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Our Lady Of Mount Carmel Hosts Annual Coronation of The “Big Time” Queen



The Roseto Big Time Celebration was held July 22nd through July 25th. The crowning of the queen ceremony was held Saturday, July 25th. This year’s Queen is Miss Anna Lucia Goffredo. The queen’s court, pictured above, consisted of: Aubrie LaBar, Anna Koehler, Madilyn Molle Vasquez, Dina Koehler, Francesca Reto, Kimberly Laubach, Emma Hanson, Gina Martino, Madelynn Hicks, and Alessandra Ilardi. The flower girls were: Ella Goffredo, Lucia Mazza, and Mila Mazza. Princesses were: Mackenzie Elyse Hughes and Julia Goffredo. Page Boys were: Roman Moyer and Michael Newton, and this years crown bearer was Steven Goffredo. Congratulations Anna. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Celebrating 77 Years of Fun and Tradition at the Plainfield Farmer’s Fair



The 77th Annual Plainfield Farmer’s Fair took place July 21st-July 25th. The fair is always a staple of Summer in the area, livestock shows, pie eating contests, Demo Derby and more, what isn’t to love about the fair! Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Time Whys Rocks The Stage During the Summer Sounds



The Summer Sounds Concert Series continued on July 26th at Weona Park in Pen Argyl with a crowd pleasing performance by Time Whys. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

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Scenes From The 77th Plainfield Farmer's Fair



Plainfield Farmer's Fair Scholarship Winners: Shea Black, William Brown, Dylan Dilts, Bethany Drunkenmiller, Eliana Koehler, Gavin Pysher, and Madison Widrick. Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press



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Scenes From The 77th Plainfield Farmer’s Fair Continued



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Photos & Videos From The Big Time Can Be Found On Our FACEBOOK!

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Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Roseto Big Time Continued



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New to the Blue Mountain Community Library

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

Our America on Wheels museum pass has arrived and is ready for checkout! Stop in today for this wonderful resources, courtesy of a sponsorship from Deerfoot Auto Parts.

The library will discuss Theo of Golden by Allen Levi on Tuesday, July 14 at 6:30pm. Email info@bmcl.org to RSVP.

The BMCL Summer Fun with Reading Program (SFRP) 2026: Words and Wonders! is underway. Stop in today for reading challenges with exciting prizes, a readers' raffle, and programs for ages 3-6 and 4-9!

The Book Nook is having a half-price sale during all open shifts from June 22-27: every morning from 10am-12pm, plus Monday, June 22 and Thursday, June 25 (6-8pm). All items are half price! We have fiction and nonfiction for all ages plus large print, puzzles, and DVDs.

New to the circulating collection - with many courtesy of a grant from Penguin Random House/United for Libraries - and more to be catalogued:

- Adult fiction:
- Ironwood (Michael Connelly)
 - The Divorce (Freida McFadden)
 - A Pair of Aces (Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray)
 - The Midnight Train (Matt Haig)
 - Brawler: Stories (Lauren Groff)
 - Dungeon Crawler Carl (Matt Dinniman)
 - Upward Bound (Woody Brown)
 - Revenge Prey (John Sandford)
 - Anatomy of an Alibi (Ashley Elston)

- Adult nonfiction:
- Crochet (Marie-Noelle Bayard)
 - Dog Show (Billy Collins)
 - There Is No Place for Us (Brian Goldstone)
 - 20-Minute Air Fryer (Christina Kynigos)

- Large print fiction:
- Served Him Right (Lisa Unger)
 - The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store (James McBride)

- YA fiction:
- The Unteachables (Gordon Korman)

- YA nonfiction:
- Top 20 Daredevils (Melvin and Gilda Berger)
 - The World Record Paper Airplane Book (Ken Blackburn and Jeff Lam-mers)

- Juvenile fiction:
- Hydoponic Hijinks (Rie Neal)
 - Squished (Megan Wagner Lloyd and Michelle Mee Nutter)
 - The Bad Seed (Jory John)
 - The Bad Seed Goes to the Library (Jory John)
 - A Family of Readers (Rob Sanders)
 - Exca-Gator! (Brooke Hartman)
 - Buns Gone Bad (Anna Humphrey)
 - The Shimmer (Ridley Pearson)

- Juvenile nonfiction:
- Tornado Terror (Lauren Tarshis)
 - Investing for Tweens (Jamie Bosse)
 - Goats (Rose Davidson)

Pen Argyl Summer Sounds Time Why's



Photos by Dale Young/
The Free Weekly Press

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Garden Dilemmas? Ask Mary!



