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North Warren Battles Belvidere During Their Senior Night Boys Basketball Game



North Warren took on Belvidere High School for their Senior Night Boys Basketball on February 12th. North Warren was defeated, 32 to 49. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Blairstown, NJ, Celebrates Their "Favorite Holiday" Friday The 13th, As Always It's a KILLER Good Time



Another Friday the 13th has rolled around, and the people of Blairstown, NJ, know how to celebrate. Jason and his friends of all sizes come out to celebrate in good spooky fashion. Did you miss Friday the 13th in February? Have No Fear! Blairstown will be back at it in March! Be sure to stop by for your photo with Jason. Photo by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press

Three North Warren Regional High School Students Showcase Their Musical Talent At Hunter's Lodge Motel and Restaurant



Ava, Mia, and Kate are three North Warren Regional High School students who happen to also be very talented musicians. The trio put on an exceptional Dinner Show at Hunter's Lodge Motel and Restaurant, located at 64 Rt 46, in Columbia, NJ, on February 15th. The show was a wonderful way to close Valentine's Day Weekend. Be sure to keep an eye out for their next musical appearance, you won't be disappointed. Photo by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press

Brown, Secretary Carroll Announces Route 33 Safety Improvements

I am excited to announce that our community will see a major safety upgrade along Route 33 in Monroe County. I truly grateful to work alongside the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Secretary Mike Carroll and Eileen Miller to announce this major improvement in our region.

This \$13.2 million investment will extend the concrete median from Lower Cherry Valley Road to the Sciota Interchange, strengthening safety along this heavily traveled corridor. This project continues the work I have undertaken alongside Eileen Miller, who tragically lost her son, Paul Miller Jr., when a distracted tractor-trailer driver crossed the median on Route 33



and struck his vehicle. Extending the concrete barrier is a critical step toward preventing similar tragedies and protect-

ing families in our community.

This project is expected to go out for bid in Fall of 2026.

NORTH WARREN (40) VS KITTATINNY (30) SENIOR NIGHT GIRLS BASKETBALL



Karina Conei with her mother, Vera



Brooke Salmon with her parents, Dawn and Matt



Hannah Allen with her mother, Kelly, brother, Sean, and grandparents, Tom and Debbie



Selah Carper with her parents, Glendon and Kattie



Jane Cook with her parents, Jeremy and Kristy, and siblings, Channing and Carson



Jocelyn Considine with her parents, Tim and Amanda, and siblings, Dylan and Raelyn

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NORTH WARREN (40) VS KITTATINNY (30) SENIOR NIGHT GIRLS BASKETBALL



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Photos by Dale Young/
The Free Weekly Press

New to the Blue Mountain Community Library

Located at 216 S. Robinson Ave. in Pen Argyl, open Mon.-Sat. 10am-12pm and Mon. and Thurs. 6pm-8pm. A library card is free for residents of Pen Argyl, Plainfield Township, and Wind Gap. Call 610-863-3029 with any questions.

New for February:

Magazine swap: Take a magazine, leave a magazine! (Recent magazines, please). **No checkout required.** **Craft supply swap:** Started a craft and have leftovers? Bring in your extra or unwanted craft supplies, and take whatever you can use. **Children's room scavenger hunt:** Children are invited to look for pictures hidden throughout the children's room and then turn in their paper for a small prize from the prize basket! (Donations of stickers, wrapped non-peanut candy, and small toys for the basket are gladly accepted).

The book discussion group will discuss *The Note* by Alafair Burke on Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 6:30pm. Email info@bmcl.org to reserve a spot. Adults are invited to a "Love Libraries" trivia challenge on Thursday, Feb. 12 at 6:30pm, to test their knowledge of libraries in general and the BMCL in particular! A small prize will be awarded to the winner. Space is limited; registration is required. Email info@bmcl.org to register.

New to the circulating collection:

Adult fiction:

Exiles (Mason Coile); *My Husband's Wife* (Alice Feeney); *Goodnight from Paris* (Jane Healey); *Some Bright Nowhere* (Ann Packer); *Night Watcher* (Daphne Woolsoncroft); *The Seven Rings* (Nora Roberts)

Adult nonfiction:

Worthy of Your Comeback (Amanda Butler); *A Marriage at Sea* (Sophie Elmhirst); *The Carpool Detectives* (Chuck Hogan); *Everything to God in Prayer* (David Jeremiah)

Large print fiction:

The Star and the Shamrock (Jean Grainger); *Cookie Crumble and Murder* (K.E. O'Connor); *High Tea at the Beach House Hotel* (Judith Keim)

Juvenile fiction:

Lucy Goes Green (Danielle Passaglia)

Juvenile nonfiction:

Punctuation (Mary Budzik)

New to the Bangor Public Library

Adult Fiction:

The Vanishing Cherry Blossom Bookshop by Takuya Asakura; *Scavengers: A novel* by Kathleen Boland; *All the Little Houses* by May Cobb; *The Exes: A Novel* by Leodora Darlington; *Jigsaw* by Jonathan Kellerman; *When There are No More Stars Left to Count* by Maria Martinez; *Want to Know a Secret?* By Freida McFadden; *The Gift* by Freida McFadden; *A Heart of Crimson Flames* by A. K. Mulford; *Wolf Hour: A Novel* by Jo Nesbo; *Hollow* by Caroline Peckham; *Bury Your Dead* by Louise Penny; *Impostor* by L. J. Ross; *Good People: A Novel* by Patmeena Sabit; *Such a Perfect Family* by Nalini Singh; *The Final Score: Six Short Novels* by Don Winslow

