

# Scotch Plains NJ

## WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

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### THIRD UNION COUNTY DAY OF PRAYER DRAWS NEARLY 600

At a time when the nation is gripped by divisiveness and intolerance for those who differ from us is worn by many like a badge of courage, nearly 600 people from all walks of life came together for the Third Annual Union County Day of Prayer, held October 6 at The Parish Community of St. Helen in Westfield.

"Day of Prayer and Reflection: Honoring People of All Faith Communities" drew speakers and readers from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh faiths. They were joined by people of all races and nationalities, as well as more than 100 people with disabilities. The event featured prayers, meditations and songs.

The Annual Union County Day of Prayer is planned and orchestrated each year by the Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council, an organization comprising interfaith congregations and community-based nonprofits, including Community Access Unlimited (CAU). The council promotes inclusion of all people within the community and creates a clearing house of faith-based, nonprofit and government community services available to the public while bringing greater awareness of these services to the wider community, according to Sid Blanchard, CAU executive director.

"In these times when families are being rendered asunder, when communities are being torn apart, when someone who is different is being rejected, it is essential to come together," Blanchard said.

Rabbi Joel Abraham of the Temple Sholom in Scotch Plains said, "I think it's important to stand with people of other faiths whenever possible. Especially now when there is a force of division...we want to reach across the pew and see how we are more alike than different yet also celebrate the ways we are different."

Reverend Cynthia Cochran-Carney of the Willow Grove Presbyterian Church in Scotch Plains, said, "There are many misunderstandings in our country about different faith groups, many stereotypes. I want to promote the vision we are all called by God and need to respect each other."

The Venerable Klint Kaevalin from the Buddhist Dhammakaya Meditation Center in



Fanwood, said, "It's nice when we can come together and share peace and have a true commonality that we want to have goodness in the world."

Dr. Mohammad Ali Chaudry of the Islamic Society of Basking Ridge said, "Interfaith cooperation is critical for not only the Muslim community but all communities. I've been talking about how to confront and counter bigotry. I will know I am making a difference when I see a Muslim say something hateful about another group and another Muslim stand up and say, 'That's not right.' When a Jew says something hateful and another Jew says, 'That's not right.' And a Christian and so on."

Chaudry encouraged everyone in attendance to sign a pledge to "stand up for the other" that reads: "While interacting with members of my own faith or ethnic community, or with others, if I hear hateful comments from anyone about members of any other community, I pledge to stand up for the other and challenge bigotry in any form." The pledge form is available online at [www.standupfortheother.org](http://www.standupfortheother.org).

"If you hear something hateful and bigoted, if you don't speak out they'll think you agree with them," Chaudry said. "If we can all take enough of a stand speaking out that that's not right, we can make a difference."

CAU is a statewide Elizabeth-based nonprofit providing support programs and services to adults with disabilities as well as youth served under the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to enable them to live independently in the community, providing supports in areas including housing, vocational skills and life-skills training, education, advocacy and recreation.

#### About Community Access Unlimited

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating its 37th year in 2016, supports people with special needs in achieving real lives in the community. CAU provides support and gives voice to adults and youth who traditionally have little support and no voice in society. CAU helps people with housing, life skills, employment, money management, socialization and civic activities. CAU also supports opportunities for advocacy through training in assertiveness, decision-making and civil right. CAU currently serves more than 6,000 individuals and families, with the number served growing each year. For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908.354.3040, online at [www.caunj.org](http://www.caunj.org) or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202.

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## PROMOTE YOUR COMMUNITY EVENT

*Community service organizations, schools and sports teams are encouraged to submit news of upcoming events or highlights and photos from recent events.*

**Organizations who are interested in submitting content, please email [editor@rennamedia.com](mailto:editor@rennamedia.com)**

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## NELSON ESPELAND NAMED HOMEFIRST HERO

Allstate Exclusive Agent Nelson C. Espeland of Scotch Plains was recently presented with the Homefirst Hero Award at the Homefirst Evening of Thanks Awards Dinner and 30th Anniversary Celebration in Kenilworth. In addition, Allstate New Jersey Insurance Company was awarded as the 2016 Corporate Champion, donating more than \$106,000 in support of Homefirst's mission to provide permanent solutions to Central Jersey's homeless.