Mary E. Stone
Stone Associates
Landscape Design
& Consulting,
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Hello fellow readers,

One of my favorite parts of landscape consulting is solving garden mysteries. Sometimes the answer is obvious. Other times, what appears to be the culprit turns out to be innocent.

During a garden tune-up at the home of my longtime client Pat, we noticed that one of the roses along the foundation was loose in the ground. I had planted that rose the previous summer to replace another one that died after its roots were gnawed to bits. We assumed chipmunks were responsible. There are plenty of them darting around the adjacent rock wall, looking too adorable to accuse of wrongdoing—almost, that is. Chipmunks can do a lot of damage.

After I visited Pat’s garden, I went down a research rabbit hole—or should I say, vole hole? Chipmunks certainly dig burrows and can disturb roots while stashing food, but when a plant lifts from the soil and its roots appear chewed off, voles are more likely the culprit.

The soft ground beneath Pat’s shrubs provided another clue.

Voiles create a network of shallow runways; their tunnels are closer to the surface than chipmunks and undermine it enough to make the ground feel squishy underfoot.

A side note here: voles and moles are often confused. Unlike moles, voles are rodents. They resemble stocky little mice with short tails, small eyes, and ears partially concealed by fur. They eat grass, roots, bulbs, bark, and other plant materials. They can also damage lawns, strip bark, and sever roots from trees and shrubs.

Moles are insect-eating mammals with powerful shovel-like front feet designed for digging; they feed primarily on earthworms, grubs, slugs, and other soil-dwelling creatures, not roots. But moles are often blamed for plant damage because their tunneling disturbs soil and can expose roots.

I suggested that Pat place a replacement rose in a large container. The boxwood hedge in front of the roses is now knee-high, so you wouldn’t even see the pot. Yes, it may require extra winter protection in our climate, but at least its roots would be beyond the reach of the underground dining committee.

There are also baskets you can make from quarter-inch galvanized hardware cloth by cutting a generous piece of mesh and shaping it into a wire bowl, putting it in your planting hole, then planting your shrub. Ready-made bowl baskets are also available.

I came across bags of poison for underground



critters at a farm supply store. I wouldn’t buy it, though, because poison introduces a different dilemma.

Depending on the active ingredient, a poisoned animal may also be eaten by an owl, hawk, fox, snake, or domestic pet, creating the possibility of secondary poisoning; harming the very predators that naturally help control voles.

When you think about it, garden dilemmas resemble the set-

backs in our lives. We have little control over many of them. We cannot change the instincts of voles, moles, or chipmunks. We can’t command a plant to thrive when its roots are compromised.

One of the greatest lessons I’ve learned in the garden—and in life—is that people and plants are not ours to fix.

We can water. We can nurture. We can encourage. We can even build wire baskets

around tender roots. But we can’t force another living thing to become something it isn’t capable of becoming.

The same is true in relationships. We can care deeply. We can offer support. We can hope someone will grow or accept help. But we can’t do another person’s growing for them.

Gardens and nature remind us that what we see on the surface rarely tells the whole story. The answers are often hidden beneath the sur-

face, and the culprit isn’t always what we first suspect.

In our own lives, healing often begins when we stop trying to change what we cannot control and instead protect what matters most.

We don’t always get to choose what tunnels beneath our gardens—or in our lives. But we do get to decide how we’ll tend to our roots.

Garden dilemmas? Visit AskMaryStone.com or tune in on your favorite podcast app.

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Kean Secures Nearly \$18 Million for Critical Local Projects Across New Jersey

Congressman Tom Kean, Jr. (NJ-07) announced that 18 Community Project Funding requests made by his office, totaling \$17,765,906, are included in key House funding bills for the upcoming fiscal year. All six counties in New Jersey's Seventh Congressional District are represented in the requests highlighted below.

