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February 12, 2026

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Vol. 53, No. 26

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Pen Argyl and Bangor Take Their Slate Belt Rivalry To The Basketball Court



Pen Argyl and Bangor boys basketball teams went head to head in their Slate Belt Rivalry Game on February 3rd. Bangor won, 50 to 44. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

North Warren Goes Head To Head Against High Point in Girls Basketball



North Warren took on High Point in girls basketball on February 5th. High Point won 33 to 32. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

North Warren Boys Basketball Team Wins Over High Point High School



North Warren went head to head against High Point in boys basketball on February 5th. North Warren won, 38 to 32. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Senate Approves Measure to Prohibit Student Cellphone Use in Pennsylvania Schools



To curb classroom distractions and improve academic performance and social development, the Senate passed bipartisan legislation to require Pennsylvania public schools to adopt policies prohibiting student cellphone use during the school day. Senate Bill 1014 en-

sures districts retain local control by giving them the flexibility to choose how to implement and enforce the standard in a way that works best for their communities, including deciding where phones must be stored.

School administrators, teachers and parents

across Pennsylvania have increasingly expressed concern about the proven link between smartphones and anxiety, depression, cyberbullying and reduced classroom engagement. The measure was sent to the House of Representatives for consideration.

Happy Valentine's Day

County Executive's Office Issues Statement on Gracedale Nursing Home Inspections

The County Executive's Office has received notification from the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that Gracedale Nursing Home received violations from inspections of the facility that occurred in 2025 and the first week of 2026.

"We take these violations extremely seriously," says County Executive Tara Zrinski. "A plan of correction has been submitted for each of the deficiencies, and all such plans of correction have been accepted by CMS and fully implemented, except for one related to minimum staffing re-

quirements that will be addressed later in February."

To further improve conditions for the residents and employees of Gracedale, the County Executive Office has also created an executive plan. Zrinski and Northampton County Director of Human Services Susan Wandalowski will oversee the plan, which includes:

The Administrator of Gracedale will provide a written report every 2 weeks to the Director of Human Services and the County Executive.

The Director of Administration will attend meetings of the Gracedale Quality Assurance Committee to exercise

oversight over quality issues before they become deficiencies.

A thorough review will be undertaken of nursing services contractors and their staff, on-site training and the scheduling of nursing staff.

A new effort will begin with Gracedale Human Resources representative to improve and retain County employees.

A commitment to improve training of new and existing employees.

On a larger scale, the County Executive Office is exploring options to seek funding to improve the facility operations for the benefit of residents and employees, and the future of Gracedale.

New in the Bangor Public Library

Adult Fiction:

Tender is the Flesh: A Novel by Agustina Maria Bazzettica; The Bookbinder's Secret by A. D. Bell; His & Hers by Alice Feeney; One & Only by Maurene Goo; The One We Wait For: A Novel Michael V. Ivanov; It's not Her by Mary Kubica; Theo of Golden: A Novel by Allen Levi; Robert B. Parker's Shutdown by Mike Lupica; In Her Defense by Philippa Malicka; Dear Debbie by Freida McFadden; Meet the Newmans: A Novel by Jennifer Niven; This Book Made Me Think of You by Libby Page; Pendergast: The Beginning by Douglas J. Preston; Just for the Cameras by Meghan Quinn; Stolen in Death by J. D. Robb; Vigil: A Novel by George Saunders; The Elsewhere Express: A Novel by Samantha Sotto; A Box Full of Darkness by Simone St. James; Read Between the Lies: A Novel by Jesse Q. Sutanto

Adult Non Fiction:

The Korean Vegan: Homemade Recipes and Stories from my Kitchen by Joanne Lee Molinaro; Black Dahlia: Murder, Monsters and Madness in Midcentury Hollywood by William J. Mann; Neptune's Fortune: The Billion-Dollar Shipwreck and the Ghosts of the Spanish Empire by Julian Sanction

Large Print Adult Fiction:

Private Room by James Patterson; The Invisible Woman by James Patterson; The Devil's Daughter: A Novel by Danielle Steel

Easy Non Fiction:

The Story Orchestra: The Sleeping Beauty by Katy Flint; The Story Orchestra: The Magic Flute by Katy Flint; The Story Orchestra: In the Hall of the Mountain King by Hattie Grylls

Junior Fiction:

The Teacher of Nomad Land: A World War II Story by Daniel Nayeri

Junior Non Fiction:

Taylor Swift: A Who Was? Illustrated Biography by Kirsten Mayer

Young Adult Fiction:

Sparkling Fire Out of Fate by Brigid Kemmerer

Pennsylvania Game Commission To Release Approximately 8,400 Pheasants



SGLs 84 and 165 (Northumberland Co.)
Southeast Region
SGL 280/Blue Marsh (Berks Co.)

