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November 25, 2026 HAPPY THANKSGIVING - REMEMBER TO SHOP SMALL Vol. 53, No. 16





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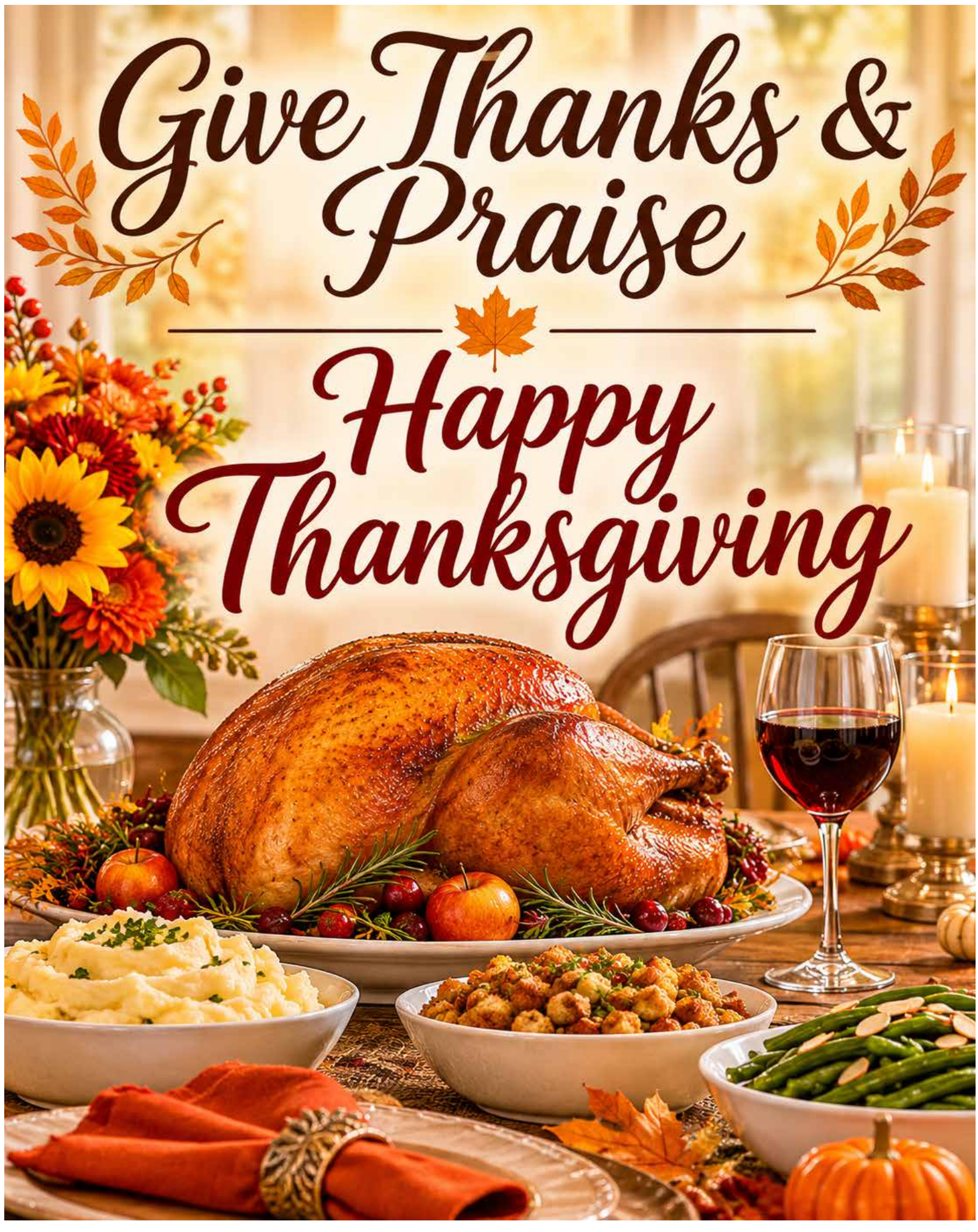



Hackettstown Police Department's Patrolman DiMare stopped by the Hackettstown Free Public Library on November 23 to read some stories to the local children, as part of their Storytime with a cop program! (Photo couresy Hackettstown Police Department Facebook)

Serving the Slate Belt & Surrounding Areas in PA, and Warren, Sussex & Hunterdon Co. in NJ

The PRESS

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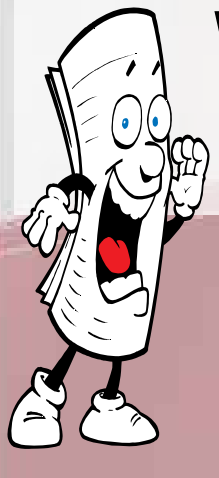

Please take the time to support the businesses who advertise in this newspaper. Shop Local!

Visit our website for a list of drop-off locations!

New to the Blue Mountain Community Library

The library is located at 216 S. Robinson Ave. in Pen Argyl. Hours are Monday-Saturday 10am-12pm and Monday & Thursday 6-8pm. Questions? Call 610-863-3029 or email info@bmcl.org.

A big thank you to the Pocono Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center for gently rescuing tiny black-and-white furry friend Libby (yup, a baby skunk!) who got trapped under the grate near our basement door!

For a $5 donation, honor or memorialize a loved one or pet and hang an ornament on our Christmas tree.

Help the library get everything on its Christmas list by taking a tag off of our mini tree and bringing the item listed on the tag back to the library! Items include Scotch tape refills, toilet paper, paper towels, brown construction paper, white construction paper, large Tootsie Pops, self-seal business envelopes, hand soap, and postage stamps.

The library's special collection of Christmas books is now available for checkout.

Fall Preschool Storytime will meet the first and third Wednesdays of each month: Dec. 2 and 16 at 10:30am. 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 are limited.