"I fought to bring this federal funding home to New Jersey because our communities deserve a strong return on the tax dollars they send to Washington," said Congressman Kean. "These investments will improve roads and bridges, modernize water infrastructure, strengthen public safety, support our first responders, and help towns complete critical projects without placing the full burden on local property taxpayers. My focus will continue to be listening to residents, cutting through the Washington gridlock, and delivering resources that make our communities safer, stronger, and more affordable."

Community Project Funding is a process that allows Members of Congress to request direct funding for projects that benefit the communities they represent. This process includes robust eligibility, ethics, and transparency guidelines and is only available to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as some non-profits. Additionally, only projects with evidence of strong support from the community will be considered, and evidence of this support and community need is required as part of the submission.

In April 2026, Congressman Kean submitted 20 Community Project Funding requests to the House Appropriations Committee for consideration in five of this year's must-pass funding bills. The next step is for these bills to pass the House.

Below are the 18 Community Project Funding requests made by the Office of Congressman Tom Kean, Jr. that will be included in the House funding bills for the upcoming

fiscal year:

1. Hillsborough Township Public Safety Interoperable Communications Upgrade. Included Amount: \$975,000. Justification: The funding would be used for modernization and replacement of outdated portable radio communications equipment used by the Hillsborough Township Police Department. The project will fund the procurement and deployment of seventy-five (75) all-band portable radios equipped with advanced interoperability, Wi-Fi connectivity, and LTE capabilities. The department's current portable radios are outdated and lack the capability to provide reliable communications in complex environments such as schools, large commercial buildings, and emergency response scenes. In addition, the existing system does not provide sufficient interoperability between police, fire, and other emergency response agencies.
2. Town of Phillipsburg Police Technology Equip-

ment. Included Amount: \$500,000. Justification: The funding would be used for modernizing the Phillipsburg Police Department's investigative, surveillance, and information technology capabilities. Through the deployment of Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology, covert surveillance systems, upgraded CCTV infrastructure, enhanced cybersecurity protections, and a mobile drone operations support vehicle, the department will significantly strengthen its ability to prevent crime, conduct investigations, safeguard critical data, and respond to emergencies.

3. New Providence Police Radio Replacement and Upgrade. Included Amount: \$245,000. Justification: The funding would be used for the replacement of 47 portable radios used throughout the agency. The New Providence Police are currently utilizing portable radios that have exceeded their useful life and have begun to fail during their usage. The upgrade will fill coverage gaps by utilizing additional technology built into the radio hardware that connects the portable radio to a wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) network. The new radios will ensure continued connectivity to the Emergency Services Dispatch Center and Fire, EMS and Emergency Management departments. The purchase of these radios has the ability to impact the lives of any person who may live, work or travel through New Providence due to the portability of this equipment. The purchase will enhance community relations and offer a better experience to all taxpayers with our public safety professionals.
4. Chester Highlands Ridge Building Roof

Replacement. Included Amount: \$137,500. Justification: The funding would be used for the replacement of the Highlands Ridge Building, a vital multi-agency hub housing the Chester Volunteer First Aid Squad, contracted Atlantic Health EMT services, the Chester Township Office of Emergency Management, the NJ Highlands Council, and NJ Department of Environmental Protection offices. It also serves as a regional food pantry and the primary location of the Chester Historical Society. This project will replace the building's 22,000 square foot flat roof which is failing in multiple locations to halt active water infiltration and preserve this essential community asset.

5. Passaic River Regional Flooding Mitigation Project. Included Amount: \$3,000,000. Justification: The funding would be used for the clearing of major obstructions from Passaic River tributaries and the shoring up of stream banks in the river towns of Berkeley Heights, Long Hill, New Providence, Summit, and Chatham Borough, which will decrease area flooding and soil erosion, while improving and protecting soils and water quality. Many municipalities in the Passaic River Basin have experienced repeated and severe flooding events in recent years, resulting in significant public safety hazards, damage to public infrastructure, damage to property, roadway closures, emergency response impacts, and disruption to residents and businesses. This project will focus on strategic, environmentally responsible de-snagging and debris removal in the most-clogged stretches of the tributaries leading into the Passaic River, representing an important

flood mitigation strategy to improve the hydraulic capacity of the river tributaries and reduce flood risk.

