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February 8, 2024

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Vol. 51: No. 29



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## Harmony Brass Castle Road Reopens



Harmony Brass Castle Road, which has been closed since July 16th when severe storms caused a bridge washout, has been reopened to all traffic. The road, which is County Route 647, had been closed between Hartmanns Corner Road and Spring Lane in the northwest corner of Washington Township due to bridge and road damage in the area of Brass Castle Creek. The Warren County Administration would like to thank all parties involved in the project, including the county Public Works Department and county Engineer's Office.

## Pen Argyl High School Honors Senior Girl Basketball Players in Game Against Moravian Academy



Pen Argyl took to the basketball court to take on Moravian Academy during their Senior Night Girls Basketball on January 31st. Pen Argyl won, 53 to 30. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

## Casey, Fetterman, Cartwright, and Wild Press PennDOT and National Park Service to Reopen Route 611

U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and John Fetterman (D-PA), and U.S. Representatives Matt Cartwright (D-PA-8) and Susan Wild (D-PA-7) sent a letter to National Park Service Director Charles F. Sams III and Pennsylvania Secretary of Transportation Mike Carroll regarding the ongoing closure of Route 611 in Pennsylvania's Northampton and Monroe Counties. In the letter, the members expressed frustration about how a lack of coordination between the two agencies has led to the road being closed for more than a year, and called for a compromise solution to reopen the road.



"The inability to find a path forward on the part of the two agencies has kept the road closed for over a year and become a burden on residents, businesses, commuters, and emergency vehicles that have had to follow detours around the closure," wrote the members. "We emphasize our collective frustration over this situation and

request both PennDOT and NPS come together and find a compromise that satisfies NPS's statutory requirements, prioritizes safety, and reopens Route 611."

The Full Letter Reads:

Dear Director Sams and Secretary Carroll:

We write today regarding the ongoing closure of Route 611 in Northampton and Monroe

## Bangor Wins Over Palmerton in Boys Basketball



Bangor High School went head to head against Palmerton in boys basketball on January 29th. Bangor won, 59 to 49. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

## North Warren Takes On Bound Brook In Girls Basketball



North Warren took on Bound Brook High School on February 3rd. Bound Brook won, 45 to 36. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Counties, Pennsylvania. This situation has been at a standstill for over a year, and we request your cooperation in seeking a solution as soon as you are able.

As you both know, Route 611 has been closed since December of 2022 after heavy rains led to a rockslide along Mount Minsi, which

blocked the road. Since then, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has been advancing plans to secure the rock face and reopen the road, which requires an Emergency Special Use Permit from the National Park Service (NPS).

We understand that  
**RT 611 cont'd on pg 3**



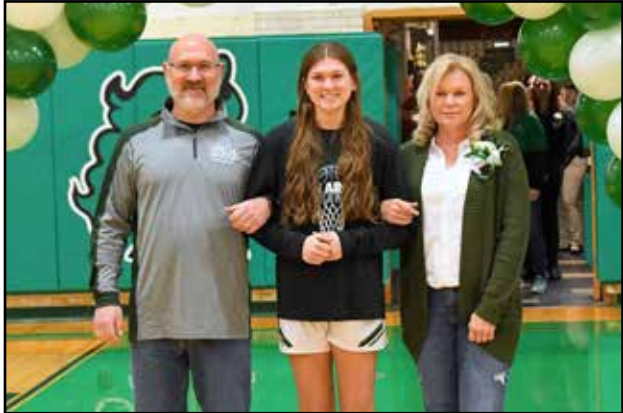
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# PEN ARGYL (53) VS MORAVIAN ACADEMY (30) SENIOR NIGHT GIRLS BASKETBALL



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Ellianna Wallbillich with her parents, Stephanie and Chris



Alex Marshall with her parents, Richard and Amy



Kristen O'Brien with her parents, Bill and Pam



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# Bloom for Women Launches “Bloom on the Inside” to Support Incarcerated Women and Provide Safe Housing for Women Leaving Prison

*Bloom Received a Safe House Project Grant to Help Fund the Program and Hired an Outreach Manager to Run the Program*

Bloom for Women, an organization dedicated to providing sanctuary and a continuum of care to heal, empower and employ women survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, announces the launch of “Bloom on the Inside”, an in-jail program offering assessments as well as individual and group psychoeducational programming in Lehigh Valley Jail and to provide safe housing for women leaving prison.