Homefirst delivers comprehensive solutions to homelessness by providing transitional and permanent housing, homeless prevention assistance, and social services to strengthen families and build communities. The agency serves more than 3,000 individuals and families annually, and is focused on building strong communities – one family at a time. For more information visit [www.homefirstinc.org](http://www.homefirstinc.org) or call Homefirst at 908-753-4001 ext. 117.

"I applaud our 2016 Homefirst Heroes and am deeply grateful for their financial donations and the time and talent they contribute to our mission," said Debbie-Ann Anderson, Homefirst Executive Director. "We couldn't do the work that we do without their support and that of our many other donors. This dinner is an expression of our appreciation and a way to recognize all that our supporters do for Homefirst and our clients."

Former Board of Trustees Vice President Nelson Espeland said, "I love seeing the joy on the faces of the children when they find they're going to move into their own home. There is no greater reward than to be a part of something that enables families to go from homelessness to hopefulness. I am honored to be chosen as a Homefirst Hero. I'm also proud to be a part of Allstate that is also being recognized as a Corporate Champion this year." Espeland served as a member of the Homefirst Board of Trustees from 1999 to 2015.

To accept the 2016 Corporate Champion award was Allstate New Jersey President John Kane. "We believe everyone deserves a good life," he said. That's why Allstate New Jersey is a proud supporter of Homefirst. We applaud their efforts and success in delivering housing, homeless prevention assistance and support services to deserving families. By partnering with Homefirst, Allstate agents, financial specialists and employees can help fulfill our commitment to helping make communities stronger, lives safer and futures brighter. Allstate Agents like Nelson Espeland are out there every day making a difference in the community. We are all honored to be recognized by Homefirst."

Photo by: Alyssa Gioia



(above l-r) Board Member Karen Oliver Moore presents Allstate Exclusive Agent Nelson Espeland from Scotch Plains with the 2016 Homefirst Hero Award.

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## FAMILY FUN WITH JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH, THE MUSICAL

Looking for some wonderful live theatre and a fun family outing? CDC Theatre in Cranford, New Jersey's oldest, continuously operating, community theatre, has just the thing! James and the Giant Peach, The Musical runs December 9th through the 11th at the theatre's home at 78 Winans Ave. in Cranford.

Based on the book James and the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl and featuring a wickedly tuneful score by the Tony Award-nominated team of Pasek and Paul (Dogfight and A Christmas Story the Musical) and a curiously quirky book by Timothy Allen McDonald (Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka, The Musical Adventures Of Flat Stanley), critics rave that James And The Giant Peach is a "masterpeach!"

The show is directed by Matthew Muccigrossi, a director new to CDC Theatre. "Roald Dahl's book James and the Giant Peach has always been a favorite of mine and I am ecstatic to have the opportunity to stage this production at CDC. The new musical version of the classic tale features a rich contemporary score by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul who wrote the scores for A Christmas Story and Dear Evan Hansen (opening on Broadway this month). The show contains both energetic dance numbers along with some beautiful, lush ballads." Muccigrossi gave some hints about the show: "The staging of this particular version is simplistic and imaginative as the actors use a series of puppets and everyday household props to bring to life the magical story and the colorful characters that inhabit Dahl's twisted world. It's an adventure that all ages will enjoy and provides a wonderful lesson as James and his friends define what it means to be a family."

Roald Dahl's fantastical tale of a boy, his insect friends, and their amazing journey across the ocean on a giant peach of fruit is a musical for the whole family to enjoy! When James is sent by his conniving aunts to chop down their old fruit tree, he discovers a magic potion which results in a tremendous peach - and launches a journey of enormous proportions. Suddenly, James finds himself in the center of the gigantic peach among human-sized insects with equally oversized personalities. After the peach falls from the tree and rolls into the ocean, the group faces hunger, sharks and plenty of disagreements. Thanks to James' quick wit and creative

thinking, the residents learn to live and work together as a family. The dangerous voyage is a success, but the adventure takes a whole new twist once they land on the Empire State Building.