6. Springfield Police Department Refurbishment Project. Included Amount: \$700,000. Justification: The funding would be used to complete critical facility improvements necessary to ensure compliance with Department of Corrections standards, modernize essential infrastructure, and improve operational efficiency. These improvements will enhance detainee management, officer safety, and compliance with applicable regulations. The project will also replace the building's aging and inefficient HVAC system. The current system has reached the end of its useful life and no longer provides reliable climate control for the facility. Finally, the project includes building modifications to create additional office space. The Department currently faces space limitations that affect administrative operations and the delivery of services to the community.
7. Renovation of the Frenchtown Borough Police Headquarters. Included Amount: \$200,000. Justification: The funding would be used for the renovation of the Frenchtown Police Department's outdated station currently housed in an aging residential structure acquired by the Borough decades ago. It lacks separate male and female changing facilities, does not meet current ADA accessibility standards, and utilizes a former residential kitchen area for temporary detainee holding—conditions that do not reflect contemporary public safety best practices. Additionally, the building's exterior components, including siding, gutters, windows, and roof, are in signifi

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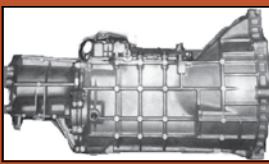
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Kean Secures Nearly \$18 Million for Critical Local Projects Across New Jersey - Article Continued from Page 8

cant need of repair and replacement. This project will transform the facility into a modern, sustainable public safety asset that benefits residents, businesses, and visitors while relieving undue financial pressure on local property taxpayers, making it a prudent and impactful investment of federal funds.

8. Hope Township Volunteer Fire Department Engine Truck Replacement. Included Amount: \$656,406. Justification: The funding would be used for the purchase of a new fire engine for the Hope Township Volunteer Fire Department. The current engine, which is approximately 20 years old, is nearing the end of its service life. Replacing this aging vehicle is essential to maintaining dependable fire emergency response capabilities and protecting the residents of Hope. A new fire engine will improve reliability, reduce out-of-service time, and strengthen the Township’s capacity to respond to fires and other emergencies within our own municipality, those surrounding us and especially Route 80 which runs through our area. It will also enhance firefighter safety by incorporating modern safety standards and updated equipment.

9. Clark Sanitary Sewer Infiltration and Inflow Correction and Rehabilitation Project. Included Amount: \$700,000. Justification: The funding would be used for a phased, condition-based sanitary sewer rehabilitation program that will target high-priority segments of the system which will be identified through inspection and flow analysis. This will include Cured-In-Place Pipe (CIPP) Rehabilitation, Full Sewer Main Replacement, Manhole Rehabilitation, and Joint Sealing and Point Repairs as needed. By stabilizing and rehabilitating the aging sanitary sewer infrastructure, the Township will prevent untreated wastewater from potentially impacting the Pumpkin Patch Brook, the Clark Wildlife Preserve (formerly the Middlesex Water Company Reservoir), and the Rahway River Basin. This directly supports water quality protection within the watershed and advances the objectives of the Clean Water Act.

10. Mine Hill Transite Water Main Replacement Project. Included Amount: \$850,000. Justification: The funding would be used for a water main project that will replace 5,307 linear feet of Transite water main. Transite is an asbestos-cement pipe made of 20%

asbestos. These pipes have been in the ground for over 40 years and have started to fail. The proposed project, including replacement of in-service transit (AC) pipe, represents a proactive and responsible approach to infrastructure management. Replacement will improve system efficiency, water quality, lower repair costs, and help preserve the long-term reliability of the water distribution system.

11. Sparta Township Lead Service Line Replacement Project. Included Amount: \$850,000. Justification: The funding would be used for the replacement of approximately 210 lead and galvanized steel service lines across Sparta Township. This will enable Sparta to accelerate compliance with New Jersey’s Service Line Replacement Law (P.L. 2021, Ch. 183), which mandates full replacement of all lead service lines by 2031 to safeguard public health. The project includes comprehensive identification of service line materials through record reviews, inspections, curb box excavations, and water testing, followed by full replacement of any lines confirmed to contain lead or galvanized steel. New copper service lines will be installed from the water main to each building, with temporary water shutoff, excavation, reconnection, system flushing, and full restoration of disturbed surfaces completed efficiently, typically within one to two days. By modernizing essential water infrastructure now, Sparta Township will protect public health, improve water quality, and ensure long term reliability of its drinking water system well ahead of the mandated schedule.