“Many of the women incarcerated in Lehigh County Jail are trafficking victims. They have the lived experience of trading sex for survival and are often misidentified as criminals by law enforcement agencies,” said Carol Andersen, CEO of Bloom for Women. “Women struggling to

survive on the streets of Lehigh County find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty and imprisonment, unable to gain and maintain employment due to criminal histories and addictions. Multiple arrests and incarcerations of these victims place a huge financial burden on the criminal justice and social service systems.”

Women returning to society from incarceration face many daunting and complex challenges, including: unemployment, housing, addiction, mental illness, transportation, family reunification, childcare, parenting, and poor physical health. “Bloom on the Inside” will inform and educate these women on topics including identification and prevention of exploitation, codependency and



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healthy relationships, conflict resolution, and introduction to life skills.

Andersen continues, “Bloom on the Inside” will help identify those victims and provide them with a safe place and the time to heal when they are released from prison. Our two-year residential program helps women break the cycle by providing safe housing, access to healthcare, and vocational training free of charge; giving these women the opportunity to once again become contributing members of society and

live a life of freedom and meaning.”

Bloom was recently awarded a grant from the Safe House Project, an organization whose mission it is to increase survivor identification beyond one percent through education, provide emergency services and placement to all survivors, and ensure every survivor can access quality, safe housing and holistic care. Bloom is partnering with Pinebrook Family Answers and Lehigh County Jail to work within the prison directly supporting incarcerated/

justice-impacted individuals.

This month, Bloom hired Sheniqua Mitchell, MSW as Outreach Manager to handle outreach initiatives directly to survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation in the Lehigh Valley; support the Department of Homeland Security, FBI and local law enforcement on sting operations and investigations; and coordinate community and prevention education activities around the topic of human trafficking throughout the Lehigh Valley.

Bloom for Women, Inc. is a faith-based non-profit organization with the mission of providing sanctuary and a continuum of care to heal, empower and employ women survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. As part of

its mission, Bloom offers emergency response, a two-year residential program, pregnant survivor services, and an independent living program in the Lehigh Valley area of Pennsylvania. Bloom follows the model and is a sister community of the remarkably successful Thistle Farms Nashville program. In addition, the Bloom Creative Studio, located in Bangor, Pa., is a social enterprise to leverage art as a healing tool and provide employment opportunities for survivors. Bloom also has a women’s upscale, resale boutique, My Sister’s Closet, based in Bethlehem, Pa., providing employment for survivors, community volunteer opportunities, and financial support for the organization.

## RT. 611

Continued from page 1

secure the rock face and reopen the road, which requires an Emergency Special Use Permit from the National Park Service (NPS).

We understand that NPS has yet to issue this Emergency Special Use Permit, citing its obligation to adhere to requirements set forth by the National Environmental

Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, as well as concerns with the proposed scope of work. Without the Emergency Special Use Permit, PennDOT has not been able to move forward with the planned course of action it has deemed necessary to reopen the road. The inability to find a path forward on the part of

the two agencies has kept the road closed for over a year and become a burden on residents, businesses, commuters, and emergency vehicles that have had to follow detours around the closure.

While we recognize the statutory limitations both parties must navigate, this impasse cannot continue. The Route 611 closure contributes to regional frustrations with government parties seeming unwilling to work together

or compromise.

To that end, we emphasize our collective frustration over this situation and request both PennDOT and NPS come together and find a compromise that satisfies NPS’s statutory requirements, prioritizes safety, and reopens Route 611.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please reach out to our respective offices.