The Game Commission's regular pheasant stocking schedule extends from early October to early January, with over 225,000 pheasants released during that period in 2025-26, and similar numbers planned for 2026-27.

"With a smaller number of pheasants being stocked this month compared to releases earlier in the season, a proportionally smaller number of sites are being stocked," said Gregg. "This approach may require pheasant hunters to travel a bit farther to find birds, but will maintain logistical efficiency and allow stockings to be targeted to areas where mid-winter habitat and access conditions are most suitable."

Gregg noted that none of the pheasants released this week will be leg-banded; however, hunters might harvest holdover banded birds from releases earlier in the season.

"We thank hunters for their cooperation in reporting over 2,600 banded pheasants this hunting season as part of our game farm pheasant harvest rate study, and we continue to welcome reports of any banded pheasants harvested late in the season. Also, for anyone who harvested a banded pheasant earlier in the season but hasn't yet gotten around to reporting it, it is not too late to call the information in to the toll-free number on the band so that your data can be included in the analysis."

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NORTH WARREN (33) VS HIGH POINT (32) GIRLS BASKETBALL



Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press



February is National Library Lovers Month, a time to celebrate the importance of libraries and all they offer to communities. Originally the Bangor town library building was the Merchants Bank Building. This beautiful stone building was built in 1890 at a cost of \$6400 on the site of an old wheelwright shop. It was in 1940 when the Bangor Library moved to its current location. However, the Bangor Public Library was founded much earlier than that in 1921 by the Bangor Women's Club and was located on North First Street. (Photo and Caption Courtesy State Belt Heritage Center - SBHC)

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* LIMIT 2, WITH THIS AD *

United Way Launches Free Tax Prep Program for Eligible Residents

Beginning in February, low- and moderate-income residents can once again have their taxes prepared and filed at no cost to them by using a free tax preparation program offered by United Way of Northern New Jersey and its partners.

Offered in partnership with the IRS, Norwes-cap and Greater Providence Missionary Baptist Church, United Way's free tax prep program is available to individuals and families who earned \$89,000 or less in 2025. Eligible residents can choose to have their taxes prepared at tax sites in Morris, Somerset, Suburban Essex, Sussex and Warren counties or virtually using a free, safe and secure online portal.

This free service is designed to help New Jersey households struggling to afford the basics. For local individuals and families who are ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) or in poverty, the free tax preparation program allows them to receive the credits and refunds they've earned while saving the average \$300

fee paid tax preparers charge.

"For ALICE families, every dollar matters," said United Way of Northern New Jersey CEO Kiran Handa Gaudioso. "When households are already stretched thin, paying hundreds of dollars to file taxes can mean falling behind even more. This program removes that barrier and helps families keep more of what they earn."

United Way and its partners offer in-person appointments with IRS-certified volunteers who prepare and file both federal and state tax returns at no cost. Appointments are available in Morris, Somerset, Suburban Essex, Sussex and Warren counties.

To schedule an in-person or drop-off appointment, text Free-TaxNJ to 51555, or call 973.993.1160, x5 and leave a message. A tax scheduler will return the call to set up an appointment.

Eligible tax filers may also choose to file virtually by visiting uwnnj.org/freetaxprep, where they can access an easy-to-use online system to

have their federal and state tax returns prepared and filed electronically for free. The system features secure document uploads, encrypted email communication and video conferencing. Assistance and forms are available in both English and Spanish.

"No matter how clients choose to file — in person or online — they receive the same high-quality service," said Gaudioso. "Our IRS tax law-certified preparers complete a double review of every return and work to ensure clients receive all eligible deductions and credits."

In addition to in-person and virtual assistance, individuals and families who earned \$89,000 or less may also use free self-filing software to file their federal and state tax returns.

To learn more about filing options or for questions about the online portal, email UnitedWayTaxPrep@UnitedWayNNJ.org or call 973.993.1160, x5 and leave a message in English or Spanish. A tax scheduler will return the call.



