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UNION'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

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# CLASS OF 1976 50 YEAR CLASS REUNION SET FOR SEP. 26TH

*Submitted by Gina Novellino Williams*

The years have passed quickly and now it is time to celebrate. Join us as we celebrate 50 years since graduation - a major, once-in-a-lifetime milestone! As the Bicentennial Class of 1976, we shared a truly historic year - and now it is time to reconnect, reminisce about the past, catch up on life's journeys, and make new memories together.

The Class of 1976 was the inaugural class to attend Central Six. It was the beginning of us coming together as one. After our 6th grade year, we went our respective ways to attend either Burnet or Kawameeh Junior High Schools until we were reunited at Union High School for grades 10-12. Our Senior year was newsworthy as we experienced the unexpected German Measles outbreak where we lined the hall of the school to receive the German Measles vaccination. So, several "firsts" for our class - Central Six, German Measles, and being the Bicentennial class.

GRADUATION DAY! JUNE 20, 1976 marked the eventful day for over 700 Union High School students. Under the blazing sun, we heard the dedication of Memorial Field to Mr. Cooke, speeches given by Dr. Fleischer, Mr. Portnoy, and then finally our own names being called to receive our diplomas. Unfortunately, the ceremony was cut short due to an unexpected thunderstorm. However, we made it Class of 1976!

And now another "first" as we celebrate our 50th Class Reunion. The kickoff of our celebration will begin on Friday, September 25, 2026 at 3:30 p.m. with a Time Capsule Reveal on the front lawn of Union High School. This should be hilarious as who can remember what was put in it 50 years ago?! Following the "Reveal," Alumni will tour the high school and pictures will be taken. Come join in the fun!

Please RSVP to Debbie Socolow Earley (meryl58@aol) by August 15th.

The 50th Reunion celebration will be held on Saturday, September 26, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. at The Gran Centurions, 440 Madison Hill Rd. in Clark. The cost is $115.00/person and includes food, an open bar, and music along with a few other "surprises". It will be great to see as many of the Alumni as possible and share in this momentous occasion! The deadline to RSVP is August 15, 2026.

We hope you will join us in celebrating the friendships and memories that have lasted half a century. We can't wait to see you! Let us come together and celebrate!

For any additional information, please visit our Facebook page (UHS CLASS OF 1976 - 50TH REUNION) or contact Debbie Socolow Earley at meryl58@aol.com.

*(above) Union High School class of 1976's 25th reunion in 2001 at Martell's Tiki Bar, Point Pleasant Beach Boardwalk.*

*(above, front, l-r) Union High 1976 Senior Class Officers: Shari Chrystal - Vice President, Debbie Socolow - President, Liz Bellantoni - Secretary, Karen Dunleavy - Treasurer. (back, l-r) Senators: Judy Hondo, Stephen Earley, Rhonda Wasserman, Ed Caruso, Terry Malczynski.*

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# MACNAMARA AND MORAN CONTRIBUTE TO A NEW BOOK ON THE JOY OF THEATRE

As summer began, a new book that celebrates the joy of watching or participating in theatre productions made its debut. "Marquee Moments" is a new book by Dr. Phillip Sprayberry that features reflections of some 40 different theatre artists about their experiences as actors, theatregoers, directors, and staff spanning both amateur and professional theatre. "To be clear," writes Sprayberry in his introduction, "these essayists are by people who love the theatre, wanted to share some vivid memories of their special moments, and have recorded them for you to enjoy as well."

The anthology is divided into five segments: "From the Start" (first experiences in theatre), "From the Seat" (audience recollections), "From the Stage" (acting memories), "From the Staff" (front-of-house, backstage), and "From the Rest" (other memories of theatre). It features varied, accessible stories, including memories of directing children's shows, a "Les Miserables" tour stop in San Francisco during the 1989 earthquake, a front-of-house confrontation, and a personal history told through viewings of "A Little Night Music".

Two local Union County natives are among those represented in the collection. Deirdre Louise MacNamara, originally from the Elmora section of Elizabeth, and currently a NYC-based playwright, contributed "To the Stage", about why she fell in love with theatre, and "What A Way to Spend the Day!" dealing with the magic of theatre. Maurice J. Moran of Rahway contributed "R&G Are Dead" about his life-long love of this alternate version of Hamlet; "Showstoppers" about personally experiencing moments of exactly that; and "Show Beginners" about why he spent 37 years of his life directing educational theatre.

*(above, l-r) Lead author Phillip Sprayberry, with contributors Deirdre Louise MacNamara and Maurice J. Moran at the book launch held in early June.*

Courtesy photos

The book is available from Amazon and B&N online in paperback or eBook editions. It is also on sale at Here's the Story bookstore in Union.