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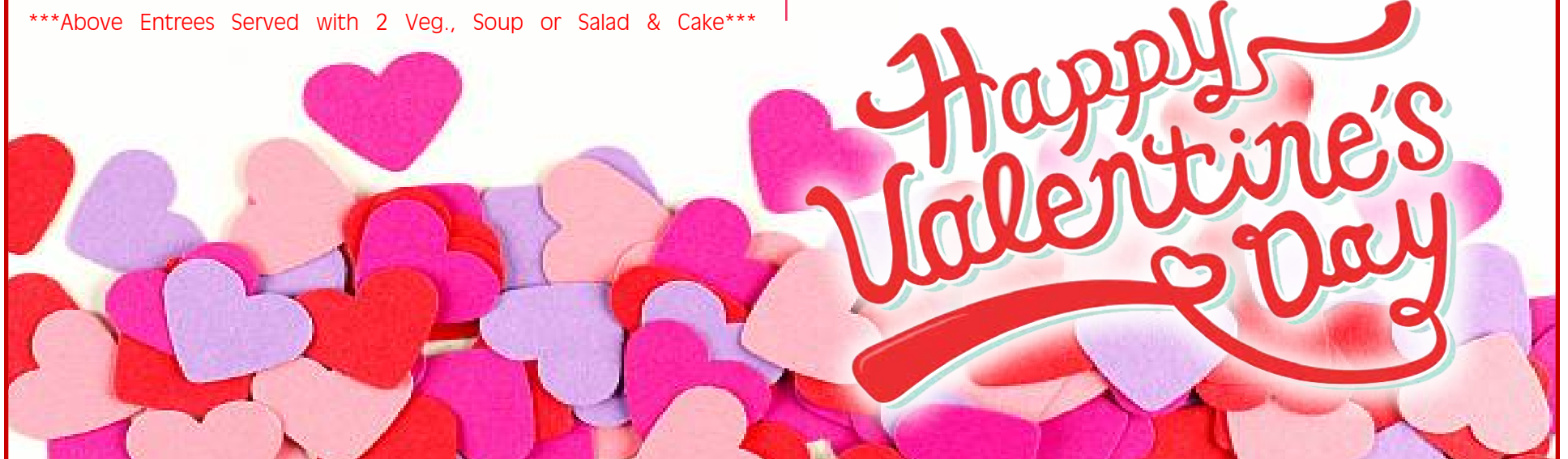
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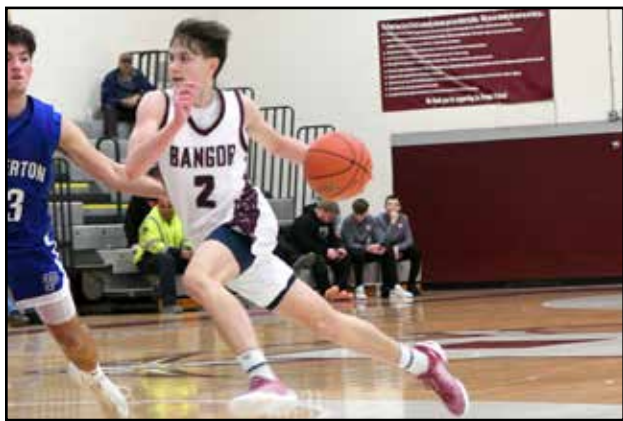
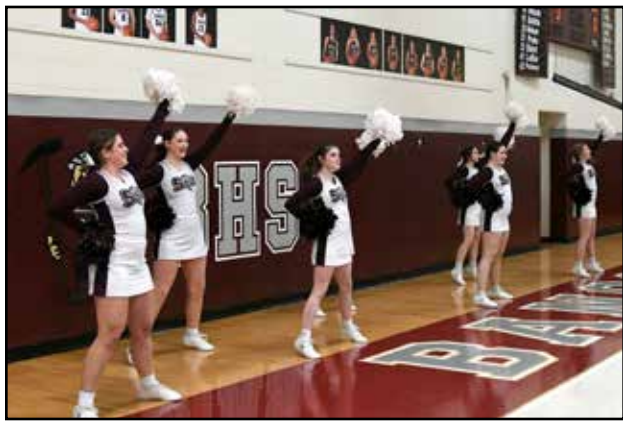
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# BANGOR (59) VS PALMERTON (49) BOYS BASKETBALL



## Golfers Play in February Fundraiser to Benefit Project Self-Sufficiency

Approximately 100 golfers recently came out to enjoy brisk, sunny weather to play on a makeshift course at the Sussex County Fairgrounds as part of the annual Chili Open Golf Classic. Proceeds benefited Project Give Shelter, a Project Self-Sufficiency initiative to help Sussex County residents who need emergency temporary shelter or stable housing. In addition to golf, participants were treated to music by R.E.N.O. the Band, raffles, a 50/50 drawing, a putting contest, souvenir photos, and a vast array of food and beverages hosted by Rotarians from Branchville, Newton, and Wallkill Valley.



The community is currently experiencing an unprecedented need for housing and housing assistance, as well as other forms of emergency basic needs like food. "Thanks to the enthusiastic support of the Chili Open participants, we will be able to provide emergency shelter, security deposits, rent, and utility

payments to those who are experiencing housing crises in our community," commented Project Self-Sufficiency Executive Director Deborah Berry-Toon. "We are grateful for the support of the local businesses which donated food and prizes, as well as the many volunteers who took the time to help coordinate this event."