Additional information and tickets can be found by visiting [www.cdctheatre.org](http://www.cdctheatre.org). Funding has been made possible in part by the NJ State Council on the Arts, Dept. of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, through a grant administered by the Union County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs.



(above l-r) Some of the cast of James and the Giant Peach: Arlene Britt, Mark Piltz, Melody Lieberman, Zach Love- Cranford resident, Mallory Ann, Rachel Valovcin, Justin Luckenbaugh, Adena Weisholtz- Scotch Plains resident.

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<small>Topped with Sauerkraut &amp; Yellow Mustard</small>	
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Firehouse Burger	5.97
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Crispy Chicken Ranch Blt	6.75
<small>Breaded Chicken, American Cheese, Applewood Bacon, Lettuce, Tomatoes, Ranch dressing, Deli Bun</small>	
Chicken Parmigiana	6.95
<small>Breaded Chicken, homemade Marinara sauce, Mozzarella Cheese, Hoagie Bun</small>	
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Contributing Author: Susan Baldani, a life member of the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad.

We're often reminded that we should change the batteries in our smoke detectors when we change the clocks twice a year. This one small act could save your and your family's lives.

According to the Red Cross, in the United States seven people die every day in a house fire, and 36 are injured. Take steps now to avoid being one of these statistics. Besides having a working smoke detector (and carbon monoxide detector), we also should focus on preventing fires in the first place.

Cigarettes are the leading cause of fire deaths, so smoke outside and dispose of cigarette butts properly. Cooking fires are also very common, and a small fire extinguisher in every kitchen could prevent a tragedy. Candles might smell nice and look pretty, but left unattended they can lead to big problems. Use the LED versions instead. Clogged dryer vents are another huge cause of fires. Make sure you not only clean your lint trap regularly, but also have your vents cleaned out by a professional at least every couple of years. Fireplaces and flues also need to be maintained, and every fireplace should have a screen in front of it. Portable heaters should be kept away from anything flammable and turned off upon leaving a room. Also, turn off all appliances when leaving the home.

In the case of a fire, everyone in the household should know what to do. A plan needs to be made

beforehand, such as where to meet once you leave the house. You should practice a fire drill using this plan at least a couple of times a year. Once you get out, stay out, and call 911 immediately.

Also, don't forget to place stickers on your window letting the firemen know if there are any pets inside. These can be found at most pet stores.

The American Red Cross has a fire safety checklist that is invaluable. You can find it here at

[http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA\\_CustomProductCatalog/m4340073\\_FireSafety.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4340073_FireSafety.pdf)

The Scotch Plains Rescue Squad is a volunteer organization of Neighbors Helping Neighbors. With over 90 volunteers, we answer calls not only in Scotch Plains but in surrounding towns as well when needed. Besides answering calls, you will see our ambulances at many special events held in town, such as Scotch Plains Day, the Memorial Day Parade, high school football games, and the summer concerts on the Village Green. We are also available to provide demonstrations for Boys and Girls Scout troops, clubs, and any other group that may be interested in what we do.

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## MORE THAN 180 WINTER COATS COLLECTED

Congregation Beth Israel in Scotch Plains collected more than 180 winter coats, which were donated to men, women and children in need through Goodwill of Springfield, New Jersey. Volunteers from the synagogue's Social Action Committee conducted a month-long coat drive collection, which culminated on Sunday, November 6. Seventh-grade students in Congregation Beth Israel's Religious School

helped sort and bag the coats when the drive ended. The students also wrote warm greetings and drew uplifting pictures to be left as "a note in the coat" in the pockets of outerwear going to children. Congregation Beth Israel's Social Action Committee sponsors a wide range of outreach projects throughout the year to help people in need in Scotch Plains and surrounding communities.