Adult Non Fiction:

Reacher: The Stories Behind the Stories by Lee Child; *The Cancer Diet Cookbook: Comforting Recipes for Treatment and Recovery* by Dionne Detraz; *Carole King: She Made the Earth Move* by Jane Eisner; *Where We Keep the Light: Stories from a life of Service* by Josh Shapiro; *Well Endowed: The Secrets to Strategic Spending, Building a Financial Foundation for You and Your Family, and Creating Last Generational Wealth* by Vivian Tu

Large Print Adult Fiction:

My Husband's Wife: A Novel by Alice Feeney; *Woman Down: A Novel* Colleen Hoover; *The Friend of the Family* by Dean R. Koontz; *Dear Debbie* by Freida McFadden; *Stolen in Death* by J. D. Robb

Easy Fiction:

Every Monday Mabel by Jasher Awan; *The Invisible Parade* by Leigh Bardugo; *Stalactite & Stalagmite: A Big Tale from a Little Cave* by Drew Beckmeyer; *There was an Old Lady who Swallowed a Truck!* By Lucille Colandro; *Penguin Problems* by Jory John; *Crazy Like a Fox: A Simile Story* by Loreen Leedy; *I Hear the Snow, I Smell the Sea* by Janice Milusich; *Shabbat Shalom: Let's Rest and Reset* by Suzy Ultman

Easy Non Fiction:

The Story Orchestra: Four Seasons in One Day by Katie Cotton; *The Story Orchestra: Carnival of the Animals* by Jessica Courtney-Tickle; *The Story Orchestra: I Can Play Swan Lake* by Jessica Courtney-Tickle; *Rain, Rain, Rain Forest* by Brenda Z Guiberson; *Ocean Speaks: How Marie Tharp Revealed the Ocean's Biggest Secret* by Jess Keating; *The Girl Who Built an Ocean: An Artist, an Argonaut, and the True Story of the World's First Aquarium* by Jess Keating; *Venus! Fierce and Fabulous* by Stacy McAnulty; *Flip, Float, Fly: Seeds on the Move* by JoAnn Early Macken; *Listen to the Music: A World of Magical Melodies* by Mary Richards

Easy Reader Fiction:

Fly Guy Presents: Firefighters by Tedd Arnold

Junior Fiction:

Wrong Friend by Charise Mericle Harper; *The Lions' Run* by Sara Pennypacker

Junior Non Fiction:

Legendary Creatures: Unleash the Beasts! By Mary Frances Budzik

Young Adult Fiction: *A Stage Set for Villains* by Shannon J. Spann; *My Life as an internet Volet: Volume 2* by A Hyeon

Young Adult Non Fiction:

Insectopolis: A Natural History by Peter Kuper

DVDs:

Any Human Heart

Northampton County Announces New Communications Manager

Northampton County Executive Tara Zrinski announces the hiring of Kelly Prentice as Communications Manager. Effective immediately, all media inquiries for Northampton County should be directed to Prentice.

This role is part of the Executive's administrative transition, reinforcing her commitment to transparency and clear, consistent communication. Key responsibilities of this role include developing and implementing clear, accurate communication strategies, serving as the primary contact for media, and acting as a liaison between the county and the public. The manager will also help to foster internal communications among County departments and stakeholders.

As part of this transition, the Deputy Director of Administration Jessica Berger will shift into a role primarily focused on serving as Deputy to the County Administrator.

Prentice holds a degree in English and communications from DeSales University, with a specialty in science and technical writing. A communications and public relations professional from Easton, she brings more than 23 years of experience in strategic planning, media relations, and content marketing.

Her professional background includes work in both corporate and nonprofit organizations across the Lehigh Valley and beyond, with experience with organizations such as Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, Lafayette College, and the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor.

Media inquiries should now be directed to: Kelly Prentice, Communications Manager, KPrentice@norcopa.gov, Office: 610-829-6302, Cell: 484-626-2580

Resident at Gracedale Celebrates 60+ Years of Marriage With a Special Valentine's Luncheon

This Valentine's week was special for residents and visitors at Gracedale Nursing Home. On Wednesday, a love-themed luncheon was held for resident couples, their spouses, and partners, where the Gracedale Life Enrichment team captured photos. The menu included a choice between creamy parmesan chicken picatta and pan-seared Atlantic salmon, with triple chocolate cheesecake for dessert.

Dorothy Silfies and her husband Ray Silfies were one of the couples in attendance. Dorothy and Ray met when they were just 9 or 10 years old and grew up in Bath just blocks away from each other. They were friends in school and started dating when they were 16.

"We went to prom together and graduated together," said Ray Silfies. The couple was married on October 17, 1964, and bought a home in Nazareth where they raised three children. With Ray working long hours



to make ends meet, he wasn't home often, and says, "I give her all the credit for raising them." Dorothy worked first as a secretary, and later as a daycare provider, which she says was the joy of her life.

