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March 19, 2026

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Vol. 53, No. 32

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### Blairstown, NJ, Celebrates Friday the 13th For Two Months in a Row



Friday the 13th has graced the calander again, back to back this year, and the residents of Blairstown, NJ were happy to celebrate. This Friday the 13th was paired with a St. Patrick's Day theme! Mark your calanders for November 13th, and make a trip to Blairstown to experience the festivities for yourself! Photo by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press

### DEP Study Shows No Radiation Risk from Leachate in Pennsylvania's Landfills

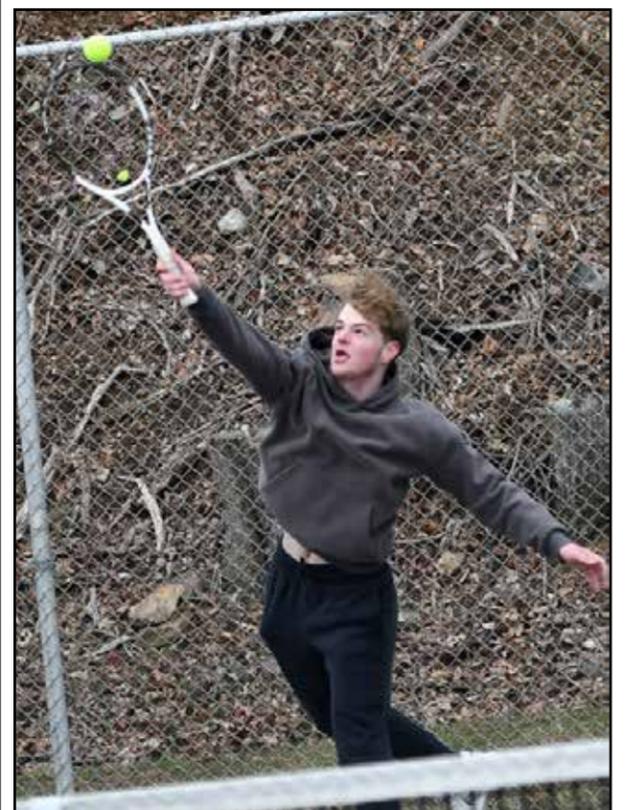


A final report from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) shows that there is no significant risk to human health from radium in landfill leachate. The multi-year study that began in 2021 of all 49 landfills in Pennsylvania found that none had results that were over the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) standards of 600 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) for discharge from industrial facilities. This study rein-

forces prior DEP studies finding that there is not a threat of radioactive material in water discharged from wastewater treatment facilities affecting surface waters or drinking water.

Two years (eight quarters) of sample results of raw, untreated leachate were analyzed using a technique called gamma spectroscopy to measure radioactivity in the raw leachate. Once all samples were analyzed, a confirmatory analysis on one round of sample results was conducted using a technique called radiochemistry. The analyses showed that none of  
*LANDFIELD cont'd on pg 6*

### Pen Argyl Shuts Out Jim Thorpe in Boys Tennis



Pen Argyl took on Jim Thorpe in Boys Tennis March 13th. Pen Argyl, won 5 to 0. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

### Former Wind Gap Fire Co. Social Hall Becomes Home To New Group, Local Residents Concerned



BG-Social Learning Center, a nonprofit group that focusses on Bulgarian culture and heritage, has taken up residency in the former Wind Gap Fire Company Social Hall, local residents have been voicing their concerns. You are encouraged to attend township meetings to discuss your concerns with your local government officials.

### Workshops Teach Helpful Parenting Strategies Offered Online and at Project Self-Sufficiency

Project Self-Sufficiency will offer a unique roster of online and in-person parenting courses beginning in April, including the 24/7 Dad course for fathers as well as the ACT Raising Safe Kids Program, which was designed by the American Psychological Association for parents and caregivers of young children.

Fathers are invited to attend special workshops created just for them, either online or in person, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. Created by the National Fatherhood Initiative, the 24:7 Dads program focuses on five characteristics of nurturing and effective fathering and has been proven to transform families

and communities. The 24:7 Dad curriculum is designed for expectant fathers as well as experienced Dads. Participants will examine what it means to be a man, health, handling emotions appropriately, discipline, and co-parenting. Twelve consecutive sessions will be held at 6:00 p.m. at Project Self-Sufficiency, April 7th – May 14th; classes will be offered in-person and online. Pizza and childcare will be available for in-person attendees.

“We are excited to be offering the 24:7 Dads program to the community,” explains Project Self-Sufficiency Executive Director Deborah Berry-Toon. “This cur-

riculum invites fathers to examine their relationships with partners and children, and addresses topics like anger, competition, communication, and fun. We are confident that fathers and families will be transformed as a result.”

The ACT Raising Safe Kids Program invites mothers and fathers to learn how to build positive parenting skills, prevent behavioral problems, and encourage effective anger management. The parenting classes were developed by the American Psychological Association with the goal of educating parents and other adults who raise and care for young children about creating



**Matt Berke will facilitate the 24:7 Dads parenting program offered by Project Self-Sufficiency (credit: Julian Huarte).**

environments which protect them from violence. Classes will be offered via Zoom on Tuesdays,

April 7th – May 20th, 6:00 p.m.

“We are delighted to continue offering these innovative parenting courses to the general public,” explains Deborah Berry-Toon, Executive Director of Project Self-Sufficiency. “Effective parenting is an important factor in preventing behavioral issues and violence, and the curriculum in both programs invites participants to examine their relationships with partners and children, and address topics like anger, competition, communication, and fun. We are confident that fathers and families will be transformed as a result.”

Interested participants are invited to call Project Self-Sufficiency, 973-940-3500, or register online, <https://www.projectself-sufficiency.org>

[projectself-sufficiency.org](https://www.projectself-sufficiency.org)/parenting-classes.

Project Self-Sufficiency has assisted low-income individuals and families in northwestern New Jersey since 1986. Services offered at Project Self-Sufficiency include high school equivalency education, computer courses, employment skills training, job placement services, support groups, parenting classes, childcare and preschool, legal assistance and education, counseling and advocacy, referrals, and help with emergency basic needs, like food and clothing. For more information about the programs and services offered by Project Self-Sufficiency, visit [www.projectself-sufficiency.org](http://www.projectself-sufficiency.org) or call 973-940-3500.

### Manahawkin WMA Site Closure on March 15th through April 15th

The berm area bordering the impoundments at Manahawkin WMA will be temporarily closed to the public on March 15th, 2026 through April 15th, 2026. A map of the closure area can be found on the Manahawkin WMA Wetlands Restoration website.

New Jersey Fish and Wildlife (NJFW) has partnered with Ducks Unlimited, Inc., (DU) and the New Jersey Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee to restore functional hydrology to 70 acres of managed coastal wetlands at Manahawkin Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Stafford Township, Ocean County, New Jersey.