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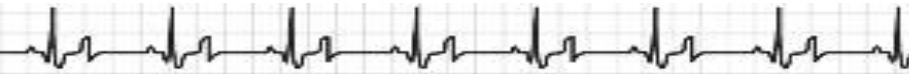
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(above l-r) Seated: Nicole Laregina, Sara Durand, Amie Berlant, Alexandra Schulman, Taylor Gregory, Anne (Fletcher) Lynch; Back row: Jacqueline Santos, Catherine Hoffman, Ellen Bifani, Karen Glod, Virginia Casazza, and Joseph Cistaro. Missing from photo is Anthony Bruno.



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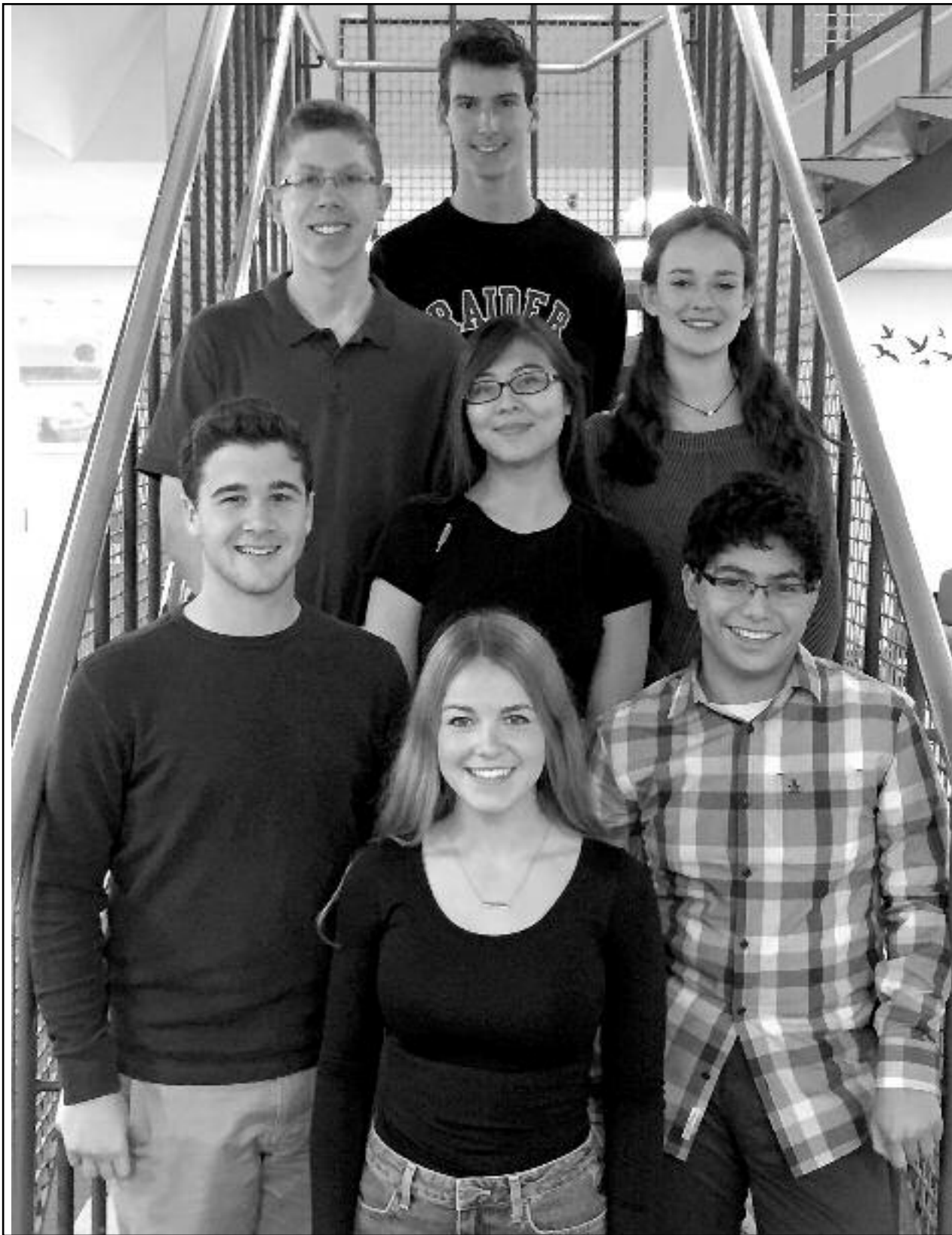
GIVEAWAYS FROM: 