The adult book discussion group will not meet in December. Upcoming meetings: Jan. 12 at 6:30pm - "book tasting" (come and share a book recommendation or two!) and Feb. 9 at 6:30pm - The Sideways Life of Denny Voss by Holly Kennedy

New to the circulating collection:

Adult fiction:
Flesh (David Szalay); Hollywood, Ending (John Green); Strange Pictures (Uketsu); Whale Harbor (Mary Beth Keane); The Gift (Freida McFadden); Mr. Dickens and His Carol (Samantha Silva); Odessa (Gabrielle Sher); Range (Dorthe Nors); The Violin Maker's Secret (Evie Woods); Mercy's Child (Richard Paul Evans); Falling Like Leaves (Misty Wilson); All In (David Baldacci); Stations (Louise Kennedy); Samantha: The Next Chapter (Fiona Davis); The Rail Splitter (John Cribb); Lula Dean's Little Library of Banned Books (Kirsten Miller); The Hollow (Michael Connelly)

Large print:
Christmas at Saltwater Cove (Amelia Addler); Christmas at the Restaurant (Pamela Kelley); Christmas at the Shelter Inn (RaeAnne Thayne); Christmas in Painted Pony Creek (Linda Lael Miller); Remain (Nicholas Sparks and M. Night Shyamalan); The Book Club on Waverly Lane (Rachel Hanna); The Manhattan Girls (Gill Paul)





Annual Fundraising Tradition Celebrates 14 Years Of Community Generosity, Honoring Don Seiple And St. Luke's Monroe With The Salvation Army's Others Award

For many, the Christmas season is a time of joy, family gatherings, and celebration. But for hundreds of families throughout Monroe County who are struggling to make ends meet, the holidays can bring added stress and uncertainty. With the continued rising costs of food, housing, utilities, and other basic necessities, the need for assistance has never been greater.

The Salvation Army of East Stroudsburg continues to meet these challenges by providing food, shelter, Christmas assistance, emergency financial support, and other essential services to neighbors throughout the Poconos.

"Just as The Salvation Army has done for more than 150 years in America, we remain committed to providing hope and practical assistance to individuals and families facing difficult circumstances," said Major John Wheeler, Commanding Officer of The Salvation Army East Stroudsburg Corps. "The rising cost of everyday necessities continues to place an enormous burden on our neighbors, while also increasing the demand for the services we provide. Community support is more important than ever as we work to bridge that gap."

Fourteen years ago, Vincent and Charlie Trapasso, owners of Desaki and The Swiftwater in the Pocono Mountains, became involved with The Salvation Army of East Stroudsburg. As they learned more about the financial demands of the annual Christmas Red Kettle Campaign, they asked a simple but powerful question: What can we do to help?

That question sparked the creation of the Red Kettle Gala, an annual fundraising tradition that has grown into one of the community's most meaningful holiday events.

This year's Red Kettle Gala will take place on Thursday, December 3, 2026, at the new Swiftwater Conference & Event Center in Swiftwater, Pennsylvania.

"Through the Trapasso family's generosity and commitment to hosting the Red Kettle Gala, they have helped raise more than $700,000 for our Red Kettle Campaign over the past 14 years," Wheeler said. "Those dollars have made a tremendous difference in the lives of individuals and families throughout Monroe County. Their generosity extends even further by covering the food expenses for the evening, allowing all funds raised through the gala to directly support our Christmas Campaign."

The evening will begin with a social reception featuring butlered hors d'oeuvres, followed by a chef-curated dinner and dancing. Tickets are $175 per person.

A highlight of this year's celebration will be the presentation of The Salvation Army's "Others Award", its highest recognition, to Donald Seiple and St. Luke's Monroe in appreciation of their outstanding commitment to serving others and making a lasting difference in our community. The Others Award recognizes individuals, organizations, and groups whose selfless and sustained dedication to helping others reflects the spirit of The Salvation Army's mission. This year's recipients exemplify what it means to put the needs of others first and make a meaningful impact throughout Monroe County.

The Salvation Army's local programs and services include emergency food assistance, daily hot meals, overnight shelter, rental assistance, clothing assistance, Christmas gifts for children, nursing home visitation, and disaster response services. These programs rely heavily on the generosity and continued support of individuals, businesses, organizations, and community partners.

"As we enter another Christmas season, we are more determined than ever to help our neighbors bridge the gap between their available resources and the cost of meeting their most basic human needs," Wheeler added. "We invite our friends, neighbors, and business community to stand alongside us. Whether through a financial contribution, volunteering to ring a bell at a Red Kettle, or joining us for the Red Kettle Gala, every act of generosity helps us bring hope to someone who needs it."



For information about The Salvation Army's programs and services, to request a Red Kettle at your business, reserve tickets or a table for the gala, place an advertisement in the event program, make a donation, or volunteer as a Red Kettle bell ringer, please contact The Salvation Army East Stroudsburg Corps at 570-421- 3050.

To purchase gala tickets or learn more about the event, visit: https://give.salvationarmy.org/RKGala26. The Swiftwater Conference & Event Center is located along Route 611 in Swiftwater, Pennsylvania.

The Salvation Army, an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church established in 1865, has been supporting those in need in His name without discrimination for more than 160 years. Today, The Salvation Army serves nearly 30 million Americans annually through a broad range of social services, including food assistance, disaster relief, shelter for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, support for the elderly and disabled, and programs for children and families in need.

In Monroe County, The Salvation Army East Stroudsburg Corps works every day to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of our neighbors through food assistance, shelter, emergency services, youth programs, seasonal assistance, and community outreach.

Approximately 82 cents of every dollar spent by The Salvation Army nationwide goes directly toward programs and services that help people in need.