Valentine's Day is this Saturday, February 14th, and Chocolate's on Broadway is ready for two of their most anticipated treats of the year, their fresh chocolate covered strawberries and chocolate covered cream cheese, which are now available! These special treats are made fresh and will be available now through Valentine's Day. Along with these seasonal favorites, they also have their classic red heart boxes and signature truffle assortments ready for you to pick out and share. Our strawberries and cream cheese do sell out fast, so feel free to give them a call at 610-588-9060 to place your order. They will be open with special Valentine's Week Hours: Monday, Feb 9 – Friday, Feb 13: 9 AM to 6 PM; and Saturday, Feb 14 (Valentine's Day): 9 AM to 5 PM



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Garden Dilemmas? Ask Mary?



Mary E. Stone
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Hello, fellow readers, Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow, but his predictions are not especially accurate—only about 39 percent of the time. Still, it's a joyful tradition. Seeing his shadow is said to mean six more weeks of winter, though perhaps it simply means the day was gloriously sunny—which it surely was. And that brings me to how much I adore shadows in the snow, in the garden, and in life.

Winter has a quiet way of revealing what other seasons hide. When snow blankets the landscape, long shadows stretch across the white canvas, turning ordinary

scenes into something sacred. Shadows even guide how I think about garden design. Yet not all shadows feel the same.

That question brings me to Peter Pan, the adventurous boy created by J. M. Barrie who could fly and never grow up. In the story, Peter's shadow becomes separated from him when he leaps from the nursery window. He tries to reattach it with soap, but only Wendy's careful needle and thread can make him whole again. Peter responds with pride—"Oh, the cleverness of me!"—yet the tender truth remains: a lost shadow longs to be long.

Psychiatrist Carl Jung offered another way to understand this longing through the idea of the shadow self—the hidden parts of our nature we tuck away. Fears, anger, selfishness, and even creativity can live there. When ignored, they may surface as blame or self-sabotage. But when gently acknowledged, they can become sources of wisdom and peace.

Across cultures,



shadows are seen as more than the absence of light—sometimes companions of the spirit, echoes of the soul walking beside us. To me, a shadow feels faithful, shaped by the generosity of the sun, which gives life without asking anything in return.

And then there are moon shadows—my favorites of all. I remember cross-country skiing

beneath a full moon, the snow glowing softly, each movement traced in silver.

Shadows shape our gardens, too. Pergolas and trellises cast patterns that create intimacy in small spaces and structure in large ones. Light and shade bring depth, protect plants from scorching sun, define outdoor rooms, and set a mood where mystery balances calm. Even garden lighting, when used thoughtfully and dimmed for nighttime wildlife, becomes part of this dance between brightness and rest.

Understanding light also guides plant health. Catalog terms can be confusing: part sun and part shade both describe four to six hours of direct light, though part shade prefers morning sun and afternoon pro-

tection, while part sun tolerates stronger afternoon rays.

Full sun offers six or more hours. Dappled shade—sunlight filtered through fluttering leaves—creates one of the gentlest environments of all. Even in full shade, where direct sun is scarce, beauty thrives peacefully.

Each morning, when sunlight slips through the woods and casts long shadows across snow, fallen leaves, or returning ferns, it feels like a quiet reassurance.

Years ago, I took a photograph I later titled Hope, it was soon after my brother Bill passed away. At the time, I recognized only beauty after a snowstorm. Later, I understood the moment itself was hope. Rather than focusing on loss, I cherish what once was. My brother's love feels