The decision to have

Dorothy move to Gracedale was a difficult one for Ray. He is usually at Gracedale visiting her for 4 to 5 hours each day. Events like the luncheon help the couple reconnect and enjoy those special moments, such as Valentine's Day.

"You'd have to go to a restaurant to get food like that," Ray said. "The plating on the meal and the dessert was 5-star."

In addition to the luncheon, the Friends of Gracedale nonprofit held a bake sale and basket raffle. All proceeds from their sale go back to the residents and activities held for residents throughout the year, including the in-house beauty parlor and barbershop.

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Friday the 13th in Blainstown, NJ

Photos by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press





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Peterson Blasts New Jersey Democrats for Reviving Immigrant Bills After Murphy Rejected Them

Assemblyman Erik Peterson sharply criticized Assembly Democrats for advancing legislation nearly identical to two sweeping immigrant-rights bills that were pocket vetoed just three weeks ago by former Gov. Phil Murphy.

The Assembly Public Safety and Preparedness Committee is scheduled to move the measures again Thursday, despite Murphy's warning that the bills risked conflicts with federal law and potential court challenges.

"Let's call this what it is — Democrats are protecting criminals," Peterson said. "We have immigration laws in this country. When you break them, there are consequences. Criminals should be afraid of law enforcement. Instead, this majority wants to tie the



hands of our police and shield people who are here illegally from federal authorities."

Murphy rejected one bill over what he called a "drafting oversight" that would have placed the legislation in conflict

with federal law. He also refused to sign legislation codifying the 2018 Immigrant Trust Directive, arguing the bill differed from his directive and could expose the state to renewed judicial scrutiny. Gov. Mikie Sherrill has

expressed similar concerns, saying she would not support measures that undermine the state's ability to defend its policies in court.

Peterson said reviving the bills now ignores those warnings.

"There are families in New Jersey who have done everything right and are struggling," said Peterson (R-Hunterdon). "They deserve a Legislature focused on them, not one that keeps doubling down on policies even their own governor refused to sign. It's time to stop protecting criminals and start protecting taxpayers."

Peterson also pointed to what he described as the financial strain on taxpayers.

"Seven billion dollars — that's the estimated burden illegal immigration places on our state," Peterson said. "Think about what that money could do for veterans battling PTSD, seniors on fixed incomes, or school districts like Toms River and Lacey that have been hammered by funding cuts. Instead, Democrats want to spend it protecting criminals."

State Police Investigate Bitcoin Fraud in Northampton County, PA

The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) Troop M — Bethlehem and the Northampton County Sheriff's Department are urging residents not to fall victim to Bitcoin scams involving warrant payments, and to hang up the phone immediately if they suspect the call is a scam.

Residents are receiving phone calls from unknown callers indicating they are "Northampton County Sheriff's" and there is a warrant for their arrest for failing to report for jury duty. Callers advise the victim's payment via Bitcoin is needed for the warrants to be voided. Callers often tell victims that they have to stay on the phone for long periods of time.

Recent fraudulent incidents include:

- December 20, 2025: Victim received phone call from a scammer indicating they were a Northampton County Sheriff and had (2) warrants for her arrest for failing to report for jury duty. Victim made (3) Bitcoin transactions which totaled \$10,000.
- February 9, 2026: Victim received a phone call from a scammer indicating they were a Northampton County

Sheriff and indicated there was a warrant for her arrest and she needed to make payments via Bitcoin. The victim deposited \$4,000 in Bitcoin transactions prior to Troopers making a traffic stop indicting it was a scam.

- February 11, 2026: Victim received a phone call from a scammer indicating they were a Northampton County Sheriff and had (2) warrants for her arrest and needed to make payment via Bitcoin. The victim made (2) transactions totaling \$16,500 before realizing it was a scam.

State Police and the Northampton County Sheriff's Office are urging residents if they receive a phone call indicating payment is needed to law enforcement, to hang up immediately. Law Enforcement never asks for payment over the phone and do not accept alternate payment methods such as Bitcoin.

For more information on the Pennsylvania State Police, visit www.psp.pa.gov.

For more information on the Northampton County Sheriff's Department, visit www.norco-pa.gov/sheriffs-department.

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Letter To The Editor: Summary of the February 9, 2026, Knowlton Township Committee Meeting

Finding Places for Helicopters to Land

The head of the Department of Public Works stated that Knowlton currently does not have a suitable area for landing medical helicopters, which require a 100' by 100' snow-free patch to land. The Department discussed clearing snow from a field owned by Gary Gray Trucking that will meet this need. The absence of a landing area does not affect landings needed for accidents on Route 80 because traffic is stopped in an emergency so landings can take place on the highway.

(Editor's note: Tuesday morning the DPW was plowing snow for a landing patch in one of the ball fields at Tunnel Field.)

Ambulance Service in Knowlton:

It was reported that a contract with Atlantic Health for ambulance service for the Township still has not yet been signed. However, the Township has full coverage through a temporary agreement until a contact is executed.

Possible Minor Zoning Changes

Zoning code official, George Boesze, came before the Committee to suggest a number of minor changes in the Township ordinances. He recommended adopting an ordinance saying that any use not specifically listed as a permitted or conditional use is prohibited. This is the law now. However, summons forms require the specific ordinance violated to be cited, and leaving that section blank can create confusion and complicate the enforcement process.