For more information about The Salvation Army East Stroudsburg, visit https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/pa/east-stroudsburg/washington-street-corps/







Hundreds of Families Enjoy Thanksgiving Feast Courtesy of Generous Community

Hundreds of Sussex County families will be able to enjoy a Thanksgiving turkey with all the trimmings this year, thanks to the generosity of local businesses, churches and individuals who donated voluminous amounts of food for Project Self-Sufficiency participants. Agency staff and volunteers recently bagged hundreds of frozen turkeys, along with fresh produce, cans of cranberry sauce, vegetables, stuffing mix, dinner rolls, and freshly baked pies and distributed them to local families.

"For many of our participants, food insecurity has become a pervasive and deeply troubling issue. The overwhelming generosity of our friends and neighbors is appreciated now more than ever," commented Deborah Berry-Toon, Chief Executive Officer of Project Self-Sufficiency. "We have a lot to be thankful for this year."

Thousands of pounds of fresh vegetables were provided by longtime Project Self-Sufficiency volunteer Michael McNamara and his family in recognition of McNamara's recent birthday. "My whole family is involved in supporting Project Self-Sufficiency all year long," noted McNamara. "I have been fortunate in my life, and I am honored to be able to use this opportunity to help those in need."

Ames Rubber Chief Executive Officer Chuck Roberts spearheaded a fundraising drive among a group of 15 Lake Mohawk Golf Club members and others, known colloquially as the Birdie Brigade, to raise more than $9,000 towards the purchase of turkeys and traditional Thanksgiving food by



the agency. Roberts has been involved in the annual effort alongside Project Self-Sufficiency Leadership Council member Roy Knutsen who initiated the effort more than 10 years ago. "Sussex County is a very unique place because there are a lot of people who give very generously, and within this group there is a lot of gratitude," remarked Roberts. "I try to make a difference by giving back to the community. I want to make this place as special for others as it has always been for me."

Generous donations of turkeys, food, baked goods, gift cards, and funds were also received from a host of other individuals, businesses, and families. The First Presbyterian Church of Newton Youth Group donated 100 freshly baked pies. Villa Capri Pizzeria & Restaurant graciously allowed the agency to store numerous turkeys in their freezer. A joint Thanksgiving food drive was conducted by Board member Dee Fernandez and Leadership Council member Kathy Nauta, with the help of their friends, families, and neighbors, culminating in donations of gift cards and funds to purchase bushels of canned goods and fresh produce. Significant Thanksgiving contributions were also made by Girl Scout Troop #99205, Kiddie Academy of Sparta, Newton Moose Lodge 432, Reverend George A. Brown Elementary School, and Selective Insurance, along with several other generous individuals and organizations.

Deliveries to homebound families were provided by parishioners of the Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, a tradition which has been in place for approximately 40 years.

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Habitat For Humanity Dedicates Three Homes To The Qualified Families.



The evening of November 11, 2026, was one to remember for three qualified Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey families. This was home dedication day for the first three families that will be moving into Franklin Village on Rt. 57 in Franklin Township, Warren County, NJ. The Alfaro, Sigafoos, and Khan families received the keys to their new homes with a room full of family, Habitat for Humanity volunteers and staff members that all had a part in making their dream of homeownership a reality.

Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey is a 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. #Habitat#HabitatforHumanityNWNJ

Effortless Holiday Hosting: Simple Tips to Keep Your Home Sparkling

(NAPS)—During the holiday season, as homes filled with laughter, joy, and loved ones, hosting a happy gathering can be a great way to catch up with friends and family—and it doesn't have to feel overwhelming.

With the right plan in place, you can manage the holiday hustle with ease and wow your guests with top-tier accommodations. Here are hints on how:

Surface Cleaning Made Simple:

Kick your old, back-breaking cleaning routine and opt for a true do-it-all product great for any surface. Pinalen 2X, available on Amazon, is a great option thanks to its combination of grime-fighting power and affordable price.

"It's easy to overcomplicate kitchen cleanup," celebrity chef and AlEn USA ambassador Marcela Valladolid says. "While I want my holiday flavors to pack a punch, when it comes to cleaning I like to keep it as simple as possible. The holidays are busy, which means I am juggling meal prep on top of my kids and family buzzing around the house. The chatter and energy during this time of year is so special, but when you're hosting, it can lead to added mess and stress—but with a powerful multipurpose cleaner such as Pinalen you really can't go wrong. It makes spot cleaning a breeze, so wiping up spills is a mindless task and I can keep my energy and attention on celebrating with good food and quality time with loved ones."

You can clean nearly effortlessly between countertops, tables, and even floors, using the same bottle for virtually any cleanup task. For extra glam, Chef Marcela underscores the importance of having your house smell as good as it looks, so she recommends opting for Pinalen Luxury Scents to fill your home with soothing aromas that add a hint of elegance.

Plan Ahead for Spills and Stains:

Spills happen and stains inevitably follow, so don't let a tipped glass ruin an evening of laughs with the people you love. Chef Marcela always channels her Mexican heritage through her cooking, which means she loves a good sauce and strong ingredients, so she knows that Ensueño Laundry Detergent has your back if you get a little Guajillo Garlic Butter on your tablecloth or if your kids are messy eaters like hers. For anything extra tricky, Cloralen Stain Remover is color-safe and boosts traditional laundry detergent for a powerful clean on everything from clothes, tablecloths and napkins to carpets and upholstery.

Prepare for Overnight Guests:

Whether it's family members coming in from out of town or just accommodating mid-afternoon food comas, if you're hosting a long holiday celebration you might just end up with a few guests ready for a snooze. Ensueño Max Fabric Softener is great for those guest bedroom sheets and blankets to create a cozy, inviting, and fresh-smelling place for anyone staying the night or sneaking in a nap.

For further tips and information on cleaning visit www.alenusabrands.com.