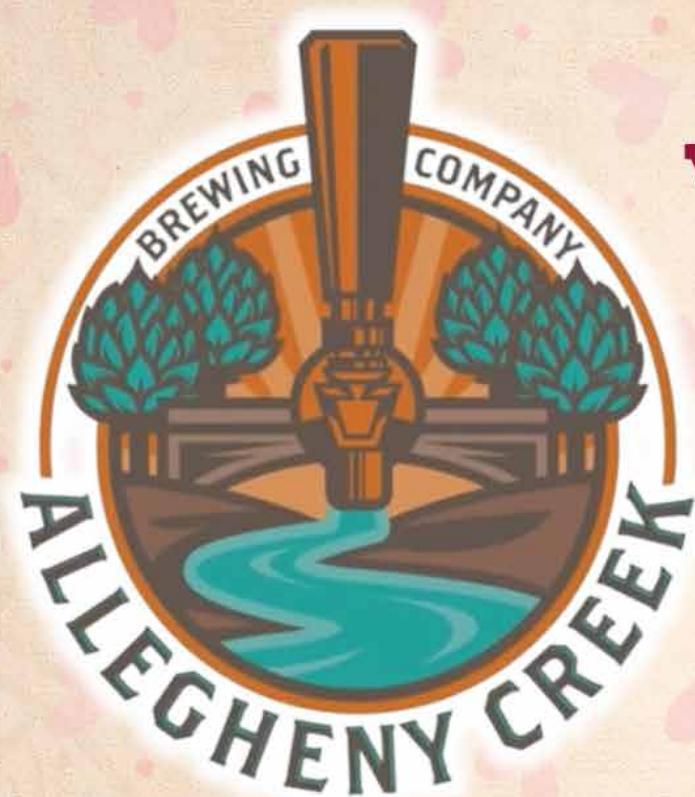
like a shadow that never leaves. The same is true as I grieve the end of a long relationship—sadness resting beside gratitude for shared years.

Perhaps that is where all these threads meet—garden shadows, heart shadows, moon shadows. Each reminds us that light and darkness are not enemies but partners, revealing depth, meaning, and grace.

So if you find yourself in a shadowed season, take heart. Look closely. There is beauty outlining the snow, structure forming quietly in the garden, hope following you home in the moonlight. And maybe, just maybe, the shadow is not the end of the story, but the gentle knowing that light is still shining.

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

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Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press



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Valentine's Day Menu

APPETIZERS

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Baby Greens | Olives | Feta |
Tomatoes | Banana Peppers

STUFFED MUSHROOMS \$14

Sausage | Spinach | Mozzarella

BLACK JACK \$20

Filet Mignon Medallions | Gorgonzola Sauce
| Caramelized Onions

LOVERS FRENCH FRIES \$14

Old Bay French Fries | Topped with Crabmeat | Bacon |
Scallions | House Remoulade

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Seeds | Maple Cranberry Vinaigrette

NORTH WARREN (38) VS HIGH POINT (32) BOYS BASKETBALL



Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

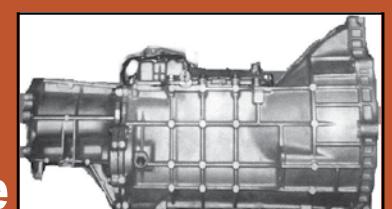
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Senator Boscola Highlights Jobs, Workforce, and Consumer Protections After Shapiro Budget Address for Pennsylvania

Following Governor Shapiro's budget address, Senator Lisa M. Boscola highlighted several areas where the General Assembly can build on existing work to strengthen the economy, protect consumers, and support Pennsylvania's workforce.

"Budget addresses are always hopeful, and this one reinforced that Pennsylvania is moving in the right direction without raising taxes," Boscola said. "I'm encouraged by the priorities the Governor outlined and look forward to working with him to turn those goals into results."

Boscola pointed to the Governor's emphasis on economic development and workforce investment, highlighting the recent \$3.5 billion Eli

Lilly announcement in the Lehigh Valley. The project, supported in part by EDGE tax credits, PA Sites grants, and workforce development funding totaling roughly \$100 million, will create 850 permanent jobs and approximately 2,000 construction jobs. It represents the largest economic development investment in Lehigh Valley history and the largest life sciences investment in Pennsylvania.

"I appreciated the Governor mentioning me during that part of the address," Boscola said. "I was smiling because this project means jobs, opportunity, and long-term growth for the Lehigh Valley. The Eli Lilly investment shows what is possible when the Commonwealth



works closely with local communities and the private sector to deliver real results."

Boscola also noted the Governor's continued focus on workforce issues, including the need to address Pennsylvania's stagnant minimum wage, which has remained at \$7.25 an hour. She empha-

sized the importance of finding a responsible increase that can pass both chambers and be tied to a cost-of-living adjustment.

Building on the workforce theme, Boscola highlighted the Governor's emphasis on professional licensure reform, including faster approval timelines and

a directive to identify additional improvements.

"Streamlining licensure is critical to keeping skilled workers in Pennsylvania," Boscola said. "As Chair of the Senate committee overseeing professional licensure, I am ready to work with the Governor to turn these recommendations into commonsense reforms that help qualified professionals get to work faster."

Turning to affordability, Boscola welcomed the Governor's renewed focus on reenacting Chapter 14, the Responsible Utility Customer Protection Act, which expired after legislative inaction in 2024.