The Chili Open is one component of a multi-pronged assistance program at Project Self-Sufficiency, an organization which provides career and job training, among a myriad of other services. Last year, 9,365 families received some type of emergency assistance through Project Self-Sufficiency as well as connections to other community or-

ganizations. Proceeds from the 2024 Chili Open are still being tallied; the \$53,334 raised during the 2023 event provided emergency assistance to 137 individuals, including the provision of 744 nights of shelter and restoration of utilities for 24 families.

"Attending the Chili Open is an annual tradition for many golfers," said Project Self-Sufficiency Development Director Bruce Tomlinson whose family has played in the Chili Open for many years. "In some ways, the Chili Open is like a community family reunion."

Photo by Dale Young/  
The Free Weekly Press

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## Cutler Forms Artificial Intelligence Opportunity Task Force to Guide AI Legislative Policy

House Republican Leader Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster) said Monday he has formed an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Opportunity Task Force comprised of House Republican lawmakers who will engage with experts and stakeholders to inform future legislative policy decisions relating to artificial intelligence, including the human-centric ethical development of this emerging technology, along with appropriate safeguards.

Announcing the formation of the task force in a letter to Gov. Josh Shapiro, Senate President Pro Tempore Kim Ward, Speaker of the House Joanna McCClinton, and Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Chief Justice Debra Todd, and inviting their participation, Cutler noted the importance of forming this task force now.

"It is our responsibility to thread the delicate needle between protecting our citizens from misuse and abuse of AI while at the same time embracing the spirit of ingenuity and entrepreneurship that opened this new frontier," Cutler said in the letter. "The time has passed for asking 'Should we utilize AI?' We already are; this change is irreversible. Rather, the time is now to ask, 'How can we, as the entrusted public servants of this Commonwealth, utilize AI in order to achieve what is so important to all of us - a thriving economy, affordable living, safe communities, and family-centered opportunities for our children to learn,



grow and thrive?"

Making up the AI Opportunity Task Force are:  
Rep. Alec Ryncavage (R-Luzerne).  
Rep. Stephenie Scialabba (R-Butler).  
Rep. Robert Leadbeter (R-Columbia).  
Rep. Valerie Gaydos (R-Allegheny).  
Rep. Jason Ortitay (R-Washington/Allegheny).

In the immediate term, the AI Opportunity Task Force will develop guiding principles and standards by which it will operate. Those principles and standards will help narrow the scope of review on legislation already in the works and inform the innovative and thoughtful legislative policy to be developed by this task force.

"The job set before the task force is not small and we do not expect a single, hasty set of recommendations. Indeed, we do not expect the challenges before this task force will remain the same over the course of its members' service," Cutler added. "So instead, we encourage the task force to view its role as ongoing and to provide periodic reports and recommendations as it deems most effective."

The full Letter can be found at: <http://www.pahousegovnews.com/AttachedFiles/AI%20Task%20Force%20-%202.5.24.pdf>

## Preliminary 2024-25 Hunting & Trapping Seasons Approved

The Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners today gave preliminary approval to the 2024-25 hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits.

Modifications proposed for the 2024-25 seasons include:

For black bear, the October muzzleloader season is proposed to be shortened to three days to reduce harvest rates on female bears and thereby promote stabilization of the bear population.

Pheasant hunting within the Central Susquehanna Wild Pheasant Recovery Area (WPRA) is currently limited to youth participants drawn in a lottery. The agency has proposed to eliminate the age restriction and permit requirements and provide the Executive Director the authority to annually designate WPRA to be opened to hunting and establish appropriate season date(s) and bag limits.

A proposal to include mentored hunters of all ages to be eligible to hunt in the early October pheasant season segment, known best as the Junior Hunt.

For wild turkey, fall season length changes are proposed for numerous Wildlife Management Units (WMU). Season length would be increased in 11 WMUs and WMU 5A, which was previously closed to fall hunting, would be opened for a 3-day season. Season length would be reduced in two WMUs (3D and 4C).

For furbearers, WMU 2D is proposed to be opened to bobcat hunting and trapping. Also, the fisher trapping season is proposed to be increased by one week in all WMUs open to fisher



harvest. This will allow concurrent fisher and bobcat trapping seasons.

No changes are proposed for elk or white-tailed deer seasons. However, after-Christmas extended firearms seasons for antlerless deer might be recommended in April for up to five WMUs - 2C, 2E, 4A, 4D and 5A - where both Chronic Wasting Disease is present and antlerless licenses remained at the start of over-the-counter sales. Until 2023-24 deer harvest data is finalized, it won't be known whether extended seasons will be recommended in any of these WMUs, because data could indicate harvest goals have been met and additional opportunity isn't needed. If extended seasons are recommended by staff to the board, they would run there from Jan. 2 to Jan. 20, after a week of deer hunting open only to flintlock and archery hunters.