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Thurs: 4-11pm; Fri: 4pm-2am;
Sat: 12pm-2am; Sun: 1pm-11pm;
CLOSED MONDAY

NJDEP Announces Launch Of Bird City New Jersey Program To Support Local Bird Protection Efforts

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, in partnership with New Jersey Conservation Foundation, is launching an initiative to reduce bird mortality threats by creating healthy habitats and supporting sustainable bird conservation practices, Commissioner Ed Potosnak announced today.Cooper's Hawk in Jersey City, Hudson County

NJDEP Fish & Wildlife biologists will lead the Bird City New Jersey program, which joins 20 other programs nationwide as part of the Bird City Network led by the American Bird Conservancy and Environment for the Americas.

Bird City programs bring communities together to enhance the environment for birds, habitats and people. One way to do so is by addressing two major threats facing birds – collisions with glass and cat predation. Combined, both threats account for more than 2 billion bird deaths annually in the United States.

"The Bird City New Jersey program will not only help protect New Jersey's critical migratory bird pathways but will also foster a greater appreciation for our natural environment among residents," said Commissioner Potosnak. "Its focus on partnership provides a platform for our cities and towns to be recognized for taking local actions to protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats."

Jersey City in Hudson County is the first community in the state to apply for certification to join the Bird City New Jersey program after residents recognized the collision hazard years ago and organized to learn how to address it.

Birds do not see glass as humans do. Collisions occur when birds see reflections of elements of their habitat — such as plants, open sky and landscaping — or when there are bright lights shining from a structure's interior.

Most birds migrate at night, which makes them even more vulnerable to colliding with buildings or other structures that use artificial light. Communities can reduce collision risk by installing bird-friendly glass in windows, reducing artificial lighting at night, and applying small dots in a pattern using tempera paint, decals or films on window exteriors. The pattern allows most birds to "see" the glass and avoid it.

Program Eligibility: Interested applicants may follow a series of actionable initiatives that help protect birds. Examples include promoting native plants and sustainable habitats that attract birds; controlling invasive species; developing educational programs or ordinances such as leash laws that can limit bird predation; educating building owners, architects and planners about bird-friendly building design; and increasing public awareness about how to implement best management practices that support bird conservation.

Migratory birds, including many forest species and at-risk species, are especially vulnerable to collisions with glass in buildings during spring and fall migration periods. However, bird-friendly retrofits to glass can reduce collisions by up to 90%, and reducing artificial light at night also decreases collision risk.

Each spring and fall, approximately 200 million birds pass through New Jersey, and more than 200 species breed in our state," said NJDEP Fish & Wildlife Assistant Commissioner David Golden. "We are fortunate to be managing this program for New Jersey and are grateful to our partner organizations for their assistance in addressing this important issue."



Getting Involved: Communities interested in participating in the Bird City New Jersey program will commit to forming a team of volunteers and selecting the actions they will take to meet the certification requirements to become a New Jersey Bird City, which also requires a resolution from the local governing body supporting the initiative.

Some actions include identifying buildings hazardous to birds, particularly during migration periods, and working with building managers and planners to make buildings safer for birds. These actions can help participating communities contribute to decreasing bird injuries and mortalities. Each Bird City may develop funding from various sources or work with building owners and managers to obtain private funding for retrofits.

"Jersey City is proud to support Bird City New Jersey and lead the way in protecting the birds that call our city home or pass through along the Atlantic Flyway," said Ward E Councilwoman Eleana Little. "Thanks to the dedication of local advocates, such as Jersey City Birds, we're taking meaningful steps to make our community safer for birds and healthier for everyone."

"Jersey City has shown what's possible when residents, community organizations, and local government work together to make a city safer and more welcoming for birds,"said Lorraine Freeney, Founder and Executive Director of Jersey City Birds. "We're excited to build on that work as part of Bird City New Jersey and help create a pathway for communities across the state to strengthen their own bird conservation efforts."

"We're thrilled to partner with NJDEP Fish & Wildlife to launch this important initiative," said Bill Lynch, Director of Engagement & Communications for New Jersey Conservation Foundation. "And we couldn't be more excited that Jersey City plans to be one of the first places designated a Bird City in our beautiful state. We've worked closely with Jersey City Birds and the Feminist Bird Club of Jersey City for years and know their passionate conservation community will make it happen."

"Bird City is a powerful tool to guide meaningful local action to help tackle some of our most pressing bird conservation issues," said Joanna Eckles, Bird City Network Coordinator for American Bird Conservancy. "These efforts not only help birds, but they make communities healthier and more beautiful for people too. We are proud to welcome Bird City New Jersey into the Network."

Resources: For more information on how a community can become a Bird City or to learn more about bird-friendly building practices, visit https://birdcity.org/ or New Jersey's webpage at https://birdcity.org/newjersey

Inquiries about the Bird City New Jersey program may be emailed to Birdcitynj@dep.nj.gov

The mission of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation is to preserve land and natural resources throughout New Jersey for the benefit of all. Learn more at https://www.njconservation.org/

American Bird Conservancy takes bold action to conserve wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. See www.abcbirds.org

Environment for the Americas connects people to nature and birds through research, education, and outreach. Visit www.environmentamericas.org







The DeathoOf Printed Newspapers Has Been Greatly Exaggerated, Newspapers Aren't Dead: Long Live Newspapers!

By Dorothy York, President and CEO of North American Precis Syndicate (NAPS)

The emergence of a vast array of digital channels has made printed newspapers stronger. While many newspapers have lost market share, been bought out, merged into chains of newspapers, or have gone out of business, others have been reborn, rebranded, reinvented themselves, or have started up as new ventures, product line extensions, or resurfaced with new owners.

Many small business owners reach customers and prospects via online channels such as social media, and use more traditional channels such as newsletters or direct mail. Community newspapers are all supported by local advertisers, mostly small businesses, who have determined that there is a competitive rate of return on their ad spend with printed media.