Currently, these wetlands consist of stagnant, lake-like tidal systems devoid of vegetation and degrading adjacent forested wetlands due to their impaired hydrological state. The goal is to restore hydrology by replacing the current infrastructure with properly sized



water control structures that will allow NJFW to convert the open-water lakes to shallow coastal emergent and forested wetland habitat that will be resilient to climate change and sea level rise. The resulting habitat will improve conditions for over 30 species of waterfowl

that occur in the project area, as well as increase storm surge protection, storm water retention, flood abatement, and ground water recharge. A state contract vendor will be replacing one culvert and one water control structure within the berm along the impoundments.

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## PFBC Reminds Anglers and Boaters that Cold Weather Life Jacket Requirement Remains in Effect through April 30th



With warmer temperatures expected to arrive this week across portions of the Commonwealth, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) reminds anglers and boaters that the annual cold weather life jacket requirement remains in effect through April 30.

“While many of us are looking forward to finally putting this year’s frigid winter weather behind us, don’t be fooled by a few days of sunny skies and balmy air temperatures that tend to be temporary this time of year,” said Ryan Walt, PFBC Boating and Watercraft Safety Manager. “Even though you may be anxious to get

outside to enjoy your favorite activities like fishing and boating, please remember water temperatures are still bitterly cold and present tremendous danger to someone who falls into the water.”

From November 1 through April 30, boaters are required to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket while underway or at anchor on boats less than 16 feet in length or on any kayak, canoe, or paddleboard. The requirement applies to all Pennsylvania waters and violators are subject to fines.

Sudden cold-water immersion, or cold-water shock, occurs when a person is unexpectedly

plunged into cold water resulting in an involuntary gasp where water is often inhaled. This uncontrollable reaction causes panic, hyperventilation, inhalation of water, and inhibits the ability of a person to swim.

According to Pennsylvania boating accident reports, nearly 80% of all boating fatalities occurred because boaters were not wearing life jackets. Since the mandatory life jacket wear law was enacted in 2012, the PFBC has seen a significant drop (approximately 50%) in the percentage of boating incidents resulting in fatalities during the cold weather months.

## LANDFIELD

Continued from page 1

the landfills in Pennsylvania exceeded the annual average of 600 pCi/L limit for discharges from industrial facilities established by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and in most cases, the results were far lower.

Of the landfills sam-

pled, only 11 had radium levels above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 5 pCi/L limit that is used for drinking water. Raw, untreated leachate is not considered drinking water and should never be consumed.

DEP is recommending an additional 4 quarters of sampling and analysis using radiochemistry to

provide a larger data set. The additional data will serve to inform future decisions to revisit landfill leachate sampling requirements and other operational or engineering controls if necessary to protect public health, safety and the environment. This page will be updated with additional findings as they become available.



## “Sister-to-Sister” Prom Shop

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/PromShop

## New to the Bangor Public Library

### Adult Fiction:

**The Secret Lives of Murderers’ Wives** by Elizabeth Arnott; **The Crossroads** by C. J. Box; **The Beginner’s Quilt** by Wanda E. Brunstetter; **Death at a Firefly Tea** by Laura Childs; **When Justice Comes** by Colleen Coble; **Across the Vanishing Sky** by Catherine Cowles; **Judge Stone: A Novel** by Viola Davis; **To Cage a Wild Bird: A Novel** by Brooke Fast; **When We Meet Again** by Kristin Harmel; **The Bookstore Diaries** by Susan Mallery; **It Girl** by Allison Pataki; **Honeymoon** by James Patterson; **Faithful of Heart** by Tracie Peterson; **Trust No One: A Thriller** by James Rollins; **Isles of the Emberdark** by Brandon Sanderson; **A Far-Flung Life: A Novel** by M. L. Stedman; **The Fox and the Devil** by Kiersten White; **Dawn of the North** by Demi Winters; **Kingdom of Claw** by Demi Winters

### Adult Non Fiction:

**The Supreme Gift: Love is the Greatest Thing in the World** by Paulo Coelho; **A World Appears: A Journey Into Consciousness** by Michael Pollan

### Large Print Adult Fiction:

**The Astral Library: A Novel** by Kate Quinn

### Junior Fiction:

**Amari and the Metalwork Menace** by B. B. Alston; **Minecraft: Wither Without You Volume 2** by Kristen Gudsruk; **Minecraft: Wither Without You Volume 3** by Kristen Gudsruk; **Hikaru in the Light! Volume 3** by Mai Matsuda; **Small Wonder** by Ross Montgomery; **Kilala Princess: The Collection Book 2** by Rika Tanaka

### Young Adult Fiction:

**The Sun and the Starmaker** by Rachel Griffin; **Twisted-Wonderland the Manga: Book of Octavinelle 1** by Wakana Hazuki; **Disney Twisted-Wonderland: Book of Octavinelle 2** by Wakana Hazuki; **Carnival Fantastico** by Angela Montoya; **Her Hidden Fire** by Cliodhna O’Sullivan

### DVDs:

**The Carpenter’s Son; Zootopia 2**

## New to the Blue Mountain Community Library

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

### Blue Mountain Community Library News for Early March:

- The board of directors has lowered the library card eligibility age to 3. Residents of Pen Argyl, Plainfield Township, and Wind Gap are encouraged to bring proof of residency and get a FREE library card today. (Annual membership is just \$12 for non-residents).

The library is in need of adult volunteers for all shifts. This is a great opportunity to serve the community and meet like-minded individuals! Commitment involves just 4.5 hours each month. No special skills are required, and all training is provided. Pick up an application at the circulation desk. Email [info@bmcl.org](mailto:info@bmcl.org) or call 610-863-3029 for more information.

- There’s a new scavenger hunt in the children’s room, and the prize basket is fully stocked with tiny treasures. Children are invited to find the insects and pick a prize!

- The magazine swap rack and craft/art supply swap basket are both overflowing. Come take some magazines and supplies!

- A limited number of 1040 tax booklets is available at the library.  
- The adult book discussion group will meet on Tuesday, March 10 to discuss David Baldacci’s *Strangers in Time*. Email [info@bmcl.org](mailto:info@bmcl.org) or call 610-863-3029 to reserve a spot.

- Order a special from Potsy’s on Broadway on Tuesday, March 24, and Potsy’s will donate a portion of the bill back to the library. Potsy’s is located on 21 S. Broadway in Wind Gap. Visit their Facebook page or call 610-881-4261 for details.

- Pen Argyl yearbooks, going back decades, are for sale at \$25 each.