\*Metal Mike Chasciak has recorded and toured the world several times over with Heavy Metal's elite, has appeared on albums totaling well over a million sold, and is a long standing guitarist to Grammy award recipient, Judas Priest's Rob Halford in the Metal God's solo endeavor Halford. Mike tours internationally as a solo artist with other metal gods, and has played in over 20+ countries while sharing tours with bands such as Motley Crue, Iron Maiden, Guns N' Roses and Ozzy Osbourne.

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# SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD HIGH SCHOOL ANNOUNCES COMMENDED STUDENTS IN THE 2017 NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Principal, Dr. David Heisey, recently announced that eight Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School students have been named Commended Students in the 2017 National Merit Scholarship Program.

Commended Students are being recognized for the exceptional academic promise demonstrated by their outstanding performance on the qualifying test used for program entry.

*(left) Scotch Plains Fanwood High School 2017 Commended Students – National Merit Scholarship include Caroline O. McNichol, Max L. Mazursky, Isaac Velasquez, Sydney Mills, Justin R. Greenman, Julia G. Guarneri and Lucas Stein. Deblina Mukherjee –not pictured.*

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## ATTORNEY SETTLES HOME EXPLOSION LITIGATION FOR \$975,000.00

Attorney David C. Bendush announced settlement of a lawsuit arising from a home explosion in Hunterdon County in September of 2014. The blast was caused by a contractor who was converting the home of his clients, from oil to natural gas. The clients were in the home with their infant daughter at the time of the explosion and fire. Davis Heating and Cooling was attempting without success to purge the new gas lines. Large amounts of natural gas were caused to accumulate inside the basement until the gas exploded, nearly levelling the structure and knocking the clients to the ground where they stood. Mr. Bendush litigated the liability issues aggressively, and attained the unusual result of summary judgment for plaintiff. The defense had little choice but to settle quickly and on favorable terms, in order to avoid a trial.

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## SPFHS SENIOR SCORES HIGH ON ACT



(above) Deblina Mukherjee, Scotch Plains Fanwood High School Senior, earned the highest composite score of 36 on the ACT college admissions and placement exam. Only 1 in 4,000 test takers achieve this score. Congratulations to Deblina!

## SERVICE LEAGUE THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS BOUTIQUE

Beginning December 6 the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League Thrift Shop's Christmas Boutique will be opened featuring new, never used items.

The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League is located at 1741 East 2nd St., Scotch Plains, NJ. Hours are Tuesday thru Friday 10 a.m.- 2:30 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Free parking is available on the street and in the rear of the building (enter parking lot via Willow Ave.).

The League is a non-profit organization that

has served our communities since 1974. New and gently used donations are always welcome during hours of operation. Since its founding, the League has donated \$1.2 million for local causes. Anyone interested in learning more about the League or League membership is invited to call 908-322-5420, visit our website at [www.scotchplainslthriftshop.weebly.com](http://www.scotchplainslthriftshop.weebly.com) or speak to any of our volunteers at the shop. Check out our Facebook page "Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League" and give us a "Like."

## MENORAH LIGHTING SET FOR DECEMBER 24TH

The Scotch Plains Business and Professional Organization and the Township of Scotch Plains will host the 2nd Annual Menorah Lighting on Saturday, December 24th at 6:30 pm. Festivities

will include a light show and refreshments. The Chabad of Union County will preside over the lighting. The event will be held at 430 Park Avenue; the Alan Augustine Village Green.

## AUDITIONS FOR NOEL COWARD'S BLITHE SPIRIT

CDC Theatre, New Jersey's oldest continuously operating community theatre will hold auditions for Noel Coward's Blithe Spirit on December 12 and 13 at 7pm.

