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Bangor Marching Band Perform During Senior Night Football Game Vs. Wilson



Bangor took on Wilson High School during their Senior Night Appreciation Game for Football, Band and Cheerleading on October 23rd. Bangor won, 32 to 24. The Slater's Marching band put on an exceptional performance during the game. Senior Night photo can be found on pages 2-5, game photos can be found on page 6. Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

North Jersey High School Explores Merger Options With Four Districts



Photo Courtesy NJ Herald

Article by: Kyle Morel (NorthJersey.com)
 A Sussex County high school is weighing a pair of consolidation options, including the possibility of merging with four other schools to create one large district. Under the more aggressive plan presented in a feasibility study by Rowan University's School Regionalization Institute, Kittatinny Regional High School would absorb the Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater and Sandyston-Walpack elementary schools and become a single district with students from pre-K through 12th grade. The other option involves moving sixth graders from the four sending districts to the high school, which is currently open to students in grades 7 through 12. Both plans were detailed in the 225-page study, which was created in May 2026 and outlined in a PowerPoint presentation at the Sept. 10 Kittatinny Board of Education meeting. Rowan and Kittatinny worked together over the previous year, with college officials gathering data and analyzing each proposal's impact on students and taxpayers in the district. "A key conclusion of this study is that an enlarged Kittatinny Regional moving to either grades pK-12 or grades 6-12 would provide

MERGEcont'donpage8

North Warren Takes On Hunterdon Central in Field Hockey



North Warren went head to head against Hunterdon Central in Field Hockey on October 21st, but were defeated, 0 to 4. Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Team Mecca Places First in Blairstown Fall Festival Bed Races



The Blairstown Fall Festival took place on October 17th and like last year, it was a HUGE success. The Bed Races have really grown in popularity gaining intrest from the surrounding areas. Pictured above is the first place team, Team Mecca. More photos can be found on page 7. Photos by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press

BANGOR (32) VS WILSON (24) SENIOR NIGHT MARCHING BAND



Chase Begor with his parents, Tom and Nicole and siblings, Jessica and Seth



Seaghan Campbell with his parents, Dan and Meghan



Emma Confalone with her parents, Cheri and Christopher



Ava Dewald with her parents, Tabitha and Tim and her sister, Bella



Kaiden Fahr with his parents, Ronnie and Tamara



Reilly Duckworth with his mother, Teresa, and sister, Caitlin



Nathan Fukushima with his parents, Jon and Susan



Tavian Marraccini with his parents, Wendy and Domenik, and sister, Angelina



Jackson Morgenstern with his parents, Amanda and Jared

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Blue Mountain Community Library News:
The library is located at 216 S. Robinson Ave. in Pen Argyl.
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and Thursday 6-8pm. Questions? Call 610-863-3029 or
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Fall Preschool Storytime will meet the first and third
Wednesdays of each month at 10:30am: Nov. 4 and 18, and
Dec. 2 and 16. Participants are required to register for each
storytime they plan to attend; send child's name, birthdate,
parent/guardian's name, and phone number to info@bmcl.org.
or provide this info at the library or via 610-863-3029.
Deadline is Monday two days prior to each storytime. Spots
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them in time for Christmas! Sizes adult S-XXXL are avail-
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dark blue on the left chest. Order forms are available at the
library now through Nov. 20 at noon. Samples will be avail-
able soon.

Stop In To See What Is New to our Library!

BANGOR (32) VS WILSON (24) SENIOR NIGHT MARCHING BAND



Evan Neely with his grandmother, Melissa and Aunt, Rachel



McKenna O'Gallagher with her parents, Lynda and Patrick



Simon Smith with his parents, William and Tricia



Lauren Teribury with her parents, Lee and Frank



Astro Udell with his father, Nathan, stepmom, Lisa and grandmother, Patricia



Tazio Vargas with his mother Vanessa, and grandmother, Joelene



Joslyn Walker with her mother, Jessica



Matthew Xiao with his parents, Veronika and Mark

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BANGOR (32) VS WILSON (24) SENIOR NIGHT FOOTBALL



Kyle Bonopane with his parents, Kimberly and Gene



Warren Bright with his parents, Kera and Dion



Hunter Hopstetter with his parents, Michael and Jessica



Lucas Hurd with his parents, Crystal and Jeremey, Sister, Isabella and brother, Dylan



Jon-Erik Ingram with his mother, Brittany and siblings, Cecilia, Austin, Lillian and Parker