12. Branchburg Emergency Operations Center. Included Amount: \$2,250,000. Justification: The funding would be used for the renovation of Branchburg’s Emergency Management facility. This project will provide adequate and modern facilities for the Office of Emergency Management, a necessary upgrade to protect Branchburg’s rapidly growing community and heavily trafficked commuter corridors on US Route 202 and US Route 22.

13. Somerville Downtown Capital Improvements. Included Amount: \$1,942,000. Justification: The funding would be used for two complementary capital improvement projects: the Division Street Arts Plaza and the Giardina Walk Improvements. Together, these projects will transform two heavily traveled public corridors into vibrant, safe, and fully accessible

pedestrian spaces that anchor Downtown Somerville’s arts and cultural identity. The Division Street project will reconstruct and enhance the full length of Division Street between South Street and West Main Street, transforming a pass-through corridor connecting New Jersey Transit Train Station to West Main Street into an activated public plaza. Improvements include the installation of brick pavers, granite curbing, ADA-compliant curbing and a new pedestrian crosswalk at the West Main Street intersection. The Giardina Walk project will improve the existing pedestrian walkway between Union Street and West Main Street, a key connector between Municipal Parking Lot #4 and Main Street. The project incorporates new and existing assets, including an existing historic mural, existing shade trees, and existing light fixtures, minimizing waste and construction disruption.

14. Bernards Pleasant Valley Park Culvert and Paths. Included Amount: \$1,840,000. Justification: The funding would be used for the construction of a culvert at Pleasant Valley Park. Currently, hundreds of vehicles per day drive through the stream that intersects the park road, negatively impacting the water quality. The construction of a culvert would reduce water pollution, provide a safe crossing to the rear of the park, and allow the construction of new paths throughout the park. Additionally, the project greatly expands walking and exercise opportunities, especially for the veterans who live at Valley Brook Village, the HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing apartments on the Lyons VA campus next to the park.

15. Bridgewater Cold Food Storage & Food Locker Implementation Project. Included Amount: \$420,000. Justification: The funding would be used for a two-pronged project designed to increase food bank donation capacity and provide targeted intervention in low-access areas through the rental and maintenance of one cold storage unit and the purchase and maintenance of one food locker unit. Bridgewater Township will work alongside the Food Bank Network of Somerset County to carry out project activities. After the purchase, installation, testing, and training of staff is complete, the cold storage and food locker units will be utilized by the partner food pantries to better accept and distribute donations—specifically to low-access areas with

transportation barriers to food pantry access. The cold storage will open up a new intake avenue, as the units will provide the capacity required to accept bulk donations from local farms, pantries, and grocery retailers. This food will benefit thousands of food insecure individuals in Somerset County. This project is designed to support the efforts of vital non-profit organizations on the frontline in the fight against food insecurity and will result in the improved delivery of life-changing aid.

16. Warren County New Law Enforcement and Emergency Services Workforce Training Center. Included Amount: \$750,000. Justification: The funding would be used for the construction of a new Law Enforcement and Emergency Services Training Center to meet the ever increasing training demands upon Police, Fire and EMS service providers in Warren County. The lack of a suitable and centralized location for hosting the necessary classes places a hardship on planners and instructors, and attendees alike. Ultimately, this impacts the services received by the over 110,000 Warren County residents. The County’s Public Safety Campus in Franklin Township, New Jersey is

already an extremely active hub of training activities at its Fire Academy structures and specialized sites for controlled combustion activities. The County endeavors to expand its training offerings to include training resources specialized to the needs of law enforcement and emergency management personnel. A new facility will include both classroom space and training areas for multiple modes of training and hands-on activity and will integrate the office of the Fire Marshall into contemporary space designed to optimize their function.

17. Mount Olive Township Police Department Facility Expansion. Included Amount: \$750,000. Justification: The funding would be used for the construction, reconstruction, and renovation of the existing 3,460 square feet vacated by the Health Department to expand the current footprint of the police department. The project is needed to address the long-standing, critical infrastructure deficiency that hinders modern, efficient, and safe public safety operations. The current, undersized facility poses significant risks to operational capacity, limits the ability to implement updated technology and training, and restricts necessary

staffing levels needed to serve a growing population. This investment will directly enhance public safety, improve officer wellness, and provide essential, secure space for effective, community-oriented policing.