Mr. Boesze also suggested amending an existing ordinance that allows enlargement of non-conforming residential structures if the enlargement will not increase the non-conforming condition or will not create another non-conforming condition. Mr. Boesze suggested amending the ordinance to allow accessory structures the same option.

The Township Committee viewed Mr. Boesze's suggestions favorably and asked the Township attorney to prepare ordinances incorporating them.

Simpson Road Issues

Resident Tara Mezzanotte, speaking as the liaison to the Township Committee on issues involving Route 80, described a situation that she viewed as dangerous on Simpson Road near the Knowlton Travel Plaza (which houses the Chick-fil-A and Starbucks). Over the years, Ms. Mezzanotte has noticed trucks occasionally parked on the shoulder on one side of Simpson Road. Recently however, this practice has escalated so that trucks are parked on both sides of the road, creating a narrow passage for vehicles being driven on Simpson Road.

Committeewoman Starrs offered to draft a resolution documenting the escalating safety concerns and requesting assistance from the County. Simpson Road is a county road.

Brake Retarders

Recently a resident contacted the New Jersey Department of Transportation to complain about the noise that occurs when trucks use their brake retarders. The NJDOT suggested the resident contact the Township. Ms. Mezzanotte looked into the matter and found that the NJDOT seems to have no consistent policy on the use of brake retarders and their impact on residents' quality of life. Ms. Mezzanotte found documentation that might support an ordinance to regulate brake retarders. The Township Committee asked that this information be sent to the Township attorney for her opinion.

Lots of Salt

In reviewing the Township bills to be paid, Committeewoman Starrs noted that Knowlton recently spent nearly \$54,000 on salt. It was noted that consecutive winter storms have reduced salt inventories with suppliers, but that the County will assist Townships that run out.

GPS for Township Trucks

It was announced that the Township had received a grant from the Township's insurance carrier for equipping DPW trucks with GPS that will track the trucks' locations. The insurance company has an interest in this technology in order to thwart people who

claim their vehicles were hit by a DPW truck and threaten to sue. Knowing where the truck is at all times renders this kind of fraudulent behavior ineffective.

Revised Job Description for the Recreation Director

Committeewoman Starrs discussed the revised job description for the job of Recreation Director with Dennis Lembeck, who has long held a similar position in Knowlton. In an effort to increase the events offered by the Township, the Committee has decided to reorganize how the recreation functions of the Township are organized. Ms. Starrs discussed the new job with Mr. Lembeck to see if he was interested in accepting it. The position previously included responsibility for all maintenance at the field, but those duties were transferred to the Department of Public Works last year. With those physical maintenance responsibilities now assigned to the DPW, this role will focus more fully on coordinating and executing activities and communication with organizations. The responsibilities of the revised position include:

- Working events put on in conjunction with the Lions Club
- Organizing four more events each year, specifically two for children and two for adults, and creating publicity for them
- Acting as a liaison between recreation groups and the Township Committee
- Submitting monthly reports on activities at the recreation site
- Overseeing the concession stand

Short-Term Rentals in Knowlton Township

By a vote of 3 to 1, with Committeeman Mazza

voting no, The Township Committee introduced an ordinance regulating short-term rentals (STR). The ordinance requires potential hosts to obtain a permit to participate and provides for enforcement mechanisms, such as the loss of their permit if the STR causes a nuisance. The ordinance also requires hosts to list with one of the STR platforms, such as Airbnb, that provide deterrents to their hosts whose STRs cause a nuisance. There was discussion as to whether the Township could collect a 3% hotel occupancy tax that Townships can impose in New Jersey. The Township attorney indicated that STRs do not qualify for the occupancy tax, but if the tax assessor determined that STRs are commercial operations, their tax rate could increase.

Return to Regular Business Hours

The Committee discussed returning the Knowlton Municipal Building to fully open status during normal business hours, rather than operating some days by appointment only. Committeeman Mazza noted that the appointment-only arrangement had been implemented on a temporary basis due to an employee's medical leave. The Committee agreed to reinstate regular hours of operation when the building is open to the public: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and thanked the staff for their support.

- Rene Mathez

Please note the summaries are intended only to inform residents of issues that might be of interest to them. The summaries are not the official minutes and have not been approved by the Township Committee. They reflect the views of the author only.

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NORTH WARREN (32) VS BELVIDERE (49) SENIOR NIGHT BOYS BASKETBALL



Tayech Yawger with her father, David



Cassidy Petty with her parents, Brad and Becky



Wilman Doigene with his parents, Wilman and Marizice and sisters, Melissa and Esther



Josiah Hanisak with his parents, Jason and Jaehnel and brother, Kolton and Jaylen



Sebastian Murphy with his parents, David and Desiree and his brother, Gabriel



Ethan Shramko with his mom, Brenda her partner, TJ, and his father, Eric and his stepmom, Sylvie

Photos on page 8 & 9 were taken by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press



Patrick Maertens with his parents, Dietrich and Nanette, and his brother, Alexander



Calvin Otufale with his mother, Joan, his sister, Crystal, brother, Christian, and his nephew, Micah