Using a combination of print and digital channels helps to move inventory for a higher price and with less time on the market. Advertisers evaluate their success on the basis of a variety of factors, which can be traced back to the specific medium used to generate responses, including increase in sales volume, leads generated, direct response by email, phone or filling out a form online, store traffic, and some more intangible effects such as brand loyalty, brand recognition, reputation management, and loss prevention.

Here are some benefits of ad budgets with a combination of print and digital media channels:

1- Connect With Consumers On Their Terms: Reach your target audiences wherever they may be, at just the right time and in just the right place.

2- Earn Trust: Printed newspapers offer the most trusted form of advertising. You can drive readers of newspapers, and their friends and family members, who they share news with, to your online assets where they can engage and interact with you directly. For those who read both in print and online, you can get reinforcement of your message by having it appear in more than one place or multiple places.

3- More Metrics For Deeper Analysis: When you use an integrated marketing approach, you have more methods of analyzing what is working and what isn't, to help you refine your plan. Some like to include unique identifying information in each form of outreach, for a more detailed and comprehensive analysis. For example, you can try using trackable links or unique landing pages, special offers, and unique email addresses, or phone numbers.

4- Extend Your Reach: Millennials tend to spend more time online than Boomers, who tend to prefer printed newspapers, and the two groups are not mutually exclusive, as they share information with each other. By using a combination of channels, you have a much better chance of reaching a larger audience.

By covering newspapers in print, you get more of an online presence as well, because most newspapers offer an online version of the printed publication, including a pdf, which is an exact replica. Newspapers have social media channels for easy sharing. You can capture audiences in print to help build a following on your social and digital channels.

The printed word will always command a higher ad rate than online advertising, for the equivalent amount of space, due to the likelihood that it will be seen. Visibility of information in a printed newspaper is generally higher because it is more likely to get read cover to cover in a short time than some sites which have many more pages, which can be added at little or no cost, whereas print is limited by the cost to print and mail. Some sites of newspapers have thousands of pages per day, offering news from a variety of external sources.



Print is not dead. It is a highly valuable segment of any marketing portfolio which will continue to evolve, redesign, innovate and prosper. There are thousands of community newspapers that are saturation mailers, offering the opportunity for reaching everyone in a given community. Small towns are the backbone of our civilization, with tightly knit communities that share information, found in newspapers, with their niche groups.













Why Changing Your HVAC Filter in Winter Matters More Than You Think

(NAPSI)—When temperatures drop and we spend more time indoors, your HVAC system becomes one of the hardest-working appliances in your home. From keeping your living spaces warm and comfortable to circulating the air your family breathes every day, your system is busy around the clock during the winter months. That's why changing your HVAC filter regularly in winter is one of the simplest and most important steps you can take to protect your home's indoor air quality.

Winter = More Indoor Air Contaminants

During the colder season, windows stay closed, doors open less often, and fresh outdoor air doesn't move through your home as easily. Meanwhile, indoor activities like cooking, cleaning, burning candles, and simply staying inside more often all increase the amount of dust, dander, and particles floating around your home.

A clean HVAC filter helps trap these contaminants before they circulate through your air ducts and back into the air you breathe.

A Dirty Filter Makes Your System Work Harder

When your filter becomes clogged with dust, pet hair, debris, and other winter buildup, the airflow through your HVAC system decreases. That means your furnace must work harder to push warm air into your home, using more energy and increasing the risk of breakdowns.

A clean filter keeps air moving freely, helping your system run efficiently and reducing stress on expensive components.

Clean Filters = Cleaner Air All Season Long

Winter air is often dry, and when combined with a dirty filter, it can leave your home feeling stuffy or dusty. Clean filters help:

- Reduce allergens like dust and dander
- Minimize odors
- Improve airflow and overall comfort
- Keep your home's air fresher and healthier



For families with pets, allergies, or respiratory concerns, winter filter changes are even more important.

Don't Forget the Bigger Picture

Your HVAC filter is just one part of your home's air quality puzzle. Dust, debris, and contaminants can still build up inside your air ducts, especially when your system is running nonstop all winter long. Scheduling a professional inspection or cleaning with a NADCA-member company can ensure your entire system is working efficiently and circulating truly clean air.

Keep Your Home Breathing Easy This Winter

Changing your filter is a small task that pays off big, helping your HVAC system run better, improving indoor air quality, and keeping your home comfortable all season long. Make it part of your winter routine and enjoy cleaner, healthier air every day.

Learn more about protecting your indoor air quality at Breathing-Clean.com.



Wawa In Wind Gap Construction Update!

Wawa Is Set To Open Early 2027, Keep An Eye Out For Additional Updates On The Site!





Photos & Videos Can Be Found On Our Facebook: The Press News Online

Photos by Dale Young/ The Free Weekly Press





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New to the Bangor Public Library

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Adult Fiction:
Snowed In by Navessa Allen; Alma Vampires by Elena Armas; All the Little Secrets by May Cobb; The Monster Hunter's Librarian by Lauren Connolly; Beneath a Midnight Moon by Catherine Cowles; Back Where We Started by Becca Freeman; The Taken Ones by Judith A. Jance; Queen of Lombard Street: A Novel by Lisa Kleypas; For Whom the Belle Tolls by Jaysea Lynn; Conspiracy Theory: A Thriller by Phillip Margolin; The Wrath Gods Reap by Abigail Owen; Reap & Sow by Charlotte B Plumb; Christmas Staycation by Meghan Quinn; Birth of the Witch by Nora Roberts; The Heist Before Christmas by Lucy Score; Peculiar Stars: A Novel By Rebecca Yarros