18. Watchung Valley Road Sidewalk Improvements . Included Amount: \$1,000,000. Justification: The funding would be used to reconstruct approximately 7,000 linear feet of sidewalk on Valley Road, between Knightsbridge and Bayberry Lane in Watchung. Valley Road is a major thoroughfare in Watchung, connecting many local landmarks such as Bayberry Elementary School and various residential streets to Watchung’s downtown business district, the Watchung Library, Watchung Arts Center, the Watchung Municipal Building, churches, local businesses, and parks. In 2019, a pedestrian, aged approximately 12 years old, was struck by a vehicle and was seriously injured while walking on Valley Road within the project limits. These existing conditions pose significant hazards for pedestrians and are in urgent need of reconstruction to improve pedestrian safety and ADA-accessibility within the Borough of Watchung.

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Mosquitoes – Always a Nuisance and Sometimes Dangerous Protect Yourself Against Mosquito-borne Diseases This Summer

As temperatures rise and mosquito activity increases across New Jersey, health and environmental officials from the New Jersey Departments of Health (NJDOH), Environmental Protection (NJDEP), and Agriculture (NJDA) are urging residents to take simple steps to protect themselves and their communities from mosquito bites.

“Protecting public health is a shared responsibility. The best defense against diseases transmitted by mosquitoes is to avoid being bitten in the first place and reducing breeding grounds,” said Dr. Raymond E. Washington, New Jersey Health Commis-

sioner.

The Departments offer the following tips and information for New Jerseyans to enjoy a healthier and safer summer.

- Prevent Mosquito Breeding and Avoid Bites: The best way to prevent illness is to take steps to avoid mosquito bites. That means taking precautions when you go outside and doing your part to get rid of standing water where mosquitoes breed.

TIP #1: Prevent bites

- Use U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents.
- Wear long sleeves and pants when outdoors.
- Stay in air-conditioned

places or screened areas whenever possible, especially during peak mosquito hours.

TIP #2: Eliminate standing water:

Dispose of items that can collect water, including unused containers and debris around your property.

Dump water weekly that accumulates in containers such as flowerpots, bird-baths, buckets, and pet dishes.

Drill drainage holes in the bottom and elevate outdoor recycling and trash containers.

Clean and repair gutters to prevent water buildup.

Keep ornamental ponds circulating or stocked with fish to prevent stag-



nant water.

TIP #3: Get help when you need it

If a mosquito problem remains after taking the above steps, call your county mosquito control agency for help with larval habitats best addressed by experts.

“It’s critical that everyone does their part to control nuisance mosquito populations by taking steps to prevent the pooling of water around their properties that can provide places for mosquitoes to breed,” said Environmental Protection Acting Commissioner Ed Potosnak. “These steps can go a long way toward reducing localized populations of mosquitoes and will help support the work of county mosquito control agencies and the state’s Mosquito Control Commission to protect the public from mosquito-borne diseases.”

Mosquito-borne diseases in NJ

While the most commonly reported mosquito-borne disease in New Jersey is West Nile virus (WNV), Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) and Jamestown Canyon virus are also causes for concern.

WNV activity started early this year and has been detected in mosquitoes in 12 counties so far this year. On average, there are 22 human cases of WNV reported each year in New Jersey.

TIP #4: Know the symptoms

Most infected people have no symptoms or a

mild flu-like illness that can include fever, headache, body aches, vomiting or diarrhea, and sometimes a rash. Most people with mild illness recover completely, but fatigue and weakness can last for weeks or months.

Some develop severe illness affecting the central nervous system or illness that results in hospitalization or death. Symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness, or paralysis.

Some effects may be permanent, and risk of severe illness increases with age, certain chronic medical conditions, and a weakened immune system.

Summer Travel Risks: Summer travel to regions where dengue and malaria are common can increase the risk of these illnesses being introduced into local communities. Infected travelers can unknowingly transmit these diseases to mosquitoes, which may then spread them to others through subsequent bites.

TIP #5: Know before you go

Review health advisories for your destination and consult your health care provider about recommended medications or preventive measures before departure.