Brodia Kruger with his parents, Jamie and Mike, and his brother



Parker Robinson with his parents, John and Crista, and brother, Chase



Manager Santiago Rueda with his parents, Wilon and Jackie



Johnny Yepez with his parents, Berrenice and Jorge



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Kyle Zheng with his mother, Fang Lian



Michael Zheng with his father, Xian Zheng

One will weave the canvas; another will fell a tree by the light of his ax. Yet another will forge nails, and there will be others who observe the stars to learn how to navigate. And yet all will be as one. Building a boat isn't about weaving canvas, forging nails, or reading the sky. It's about giving a shared taste for the sea, by the light of which you will see nothing contradictory but rather a community of love. ~ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry



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BANGOR (32) VS WILSON (24) SENIOR NIGHT CHEERING



Rachael Curley with her parents, Trina and Robert



Cal Karner with his parents, Alicia and Larry and Step Parents, Robert and Susan



Alyssa Luckadoo with her parents, Khristine and Raymond



Hannah Martin with her parents
SENIOR NIGHT PHOTOS TAKEN BY DALE YOUNG/THE FREE WEEKLY PRESS



Ariana Puga with her mother, Tricia and her Stepmother, Jessica



Sydney Sandt with her parents, Tammy and Kyle

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BANGOR (32) VS WILSON (24) SENIOR NIGHT FOOTBALL



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Blairstown Fall Festival at Footbridge Park



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The Small Town Fall Festival at Footbridge Park was no longer small. The Bed Races had caught on and now have become a big draw. Friends from as faraway as Syracuse ,New York had come to see what it was all about. It had everything you need to become a success. A Magic Show, talented craftsman and women, Food, face painting, music and more. Blairstown's own Miss Agriculture USA, Kinsley Kise started it off and of course there were the Bed Races. The Bed Race winners were team MECCA in first place, The Planet Network team made the connection and took second place and Murphy's Tree Service chopped their way into third. Photos by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press



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MERGE

Continued from pg 1

opportunities for a more effective and efficient educational program," the presentation read. Save \$885K with shared services, fewer administrative staff: The grant-funded study estimated that the districts could save \$885,800 annually by consolidating, a figure that was "intentionally conservative." The biggest areas of savings included reducing various administrative positions, while all existing programs are expected to be maintained in any merger. The study described

the Kittatinny sending districts as "a model of shared services and co-operation." Among the employees who serve multiple schools is Craig Hutcheson, who is the superintendent at both the high school and Marian E. McKeown Elementary School in Hampton. Hutcheson could not immediately be reached for additional information on the consolidation plans, including a timeline for when either proposal could be voted on or enacted. Must be a vote in each municipality: State law requires that a proposal to transition to a pre-K-12 district be sub-

mitted to voters of each municipality involved in the potential change, according to the study. The measure would be adopted if at least 50% of voting residents in a majority of districts — in this case, three out of four communities — approve the move. Moving sixth graders to Kittatinny would likely require approval from the New Jersey Department of Education because a grade 6-12 configuration is not recognized under law, the study stated. The change would need to be approved by a majority of voters across the entire district, not by each individual town.

It's Always Friday the 13th in Blairstown, NJ



Photos by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press



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DEP Encourages Extra Roadway Caution with Fall Deer Rutting Season and Increased Deer Activity Underway

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is urging motorists to be extra cautious due to increased white-tailed deer activity near roadways with deer mating season underway. This increased activity aligns with morning and evening commutes when visibility can be difficult due to darkness or sun glare.

During mating season, also known as the fall rut, deer are more likely to be present near and on roadways as bucks attempt to court does.

“Collisions with deer pose a very serious safety threat and can cause significant damage to vehicles and possible loss of life,” said Dave Golden, Assistant Commissioner for NJDEP Fish & Wildlife. “It’s especially important that drivers be extra vigilant to this

threat and take time to know steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of collision.”

Peak mating season for deer in New Jersey typically continues from mid- to late-October to mid-December. Visibility issues become more pronounced when daylight savings time ends at 2 a.m. on Sunday, Nov. 1. The time change causes commutes to more closely align with increased periods of daily deer activity.

Drivers can practice extra caution by following these tips:

- Slow your vehicle if you see a deer and then watch for sudden movement. If the deer is on the road and doesn’t move, wait for the deer to cross and the road is clear. Do not try to drive around the deer.
- Watch for “Deer



Crossing” signs. Drive slower when traveling through areas known to have a high concentration of deer so there is enough time to stop, if necessary.