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NORTH WARREN (32) VS BELVIDERE (49) SENIOR NIGHT BOYS BASKETBALL



Colin Walsh with his parents, Andrea and Brian and his siblings, Owen and Katie



Brody Mantz with his father, Tim



Sammy Gonzalez with his good friend, Owen McLaughlin



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Hello fellow readers,
After last week’s discussion, many readers shared how comforting it felt to see shadows not as darkness, but as outlines of something still present, still loved. This week, my thoughts turned to reflections—the companions of shadows in nature, gardens, and life.
Shadows form when light is blocked, stretching away from their source. Reflections occur when light returns from a surface, such as water, glass, or a mirror, echoing the colors and shapes of what stands before it.
Soon after Jolee arrived, she paused at the storm door, gazing at her reflection in quiet wonder. Dogs may not recognize themselves visually; they rely instead on scent and sound. Yet some an-

imals—chimpanzees, dolphins, elephants, and others—do show visual self-recognition through what scientists call the mirror test, a reminder that awareness takes many forms.
I came across a video titled “Casting Shadow,” by artist Ellen Ebert. She explains the difference between shadows and reflections in paintings and helps us understand our enjoyment of them in nature and gardens. What fascinated me most was the influence of light on shadow color.
Outdoor shadows often appear bluish or violet because blue skies spread cool light into shaded places. By comparison, the area outside the shade lacks a purplish tint because the sun’s more dominant yellow color casts a stronger hue. And shadows fade farther from the subject than in the shade. So, shadows aren’t merely darkness; they hold subtle color.
Simply put, shadows mark the absence of light, while reflections return it.
Indeed, in gardens and nature, reflections and shadows work together. A calm pond surface mirrors the sky while nearby branches cast soft darkness across the water—light and shade living



together, each revealing something the other cannot.
Mirrors in the garden brighten shaded corners and expand small spaces. Polished stone and metal catch glimmers of light, and even gazing spheres offer tiny, reflected worlds.
Placement in the garden is important. Be sure to place mirrors in areas to prevent glare or fire risk, and keep them clear of bird flight paths.
I like to soften them with vines, so they feel part of the living garden.
Perhaps, our inner lives work like shadows and reflections, too. We carry places of brightness and happiness in our lives that we reflect to others. Then there are quieter areas of challenge or sadness that often stay hidden, like the shaded side of a garden path, not wrong or unsightly, just unseen.
For a long time, I



thought healing meant bringing hidden feelings to the surface, but gardens have taught me otherwise. Some seeds only germinate in darkness. Roots do their important work underground. Tender plants need dappled shade before they can endure full sun.
Painful patterns, sometimes called self-sabotage, may begin as protection shaped by childhood family dynamics. In garden language, it’s a plant shaped by difficult weather—leaning toward scarce light, holding tight to little water, growing small to stay safe. Those responses were wisdom, not failures. They were how the plant survived. Same with us.
When richer soil and steadier light appear, old patterns may linger in the roots—not because the plant is broken, but because it remembers. Awareness of our old patterns becomes a gentle gardener loosening soil, offering water, and waiting with kindness. Then something softens. New shoots feel safe to reach toward the light. Blossoms appear not because we forced them, but because the garden is ready.
Perhaps this is the truest form of reflection, beyond the image in water or glass, but the moment we see ourselves with compassion and choose to grow in a kinder light, just as winter slowly turns towards the promise of spring. Beneath stillness and the light lengthening a bit each day that we barely notice, something is already preparing to bloom.
Garden Dilemmas? AskMaryStone.com or tune in on your favorite Podcast App.



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Boscola Announces Over \$500,000 In State Funding For Fire Departments and EMS Providers

State Senator Lisa M. Boscola announced today that thirty-four grants were approved for fire departments and emergency medical services (EMS) providers in the 18th Senatorial District totaling \$513,963.89 through the 2025-26 Fire Company and Emergency Medical Services (FCEMS) Grant Program, which is administered by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner (OSFC). “The Fire Company and Emergency Medical Services Grant Program continues to provide critical financial assistance to the most vital organizations in our local communities: our fire and emergency medical services providers,” Boscola said. “Our fire departments and EMS provide essential services throughout our local communities that

protect our citizens in their time of need.” In accordance with program guidelines for 2025-26 program, eligible projects for funding include facility construction or renovation, equipment, debt reduction, training, education, recruitment and retention, construction savings account (fire companies only), and overtime costs associated with backfilling positions while firefighters are attending training (career departments only). Grants approved in Senator Boscola’s District are as follows: City of Bethlehem – Fire - \$16,136.55 City of Bethlehem – EMS - \$14,975 Blue Valley Rescue Squad - \$12,014.25 City of Easton Fire Department - \$16,136.55 Columbia Fire Compa-

ny - \$12,014.25 Community Fire Company of Forks Township - \$14,693.75 Dewey Fire Company No 1 – Fire - \$15,518.21 Dewey Fire Company No 1 – EMS - \$15,000 East Bangor Volunteer Fire Co - \$12,220.36 Easton Emergency Squad - \$15,000 Hecktown Volunteer Fire Company No 1 - \$16,136.55 Liberty Fire CPNY - \$12,014.25 Lookout Fire Company No 1 - \$12,014.25 Lower Mount Bethel/Sandts Eddy Fire Co - \$12,838.71 Lower Saucon Fire Rescue - \$40,136.55 Mount Bethel Vol Fire Company, Inc - \$13,457.05 Nancy Run Fire Company of Butztown - \$14,899.86 Nazareth Ambulance Corps Inc - \$15,000