Upon returning to New Jersey, prevent mosquito bites for at least three weeks to reduce the risk of disease transmission

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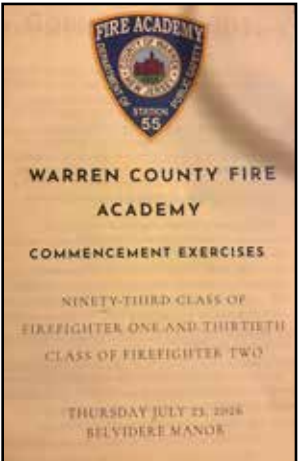
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Blairstown Hose Company #1 proudly attended the Warren County Fire Academy - NJ Commencement Exercises for the 93rd Firefighter I Class to celebrate our very own graduate, Firefighter Joe Marone! This milestone represents countless hours of classroom instruction, hands-on training, physical dedication, and an unwavering commitment to serving our community with professionalism, courage, and pride. Please join us in congratulating Firefighter Joe Marone on this outstanding achievement. We are incredibly proud of the hard work, determination, and perseverance he demonstrated throughout the academy. We look forward to watching him continue to grow as a firefighter and proudly serve the residents of Blairstown for many years to come. The graduation ceremony was attended by Chief Stuart Kise and Treasurer Doug Gelsleichter, who were honored to celebrate Joe's accomplishment alongside his family, friends, and fellow graduates. Blairstown Hose Co. #1 was also recognized for its donation of rescue stabilization equipment to the Warren County Fire Academy. We are proud to support the education and training of future firefighters and remain committed to strengthening the fire service throughout Warren County. Congratulations again, Firefighter Joe Marone! Your fire family is proud of you, and we can't wait to see all that you accomplish. Stay safe, and welcome to the next chapter of your firefighting journey! (Courtesy Blairstown Hose Company #1 Facebook)

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Steinhardt Statement On New Jersey Registering 6,600 Non-Citizens To Vote

The Governor’s admission that approximately 6,600 individuals who identified themselves as noncitizens were improperly registered to vote is a serious failure of New Jersey’s election safeguards.

“Regardless of whether the cause was software or human error, the State’s voter registration system failed. The public deserves to know whether the problem extends beyond the registrations already identified.

“I am calling on the Legislature to suspend no-excuse vote-by-mail until an independent forensic audit of New Jersey’s statewide voter rolls is completed and their accuracy is certified. During that time, voting should take place in person with government-issued identification, subject to accommodations required by federal law.

“This is not a partisan issue. Every eligible voter deserves confidence that their lawful vote counts equally.

“Election confidence cannot be demanded—it must be earned through transparency, accountability, and secure elections.”

The Children’s Home of Easton Announces Upcoming Retirement of Executive Director Anita Jo Paukovits

The Children’s Home of Easton announced that Executive Director Anita Jo Paukovits will retire at the end of this year, with her official retirement date set for Jan. 8, 2027, concluding an extraordinary 44-year career with the organization.

Paukovits joined The Children’s Home of Easton as a direct care staff member in 1982 and advanced through the organization over four decades, serving in a variety of leadership roles before being named Executive Director in 2015.

Throughout her career, Paukovits has played an instrumental role in the organization’s growth and evolution, helping expand its reach while remaining steadfast in its mission to serve children and families in need.

Since becoming Executive Director, she has led the organization with compassion, vision, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Under her leadership, The Children’s Home of Easton has strengthened its programs, expanded services, enhanced community partnerships, and increased its impact throughout the Lehigh Valley and beyond.

“It has been an incredible honor to serve The

Children’s Home of Easton for more than four decades,” said Paukovits. “I am deeply grateful to our dedicated staff, Board of Directors, donors, volunteers, and community partners whose commitment makes this important work possible every day. I have every confidence that the organization will continue to thrive and make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families for years to come.”

“The Board of Directors is deeply grateful for Anita’s extraordinary leadership and unwavering dedication to our mission,” said Arden Miller, Chair of the Board of Directors. “Her vision, compassion, and commitment have strengthened this organization in countless ways, leaving a lasting legacy that will benefit generations of children and families. While we will certainly miss her leadership, we are committed to ensuring a thoughtful transition and building upon the strong foundation she has established.”

The Board of Directors has initiated a comprehensive search for the organization’s next Executive Director. An announcement regarding Paukovits’ successor is expected later this year.