# PEN ARGY (5) VS JIM THORPE (0) BOYS TENNIS



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Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

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# Tails of Valor® Enters a Half-Decade of Donated Billboards in Partnership to Amplify the Mission of Local Heroes

Tails of Valor®, Paws of Honor, Inc. is proud to announce it is entering a half-decade of strategic partnership with Lamar Advertising of Allentown. Since August 2021, Lamar has served as a cornerstone partner in Tails of Valor's "Journey With A Purpose®," providing high-visibility digital billboard space to raise awareness for Veterans and First Responders seeking non-medical rehabilitation.

Through this generous collaboration, Lamar Advertising has donated space on 27 rotating digital billboards across the Lehigh Valley. This multi-year commitment has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in donated advertising, ensuring that the mission of Tails of Valor reaches the community it serves.

A Partnership Rooted in Service

The connection between the two organizations is personal. Lamar's Vice President and General Manager, Victoria Hammes, whose father was a career Air

Force pilot, felt a deep resonance with Tails of Valor's mission to support those living with Post-Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

"Lamar of Allentown is committed to acting as a true public service for the Lehigh Valley community," said Peter Coleman, Senior Account Executive at Lamar Advertising. "We view our role as amplifying the voices of local non-profits like Tails of Valor. We are proud to contribute by providing donated advertising that increases brand awareness and shares messages of inspiration, commitment, and unconditional love."

Visualizing the Impact The billboards often feature candid moments of the human-canine bond, including powerful images of Veterans who have transformed their lives through the program. Because each Tails of Valor service dog is named in honor of a fallen soldier, the massive roadside displays serve as a public tribute



to both the fallen and the living heroes currently walking their path to recovery.

"Lamar's consistent support has been a cornerstone of our growth

as we move into our fifth year of partnership," said Heather Lloyd, Founder and Executive Director of Tails of Valor. "Their ability to amplify our message allows

us to reach the 'whole person.' When a Veteran or First Responder sees those images of hope while driving, they realize they don't have to face their trauma alone."

Championing Post-Traumatic Growth

As a privately funded 501(c)(3) that receives no federal funding, Tails of Valor relies on community partners like Lamar to maintain its commitment to providing services at no cost to participants. This partnership highlights a shared dedication to non-medical rehabilitation and Post-Traumatic Growth, helping participants transform lived experiences into strength and resilience.

Founded in 2014, Tails of Valor® provides rehabilitation through non-medical canine-assisted service programs. Their patented "Journey With A Purpose®" and "The Restorative Path" programs help Veterans, Law Enforcement, and Emergency Personnel mitigate symptoms of PTS and TBI. Each service canine is named in honor of a fallen soldier and is provided at no cost to the participant.

Learn more at: [TailsOfValor.org](http://TailsOfValor.org)

# BRUNCH

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### Philadelphia Children's Alliance Announces 2026 Annual Prevent Conference To Kick Off National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Philadelphia Children's Alliance (PCA) will kick off National Child Abuse Prevention Month with its annual PREVENT Conference on Thursday, April 2, 2026 at Braid Mill in Germantown, which connects and trains leaders in child advocacy, education, support, and service.

This year, PREVENT will feature speakers from the Zero Abuse Project, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and forensic interviewers from the Philadelphia Children's Alliance, followed by an engaging workshop led by Change the Conversation. Like Philadelphia Children's Alliance, these organizations are all committed to the safety and healing of survivors and the

wellbeing and education of their families and communities.

Topics for the 2026 PREVENT Conference will center around issues impacting youth and young adults and the factors that increase susceptibility to abuse both in the community and in schools.

Benita Williams, Executive Director of Philadelphia Children's Alliance, states, "This conference gives us an opportunity to invite professionals and community leaders into a space that supports learning, action, and connection around the reality of child sexual abuse and the many forms it can take, while enforcing a shared responsibility to support Philadelphia's most vulnerable children."

Attendees of the PREVENT Conference include youth-serving professionals, faith-based

community members, child advocates, and anyone who cares for children and wants to better understand how to reduce risks. Members of Philadelphia Children's Alliance's multidisciplinary team, including representatives from Philadelphia Police Department Special Victims Unit, the District Attorney's Office, Department of Human Services, our on-site medical clinic partners from St. Christopher's Hospital and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia are expected to attend.

This conference is just one of the pillars of Philadelphia Children's Alliance's extensive prevention and education program, which serves the Philadelphia area throughout the year by providing trainings and resources to organizations and groups throughout the city. Last year, PCA launched a

partnership with the School District of Philadelphia, providing an interactive and age-appropriate puppet-based workshop to students in kindergarten through third grade, which teaches important body safety concepts and includes a workshop for caregivers.

Following the PREVENT Conference on April 2, Philadelphia Children's Alliance will host and participate in several National Child Abuse Prevention Month activities including a Legislative Event at City Hall (April 9) and a Pinwheel Planting event (April 10), along with its annual fundraiser, the Bear Affair, on Thursday, May 7, 2026 at the National Constitution Center.

Visit [philachildrensalliance.org](http://philachildrensalliance.org) for more information on the PREVENT Conference, April's events, PCA's services, and more.

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### Boscola Announces \$574,816 PCCD Grant Funding For Nonprofit Security Upgrades & County Criminal Justice Programs

State Senator Lisa M. Boscola announced today that the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) awarded grants totaling \$574,816 to provide safety and security upgrades at Greater Shiloh Church in Easton and criminal justice funding for Northampton and Lehigh Counties.

"I am pleased as a Commonwealth that we continue to provide places of worship grant fund-

ing to ensure their congregations can come together in a safer environment following the tragedy at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh," Senator Boscola stated. "In this round Greater Shiloh Church will receive funding to provide safety and security upgrades and I look forward to additional places of worship receiving such funding in the future."

Grants through the

programs listed below were approved today by PCCD:

- State Act 80 Funds
- Northampton County: 2026 Jail Based MAT Program, \$143,876
- Lehigh County: Lehigh County MAT Program, \$175,832
- FY 2025-26 Indigent Defense Grant Program Funds
- Northampton County: \$106,808
- Lehigh County: \$105,965

Nonprofit Security Grant Program

- Shiloh Baptist Church of Easton: Safety and Security Upgrades, \$42,335  
The Nonprofit Security Grant Fund Program was originally passed by the General Assembly in the fall of 2019 and signed into law as Act 83 of 2019. The program was extended an additional five years to 2029 by Act 104 of 2022. Under the program, PCCD is directed to administer

grants to Pennsylvania-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations who principally serve individuals, groups or institutions that are included within a bias motivation category for single bias hate crime incidents as identified by the FBI's 2017 Hate Crime Statistics publication. The categories include race/ethnicity/ancestry; religion; sexual orientation; disability; gender; and gender identity.

PCCD met today to approve Nonprofit Security Grant Fund Program, State Act 80 Funds, FY 2025-26 Indigent Defense Grant Program Funds, Federal STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program, Federal Victims of Crime Act Funds and Federal State Opioid Response Funds. The awards from these programs were approved pending outstanding fiscal or programmatic concerns.