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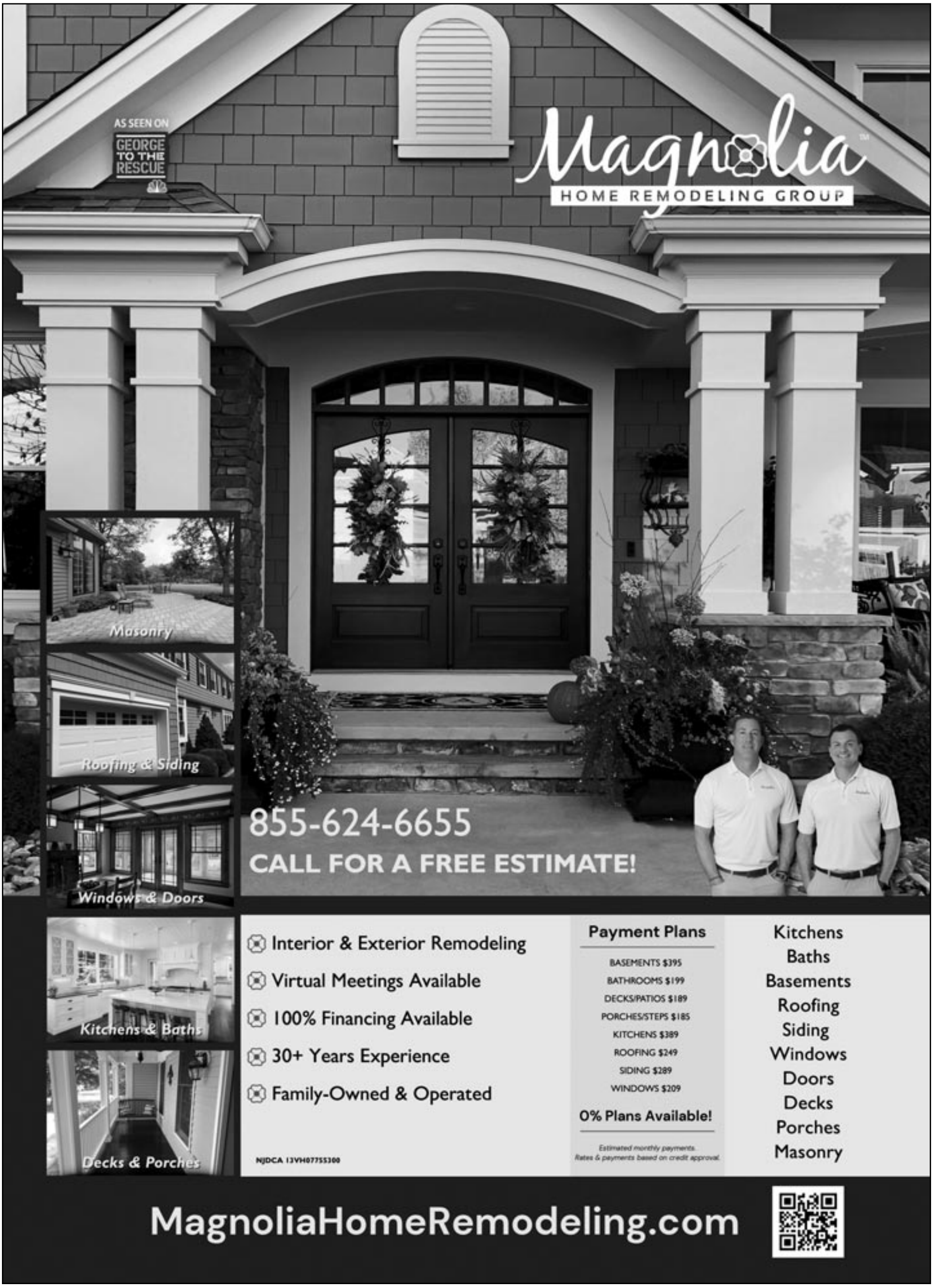
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# AUGUST EVENTS AT THE UNION PUBLIC LIBRARY

Registration is required for all events. To register visit the library, or online at uplnj.org.

***Adult Services at (908)-851-5450 extension 3, or our Vauxhall Branch at (908)-851-5451, or check out our website at uplnj.org or visit us at the Main Library at 1980 Morris Avenue or at our Vauxhall Branch at 123 Hilton Ave.***

**Black Inventors Throughout American History (Vauxhall Branch Library)**

***Mon. Aug 3rd @ 6:00 pm***

Black inventors in American history have fundamentally transformed daily life, science, and industry, despite systemic barriers. Please join us as we watch a documentary on Benjamin Banneker, George Washington Carver, Lewis Latimer, and many more throughout black history. Attendees will learn about their legacy, their inventions and their story. A discussion will follow the documentary.