"When Chapter 14 expired, families lost critical statutory protections, including safeguards for medically vulnerable households and clear rules around shut-off notices," Boscola said. "I commend the Governor for re-energizing this issue and engaging utilities on

reenacting these protections."

Boscola also addressed the Governor's comments on managing the rapid growth of data centers, stressing the need to protect ratepayers and preserve local decision-making.

"Data centers bring real economic opportunity, but that growth cannot come at the expense of families and small businesses," Boscola said. "Ratepayers should not be footing the bill for grid upgrades driven by massive new demand. That is why I am advancing the Protecting Pennsylvanians' Power Act, to ensure these projects pay their fair share and communities have a voice."

Boscola concluded by emphasizing the importance of follow-through.

"The Governor put important issues on the table," Boscola said. "Now it is up to the General Assembly to act, work together, and deliver real results for Pennsylvania families."

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Pennsylvania Game Commission Is Proud To Welcome And Celebrate The Newest Graduates



Graduation is a moment that marks the end of one demanding journey and the beginning of a lifelong commitment to service, conservation, and duty. Last winter, the 37th class of game warden cadets began their journey at Ross Leffler School of Conservation with ambition. After 44 weeks of intense, hands-on training, 24 new wardens graduated with purpose, and have joined the ranks of just 800 that have come before them. Now, as state game wardens, they'll stand on a ridgetop, looking out across their district, and recognize that the citizens of Pennsylvania have entrusted them to be the guardians of everything wild. The Pennsylvania Game Commission is proud to welcome and celebrate the newest graduates as they begin their new career as game wardens. We wish them all the best! (Courtesy Pennsylvania Game Commission)

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Habitat for Humanity Collects Aluminum Cans for the Novelis Recycling Program

Each year in March Habitat for Humanity affiliates nationwide start collecting aluminum cans for the Novelis Recycling Program, and each year thousands of pounds of aluminum are collected. The 2025 numbers have just been released with a total of 169,684 pounds collected by the 48 affiliates that participated in the program.

Habitat for Humanity NWNJ was recognized in the final report for a July creative social media post depicting Uncle Sam asking for your aluminum, created by Brooklyn Rajnai. The total collected by Habitat for Humanity NWNJ was 2,740 pounds, a considerable amount more than the year before. As a result, the affiliate will receive a grant amount of \$2,500.00.

The Novelis Aluminum Recycling Program will resume in March 2026 so remember to save your aluminum, which can be cans, house siding, gutters, and foil containers to help build homes and continue critical home repair projects in Northwest



New Jersey.

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

Slate Belt Heritage Center and Museum To Host Bangor's 150th Time Capsule Burial Ceremony



The Slate Belt Heritage Center and Museum will be having Bangor's 150th Time Capsule Burial Ceremony at Bethel Park in Bangor on Saturday, April 25th at 10:00AM with a rain date of April 26th at 1:00PM. Individuals may purchase envelopes for \$5 for letters to family members, organizations, owners of their home in 50 years, etc. that will be placed in the time capsule. The Center is also looking for items that represent Bangor now for the time capsule. We would like businesses, churches, schools, daycares, local government, and organizations to donate items such as but not limited to business cards, brochures, photos, church bulletins, and written history. We are hoping when the capsule is opened in 2075 there will be a clear picture of what the Bangor was like in 2025. NO liquids of any kind or food items will be accepted. We would like all envelopes and donated items at the Center by March 1st. Packing the time capsule will be a deliberate process so all items will survive being underground for 50 years. Photos will be taken of items that will be placed in the time capsule and shared on our Facebook page. The time capsule, which is actually burial vault, will be sealed shut mid-April. Follow our Facebook page, Slate Belt Heritage Center-SBHC, for the latest information. Any questions, email Jane at janehr58@gmail.com. The Slate Belt Heritage Center is located on 30 N. 1st Street in Bangor and is open on Sundays from noon to 3. We are looking forward to seeing everyone be part of this historical moment!

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Acting DEP Commissioner Potosnak Announces Joseph Seebode As Deputy Commissioner

Acting Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Ed Potosnak today announced the appointment of Joseph J. Seebode to the role of Deputy Commissioner to advance the Sherrill Administration's environmental goals.

