, playing a vital role in the everyday lives

of New Jersey residents, NJAC's annual conference provides county-level decision-makers with the unique opportunity to share valuable resources and ideas. The conference includes a trade show; a "New County Commissioner Orientation"; meetings for county administrators, finance offices, information technology officers and others to meet with their peers; and some 33 informative workshops on diverse topics including regionalization and shared services, public health, emergency preparedness, new AI tools, energy efficiency and more.

"For 75 years, NJAC has provided counties with a unified voice, and that mission remains as important as ever as we work together to strengthen our communities and better serve residents across New Jersey," Kern noted, adding, "I am honored to serve as President of this organization and to help carry forward that mission."

Warren County (NJ) Commissioner Kern Honored by NJ Conference of Mayors



Commissioner James R. Kern III received the Former Mayor of the Year Award during the New Jersey Conference of Mayors' 61st Annual Spring Conference in Atlantic City on May 21st. The award recognizes Commissioner Kern's years of public service and leadership at both the municipal and county levels, including his service as Mayor of Pohatcong Township and on the Warren County Board of County Commissioners. "It's all about community service and working for the residents," said Hope Mayor Timothy McDonough, a past president of the NJCM. Noting that Kern was one of the youngest mayors in New Jersey when he started, McDonough added, "The energy that Jim Kern has shows in all that he does." McDonough said that Kern took what he learned as mayor and used it as he moved into serving at the county level and his involvement at the state level. Kern is president this year of the New Jersey Association of Counties. "Once a mayor, always a mayor," McDonough added, noting Kern is "doing the same great job as commissioner." Pictured with Commissioner Kern during the presentation are NJCM President and Evesham Township Mayor Jaclyn Veasy and McDonough, who was re-elected NJCM's legislative chair for a 10th year.

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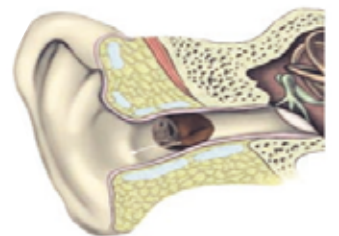
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Sixth Street Shelter Celebrates Staff and Community

The Sixth Street Shelter, a program of Community Action Lehigh Valley, will host Sixth Street Shelter Day on Sunday, June 7, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., on the 200 block of North Sixth Street in Allentown. The block-party celebration honors the staff, partners, and community members who support families experiencing homelessness and recognizes the important role the Shelter plays in the Allentown community.

Sixth Street Shelter Day—proclaimed by Allentown Mayor Matt Tuerk in 2023—recognizes the vital work done each day at the Sixth

Street Shelter to provide families with safe housing, stability, and access to supportive services.

This year's celebration will feature local food trucks, entertainment provided by La Mega Radio, community vendors and partner organizations, and a variety of free, family-friendly activities. Children and families can enjoy hands-on experiences and live demonstrations from the Da Vinci Science Center, along with additional games and activities throughout the afternoon.

Speakers during the event will share the mission and the impact



the Shelter has on families who stay there. At-

tendees will hear how supportive housing and comprehensive services help families build sta-

bility and move toward long-term independence.

“Since its inception, the Sixth Street Shelter has been a place of safety and a fresh start for families in our community—offering not just a roof, but the support, resources, and encouragement parents need to regain stability and move forward,” said Dawn Godshall, CEO of Community Action Lehigh Valley.

The community is invited to attend this free event and join in celebrating the people and partnerships that make the Sixth Street Shelter a place of possibility for families in need.

For sponsorship and Sixth Street Shelter Day inquiries, contact Lynn Schoof, Marketing and Philanthropy Officer, at lschoof@caclv.org or

484-280-6795.

The Sixth Street Shelter is a 30-60-90-day temporary shelter for families experiencing homelessness. Our program provides secure, safe housing through family-centered services, in-house programming, and referrals to community resources, while advocating that affordable housing is a human right.

The Sixth Street Shelter is the largest family shelter in the region, accepting any configuration of families, as long as they have custody of at least one child under the age of 18 years who will be residing with them. Our goal is to end generational poverty and families experiencing homelessness by increasing independence through self-sufficiency.

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FREE "Ham Mac-n-Cheese" Dinner on Sunday, June 7th, from 4 to 4:30pm This is TAKE-OUT only at 136 W. Central Ave. (Rt. 512), East Bangor, PA. For more info., call 610-588-4453 or visit www.ebumc.org.

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