Adult Non Fiction:
American Pope: Leo XIV's Road from the South Side of Chicago to Vatican City by Daniel Burke; Is it Too Late to Make a Run For It? By Judi Dench; Do What You're Gonna Do: The Definitive Oral History of Breaking Bad by Dean Norris; The Man Who Mastered Gravity: A Twisted Tale of Space, Time and The Mysteries In Between by Paul Schatzkin; William Howard Taft: A Great American Life by Walter Stahr; Forgiving What You Can't Forget: Discover How to Move On, Make Peace with Painful Memories, and Create a Life That's Beautiful Again by Lysa Terkeurst; Needle Felting Through the Seasons: 12 Beginner Projects for the Home by Elizabeth Whitton

Easy Fiction:
Bluey: Baby Race; My Mum is the Best; Bluey: Grannies and Other Stories; Bluey: A Jigsaw Puzzle Book by Penguin Young Readers Group; Owl by Myself by Pete Oswald; Roar! By Make Believe Ideas; Count and Slide Dinosaurs by Elena Rodgers; Dr. Seuss's Jolly Things

Junior Fiction:
Front Desk: The Graphic Novel by Kelly Yang

Junior Non Fiction:
The Big, Fun Kids Cookbook; Home Sweet Home: What Makes a House a Home? By Moira Butterfield; Ancient Greece by Ian Fitzgerald

Young Adult Fiction:
The Ruling Class by Jennifer Lynn Barne; Lessons in Power by Jennifer Lynn Barnes

Garden Dilemmas? Ask Mary?



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

Hello, fellow readers,

What a joy to spend Saturday's glorious weather walking in the woods. Jolee and I joined a guided hike at Birch Ridge Ravine Preserve in Hardwick, New Jersey, celebrating Ridge and Valley Conservancy's merger with The Land Conservancy of New Jersey (TLCNJ). Its staff and programs continue as TLCNJ's Ridge and Valley Region, protecting natural lands, waterways, farmland, and wildlife habitats.

My friend Dennis Briede, Stewardship Manager for TLCNJ, joined us. What fun having a walking encyclopedia of native plants along to answer everyone's questions!

Chris Hepburn, a trustee who welcomed us with coffee and donuts, and her husband sold 35 acres of their 200-acre property to the Conservancy. Like others who have made land available for preservation, they've given a lasting gift—opening its beauty to the public while protecting the land and wildlife that reside there.

It was a leisurely walk, and we enjoyed the sights and sounds of the forest. Towering hardwoods surrounded us, while old stone walls snaked through the woods, reminders of farmers who once worked the land.







Expansive native rhododendrons lined the ravine above the stream far below. I adore using Rhododendron maximum, also called great laurel or rosebay rhododendron, in landscape designs. They can grow twenty feet tall or more and have leathery, dark green leaves year-round. Their showy pink, white, or light purple blooms are in their glory in June. Unlike other rhododendrons, deer seem to steer clear of them in our neck of the woods.

We encountered American hornbeam (Carpinus caroliniana), an understory tree called ironwood for its hard wood, then stopped to capture the magnificence of delicate gray shelf fungi decorating a log.

Velvety moss carpets softened the forest floor. I couldn't help marveling at what looked like a still-life masterpiece of moss, lichen, and two perfectly poised birch leaves.

Two discoveries were especially intriguing. Rough horsetail (Equisetum hyemale), an ancient fern relative, has sandpaper-like, jointed stems that Native Americans used for scouring. Striped prince's pine (Chimaphila maculata), also called spotted wintergreen, displayed striking white-striped evergreen leaves among the fallen oak foliage. Such treasures, easily overlooked beneath our feet!

Dennis introduced us to "empty forest syndrome," when deer browsing and invasive plants leave woodland floors nearly barren of native vegetation.

"In a healthy forest, you shouldn't be able to see more than 75 feet," he explained, referring to the density of understory plants.

Sadly, we could see farther in several areas. Although conservation volunteers have worked to remove invasive species, a substantial patch of Japanese barberry remained near the Princeton University camp. Nearby seed sources make reinfestation an ongoing challenge. Fortunately, other sections showed encouraging signs of recovery, demonstrating the importance of continued stewardship.

With most leaves fallen, Dennis identified several varieties of oaks by their bark. Red oaks have ridges resembling ski runs, while white oaks have lighter bark. I made notes, hoping to improve my leafless tree identification skills.

Meanwhile, Jolee was having a magnificent time investigating the forest's fascinating scents. The hikers seemed equally delighted by her. One gentleman stopped to shower her with affection. Watching their joyful exchange reminded me how animals bring people together, even strangers meeting along a woodland trail.

My favorite find was a tiny white pine (Pinus strobus) standing alone beneath towering hardwoods. I searched for a parent tree nearby but couldn't find one. There stood a soft-needled little evergreen surrounded by trees so different from itself, growing where its seed had landed.

It made me reflect on how the very things that make us feel we don't belong are what make us unique. We can allow ourselves to be who we are, just as we allow nature to grow in its own extraordinary ways.