The public may offer

comments on all proposed 2024-25 seasons and bag limits, as well as other board actions, between now and the board's April meeting, when 2024-25 seasons and bag limits will be finalized, and antlerless deer license allocations will be determined.

The board is scheduled to meet April 12 and 13 at the Game Commission's Harrisburg headquarters.

**PROPOSED 2024-25 HUNTING SEASONS AND BAG LIMITS:**  
**SQUIRRELS,** Red, Gray, Black and Fox (Combined): Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license - Sept. 14-28 (6 daily, 18 in possession limit after first day).

**SQUIRRELS,** Red, Gray, Black and Fox (Combined): Sept. 14-Nov. 16; Sunday, Nov. 17; Nov. 18-23; Sunday, Nov. 24; Nov. 25-29; Dec. 16-24 and Dec. 26-Feb. 28, 2025 (6 daily, 18 possession).

**RUFFED GROUSE:** Oct. 19-Nov. 16; Sunday, Nov. 17; Nov. 18-23; Sunday, Nov. 24; Nov. 25-29 and Dec. 16-24 (2 daily, 6 possession).

**RABBIT (Cottontail):** Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license - Oct. 5-19 (4 daily, 12 possession).

**RABBIT (Cottontail):** Oct. 19-Nov. 1; Sunday, Nov. 17; Nov. 18-23; Sunday, Nov. 24; Nov. 25-29; Dec. 16-24 and Dec. 26-Feb. 28, 2025 (4 daily, 12 possession).

**PHEASANT:** Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license, and all mentored hunters, regardless of age - Oct. 12-19 (2 daily, 6 in possession). Male and female pheasants may be taken in all WMUs. There is no open season for taking pheasants in Wild Pheasant Recovery Areas, except as authorized by executive order.

**PHEASANT:** Oct. 26-Nov. 16; Sunday, Nov. 17; Nov. 18-23; Sunday, Nov. 24; Nov. 25-29; Dec. 16-24 and Dec. 26-Feb. 28, 2025 (2 daily, 6 in possession). Male and female pheasants may be taken in all WMUs. There is no open season for taking pheasants in Wild Pheasant Recovery Areas, except as authorized by executive order.

The Full article can be found at: <https://www.media.pa.gov/Pages/game-commission-details.aspx?newsid=634>

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## FEBURARY 29TH 2024 6-9PM

### BEER DINNER MENU



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BEER PAIRING: NUTTY PROFESSOR

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February 29th, 2024

6:00-9:00pm



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### Garden Dilemmas? Ask Mary!



**Mary E. Stone**  
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Hello, fellow readers,  
Ruth and Jim, dear friends in Hope, NJ, asked that I water their houseplants while they are away. Their magnificent Money Tree reminds me of one I met

a decade ago, along with its plant parent, which turned out to be life-changing.  
I met Diana Seb- zda when I learned that the Karen Ann Quin- lan Hospice offered not only group sessions for those who have lost a loved one but also one- on-one counseling ser- vices on a sliding scale. I was floundering after my brother Bill passed away, combined with other overlapping loss- es.  
It was a gift to ben- efit from Diana's wis- dom, kindness, and the center's services. Fast forward three years, and the gift inspired me to become a Hospice Vol- unteer—it's hard to be- lieve it's been over sev- en years since having

the privilege of being part of the organization. And since meeting Ken Roberts, my singing partner and dear friend.  
The Bereavement Center was in New- ton, NJ, then. Now, it's named the Joseph T. Quinlan Bereavement Center in a dedicated building in Augusta, NJ. Diana became the Di- rector of Bereavement (I coined her the Queen of Grief), and she and I became friends.  
In the entry area of the center was a beau- tiful plant with beefy glossy leaves and a nif- ty braided trunk that I asked her about. It's a Money Tree, Pachira aquatic, and grows into a large tree in tropical and subtropical regions. It's often a small bonsai tree as a house plant, though Ruth and Jim's is bountifully growing, reaching the top of a large window in their historic Victorian home.  
Diana shared the legend that a poor Tai- wanes farmer first dis- covered the unusual yet attractive Money Tree growing in his field. He took it as a sign, dug it up, and brought it home to find it required very little care. The farmer