As Deputy Commissioner, Seebode will serve as second in command for the DEP and will be responsible for continuing the agency's successes in developing and implementing policies that protect air and water quality, advance climate resilience, preserve natural resources, provide quality open space for the public, and ensure environmental justice, among many other roles.

"Joe's on-the-ground experience advancing

projects with the Army Corps will be a major asset in accomplishing the Sherrill Administration's mission to deliver for the people of New Jersey by reducing permitting times while protecting health, safety and environment," Acting Commissioner Potosnak said.

"In particular, his wealth of knowledge in building and growing partnerships will be critical to ensuring the protection of our air, land, water and natural resources."

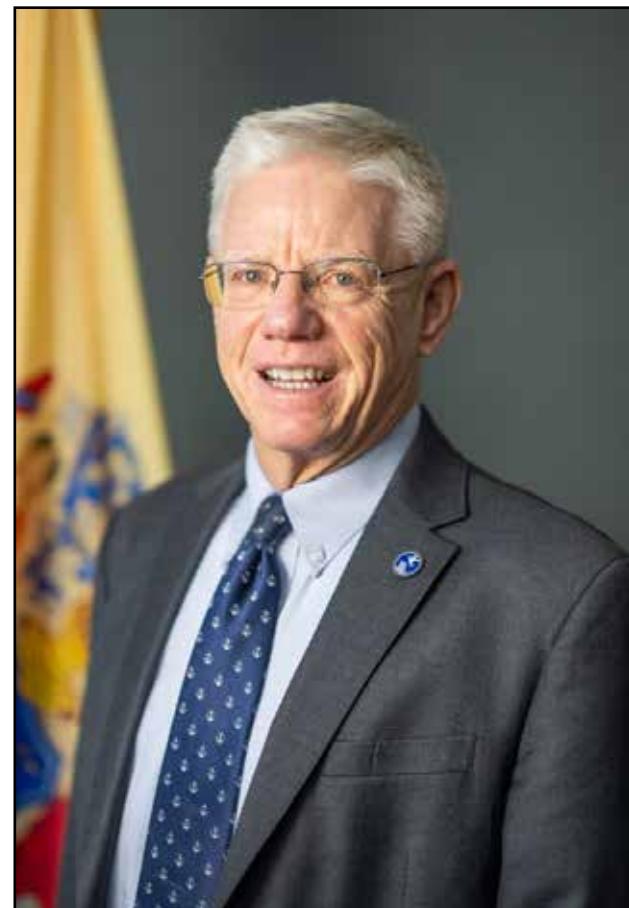
Seebode, an environmental engineer with more than 40 years of experience, including a stint as a DEP Assistant Commissioner in the early 2000s, returns to the DEP after an exciting and fulfilling public service career with the U.S. Army Corps of En-

gineers, where he most recently served as the Deputy District Engineer and Chief of Programs and Project Management for the New York District.

"I am excited to return to DEP and work with its deeply talented team of scientists, engineers and professionals to continue raising the bar on environmental protection, stewardship and permitting turnaround times," Deputy Commissioner Seebode said.

"From coastal resilience to brownfields redevelopment, the projects and policies we undertake today will protect and strengthen our environment for future generations."

In his most recent role at the Army Corps, Seebode oversaw an in-



itiatives for the New York District, including a \$2.1 billion deepening project for the Port of New York and New Jersey and a comprehensive environmental restoration strategy for the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary.

Seebode's post-Sandy efforts and the port-deepening project earned him the prestigious Richard J. Sullivan Award in December 2025 for his dedication to advancing coastal resilience, environmental restoration and sustainable water management. The award is part of the DEP's annual Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards program.

From 2003 to 2006, Seebode served as a DEP Assistant Commissioner on an intergovernmental detail, overseeing a team engaged in a wide array of environmental engineering and remediation activities.

Seebode earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Manhattan College after graduating from Seton Hall Prep and is a proud member of the Seton Hall Prep Athletic Hall of Fame.

Boscola Announces \$249,411 PIDA Loan to Forks Township Manufacturer Creating 24 New Jobs & Retaining 59 Jobs

Senator Lisa Boscola (D-Lehigh/Northampton) announced today that CryoConcepts, LP, a Northampton County business, was approved for a \$249,411 low-interest loan through the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority (PIDA) that will create 24 new, full-time jobs within three years and retain 59 positions.