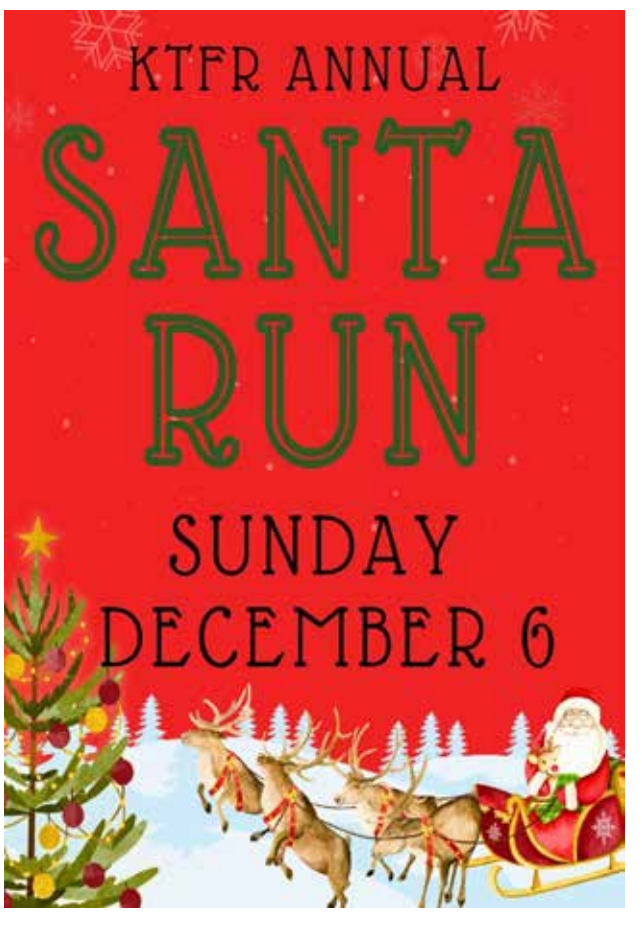
Yet, like the little pine, we're part of something greater than ourselves. We're connected to this dear Earth and the people, plants, and critters who call it home. Belonging begins with recognizing that we already do.

This Thanksgiving, let us be grateful to those who help preserve such treasures for generations to come.

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







Six Ways To Protect Your Mail And Packages



(NAPSI)—Every day, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service works to protect your mail, USPS employees and USPS facilities. It's just as important to it as it is to you that these items reach their destinations safely, and the Post Office could use your help to keep your mail and packages safe.

Here are a few tips to consider this holiday season:

1.Don't leave your delivered mail and packages unattended. You wouldn't leave important items sitting on the front seat of your unlocked car overnight. So don't leave your mail and packages sitting in mailboxes or on front porches for any length of time.

2.Going out of town? Hold your mail at the Post Office. You can sign up for Hold Mail service on usps.com if you plan on being away from home for a few days. Your letters and packages will be held securely at your Post Office until you pick them up or request they be delivered to your home.

3.Plan ahead. Ship using Hold for Pickup. If you are sending packages, you can choose the Hold for Pickup option on usps.com. The packages will be safely held at the recipient's local Post Office until they can pick it up. If you are expecting a package, you can redirect it to your Post Office by selecting Hold for Pickup using Intercept a Package under Track & Manage on usps.com.

4.Customize the delivery. If you are expecting something you know will not fit in your mailbox and you won't be home to receive it, you can authorize the carrier to leave it in a specified location. Visit usps.com, enter the tracking number in Track a Package, and select Delivery Instructions.

5.Secure the shipment using USPS Special Services. Signature Confirmation helps ensure the package ends up in the right hands by requiring a first initial and last name at the time of delivery. For your most valuable packages, you can opt for Registered Mail service. Registered Mail receives special handling from the time it's mailed until the time it's delivered.

6.Monitor your front door. If you have a home security camera system, and you catch any mail thieves in the act, save the video and alert the Postal Inspectors.

For more great tips you can use not just during the holidays, but all year long, visit: uspis.gov.





Pennsylvania's Firearms Deer Season is Almost Here



Pennsylvania's statewide firearms deer season officially kicks off on Saturday, Nov. 28., bringing thousands of hunters into Penn's Woods for the most anticipated outdoor tradition in the Commonwealth.

For generations, this season has brought families and friends together to hunt close to home or at a camp across the state, all while pursuing whitetails and making lifetime outdoor memories.

"This season is a representation of our rich hunting culture in Pennsylvania," said PGC Executive Director Steve Smith. "For our passionate hunters across the state, this day represents a way of life and an everlasting commitment to wildlife and conservation."

Pennsylvania's 2026 regular firearm deer season runs from Nov. 28-Dec 13, including all Sundays. The 2026-27 license year marks the state's first deer hunting season with Sunday hunting expanded to include all Sundays that fall within the seasons start and end dates.

"While luck can be a factor for success in deer hunting, preparation and time in the woods are key components to a successful hunt," said Game Commission Deer and Elk Section Supervisor David Stainbrook.

Hunters are allowed one antlered deer per year, plus one antlerless deer for every Wildlife Management Unit (WMU)-specific antlerless license or Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) permit.

Last year's deer harvest was estimated at 505,600 deer, 185,310 of them antlered and 320,290 antlerless.

By comparison, the statewide 2024-25 harvest was estimated at 476,880 deer.

The year-over-year increase is equally attributable to rises in the antlered and antlerless deer harvests. Both were about 6% higher than the year before.

It's notable, however, that 2025-26's antlered deer harvest was up about 9% over the most-recent three-year average, and the antlerless harvest was about 17% higher.

"That was partly by design, in regard to antlerless harvest," said Stainbrook. "The objective in most of the state's 22 Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) is to reduce deer numbers, based on the goals of healthy and sustainable deer populations, healthy and sustainable forest habitats, and acceptable levels of deer-human conflicts."

More details can be found in the 2026-27 Deer Population and Antlerless Allocations Report on the deer page of the PGC website.

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Hunters are permitted to harvest one antlered deer with a valid general hunting license, which costs $20.97 for adult residents and $101.97 for adult nonresidents.

Antlerless deer licenses can be used anywhere within the Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) for which they're issued.

Hunters can check up-to-the-minute availability at https://huntfish.pa.gov/pa/antlerless-wmu/remainingquotas, then buy licenses directly from any license issuing agent or online at www.huntfish.pa.gov.

Be aware that licenses purchased online must be mailed, to provide hunters with an actual harvest tag. Hunters buying their license close to opening day may want to do so in person at a vendor, so as to get their harvest tag immediately and be able to lawfully hunt.