- Use high beams during dark periods if there is no oncoming traffic or vehicle ahead. High beams will be reflected by the eyes of deer on or near

roads.

- If you see one deer, assume that others may be in the area.
- Don’t tailgate. The driver ahead might have to stop suddenly to avoid colliding with a deer.
- Always wear a seatbelt, as required by law. Drive safely and sensibly, following the speed limit, factoring for

weather, available lighting, traffic, curves and other road conditions.

- Do not swerve to avoid impact if a collision appears inevitable because a deer may counter-manuever suddenly. Apply brakes appropriately and stay in your lane. Collisions are more likely to become fatal when a driver swerves to avoid a deer and instead collides with oncoming traffic or a fixed structure along the road.

Report any deer-vehicle collision to a local law enforcement agency immediately.

- Obey the state’s hands-free device law or refrain from using cellular devices while driving.

For information about white-tailed deer in New Jersey, visit dep.nj.gov/njfw/wildlife/white-tailed-deer

Information about white-tailed deer seasons and regulations is available at dep.nj.gov/njfw/hunting/deer-seasons-and-regulations

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Junior Fiction:
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Young Adult Non Fiction:
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Garden Dilemmas? Ask Mary?



Mary E. Stone
Stone Associates
Landscape Design
& Consulting,
Blairstown, NJ

Hello, fellow readers,
I have a bit of a lawn dilemma. Or, better said, uncertainty about best practices as trees complete their final shed. I should preface this by saying I'm not a lawn enthusiast and prefer lawn alternatives where practical, especially when grassy areas aren't needed for children or canine kids to play. Converting portions of larger lawns to meadows is another option that's kind to pollinators and pocketbooks, since it reduces lawn maintenance costs. And meadows are lovely!
Last year's leaf cleanup didn't happen until early spring. Construction of a boulder wall and front walkway was underway during leaf season, with heavy equipment traveling

across the lawn to retrieve boulders from the woods. Leaves settled wherever Mother Nature placed them, including disturbed areas awaiting repair. That made me happy.
Come spring, I gathered the heaviest pockets and dragged them into the woods, spreading them over areas disturbed by machinery to help heal the forest floor.
While walking Jolee the other day, I admired my friend Susan's immaculate garden. Not a weed in sight! She was tending to leaves when I mentioned that, by and large, mine had taken care of themselves last year.
"Nature has a way of taking care of things if you can handle the mess," she said.
Indeed! But I don't see a mess when leaves blanket the ground; I see bundles of nutrients waiting for their next role. Think of leaves as vitamin-packed confetti. Trees draw nutrients from the earth, and as their fallen leaves decompose, they return valuable nutrients to the soil.
Shredded leaves make excellent mulch around garden plants, helping retain moisture, moderate soil temperatures, and suppress



weeds. Mowing over a light covering of leaves also returns nutrients to the lawn.
My shagbark hickories have dropped leaves so thickly that mowing over them isn't practical. So I've been raking and dragging tarps of leaves to areas where I want to suppress weeds. Raking is remarkably therapeutic and much quieter than using a blower.
Behind the potting shed, I've accumulated quite a pile of light, fluffy leaves, easier to tote than heavy, wet ones. As rain softens them, they'll settle considerably. I'll redistribute them as needed, keeping them away from tree trunks and crowns to prevent moisture-related disease and insect problems.
The same philosophy applies to spent perennials. Rather than cutting everything down, I



leave dried seed heads and stems standing, providing winter food for birds and shelter for beneficial insects.
This year, my front garden overflowed with zinnias, thanks to my birder buddy Dennis, who shared seeds harvested from his butterfly garden. Those long-lasting blooms were a gift as the garden recovered from construction. A tradition I'll continue. I'll scatter dried seed heads where I'd welcome another colorful display.