**UCNJ Instant Decision Day (Main Library)**

***Tues. Aug 3rd @ 3:00 pm - 7:00 pm***

Schedule yourself through UPL for 1-on-1 help with UCNJ on their application process. Get assistance with items such as: general questions, applications, help getting their transcripts sent to them, and more. Appointments are 20 minutes each available on a first come first served basis.

We ask that you arrive timely for your appointment, as if you do not, the next appointment may be served ahead of you to ensure no delays in the process.

**Unwine & Paint (Vauxhall Branch Library)**

***Wed. Aug 5th @ 6:00 pm***

Please join us for an evening at the library as Newark resident, Ms. Lelia Stevenson, leads attendees for a fun and relaxing evening of painting!

**Candle-Making Workshop (Main Library)**

***Mon. Aug 10th @ 6:00 pm***

Check in at the Union Public Library and express your creative side at our candle-making workshop led by Salimah Scott, the talent behind Urban GLO. Limited slots available for this hands-on experience to crafting your own personalized candle.

Register early to reserve your place in this truly unique experience. Registration limited to UPL card holders only.

**Vauxhall Negro League Baseball Club (Vauxhall Branch Library)**

***Mon. Aug 10th @ 6:00 pm***

Are you a baseball fan and love history? Perhaps you are a fan of Satchel Paige or the Kansas City Monarchs?

Come join us where our goal is to preserve the history of Negro League Baseball.

Our meetings will consist of presentations, discussions, film viewings, book talks, and much more.

**Chair Yoga at Vauxhall (Vauxhall Branch Library)**

***Thur. Aug 13th @ 9:30 am***

Take a deep breath with friends and stretch! From beginners to professionals, join this popular class as a bi-weekly series. Presented by the Gateway Family YMCA.

**Made in New Jersey: Artistry, Machinery and History in the Garden State (Main Library)**

***Thur. Aug 13th @ 6:00 pm***

New Jersey is famous for a lot of things, but did you know this small state can take credit for the sewing machine, the phonograph, and even a phony alien invasion? Join Liberty Hall educators as they use artifacts and resources from the museum's collection, to highlight all of New Jersey's most famous inventions, innovators, and ideas.

**Dapper Dan: A Film & Community Discussion (Vauxhall Branch Library)**

***Mon. Aug 17th @ 10:30 am***

Daniel Day, known as Dapper Dan, is a Harlem couturier and a foundational architect of global streetwear. His store, Dapper Dan's Boutique, is most associated with introducing high fashion to hip hop culture. He is one of street couture's most influential and most mythical characters who has changed fashion forever.

**Build Your Balance (Main Library)**

***Wed. Aug 19th @ 10:30 am***

It's more important than ever to avoid the risks of falling as we age. Through gentle strength exercises, and stepping strategies, learn to keep your body balanced in different situations.

**Adult Game Night (Vauxhall Branch Library)**

***Wed. July 19th @ 6:00 pm***

Are you a game enthusiast? Do you want to meet new people? Come join us as we play classic games for a fun and relaxing night.

**Adult Dance Fitness (Vauxhall Branch Library)**

***Mon. Aug 24th @ 6:00 pm***

Get your exercise in with a fun cardio workout featuring hip-hop inspired dance moves, presented by Tiffany Steele!

**Union Public Library's Silent Book Club (Main Library)**

***Mon. Aug 24th @ 6:00 pm***

Join us for Union Public Library's Silent Book Club. There's no assigned reading. All readers are welcome to join in, from fiction and non-fiction to ebooks and more! Bring your own book and join us as we read in quiet camaraderie.

**ESL Conversation Group (Main Library)**

***Tues. Aug 25th @ 6:00 pm***

Join us at the Union Public Library for our English Conversation Group. English is a major barrier to health for many within our community. This ESL-adjacent program offers monthly, 2-hour group sessions to support English speaking, writing, and listening skills. While loosely structured, sessions are informal and use ESL books, games, audio lessons, and role play to build proficiency with the English language.

**Soul Food: A Film & Community Discussion (Vauxhall Branch Library)**

***Wed. Aug 26th @ 6:00 pm***

Soul food is a rich and enduring tradition that holds deep cultural meaning for the African American community. Please join us as we watch a documentary that explores the soul food tradition, its relevance to black cultural identity, and its continuing popularity despite the known dangers of high-fat, high-calorie diets. The result is an absorbing and ultimately inspiring look at the cultural politics of food and the complex interplay between identity, taste, power, and health.