North Bangor Fire Company - \$12,426.48 Palmer Municipal Fire Department - \$16,136.55 Plainfield Township Volunteer Fire Co - \$16,136.55 Portland Hook & Ladder Co #1 - \$12,014.25 Rescue Fire Company #1 - \$12,632.59 Second Ward Fire Company - \$12,426.48 Suburban EMS Inc. - \$30,000 Tatamy Fire Company - \$12,426.48 Upper Nazareth Fire Department - \$14,899.86 Vigilance Hose Company No 1 - \$16,136.55 Washington Township Volunteer Fire Company - \$14,075.40 West Easton Volunteer Fire Company No 1 - \$13,044.82 Williams Township Fire Company #1 - \$13,869.28



Wilson Borough Fire Department - \$15,105.98 Wind Gap Ambulance Corps Inc - \$10,000 Wind Gap Fire Company - \$12,426.48 Companies have until May 31, 2026, to submit their 2025-26 FCEMS Grant Agreements. All final reports (including all support-

ing documents) must be submitted electronically via grant application by September 1, 2026. More information on the Fire Company and Emergency Medical Services Grants program can be found online at <https://www.osfc.pa.gov/> or by contacting Senator Boscola’s office at (610) 868-8667.

St. Luke’s Expands Enterprise Image Management with State-of-the-Art Technology from Sectra

St. Luke’s University Health Network has implemented a next-generation enterprise imaging solution that dramatically enhances how medical images are stored, accessed and shared across the Network. The system, provided by Sectra – a global leader in PACS (picture archiving and communication system) and medical imaging technology – delivers a unified, highly secure archive capable of managing imaging across multiple specialties and care pathways. With this deployment, St. Luke’s now has a single, powerful platform that seamlessly integrates multiple modalities and imaging types, including radiology, cardiology, ophthalmology and more. All images flow into one compre-

hensive storage environment, enabling caregivers to retrieve studies instantly, regardless of the campus or department where they were created. This centralized design not only streamlines clinical workflows but also ensures that physicians and other authorized providers have rapid, on-the-fly access to the information they need to diagnose, treat and monitor patients with unprecedented efficiency. “This enterprise imaging solution is another example of St. Luke’s strategic investment in cutting-edge technology that elevates patient care and supports our mission to remain one of the nation’s top health systems,” said Dr. Robert Fournier, St. Luke’s

Chairman of Radiology. “A single, secure archive for all imaging across the Network enhances collaboration, strengthens clinical decision-making and ultimately benefits every patient we serve.” Sectra’s advanced cloud-based technology incorporates industry-leading cybersecurity protections, including proprietary encryption, while still allowing end-users to access the full imaging suite through a standard web browser. The result is a highly resilient, scalable and user-friendly imaging ecosystem. “For years, Sectra has been advancing a vision for enterprise imaging and integrated diagnostics, one that strengthens collaboration, improves access to information

and ultimately supports better patient care,” said Isaac Zaworski, U.S. president for Sectra. “St. Luke’s is leaning into this vision and setting an example for others through their commitment to innovation. We couldn’t be prouder to have them as a partner.” St. Luke’s was recognized in 2025 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the #1 health system in the nation for quality, safety and patient experience, affirming the Network’s leadership in delivering exceptional care supported by innovative technology.

“Clinical images are essential parts of a patient’s health story. Sectra ensures those stories are complete, connected and accessible,” said Dr. Christine Ramirez, Associate Chief Medical Information Officer.

“Unifying every imaging modality, workflow and clinician on one enterprise imaging platform advances St. Luke’s mission by empowering clinicians, improving outcomes and elevating patient care.”

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Call for Nominations: Outstanding Seniors Awards 2026

The Advisory Council of the Northampton County Area Agency on Aging is pleased to announce that applications are now open for the Outstanding Seniors Awards 2026. Held in April—National Volunteer Month—this annual event aims to recognize County residents aged 60 and over who have made significant contributions to the community through outreach, personal action, inspiration, public service, sports/educational efforts, and civic humanitarian endeavors.

The agency is seeking nominations for senior citizens whose passion for helping others is evident through their actions and the inspiration they provide. You are encouraged to nominate individuals who have overcome personal challenges to meet the needs of others, as well as those involved in inter-generational efforts and community betterment.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Nominees must be residents of Northampton County
- Nominees must be aged 60 or over

Nomination Process:

To submit a nomination, please complete the Nomination Form on the Agency on Aging website and attach an essay of 250 words or less, describing why the individual deserves to be recognized. The form can be found at: <https://norcopa.gov/area-agency-on-aging>. You can also request the form by calling 610-829-4509 or emailing mtitus@norcopa.gov.

All nominations must be received by February 27, 2026.

The selected individuals will be honored at the Outstanding Senior Awards Ceremony on Thursday, April 23 at the Charles Chrin Community Center, 4100 Green Pond Road, Palmer Township.

New Freshwater Fishing Regulations for New Jersey Effective February 17th



It is anticipated that the 2026 Freshwater Fishing Regulations will go into effect on February 17. The new rules are designed to provide more angling opportunities and to simplify the regulations, all while providing adequate protection of our precious fisheries resources.