Zinnias can self-seed, though Mother Nature may surprise us with different colors.
Black-eyed Susans are another favorite. I affectionately call them Rude Becky, after their botanical name, Rudbeckia. These short-lived perennials spread readily by seed. If Rude Becky gets too rambunctious, I weed her out.
But here's my dilemma.
After weeks without mowing, my lawn is shaggy. Could I leave it until spring? Wouldn't the dormant grass decay and provide nutrients too? I learned that one final trim after clearing the heaviest leaves helps

prevent long grass from matting and reduces the risk of snow mold, a fungal disease that can develop under snow.
This first season maintaining the lawn myself has brought surprising satisfaction. True, I've gotten the tractor stuck a few times. Stressful! But on a wing and a prayer (literally, I prayed), I managed to get unstuck. Smiling as I write, the same is happening in my personal life. Grateful.
I've also become more intimately acquainted with the property's nooks, crannies, and problem spots—which are really opportunities waiting to unfold.
That's autumn's greatest lesson.
We don't have to manage everything perfectly or tidy every corner. A little messiness is kinder to wildlife and ourselves. In our gardens of life, beauty lies in letting things be.
Garden Dilemmas? AskMaryStone.com or tune in on your favorite Podcast App.

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Vows of Valor Gala to Honor Military Families and Give the Gift of a Wedding Celebration

The Armory Arts and Historical Preservation Society will host its Vows of Valor Gala on Friday, November 20, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at The Armory in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania.

The event will bring together community members, local businesses, and military families for an evening celebrating love, service, and sacrifice. 100% of event proceeds will benefit Vows of Valor, an initiative that provides deserving military and veteran families with all-expenses-paid wedding celebrations. Celebrating Love, Family, and Service

For many military couples, the sacrifices of service extend beyond deployments and time apart.

Financial challenges and military commitments often mean postponing or sacrificing the wedding celebration they once imagined.

"Over the years, we've toured hundreds of couples through The Armory and heard countless stories of how military

service impacted their wedding plans," said Kasie Romagno, Owner of The Armory. "Some couples simply couldn't afford to celebrate, while others had to put their dreams aside because of their commitment to our country."

"We believe a wedding celebrates more than two people. It's an opportunity to honor an entire family's commitment to our country. Through Vows of Valor, we celebrate their marriage, their love, their family, and their service by giving them a moment that is entirely about them."

A Love Story Worth Celebrating:

The 2026 Vows of Valor recipients, Talon, a United States Navy veteran, and his wife, experienced these sacrifices firsthand.

After becoming engaged following Talon's graduation from Navy boot camp, the couple's wedding dreams were put aside as military life took priority. They ultimately eloped with their dogs by their side and

family watching through FaceTime.

Six years, multiple moves, deployments, and two children later, the family has settled in Northeast Pennsylvania. Through Vows of Valor, they will finally have the opportunity to celebrate their marriage surrounded by the family and friends who supported them along the way.

Join the Celebration:

The Vows of Valor Gala will take place Friday, November 20, at 6:30 p.m., at The Armory in East Stroudsburg.

The event is made possible through the generosity of local businesses, wedding professionals, and community supporters. All event proceeds will support the Vows of Valor initiative and its mission to honor military families through meaningful wedding celebrations.

The celebration will include Dinner sponsored by Diane's Catering and music by Joey and the T-Birds.

Tickets are available at: [https://www.](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/vows-of-valor-gala-tickets-2001061287177)



eventbrite.com/e/vows-of-valor-gala-tickets-2001061287177

The Armory Arts and Historical Preservation Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the history of the East Stroudsburg Armory while giving back to the community through educational, cultural, and charitable initiatives, including Vows of Valor.



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Warren County Celebrates 30,000 Acres of Preserved Farmland, McEvoy Family Milestone Reflects Generations Of Warren County Farmers Protecting the Land for the Future

Sixteen years ago, Frank Demeter stood on his farm in White Township as Warren County celebrated the preservation of its 20,000th acre of farmland. This past Sunday, his daughter and son-in-law, Sue and Jerry McEvoy, stood on their own farm to mark another milestone: the preservation of their 120-acre property, helping Warren County surpass 30,000 acres of permanently preserved farmland.

"There's something especially meaningful about celebrating 30,000 acres here," said Warren County Agriculture Development Board Chairman Joel Schnetzer. "Sixteen years ago, Frank Demeter's farm represented a milestone for Warren County. Today, his daughter and son-in-law are helping us reach the next one, while their son is farming land his grandfather helped preserve. That's what farmland preservation is really about – keeping the land in agriculture and giving the next generation an opportunity to carry on the tradition."

The McEvoy farm is part of a much larger story that has shaped Warren County for generations. From the rolling fields of the

Delaware River valley to the farms of the county's northern and central communities, agriculture is deeply woven into Warren County's identity. Farms produce food, support local businesses, provide habitat and open space, and help define the rural landscapes that residents and visitors associate with the county.