### Poultry Owners Urged to Continue Efforts to Combat Avian Influenza

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture is reminding poultry owners – backyard flock owners and commercial producers – to continue taking steps to protect their birds from highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

Since the current outbreak began in 2022, Pennsylvania has lost more than 14.3 million birds, with approximately half of these lost since the beginning of 2026. Steps to reduce HPAI risk include:

- Practicing biosecurity every day.

- Wearing clean clothes, scrub boots or shoes with disinfectants and washing hands before and after contact with animals.

- Controlling birds and rodents that can carry and spread disease.

- Keeping birds indoors whenever possible and minimizing contact with wild birds.

- Eliminating standing water that may attract wild birds.

Poultry owners should report sick birds or unexplained deaths to 717-772-2852. Anyone encountering sick or dead wild birds should



contact the Pennsylvania Game Commission at 1-833-PGC-

WILD. You can find more information at: www.aphis.usda.gov/

livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock/resources

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# St. Luke's Older Adult Meal Program Is a Big Hit Among Seniors

Even a frigid cold day in January after a near-record snow couldn't stop area senior citizens from heading to St. Luke's Anderson Campus in Northampton County for their evening meal.

"The food is delicious, but the main reason we come is the people," said retired physician Ralph Shields of Bethlehem. "The friends. We have friends we get to see here all the time."

His wife, Jean Soloi, was a bit more focused on the food. "Do they have a good dessert," she asked. "I have to get it first."

Dozens of senior citizens turn out every weekday night to the cafeterias at 10 St. Luke's campuses to take advantage of the Older Adult Meal Program.

Over at Geisinger St. Luke's Hospital in Orwigsburg, Schuylkill County, 85-year-old Clem Utara from nearby Deer Lake goes 4-5 times a week depending on the menu, and gets there early to save seats for five

friends so they can all sit together.

"The food is good," he said. "The ambiance here, the people, the staff, it just feels nice. I look forward to it, and to seeing everyone."

For just \$3.99, adults 65-and-over receive a nutritious and healthy meal that includes an entree, a soup or salad, a side dish, vegetable, dessert and a 12-ounce drink. All the meals are prepared fresh daily, and many of the ingredients are grown at the St. Luke's Rodale Institute Organic Farm, a 14-acre area that grows more than 70 varieties of about 30 types of produce.

St. Luke's began the Older Adult Meal Program in 2017, one component of a broader Senior Health Program committed to helping older adults stay as healthy and independent as long as possible.

According to a study in JAMA, the Journal of the American Medical Association, about one-third of older adults reported feeling lonely or a felt a



Photo caption: Al Gerra, left, with Michel Lloyd, enjoy a meal at St. Luke's Anderson Campus.

lack of companionship, with that percentage raising the lower their income. Loneliness and social isolation increased the mortality rate by more than 25%.

"This initiative addresses many of the needs outlined in our 2025 Community Health Need Assessment comprehensively - from access, healthy fresh food, to building companionship for community development," said Rajika E. Reed, Ph.D., MPH, M.Ed., Vice President of Community Health for St. Luke's. "Along with the adults participating in the meal program, our partners in the community have been overwhelming positive about the benefits of this program, as it serves our senior

population - a group frequently missed."

The Older Adult Meal Program, providing affordable nutritious meals along with social contact, exemplifies the unique culture that has made St. Luke's the top-ranked health care system in the country. In 2025, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ranked St. Luke's #1 ahead of Houston Methodist and Mayo Clinic as the nation's top health system for quality, safety and patient experience - an objective recognition reaffirming St. Luke's preeminent position as a leader among the largest and most respected health care providers in the country.

"The food is good and it's good company, but

it's a great value," said Butch Cutrona of Plainfield Township, who was there with his partner, Theresa. While often it's the relatively low price of the meals that initially draws people, it's the quality and camaraderie that keeps them coming back.

"My daughter-in-law told me about this a long time ago," Theresa Rothrock said. "I never really thought about coming until one of the friends I have breakfast with said she was coming, so we came. That was two years ago, and we've been coming ever since."

Theresa said that the friends they meet make the evening meals special. She and Butch attend almost every weeknight.

"We sit with our friends and we laugh so much," she said. "People say they want to sit at our table because we're having so much fun."

Ralph and Jean said they attend two or three nights a week. He is a retired St. Luke's family practice internal medicine doctor, the middle of a three-generation chain of St. Luke's doctors starting with his father and now his son.

Ian Russell, the general manager for Dietary Administration at the An-

derson Campus, said they serve 60-100 Older Adult meals every day, averaging 63 meals per weekday over the last year. The Warren (NJ) Campus led the way by averaging 80 meals per weekday.

"We get a big crowd, about 20-30 who are regulars every day," he said. "Some of them get here well before we are ready to serve at 4 o'clock."

Sally Boyer, a Nutrition Services aide, is the shining star for the seniors on Wednesday nights. She knows everyone's name and everyone asks her what's being served before they get to the dinner line.

Hours vary a bit from campus to campus for the Older Adult meals, but they are served on weekdays Monday through Friday.

Many of the campuses also offer an expert speaker during the meals one night a month who speaks on physical or mental health topics.

Anderson Campus - 4-6:30 pm; Bethlehem Campus - 4-6 pm; Carbon Campus - 4-6 pm; GSL Campus - 4-6 pm; Lehighon Campus - 4-6 pm; Miners Campus - 4-6 pm; Monroe Campus - 4-6 pm; Sacred Heart Campus - 4-6; Upper Bucks Campus - 4-6 pm; and Warren Campus - 4-6 pm

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# Shapiro Administration Invests over \$10 Million to Strengthen Electric Grid Infrastructure and Help Prevent Power Outages

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded more than \$10 million to six companies to improve electric grid reliability and resiliency through the 2026 Pennsylvania Grid Resilience Grants (PA GRG) funding. The projects will prevent power outages, providing more reliability for emergency services, businesses, and residents.

“Now more than ever we need to build infrastructure that keeps our power grid reliable and mitigates challenges such as climate change-driven weather events, population growth, and aging infrastructure,” said DEP Secretary Jessica Shirley. “The Grid Resilience Grants provide important funding that brings more energy jobs, more investment in our communities, and a more resilient and reliable electric grid to Pennsylvanians.”

Frequent and extended outages also impact Pennsylvanian’s businesses, health care, emergency response, and utility services. The PA GRG funding helps DEP prioritize smart investments to increase the resilience and reliability of our electric transmission and distribution systems.