The most substantial change is that the traditional preseason closure will be lifted on all lakes and ponds. This change will result in the following benefits:

- An additional 19 days of fishing per year on all trout stocked lakes and ponds.
- Anglers will be able to keep up to 2 trout per day during this time, rather than be outcompeted by predatory birds such as cormorants for up to 3 weeks.
- Warmwater anglers will benefit as well, as they will be able to fish for bass, crappie, and everything else during this time.

For those of you that like the traditional preseason closure, it will remain in effect on all rivers and streams.

Other Trout related changes include:

- Opening Day is now established as the second Saturday in April.
- 23 new small ponds, primarily in highly populated areas, will be stocked with trout. Small ponds are a family friendly way to introduce children to fishing and catch rates are typically high.
- The daily creel limit of 6 trout per day will remain in effect from Opening Day thru May 31, however the limit for the rest of the year will be reduced from 4 to 2. This reduction should make more trout available to anglers for a longer period of time, especially the 14 to 16 inch trout stocked in the fall.
- Greater protection will be provided to wild Brown Trout residing in the Pequannock River, as the minimum length will be increased from 9 to 12 inches and only 2 may be taken per day rather than 6.

That's not all:

- Lake Trout regulations have been changed to allow for more harvest, which should help to preserve trophy fisheries at Round Valley and Merrill Creek Reservoirs. There is also no closed season.
- Round Valley and Merrill Creek Reservoirs are now managed under Lunker Bass regulation set.
- Ryker Lake and Rainbow Lake are now managed under the general statewide regulations.
- 11 native fish species have been added to the Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern list.

Please see the Freshwater Fishing Digest – 2026 Complete for these and other regulation changes.

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Habitat For Humanity Northwest New Jersey Calls On New Jersey Congressional Members To Take Action To Increase The Stock Of Affordable Starter Homes In The U.S.

[Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey] will join hundreds of local Habitat organizations and affordable housing advocates on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. to amplify the growing demand that Congress take action to expand the supply of affordable starter homes to address the national housing crisis. During Habitat on the Hill, the three-day, D.C. based event, advocates from 48 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico will travel to meet with Congressional leaders. Affordability remains a top issue facing Americans, and rural, urban, and suburban communities nationwide are experiencing this historic loss of affordable homeownership opportunities, which is driving the overall crisis. The shortage of starter homes impedes workers’ access to job markets with economic opportunities, holds back local economies, exacerbates the wealth gap, and keeps millions of would-be homebuyers in the rental market. But there is hope. For the first time in recent decades, there is growing momentum in Congress to tackle the issue. Both the House and Senate have taken important steps in advancing bipartisan housing legislation – the Senate through the ROAD to Housing Act (S. 2651) and the House through the Housing for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 6644). Congress must keep this momentum going, work to combine these two packages, and pass a bipartisan housing package as soon as possible that will take meaningful action to help address our nation’s housing crisis and increase supply. [Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey] will meet with [Cory Booker and Andy Kim] to urge their support. Ben Eskow, Executive Director, “We know that solving the housing crisis requires meaningfully increasing the supply of affordable starter homes,” said Ben Eskow, Executive Director. “We need bold policy action, and we’re committed to partnering with lawmakers who share our desire for every family to have access to a safe, decent, and affordable place to call home.” In addition to the legislative priorities above, advocates will urge representatives to:

- Fund the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP) at no less than \$20 million in the Transportation-HUD appropriations bill.
- Fund the Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) at no less than \$1.5 billion in the Transportation-HUD appropriations bill.
- Fund the USDA Section 502 Direct Loan Program at no less than \$1.25 billion in the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration appropriations bill.

This year, advocates will also call on elected officials to act and champion Habitat’s legislative priority, the Homeownership Supply Accelerator, a plan designed to rapidly increase the construction of affordable homes in the United States. The Homeownership Supply Accelerator aims to create a source of flexible financial assistance that supports property acquisition, new home construction and rehabilitation, and other financial barriers faced by for-profit and non-profit developers serving modest-income homebuyers. This milestone year marks the 20th Habitat on the Hill, coinciding with Habitat for Humanity’s 50th anniversary. Over the last five decades, Habitat has helped more than 65 million people build or improve the place they call home. Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey is a recently merged affiliate of Habitat for Humanity, International, combining the efforts of the Warren and Sussex County Habitat for Humanity affiliates. Having merged officially in 2025, they have served Sussex County since 1993 and Warren County since 1999. An accredited 501 (c) (3) charitable organization, Habitat’s mission is: Seeking to put God’s love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope. You can learn more about Habitat NWNJ at habitatnwnj.org. #911#Habitat#HabitatforHumanityNWNJ





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Innovative Program Saves Diabetics' Eyesight

For people living with diabetes, the biggest threat to their eyesight often arrives with no symptoms. Diabetic retinopathy, the leading cause of blindness in adults with diabetes, is both silent and largely preventable. A simple, five-minute eye scan can identify concerns long before you notice changes in your vision.

Star Community Health, affiliated with St. Luke's University Health Network, is recognized as one of Pennsylvania's top performers in diabetes care. Every Star primary care office is equipped with technology that captures retinal images quickly and comfortably. The images are reviewed by a third-party specialist who sends results directly to the patient's primary care provider.