DEER SEASON REGULATIONS

Antler point restrictions vary by WMU. In most WMUs, a buck with three points to a side, counting the brow tine, is legal to harvest. But in WMUs 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B and 2D, a buck must have three points not counting the brow tine.

Junior license holders, mentored youth, disabled hunters with a permit to use a vehicle, and resident active-duty U.S. Armed Services personnel, can harvest antlered deer with two or more points on one antler, or a spike 3 or more inches in length.

For a complete breakdown of antler restrictions, WMU boundaries and other regulations, consult the 2026-27 Pennsylvania Hunting & Trapping Digest, which is provided to hunters and available online at the Game Commission's website.

Deer hunters everywhere statewide must wear at all times a minimum of 250 square inches of fluorescent orange material on their head, chest and back combined, visible from 360 degrees, during the firearms deer season. An orange hat and vest will satisfy the requirement.

Non-hunters who might be afield during deer season and other hunting seasons should consider wearing orange, as well. New regulations require all state game lands users not engaged in hunting, trapping or fishing to wear fluorescent orange through Jan. 31.

Hunters who harvest a deer are required to affix a valid tag to the ear – not an antler – before the deer is moved. Hunters can use a large safety pin to attach the tag, as it won't damage the ear. The tag must be filled out with ballpoint pen.

Hunters must then report their harvests to the Game Commission within 10 days. Harvests can be reported online at www.huntfish.pa.gov, by calling 1-800-838-4431 or by mailing in the postage-paid cards that are provided in the digest.

Mentored youth hunters are required to report deer harvests within five days. Hunters with DMAP permits must report on their hunting success within 10 days of the last possible date of harvest, regardless of whether they harvest deer.

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Controlling Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), an always-fatal brain disease affecting deer and other members of the deer family, is critical to the future of deer and deer hunting. So preventing the human-assisted spread of the disease is important.

With that in mind, hunters need to know that if they harvest a deer anywhere in the state, high-risk parts cannot be disposed of on the landscape away from the site of harvest. Hunters can transport their deer home or to any processor. If home processed, all high-risk parts must be disposed of with a commercial trash service. This applies to deer transported into Pennsylvania from any other state or country as well. Proper disposal helps prevent CWD's spread to new areas.

Hunters can still use Game Commission approved cooperating processors or taxidermists anywhere in the state as well. Cooperators partner with the Game Commission by allowing staff to collect biological data supporting both the deer management and the CWD programs. The list of cooperators is available on the agency website.

Please note that there are, across Pennsylvania, fewer butchers handling deer than in years past. Some get all that they can handle quickly, too, especially around opening day. So, it's a good idea for all hunters to call ahead and make sure your processor of choice is open and accepting whitetails.

And once again, hunters can get their deer tested for CWD for free by placing the animal's head in one of many collection bins, the locations of which are identified on the Game Commission website.

Test results can then be checked at the Game Commission's CWD dashboard, https://pgc-datacollection.pa.gov/CWDResultsLookup.

For more information about hunting in Pennsylvania, visit the Game Commission's website. The Game Commission manages and protects wildlife and their habitats while promoting hunting and trapping for current and future generations.







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Northampton County Launched Housing Landscape Map in Collaboration with Lehigh Valley Justice Institute (LVJI) at United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

Northampton County, in collaboration with the Lehigh Valley Justice Institute (LVJI) at United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, has introduced the Northampton County Housing Landscape Map, an online tool that helps users better understand local housing needs and explore opportunities for housing preservation and development.

Featured on the homepage of the Northampton County's website, the interactive map brings together 40 layers of information, including housing costs, eviction rates, existing affordable housing, property parcels, conserved land, and infrastructure. Instead of searching multiple websites, users can view and compare information in one place. Eventually, it will be accessible on the Public Works page of www.norcopa.gov.

The map was introduced at a housing summit hosted by United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, LVJI, and Northampton County's Housing for All Committee.

"How do we turn what we know about housing needs into opportunities for action?" said Northampton County Executive Zrinski. "That question helped shape the Northampton County Housing Landscape Map."

What can the map do? Residents, municipal officials, developers, nonprofits, and community organizations can use the map to:

- Explore housing conditions, including housing cost burdens and eviction rates.
- Locate existing affordable and subsidized housing.
- Compare property parcels with information about land use, conservation and infrastructure.
- Follow links to municipal zoning information and original data sources.
- View countywide housing and homelessness statistics.
- Print maps and add their own data for a customized view.

For individuals visiting the County's website, the map offers a starting point for understanding housing conditions in their community and finding related housing information and resources. For organizations and municipalities, it can help guide conversations about where to preserve existing housing, where to explore new housing opportunities and what additional research may be needed.

"This Housing Landscape map was created at no expense to the taxpayer through the efforts of this administration's ability and willingness to leverage county influence to form the public-private partnerships necessary to make this tool available for public use," said Joseph Welsh, Director of Outreach and Government relations for Lehigh Valley Justice Institute.

The map is a research and planning resource, not a listing of available homes or apartments. It does not determine whether a property can be developed.

"When good data is available to everyone, it creates transparency, supports collaboration, and empowers communities to make decisions rooted in evidence," said Vicky Wrigley, director of the Lehigh Valley Justice Institute at United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley.

LVJI Data Scientist Eli Laurin led the map's development, bringing together information from sources including the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and Northampton County GIS. Many layers connect directly to their original sources and can refresh automatically; others can be updated annually or as needed.

The project also benefited from contributions by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, Kyle Wehr of Northampton County GIS, and the County's Housing for All Committee. Northampton County recognized Richard Master for his support of Wrigley and Laurin's work, and Kelly Prentice for coordinating committee meetings and helping organize the summit.

The map is intended to evolve as new information becomes available and community needs change. Visit Northampton County Housing Landscape Map to access the Northampton County Housing Landscape Map.

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