Over 20,000 Pennsylvanians in nine counties will experience significant improvements in their electric grid resilience and reliability as a result of this year’s grants. The work will be accomplished by over 40

energy sector job types including: electronic and general technicians, systems and electrical engineers, linemen, journeymen, and apprentices.

Activities in this round of the PA GRG grant include installing 100 pieces of cutting-edge smart grid equipment to provide protection and control via enhanced system monitoring to detect and prevent power outages.

Grants were awarded to: REA Energy Cooperative, \$1,500,000 award: The rural distribution system will be upgraded with over 70 smart grid technology equipment that will reduce outages to 9,000 rural customers. This project will decrease time to restore power and provide remote outage detection capabilities. Cambria, Indiana, and Westmoreland counties.

Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative, \$4,680,655 award: Northwestern will connect two substations with high-voltage power lines to allow for a more continuous flow of electricity from these substations to reduce the number of outages caused by disruptive events. This connection will reduce the number of outages for the area by 85 percent. Erie and Crawford counties.

Borough of Duncannon, \$507,840 award: The Borough will implement smart grid technology to isolate its system and add a connection point to loop their distribution area. This investment

will reduce outages by 25 percent. Perry County.

Borough of Schuylkill Haven, \$994,746 award: The borough will purchase an Advanced Metering Infrastructure and Supervisory Control Data Acquisition system (SCADA), providing data instantly to the borough. This will reduce response time to outages and provide resiliency to the community. Schuylkill County.

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, \$2,193,767 award: The rural electric cooperative will install a 1.5 MW battery energy

that supplies the county 911 center and other facilities around the I-81 corridor to reduce outages. The cooperative experienced several events in 2024 that resulted in outages to critical facilities. This project aims to reduce outages by 44 percent in the worst performing areas. Susquehanna County.

Borough of Hatfield, \$355,945, award: The borough will replace 56 outdated utility poles. This project will reduce maintenance and improve resiliency for the entire borough while using environmentally



friendly materials. Montgomery County.

The PA GRG Program is funded under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Grid Resilience State/Tribal Formula Grant Program. This year’s \$10 million PA GRG awards will leverage a total \$3 mil-

lion awardee cost share.

This is PA GRG’s second round of funded projects. All awards are pending U.S. Department of Energy’s confirmation. For more information on PA GRG, please see DEP’s Pennsylvania Grid Resilience Grant Program webpage.

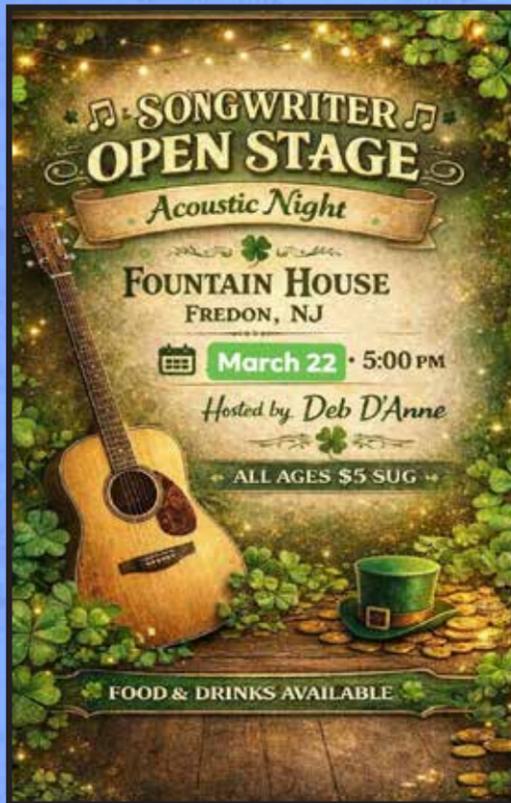
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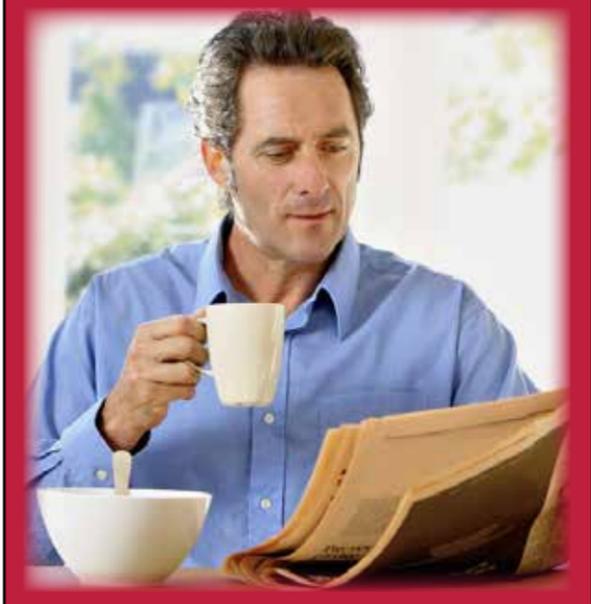
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## Garden Dilemmas? Ask Mary?



**Mary E. Stone**  
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Hello, fellow readers,  
Some walks happen deep in the woods, where the quiet invites reflection. Other walks take place along country roads where the stories are different—but no less revealing.

Jolee and I often walk along the road near my home. It's not the prettiest time of year when snow melts away, revealing litter thrown out of windows.

Many castaways are alcoholic beverages—spiked seltzers, beer cans, and tiny bottles of cinnamon whiskey. Seeing them makes me wonder about the stories behind them. Were they tossed intentionally to hide a habit from someone at home? Or discarded without any thought—buggering up the roadside drain-

age system. Or forever lingering in the woods, maybe ingested by wildlife, causing them harm.

Rather than being frustrated by it, as I used to be, I pick it up during road walks. I've learned that tending small things helps steady the heart during unsettled times. Picking up what doesn't belong reminds us that we can make the world a little better, even when life feels messy or uncertain.

I think of it as weeding out undesirables in the garden of life. There's even a name for the practice of collecting litter while out and about—plogging if you're jogging, planking if you're walking, and pliking if you're hiking.

Being part of the solution shifts anger and frustration into positive change. Imagine if we all did just that.

Thankfully, there is beauty beyond the litter, too. During the anomaly of overly warm days in the high 70s, as if on cue, the snowdrops popped out of the ground. One day, they weren't there. The next day they were.

Snowdrops (Galanthus) are those delicate white flowers that push through winter's last frost like tiny bells nodding toward spring.



They're also called Candlemas Bells because they often bloom near the Christian holiday of Candlemas on February 2nd. According to legend, after Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden and Eve grew weary of endless winters, an angel fashioned snowdrops to assure her winter wouldn't last forever—symbolizing hope as the first flowers to appear.

I've often wondered how the ones along the road arrived there. Perhaps someone planted them, though it seems unlikely. Maybe they were moved by birds, or perhaps scattered by angels. No matter how, seeing them always lifts my heart. Nature has a way of delivering encouragement exactly when we need it.