Today, that agricultural landscape remains an important part of the county's economy. According to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, Warren County had 923 farms encompassing 70,747 acres, with agricultural products generating more than \$128 million in market value. But farming in Warren County continues to face pressure from private residential, commercial, industrial, and other forms of development. Once productive farmland is converted to another use, however, the loss is normally permanent.

That is why Warren County has made farmland preservation a long-term priority. Since the County's farmland preservation program began in 1989, Warren County and its partners have worked with hundreds of



willing landowners to permanently protect farms throughout the county. The program is voluntary. Participating landowners retain ownership of their farms and continue their agricultural operations, while the non-agricultural development rights are permanently extinguished. The result is a growing network of farms that will remain available for agriculture regardless of future development pressures.

"Warren County has a rich agricultural heritage, and preserving farmland is one of the ways we can make sure that heritage remains part of our future," said Commissioner Director Lori Ciesla. "These are not simply acres of open land. They are working farms, family businesses and places where generations of Warren County residents have built their lives."

"Every farm we preserve helps protect the character of our communities and the landscape that makes Warren County special," said Commissioner Deputy Director James R. Kern

III. "There is increasing pressure to develop land throughout New Jersey, and Warren County must continue to be intentional about protecting the farmland, open space and natural resources that our residents value. Preserving farmland is an investment in the future of the county."

"Farmland preservation is ultimately about people as much as it is about land," said Commissioner Jason J. Sarnoski. "It is about families who have farmed here for generations, young farmers who want an opportunity to continue farming, and residents who want to see agriculture remain a visible and vital part of Warren County. When we preserve a farm, we are helping to protect that economic opportunity into the future."

The County's farmland preservation efforts have made Warren County a statewide leader. Based on State figures, Warren County ranks fourth among New Jersey's 21 counties in total preserved farmland acreage

and third in the number of preserved farms. The County has permanently preserved more than 30,000 acres through partnerships involving the State Agriculture Development Committee, municipalities, nonprofit organizations and willing farm owners.

"Thirty thousand acres is a tremendous accomplishment, but it is not the end of the story," explained Corey Tierney, Director of the Warren County Land Preservation Department. "There are 70,000 acres of farmland in Warren County. And there are farmers thinking about the future of their farms right now. Thanks to the County Commissioners and our partners, we are making sure those landowners have the opportunity to preserve their farms if they choose," Tierney added.

For the McEvoy family, the significance of the milestone is particularly personal. Frank Demeter's farm marked Warren County's 20,000-acre preservation milestone on September 27,

2010. Nearly 16 years to the day, his daughter and son-in-law's farm marks the County's 30,000-acre milestone. And today, their son is farming the land that his grandfather helped protect. "It was so important to us as a family," Sue McEvoy said, as she thanked the Land Preservation Department for its efforts.

Preserving this much acreage of farmland in any county is rare, noted Charles Roohr, Executive Director of the State Agriculture Development Committee. "I could count the number of counties that have made it to 30,000 acres on one hand," he remarked.

Tierney thanked Roohr for making a long trip from Trenton to attend the ceremony marking the preservation milestone, but Roohr replied "for 30,000 acres, I'd walk here."

Ciesla noted it took a lot of effort from a lot of people to achieve the 30,000-acre milestone, including county staff, state officials, past County Commissioners and Freeholders, and landowners.

Sarnoski and Kern both pointed out the cooperation of farmers and landowners is critical to the preservation effort. Warren County has a dedicated open space tax and money for preservation, Sarnoski noted, but, "Without a willing seller, our money is worthless."

To the McEvoy family, Kern said, "Thank you so much for being a partner with us."

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- Stay at least 500 yards away from right whales.

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- V-shaped spout
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Washington's Hometown Halloween and Pumpkin Park welcomed hundreds of children and their families to the downtown on Oct. 24. Many great costumes, trick or treating, lots of candy, a pirate ship, vendors and much, much more made for a perfect day! Judges had a very hard time picking the best costumes, however, a few really stood out and were declared winners of the contest. They included: Haily Balboa (in the chicken coop), Isadora Mauricio and Dante Miranda (in masks), Evelyn Curran (3 eyed creature) and The Lamberti Family and their dog (Framed!). Special note about Evelyn's costume. She designed it herself! Pumpkin carving winners were Blake and Laura Leeds, The Rubilars, and James Martiuk. Photos Courtesy Dan Hirschberg

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