Last year alone, Star Community Health helped more than 200 people protect — or even save — their eyesight through these screenings. Beginning in mid-February, the Intelligent Retinal Imaging System (or IRIS) will be available at Star's new rural health primary care offices in Carbon and Schuylkill Counties.



"People who have diabetes are very aware they need to check their blood sugar and have foot exams regularly to prevent complications," said Karen Hepworth, Director of Quality Management at Star Community Health. "But they're not always aware that diabetes can affect their eyesight as well. Diabetic retinopathy has no symptoms until you've already lost some of your vision. If caught early, retinopathy is treatable. That's what makes this test so important. It's quick, painless, and can save someone's vision."

Star Community Health has delivered this sight-saving service

across eastern Pennsylvania with outstanding success for six years. In 2025, Star centers performed IRIS eye screenings on 912 people. Nearly 300 of those patients were found to have some form of eye disease, including 178 with diabetic retinopathy. As a result of the IRIS scans, 207 people were referred for treatment to prevent further vision loss.

This means nearly 23 percent of screened patients were considered "saves" — a significant rise from 16 percent in 2022. Star Community Health's experience shows a clear trend: The more patients they screen, the more people they can

help to preserve their sight.

The test itself is simple and pain-free. During a regular office visit, patients sit at a tabletop machine in a darkened room to allow their pupils to dilate naturally, then focus on a small dot as the device takes a series of images. The entire process takes just a few minutes.

"Without this screening, some people would have eventually lost their sight. The damage is not reversible," Hepworth noted.

IRIS screenings are offered at several Star Community Health locations, including Sigal Family Medicine in Allentown; Family Medicine in Bethlehem; Southside Internal Medicine in Bethlehem; and Coventry Family Medicine in Phillipsburg, New Jersey. Beginning in mid-February, screenings will also be available at Star Community rural health practices in Hometown, Ringtown, and Lansford.

Star Community Health, a Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike (FQHC), provides high-quality primary care, including Pediatrics, Women's Health, and Dental services, to more than 50,000 patients across the region. These

FQHCs deliver accessible, cost-effective preventative care for insured, underinsured, and uninsured patients alike.

For people living with diabetes, getting this eye exam is one of the most effective steps they can take to protect their long-term vision. Star Community Health uses advanced technology to support comprehensive care for diabetes, hypertension, and other chronic conditions. In fact, Star practices consistently outperform most Community Health Centers and primary care offices in managing chronic disease.

To schedule a diabetic eye screening or to find a primary care provider for yourself or your family, visit Star Community Health online or call 484-822-7827.

Founded in 1872, St. Luke's University Health Network (SLUHN) is a fully integrated, regional, non-profit network with annual net revenue of more than \$4.5 billion. With 23,000+ employees at 16 hospital campuses and 350+ outpatient sites, it is the Lehigh Valley's biggest employer.

The Network's service area includes 11 counties in two states: Lehigh, Northampton,

Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Montgomery, Monroe, Schuylkill and Luzerne counties in Pennsylvania and Warren and Hunterdon counties in New Jersey. St. Luke's Children's Hospital is based at the Bethlehem Campus.

St. Luke's has been named a Leapfrog Group and Healthgrades Top Hospital and a Newsweek World's Best Hospital. It is the only Lehigh Valley-based health care system to earn Medicare's five-star ratings (the highest) for quality, efficiency and patient satisfaction. In 2025, the Network earned straight A's from Leapfrog across all of its acute care hospitals. It has earned 100 Top Hospital designations from Premier 11 years in a row, including in 2021 when its flagship University Hospital was identified as THE #1 TEACHING HOSPITAL IN THE COUNTRY. Utilizing the Epic electronic medical record (EMR) system for both inpatient and outpatient services, the Network is a multi-year recipient of the Most Wired award recognizing the breadth of SLUHN's information technology applications such as telehealth, online scheduling and online pricing information.

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hearing aids Solutions 1,2,3,4**

OR... Maybe you want our tiny completely-in-the-canal hearing aids. No manual volume controls for you to adjust. Just slip it into your ear , it adjusts itself automatically as you listen!*

WE OFFER HEARING AIDS AT NO COST TO FEDERAL WORKERS AND RETIREES! That's right! No Co-Pay! No Exam Fee!
No Adjustment Fee! You are covered for hearing aids with no out-of-pocket expense. 1 year warranty. If you have a basic plan, we have factory pricing for non-qualifiers. Similar plans are avialble to PA state employees. Please call for details.



Miracle Ear 1343 Blue Valley Drive Pen Argyl, PA 18072 610-674-1196	Miracle Ear Center 201 Strykers Rd., Phillipsburg, NJ 08865 908-954-7997
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*Hearing aids do not restore natural hearing. Individual experience may vary depending on severity of hearing loss, accuracy of evaluation, proper fit and ability to adjust to amplification. A Miracle Ear representative can determine which model and options may be right for you. Hearing test and video otoscopic inspection are always free. Hearing test is an audiometric test to determine proper amplification needs only. These are not medical exams or diagnoses, nor are they intended to replace a physician's care. If you suspect a medical problem, please seek treatment from your doctor. 5128ROP c>FS Marketing Services, Inc.

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