Jolee had her own moment of enthusiasm



during that walk. She suddenly dropped and rolled in a spot where my previous dog, Miss Ellie Mae, used to roll. It was one of those small reminders that life moves forward while still holding the memories of those we love who once walked beside us.

A little farther along the road, we passed a small pond. A thin layer of ice still clung to the center, but the edges had melted in the warmth. There, moving slowly through the weeds, was a hand-sized snapping turtle—as if inspecting to see whether spring had truly arrived. I couldn't get a photo of the little guy, but it made me think of my beloved brother Bill, who had an affinity for turtles.

The Canada geese seem to be conducting their own inspections, too. Their calls overhead these mornings announce that ponds and lakes are reopening for landings.

Meanwhile, other signs of growth are appearing. Daffodil foliage is pushing through the soil in my front garden; despite the recent upheaval caused by the construction of a new boulder wall, I adore replacing the telephone poles once there. Some bulbs were disturbed during the work, so it will be fun to see where they decide to emerge this year.

Gardens, like life, have a way of rearranging themselves. Lately, I'm reminded that even when life rearranges more than we expect, something hopeful is waiting just beneath the surface. And perhaps that is one of the wisdoms the shift from late winter to early spring offers us. After disruption, growth returns. Sometimes in the most unexpected places.

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## Letter to the Editor: Summary of the March 9, 2026 - Knowlton Township Committee Meeting

### Executive Session:

The Committee held an executive session at the beginning of the meeting to interview applicants for an open position.

JCP&L Representative Amy Overman, who works in the Municipal Affairs section of JCP&L, discussed improvements to the Township's electric grid that are planned by the company and responded to questions from the Committee and the audience. She was asked to speak in response to numerous complaints from residents about the reliability of their electric service.

Ms. Overman stated that JCP&L was undertaking a significant investment in infrastructure in Knowlton Township, focusing primarily on the distribution side of the grid, from substations to homes.

She explained that Knowlton is served by circuits coming out of four substations: the Blairstown, Columbia, Kittatinny and Pequest substations. The substation for the Columbia transmission line is located in Pennsylvania and is operated by a sister company of JCP&L, Met-Ed.

Ms. Overman recognized that residents have legitimate complaints and emphasized that JCP&L has embarked on an extensive program to improve the infrastructure of the system by upgrading equipment and having a more flexible tree cutting policy which allows off-cycle tree cutting between the scheduled four-year forestry maintenance cycle.

Ms. Overman mentioned a number of other steps that are being taken to increase the reliability and redundancy of the system. These include replacing standard poles with storm-rated poles, installing six ad-

ditional "Trip Saver" smart fuses that automatically restore power once a line is clear, thereby saving time and a trip by a lineman to do the work manually, and generally upgrading the infrastructure. Adding lines for redundancy on the Columbia circuit and installing a completely new Kittatinny circuit are also planned for this year. A JCP&L lineman, who accompanied Ms. Overman, noted that these are the most extensive set of improvements to Knowlton's grid that he has seen in 17 years with the company.

After Ms. Overman's presentation, the Township Committee and members of the public asked questions. The Committee thanked Ms. Overman for improving communication between the Township Committee and JCP&L and for being accessible and responsive at any hour.

One member of the audience expressed frustration that her house on Lime Kiln Road had experienced around 14 outages in the last year. Another resident, on the same road, reported that his house had low voltage for much too long until it was finally determined that the cause was a defective voltage regulator on the line. A third, who lived on Delaware Road related how a falling tree knocked out his service and, when it was restored, a surge caused over \$1,000 worth of damage to a number of different appliances. He asked JCP&L for compensation. They responded that the damage was not their fault and declined to compensate him.

A representative from Knowlton Fire and Rescue commented on an incident in which the squad was protecting the public from a potentially dangerous downed

wire. The squad had to wait 11 1/2 hours before JCP&L personnel arrived to ensure the site was safe. The KTRF member emphasized that he had great respect for the JCP&L line crews, who are highly dedicated and professional, and like the Knowlton squad, often work in extreme and dangerous conditions, but he said that a 11 1/2-hour wait is unacceptable. Ms. Overman agreed that such a wait was excessive.

Ms. Overman pledged to look into these complaints.

Committeewoman Starrs noted later in the meeting that she and Deputy Mayor Baley were attending a meeting with the NJ Board of Public Utilities to discuss Knowlton's electric grid later in the week.

### Ordinances

A number of ordinances were introduced. Two ordinances amended rules for administering the Township's low-income housing obligation so that they are consistent with the State's revised regulations. The votes to introduce the ordinances were all unanimous.

Perhaps the most significant ordinance discussed was designed to prohibit data centers in Knowlton Township. The ordinance was prepared by the Warren County Board of Commissioners for use by towns that would like to avoid these controversial facilities. The Township attorney will review the proposed ordinance to be sure that it is thorough before it is introduced.

### School Consolidation/Regionalization

The Committee passed a resolution expressing support for the School Regionalization Efficiency Program administered by the NJ Department of Community Affairs that provides grants to schools to study

the feasibility of consolidating their schools.

In expressing support for the resolution, Committeewoman Starrs noted that the Knowlton Elementary School has lost over \$1,000,000 in State funding since 2018. A school can, in some cases, raise the 2% limit on a tax increase without voter approval, and last year, the elementary school did so. Committeewoman Starrs said that Knowlton has the fifth highest tax rate in the County and that schools are driving the rate up.

The Committee passed the resolution unanimously, noting that the application itself must be submitted by the schools and all schools in the potential consolidation must agree to participate. Ms. Starrs said she had been in touch with the elementary school superintendent, who shared the grant with their board. She also emphasized that if the schools in the North Warren cluster apply for the grant, they would not be obligated to act on the results of the feasibility study. The study would simply present possible options and outline potential savings; it would not require the schools to move forward with consolidation.

### Public Comment

A resident who supports the initiative to bring back the railroad on the former Lackawanna right of way, spoke during the public

comment portion of the meeting. He said that he felt people at the last Township Committee meeting might have gotten the wrong impression that it is possible that the freight trains might run on the re-established Lackawanna cut-off. The resident categorically denied that freight trains would run on the refurbished cut-off, although they do run on the tracks in Pennsylvania.

At that meeting, Committeewoman Starrs she said listened to the recording of the public meeting on the subject to be sure that she had heard it correctly. She confirmed that the railway project representative did say they were looking to have a "harmonious marriage" of freight and passenger service. Despite that comment, she added that she hoped that Mr. Walsh's assessment is correct.