"CryoConcepts has a three-decade long history of setting the standard for all things Cryo and this funding will allow this Forks Township manufacturer to create additional manufacturing jobs helping to further expand our region's economy," Boscola stated. "PIDA is one of Pennsylvania's most successful economic development programs and this loan will also allow CryoConcepts to retain 59 jobs."

CryoConcepts, located at 1100 Conroy Place in Forks Township, will use the loan to purchase several pieces of machinery and equipment that will enable the company to

meet the increased demand for products being produced at its facility. The company is a developer, manufacturer, marketer, and seller of a variety of cryosurgical and esthetic products and is known for pioneering advancements in cryo-based products for markets including Over-the-Counter (OTC), physician offices, medical & day spas, and veterinarian practices.

The PIDA funding through the Lehigh Val-

ley Economic Investment Corporation, was approved for a 10-year \$249,411 loan at a 2.5 percent fixed interest rate. The total project cost is \$1,117,737. With the goal of creating and retaining full-time jobs, PIDA offers low interest loans and lines of credit to Pennsylvania businesses. For more information about the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority and other DCED initiatives, visit dcid.pa.gov.

terdisciplinary team of engineers and scientists delivering major military and civil works construction and regional infrastructure improvements in New York, New Jersey and Greenland.

While at the Army

Corps, Seebode's leadership helped guide post-Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts such as the removal of water from flooded tunnels, emergency dredging, coastline repair work and debris removal. He also oversaw other major

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ArcGIS Hub Website Has Officially Launched

Warren County has launched an ArcGIS Hub website, which serves as the new home of the Warren County Planning Department's GIS data and applications. The Planning Department has been hard at work to provide Warren County

residents with interactive web maps, apps and comprehensive data to further their connection with the county and all it has to offer.

Featured content on the website includes a detailed parcel viewer, eye-opening tourism

applications, recreation information and the latest developments happening here in Warren County. Additionally, the hub provides insight to larger scale planning department projects such as the County's transportation planning

Warren County GIS Hub



infrastructure and general planning related news.

The site can be accessed at <https://hub-warren-countynj.hub.arcgis.com>.

ArcGIS Hub websites are a staple among many county governments across the nation, and their ability to convey useful information in a digestible, clean format

makes Hub sites a key component of public facing GIS systems. The Planning Department intends to add more features to the Hub site for usage of residents and developers alike, alongside additional maps, web applications, GIS data and resources for land developers. Warren County's ArcGIS Hub will be a constantly evolving tool for those invested in Warren County and how it will grow and change in the future.

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Pennsylvania One Step Closer to Joining Occupational Therapy Compact Following Passage of Boscola Bill

Senator Lisa M. Boscola (D-Lehigh/Northampton) announced today that the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee unanimously approved her legislation, Senate Bill 571, authorizing Pennsylvania's participation in the Interstate Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact. The committee also advanced House Bill 482 (Markosek), the House companion measure.

Occupational therapists play a critical role in helping Pennsylvanians regain independence and improve quality of life following injury, illness, or disability. Across the Commonwealth, OTs provide essential services in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, schools, long-term care facilities, and community-based settings, supporting seniors, individuals with disabilities, and families.

"Joining the compact will help Pennsylvania remain competitive, strengthen our health care workforce, and ensure patients can access timely, high-quality occupational therapy services," Boscola said. "I appreciate the committee's bipartisan support and look forward to seeing this legislation continue to move forward."

Under current law, oc-

cupational therapists licensed in Pennsylvania must navigate separate licensure processes and administrative requirements to practice in other states, even when those states maintain comparable licensure standards. The Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact streamlines that process by allowing qualified practitioners to practice across state lines while preserving each state's authority over scope of practice and discipline.

The compact has been enacted by 32 states, including Pennsylvania's neighbors Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, and West Virginia. By joining the compact, Pennsylvania would be better positioned to attract experienced occupational therapists from other states and retain students trained here who want the flexibility to practice more broadly.

"Joining the compact will help Pennsylvanians of all ages recover, adapt, and live more independently," Boscola said. "This compact is a practical step to strengthen our workforce and improve access to care while maintaining high professional standards."

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“Open That Bottle Night” Fundraising Event Set to Benefit 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 28th, 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, entertainment by Magical Nights magician Michael Chaut, and an auction hosted by Ted Tafaro. Music will be provided by the jazz ensemble 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



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.

“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,” comments Project Self-Sufficiency Board member and event organizer 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 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.projectselfsufficiency.org/open-that-bottle-night, or call 973-940-3500.

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