All auditions and rehearsals will take place at the theatre's home at 78 Winans Ave., Cranford, NJ. The production is scheduled for February 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 2017.

Winner of the 2009 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Revival, the smash comedy hit of the London and Broadway stages, this much-revived classic from the playwright of Private Lives offers up fussy, cantankerous novelist Charles Condomine, re-married but haunted

(literally) by the ghost of his late first wife, the clever and insistent Elvira who is called up by a visiting "happy medium", one Madame Arcati. As the (worldly and un-) personalities clash, Charles' current wife Ruth is accidentally killed, "passes over", joins Elvira and the two "blithe spirits" haunt the hapless Charles into perpetuity.

Additional information can be found by visiting [www.cdctheatre.org](http://www.cdctheatre.org). Funding has been made possible in part by the NJ State Council on the Arts, Dept. of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, through a grant administered by the Union County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs.

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## TINY TIM CAROL NIGHT

On the evening on Wednesday, December 7, from 4 – 9 p.m., carolers supporting the Tiny Tim Fund will be singing their hearts out and spreading peace, joy, and love to all ears that are open to them! Residents, be sure to leave an outdoor light on so that our community songbirds will know that they are welcome at your doorstep. No voice will be denied a holiday song booklet and no age is too young or too old to participate! This annual event is truly a family affair: “The more carolers on the streets, the merrier!” jested, Barbara Avilo, President of the non-profit corporation founded in 1983 and operated throughout Scotch Plains – Fanwood.

The Tiny Tim Fund is committed to

continually and tirelessly contributing aid to local families who are suffering financially due to medical, dental, psychiatric, or other significant expenses. All donations are welcomed on behalf of the core team, including Barbara, Flavia Blechinger, and Mari Mc Devitt, as well as the many families in desperate need.

If possible, call ahead to Barbara Avilo at (908) 322-4472 to learn about designated meeting spots and secure your “Caroling Kit”. Residents are also invited to jump in with friends and neighbors at any point! To end the night, Stage House Tavern, located at 366 Park Avenue in Scotch Plains, will greet all participants with warm desserts and hot chocolate.



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## LUMINARY SALE

During the month of December, the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary club will sell Luminaries at the Fanwood Department of Public Works Building on Manfra Way off of North Avenue (across from the Fanwood Public Library).

The sale dates are December 3, 10, 11, 17, 18, from 9AM to 3PM and December 24 - 9am to 12pm.

The luminary kits cost 75 cents apiece in all quantities and include paper bags, candles and sand. Customers are encouraged to bring buckets, boxes or plastic bags to transport the sand.

Luminaries are traditionally used to illuminate the streets on Christmas Eve. A candle is nestled in sand at the bottom of a paper bag and placed along sidewalks to create a beautiful walkway. The candles are then lit at dusk on Christmas

Eve. Some neighborhoods in the area get together and buy hundreds of kits to create an amazing display.

All proceeds from the sale will be used to fund the various charitable and humanitarian projects that Rotary supports, both locally and overseas. The Rotary Club will also be collecting canned food for their annual Holiday Food Drive to support local food pantries.

The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club has been serving the community since 1938. The club meets on Wednesdays at noon at the Stage House Restaurant and at 6pm at Darby Road on the last Wednesday of the month.

Guests are invited to attend and learn about the good that Rotary is doing worldwide. For further information about the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary club, go to fsrotary.org.



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## EARLY LITERACY KITS NOW AVAILABLE AT THE SCOTCH PLAINS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Caregivers can now share the joy of reading and learning together with their little ones by checking out the Scotch Plains Public Library's new Early Literacy Kits. Each kit is created around a single theme, including colors, food, opposites, and many more. Each kit includes information and hands on activities. Patrons can check out one of these kits for two weeks with their library cards.