### Locks

The Committee authorized the purchase of new locks with keys that can't be copied for municipally-owned buildings at a cost of \$7,262. The members favoring the purchase pointed out that the existing keys can be duplicated leading to a large number of unauthorized keys in circulation which is a security concern. In addition, they point out that the large number of different keys required to access all the locks in Township buildings is cumbersome. Many of

the new locks would use the same key. Mr. Mazza said that he thought the purchase would save money in the long run.

Those opposed to the purchase pointed out the high cost, especially given our current economy, and that the present situation, although not ideal, was tolerable. The purchase was authorized by a vote of 3-2 with Committee members Shipps, Mazza and Baley voting yes.

### Spring Cleanup

The spring cleanup will be from June 1 to June 6. Vouchers should be available at the Knowlton Municipal Building in May.

### Community Day & 250th Celebration

Community day has been scheduled for October 3, 2026, and will incorporate a celebration of America's 250th anniversary. Mayor Shipps suggested the formation of a resident subcommittee to help plan events. Residents interested in joining should email Knowlton office assistant Maryann Gingerelli to express their interest at [administrativeasst@knowlton-nj.com](mailto:administrativeasst@knowlton-nj.com).

-Rene Mathez

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

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# From The Desk Of Senator Rosemary Brown - Wildcat Ridge Conditional Use Hearing in Archbald

This week, I attended the Wildcat Ridge conditional use hearing in Archbald to listen directly to residents and fully understand the concerns surrounding the proposed project. Unfortunately, public comment was cut short before I had the opportunity to speak. Regardless, hearing directly from residents during the public comment period and

having personal conversations with many of you is critical my work.

While Pennsylvania law ultimately gives municipalities authority over land-use decisions, it is my responsibility at the state level to ensure we have strong safeguards in place that protect residents, natural resources, and local infrastructure. Responsible development re-

quires careful planning, transparency, and a commitment to putting our communities first.

Northeast Pennsylvania has increasingly become a target for large-scale data center development proposals. While these projects may present economic opportunities, they also raise serious questions about water usage, energy demand, land use, and long-term



impacts on our communities. I have heard from hundreds of residents across Lackawanna, Monroe, and Wayne counties who share these same concerns.

That is why I introduced a "Residents First" legislative package to bring greater transparency and

accountability to the data center development process. My proposals would require developers to provide "will-serve" letters confirming that water, sewer, electric, and other infrastructure can support a project at full build-out before a formal appli-

cation is submitted. The legislation would also require an independent third-party water impact study at least 30 days prior to any formal application, ensuring communities have a clear understanding of how these facilities could affect local resources. In addition, my proposals would limit large-scale data center development to properly zoned industrial areas and direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study the long-term viability of this rapidly evolving technology. These steps are designed to ensure decisions are based on clear data and responsible planning, not rushed development.

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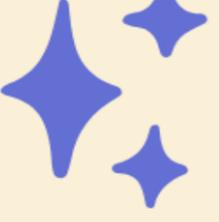
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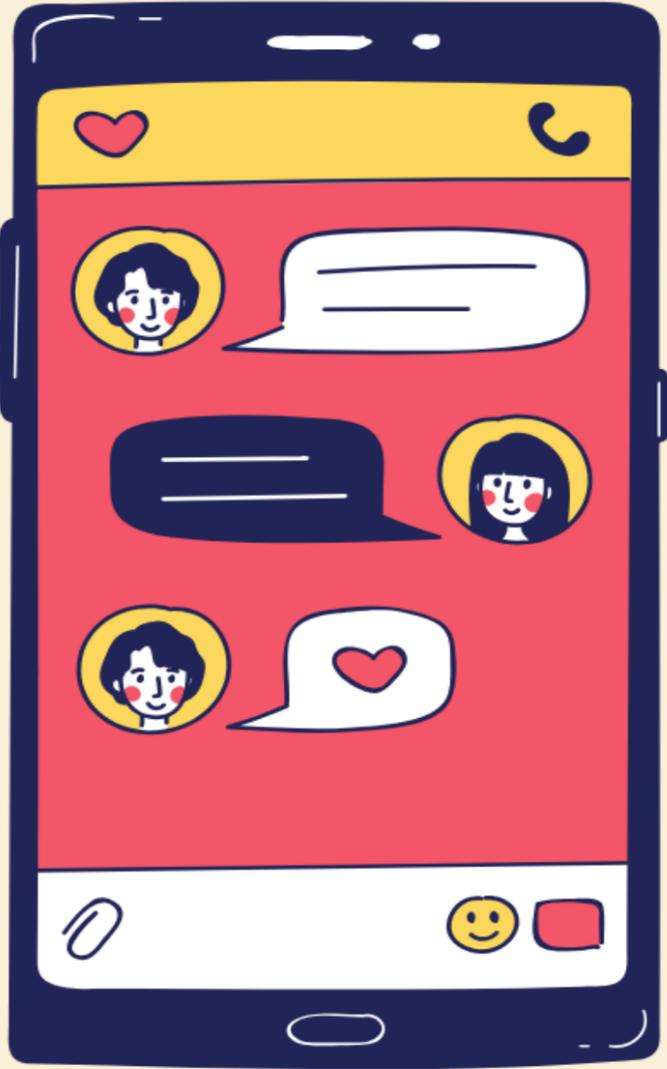
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# Assembly Transportation Committee Passes Bill Cracking Down on Illegal Limo Operators

New Jersey residents conveniently booking for-hire rides online are unknowingly being exposed to harm by a growing number of unlicensed limo operators.

The Assembly Transportation Committee on Monday took steps to protect drivers and passengers from the illegal chauffeur industry by clearing a bill (A1552), sponsored by Assemblyman Michael Inganamort, increasing penalties for certain limousine law violations.

“Legitimate limo drivers must pass criminal background checks and purchase a \$1.5 million

insurance policy, but illegal operators are skirting these safety regulations while also bypassing wage and tax laws. They are increasingly undermining professional limo services and putting unwitting passengers and their drivers in harm’s way,” Inganamort (R-Morris) said. “Currently, penalties are low compared to the potential profits these illegal operations can rake in, so raising the fines and consequences for violations should help deter some of these bad actors.”

The bill increases penalties for a third and subsequent violation of the fol-

lowing: operating a limo without a license issued by a municipality, driving a limo without a valid license, failing to carry the right insurance policy, exceeding the limo’s seating capacity, not having special registration plates, or not properly inspecting the limo. Violators would be subject to a \$7,500 fine, a six-month driver’s license suspension, and vehicle impoundment.

The Chauffeured Transportation Association of New Jersey has documented several cases of unlicensed operators advertising on online platforms and providing



for-hire transportation in New Jersey. Several unlicensed drivers believed they were adequately insured simply by increasing their personal policy limits, demonstrating a widespread misunderstanding of coverage requirements, as most per-

sonal auto policies have a for-hire exclusion. Therefore, passengers are being exposed to uninsured operators, while drivers face life-altering risks with no safety net.