for itself. It also speaks for the nurturing gift she shares with folks like me.  
Other common names for the Money Tree are Water Chestnut, Guiana Chestnut, and Malabar Chestnut. I believe only the houseplant or bonsai is called a Money Tree or Money Plant. But I call it an Abundance of Love Tree—the utmost currency.  
Jim Ratcliff teaches piano, planting a pas- sion for music that will grow for generations. Ruth is a vibrational sound therapy practi- tioner offering sound healing to help people achieve overall well- ness.  
May we all follow whatever path to serve others that makes us feel good, however small. Small gestures of kindness grow as our plants do, spreading rip- ples of love like a peb- ble dropped in a pond.  
Diana has since re- tired from her role at the bereavement center, but not from sharing her abundance of love. The seeds continue to grow in all of us whom her service has blessed.  
Garden dilemmas? AskMaryStone.com and your favorite Podcast App.

decided to propagate and sell them at the market. They were an enormous success and brought him his longed- for affluence, which is how the Money Tree became associated with wealth and prosperity. But life is much more than about money. Abundance comes from serving others.  
The number five suggests another theory about the meaning of the Money Tree. They typically have five trunks per plant, five leaves on each leaf. In Feng Shui, the ancient Asian

art of arranging objects to generate a positive outcome, there are five elements: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. The Money Tree's pat- tern of five is said to represent those ele- ments, and placing one in the southeast corner of your home is recom- mended. A side note: the five trunks are often braided, but they don't have to be. It's a way to stabilize the plant.  
Diana professes not to have a green thumb, and I beg to differ. The mother plant and the offshoot she potted are thriving, which speaks

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## “Open That Bottle” Event Hosted To Help Raise Fund for Project Self-Sufficiency

The Hudson Farm Club will host a local celebration of the internationally acclaimed “Open That Bottle Night” in support of Project Self-Sufficiency on Saturday, February 24th, 6:00 p.m. The unique event was conceived more than 20 years ago by the former authors of the Wall Street Journal’s “Tastings” column, John Brecher and Dorothy Gaiter. This year’s affair will include fine wines, sumptuous food, and an auction. Musical entertainment will be provided by the jazz quartet Meant to Be. In addition to the excellent wines which will be available, participants are also invited to bring their own bottle of wine along so that they can share their story about its origin with the other guests. The event will be hosted by Peter and Cynn timer Kellogg, Blake and Cathy Ellman, and Lou and Kathy Esposito.

The worldwide Open that Bottle Night celebration of friends, families and memories encourages those



who have been saving a special bottle of wine to gather with other wine-enthusiasts and create a memorable wine-tasting experience. The bottles of wine brought along to the occasion need not be particularly expensive. The popular event is now celebrated around the world, in places as far flung as Antarctica and Hawaii.

Organizers of this year’s event include Project Self-Sufficiency Leadership Council members Blake and Cathy Ellman as well as Board member Kathy Esposito and her husband, Lou. “What could be better than enjoying the company of friends at a beautiful place like the Hudson Farm Club,

drinking great wine, and making a contribution to benefit the life-changing services that an organization like Project Self-Sufficiency provides?” remarks Blake Ellman.

“Open That Bottle Night is not just a celebration of our fine wine; it’s a toast to the spirit of resilience and community in Sussex County,” adds Kathy Esposito. “At Project Self-Sufficiency, we believe in opening doors and extending our hand. This event is a reminder that sometimes, the best way to savor life is by uncorking the moments that bring us together. Cheers to shared stories, shared bottles, and the shared journey toward self-sufficiency!”

“Open That Bottle Night is a significant component of our annual campaign, and one whose message reminds us that we need not wait for a special occasion to celebrate with family and friends,” commented Deborah Berry-Toon, Executive Director of Project Self-Sufficiency. “We are grateful to Peter Kellogg and the members of the Hudson Farm Club for their extraordinary hospitality.”

The affair will be held at the Hudson Farm Club in Andover, a 3,800-acre private hunting preserve originally owned by railroad magnate John P. McRoy who operated a dairy farm on the property. In 1920 the property was donated to The Hudson Guild, a charitable organization located in New York City.

Sponsorship packages for Open that Bottle Night are available at a variety of levels, ranging from \$500 for individual tickets to the “Oenophile” level at \$10,000. To purchase tickets, visit [www.projectsselfsufficiency.org/open-that-bottle-night](http://www.projectsselfsufficiency.org/open-that-bottle-night), or call 973-940-3500.

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