The Children’s Home of Easton remains committed to its mission of providing compassionate care and support to children and families. The organization is confident the leadership transition will be seamless and will position it for continued success in serving the community.

About The Children’s Home of Easton

The Children’s Home of Easton is dedicated to improving the lives of children and families through compassionate care, innovative programs, and community partnerships. For more information, visit www.thechildrenshome.org.

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St. Luke’s Penn Foundation Celebrates 5 Years of Growth, Integration and Expanded Access to Mental Health Care

This summer marks the fifth anniversary of Penn Foundation’s merger with St. Luke’s University Health Network, a partnership that has strengthened access to high-quality, integrated mental health services throughout eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Today, St. Luke’s Penn Foundation (SLPF) operates 35 inpatient and outpatient programs across more than 30 locations, making it the largest fully integrated network of mental health and addiction treatment services in the region. Through a compassionate, personalized and holistic approach, SLPF provides comprehensive care that addresses the mental, physical and emotional well-being of those it serves.

“Over the past five years,

we have expanded our reach, enhanced the quality of our services and strengthened our ability to meet the growing mental health needs of our communities,” said Wayne A. Mugrauer, who served as president of Penn Foundation before the merger and continues to lead St. Luke’s Penn Foundation today. “As part of the Network ranked #1 in the nation for quality, safety, and patient experience, we are able to provide fully integrated mental health and medical care that improves outcomes and enhances the lives of the people we serve.”

Mental health has long been a strategic priority for St. Luke’s, and it has consistently ranked as a top need in St. Luke’s Community Health Needs Assessment. In 2018, the

Network tripled the number of its mental health inpatient beds, becoming the region’s largest provider of inpatient mental health services. Later, St. Luke’s Sacred Heart in Allentown opened the Lehigh Valley’s first Level IV medical detoxification unit, providing 24-hour medical supervision for individuals withdrawing from alcohol and other substances.

Since joining St. Luke’s in 2021, St. Luke’s Penn Foundation has achieved a number of significant accomplishments, including: Expanded Mobile Engagement Services (MES) into Lehigh County and lower Bucks County, bringing addiction outreach, crisis intervention and care coordination to more individuals in need.

Launched Victory for Veterans, a special-

ized program providing trauma-informed mental health, substance use and social services support for veterans, first in Carbon County and later expanding into Schuylkill and Monroe counties.

Opened a Mental Health Walk-in Center in Lehigh-ton, providing immediate access to assessments, crisis support and connections to ongoing treatment.

Increased access to community-based care for children and adolescents through Your Emotional Strength Supported! (YESS!), a school-based counseling program.

Expanded Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services, including the opening of a new Bethlehem location to support continued growth and improve access for employers and employees.

Advanced the integration of mental health and primary care services through embedded clinicians and collaborative care models that provide coordinated treatment in a single care setting.

Secured a federally funded Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) grant, enhancing access to comprehensive services, strengthening care coordination and expanding community partnerships.

Opened a new outpatient office in Tamaqua, expanding access to high-quality mental health services in a rural community where access to care can be challenging. The office also leverages the expertise of St. Luke’s Rural Psychiatry residents, who provide counseling and other outpatient services while gaining valuable clinical experience.

Expanded the Adolescent Partial Hospitalization Program, broadening the age range served and increasing capacity to meet growing demand for intensive mental health treatment. The expansion enables more youth to receive structured, therapeutic support while remaining connected to their families, schools and communities.

Launched two new Graduate Medical Educa-

tion programs - Addiction Medicine and Addiction Psychiatry Fellowships - to help address workforce shortages and train the next generation of mental health specialists. These additions bring the total number of mental health-related training programs to four, joining Psychiatry and Rural Psychiatry.

Unified services under a single identity, St. Luke’s Penn Foundation Mental Health Services, and launched an integrated website, StLukesPennFoundation.org, to improve access to information and resources.

Transitioned to a single electronic health record system, creating one comprehensive medical record that integrates physical and mental health information and supports more coordinated care.

“The last five years have been transformative,” Mugrauer said. “Through new programs, expanded locations, integrated care models and strategic investments in access, we’ve been able to reach more individuals and families than ever before. From veterans and youth to people facing addiction, mental illness or a mental health crisis, our focus remains on ensuring that high-quality care is available whenever and wherever it is needed.”

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