“Unlicensed limo operators tend to target entertainment and sports ven-

ues, and airports, which means many areas in New Jersey are prime targets. To protect the public, drivers, and legal chauffeur businesses, New Jersey’s limo laws need to be updated, and that is what this bill does,” Inganamort said.

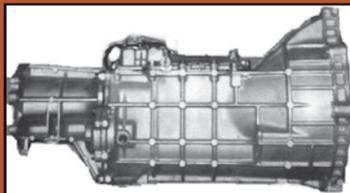
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64 Rt. 46, Columbia, NJ • 908-475-0060 • We Are Open 11am-11pm • 7 Days a Week

**Motel Rooms:**

**\$105/Night;  
\$500/Week;  
\$1,150/Mo.**

Includes: A/C & Heat,  
WiFi, Dish Network,  
Trash, Parking,  
Small Fridge  
& Microwave.

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For Motel Rooms!



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LEGENDARY  
STEAKS!**



**Taco Tuesday!  
\$7.99**



**Serving Breakfast  
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**Steamed  
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**Martini Monday!  
\$5 Wells**

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A BUDGET FRIENDLY WAY TO PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS WITH US

**WE ARE NOW OFFERING ONLINE ONLY ADVERTISING!**

Run your business on our website only, in our featured ads section, for as little as \$15/week  
Larger ads are \$25/week  
Contact Melissa to get started!  
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TOWNSHIP OF FRELINGHUYSEN

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JOIN US FOR AN EGG-CITING EVENT!

PICTURES WITH EASTER BUNNY!  
(Bring Your Own Camera)

**WHEN**  
MARCH 28 at 2 PM  
RAIN DATE: MARCH 29 at 2 PM

**WHERE**  
TOWN HALL PAVILION  
Frelinghuysen, NJ

**DETAILS**  
FREE FOR ALL AGES!  
DON'T FORGET YOUR BASKET!  
REGISTRATION STARTS 1:45 PM  
CATEGORIES FOR DIFFERENT AGES  
SWEET TREATS!

75ft BUCKET TRUCK

Free Estimates | Fully Insured

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For Fast Service, Call:  
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Promote Your Business in the Business Directory for ONLY \$230 for 12 Weeks  
Call 610-599-1952 or email thepressads@gmail.com to get started Today!

**ADVERTISE**

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Veteran Owned and Operated

# Classifieds

## Rentals

Office & Lot for Rent - Rt. 512, Pen Argyl. \$1,600/mo includes utilities. Text 484-542-8579 with Name, Address & Business Use. Will Respond to Text

## Help Wanted

Siding, Roofer, and Window Installer. Experienced only. Must have drivers license. Work available immediately. Call Comunale Construction at 610-588-6715 TS

Position for oil burner service tech! Must have experience in oil burner cleanings, service, and air conditioning. Blairstown & Belvidere areas. Call: 908-362-8910

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Henry Yeska & Son Septic Service Is Now Hiring CDL Drivers Class A & B and Laborers. Full Time & Part Time positions available. Experience preferred but not required. Will train on the job. **Please call the office at 610-759-3290.**

Part Time Tree Helper Wanted! Must Have Valid DL. Call 610-588-1034

Help Wanted Must Have Taken CDL Endorsment Class A or B Benefits Offered & Vacation Time Apply by Calling 610-759-3290

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CDL Class B  
P & S Endorsments  
Will Train.  
Call 973-383-2786  
stockerbus@gmail.com

Pen Argyl Area School District has a full-time aide and a part-time aide position available!  
Submit letter of interest and resume to:  
Pen Argyl Area School District  
Attn: Mrs. Mary Dillon, 1620 Teels Road, Pen Argyl, PA 18072 or email dillon.mary@penargylsd.org  
**APPLICATION DEADLINE: When position is filled**

## American Microsemiconductor Inc. is Hiring!

AMS is an online distribution platform. We are needing someone with FEDEX, UPS and DHL shipping knowledge. The job will be sorting / organizing, counting and loading merchandise strategically in preparation for shipments. This is a 'PULL-PACK-SHIP' position. Shipments will be domestic and international.

You must also receive incoming stock efficiently to effectively fulfill orders from our online store. There are general cleaning duties to achieve warehouse appearance standards for safety requirements. Training for the position will be in New Jersey in the vicinity of Morristown for approximately 3 - 4 months. The hours of operation are 8:30 am to 5 pm for Pennsylvania. When responding to this job offer, please leave your name, phone number and email address.

Compensation: \$19.00 / hour  
Experience level: entry level  
Job Title: Warehouse Position

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NJ: 908-531-2486, NJ13VHO0857300

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**Ruff-ly Purr-fect**  
436 S 1st St.  
Bangor, PA 18013  
or by calling  
**Laurie at:**  
**(610) 599-0454**

## Classified Ad Order Form

Non-commercial classified ads (Misc., Vehicles, Recreation, Wanted, Pets, Yard Sales) are \$5 per week, per inch (1.8" W x 1" H). There is no charge for Free items. Services, Rentals, Real Estate, Homes For Sale and Help Wanted ads are \$15 per week, per inch. Please specify the category in which your ad should appear, the size your ad should be (boxes on right), and how many weeks your ad will run. Please PRINT ad information.

Ads with Photos!  
**\$18**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY: \_\_\_\_\_

WEEKS RUNNING: \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT PAID: \_\_\_\_\_

Please PRINT Your Ad Information Below

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One inch  
(actual size shown here)

Two inches  
(actual size shown here)

CLASSIFIEDS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN NOON ON FRIDAY IN ORDER TO BE PRINTED IN THE UPCOMING EDITION.

All classified ads must be paid in full, in advance. Credit cards are NOT accepted for charges less than \$25. Classifieds may be submitted by mail: The PRESS Classifieds 106 Kline, St. Bangor PA 18013; email: thepressads@gmail.com or fax: 610-599-1185. Classifieds are NOT accepted by phone. Help Wanted ads are free for current advertisers.

Make Checks Payable to: The Free Weekly Press, LLC



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**"FAMILY OWNED & OPERATED"**

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COLLECTIBLES • SPORTS CARDS  
ONE ITEM OR ENTIRE ESTATES  
**HONEST & TRANSPARENT PRICING YOU CAN TRUST!**

**NOW AT OUR NEW LOCATION!**  
**128 RT. 94, BLAIRSTOWN, NJ**  
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**PRIVATE APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE**  
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**Special Easter Pricing:**

**Now - April 2nd**

**Full Page Ads: \$300 | Half Page Ads: \$200**

**Quarter Page Ads: \$100**

**3x5 ads: \$80 | 3x3 ads: \$68**

**2x3 ads: \$40 | 2x2 ads: \$25**

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