The kits are inspired by the Every Child,

Ready to Read @your library initiative of the Association for Library Services to Children and the Public Library Association. The program invites caregivers to talk, sing, read, write and play with their children to help embrace early learning skills. The kits being offered by the Scotch Plains Public Library are meant to help children develop skills for when they are ready to start Kindergarten.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HELP AT BLOOD DRIVES

New Jersey Blood Services, a division of New York Blood Center, which supplies blood products and services to 60 hospitals throughout the state, is in need of volunteers at blood drives. The blood service volunteer is an integral member of the collection team whose task it is assist donors with registration, escorting and

canteen duties, and to watch for post donation reactions. Volunteers should have the ability to relate to the public, be able to perform different jobs as needed and have the willingness to follow the rules. For additional information contact, Manager of Community Relations, R. Jan Zepka at 732-616-8741 or rzepka@nybloodcenter.org.

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Sunday Eucharists at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.  
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**CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE**  
December 24-Christmas Eve  
4:00 p.m. Children's Service of Lessons and Carols  
6:00 p.m. Candlelight Eucharist with Soloists  
8:00 p.m. Candlelight Eucharist with Sanctuary Choir, Bells and Instrumentalists

**DECEMBER 25**  
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<p>7</p> 	<p><i>Have a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year!</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Thank you, Joe and Tina Renna</p>		<p>8</p> 																				
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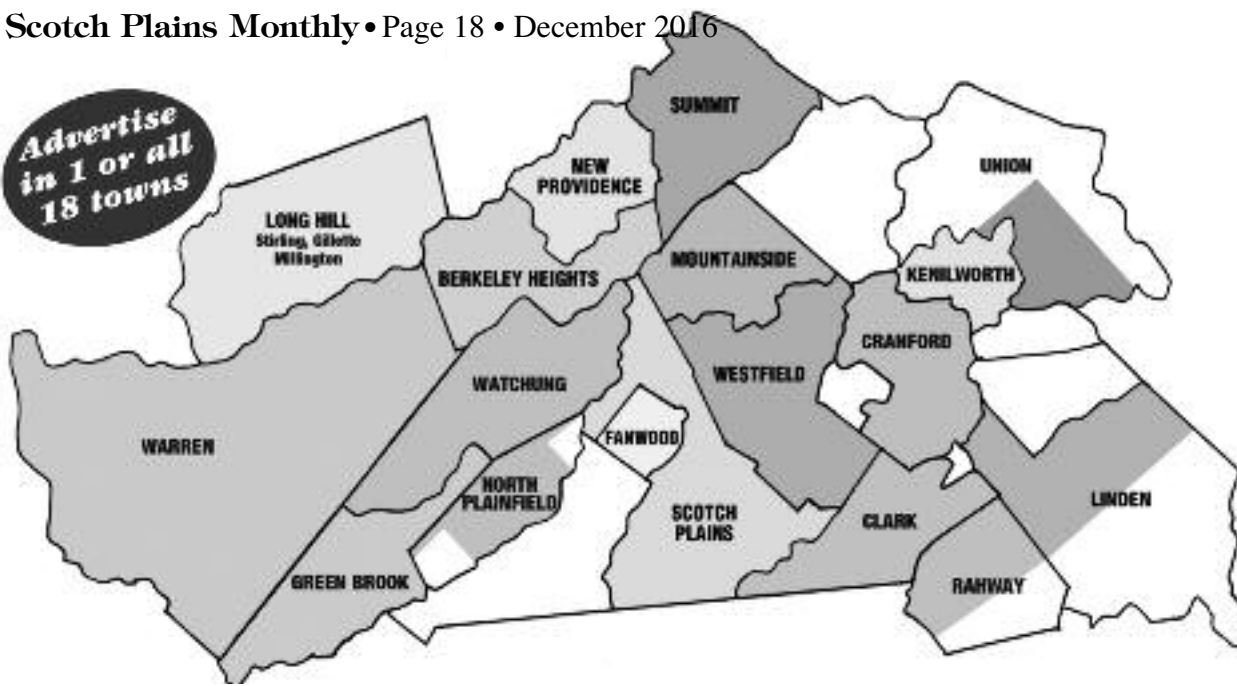
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