**Minding the Mess Introduction with Zaira (Main Library)**

***Thur. Aug 27th @ 6:00 pm***

There's a unique beauty in the intersection of order and emotion; of putting physical things in place while acknowledging the mess that life can be. That's where Minding the Mess was born; in the space where empathy meets action. Whether you're navigating grief, rediscovering your identity, or just trying to make your home work for this chapter of life, Minding the Mess is here not just to tidy your home, but to honor your journey.

**Healthy Pasta Alternatives (Vauxhall Branch Library)**

***Mon. Aug 31st @ 6:00 pm***

Pasta is a dish almost everyone loves! For some, pasta is a way of life. For others pasta is an occasional treat because it is a high carb dish. Please join us as Maryanne Christiano-Mistretta discusses healthy pasta options such as: brown rice noodles, quinoa pasta, chickpea pasta, lentil pasta, seaweed noodles, buckwheat noodles, squash pasta, Miracles Noodles, and more! Attendees will get to try samples and there will be giveaways including a gift card.

**Meditation (Virtual on Zoom)**

***Mondays @ 6:30 pm***

Join Bindu Bhatt for any of her virtual evening meditation sessions. No prior experience is necessary. Bindu has practiced meditation for over 30 years and wants to share her insight.

**Chair Yoga (Main Library)**

***Tuesdays @ 9:15 am***

Take a deep breath with friends and stretch! From beginners to professionals, join this popular class as a weekly series. Presented by the Gateway Family YMCA. Space is limited, please register to secure your chair!

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# COMMUNITY GARDEN OPEN HOUSE

***Submitted by Janet Sangekar***

On Saturday, August 8, 2026 the Township of Union Community Garden, at the Eleanor R. Erikson Park, located at Liberty Avenue and Bancroft Avenue's, is hosting an open house from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There is a tour scheduled for 11 a.m. Come out and learn about small space gardening and meet the gardeners and share experiences with them.

The Township of Union Community Garden was established in 2013 by four Township Garden Club ladies who shared a vision to develop a sustainable and organic community garden.

The Township of Union allowed us to use a fenced-in abandoned playground which had a water source. Through fundraising and the help from the Township DPW eight beds were built the first year. Thirteen years later we have 45 beds rented and plan to expand to 53 beds within the next three years.

We have designated garden beds for donations which we have given produce, including garlic, tomatoes, peppers, squash and herbs, to the Township Senior Center. We have donated our saved seeds to the seed library at the Union Library.

We also have help at our monthly work parties from the UHS Key Club and Interact Club many of whom have learned to garden.

We have an established certified butterfly garden/pollinator garden. We are a member of the New Jersey Native Plant Society.

New for 2026 and in celebration of our nation's 250th anniversary we have planted a 3 Sisters Garden to share with our community. The Three Sisters planting method originates from Indigenous agricultural traditions.

For further information or would like to make a donation, please contact us at twpunioncommunitygarden@gmail.com, or visit us on our Facebook page, Township of Union Community Garden.

Courtesy Photo

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# NATIONAL NIGHT OUT - AUGUST 4TH

***Township of Union Police Department***

Mark your calendars and spread the word, it's that time of year again for National Night Out! Be sure to join us on Tuesday, August 4th (rain date August 11th), from 5pm-9pm at our

Township of Union NJ Police Department's Headquarters, located at 981 Caldwell Avenue, to celebrate our Township of Union, New Jersey - Government community.

Don't miss this chance to engage in free fun activities, demos, games, learn about local businesses and vendors, and enjoy some delicious treats! If you require any additional assistance or have any questions or concerns regarding our Annual National Night Out, please feel free to contact the Township of Union NJ Police Department's Community Policing/Bike Unit. The Community Policing/Bike Unit can be reached at 908-851-5252, or via email at communitypolicing@Uniontownship.com.

Be sure to visit our new website, unionpd.com, and stay updated with UPD!

# BLOOD DRIVE AUG 16

On Sunday, August 16, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Holy Spirit Parish, 970 Suburban Road, Union, will hold a blood drive by the staff of Vitalant.

Appointments are recommended, but walk-ins are welcome. Donors may schedule their appointments at donors.vitalant.org and entering Blood Drive Code: XHSCU.

$15 rewards gift cards as thank-you's are available by using the code AUGUST15-2026-V when scheduling. Refreshments for donors will be available in the parish hall.

For more info, please call 877-258-4825.

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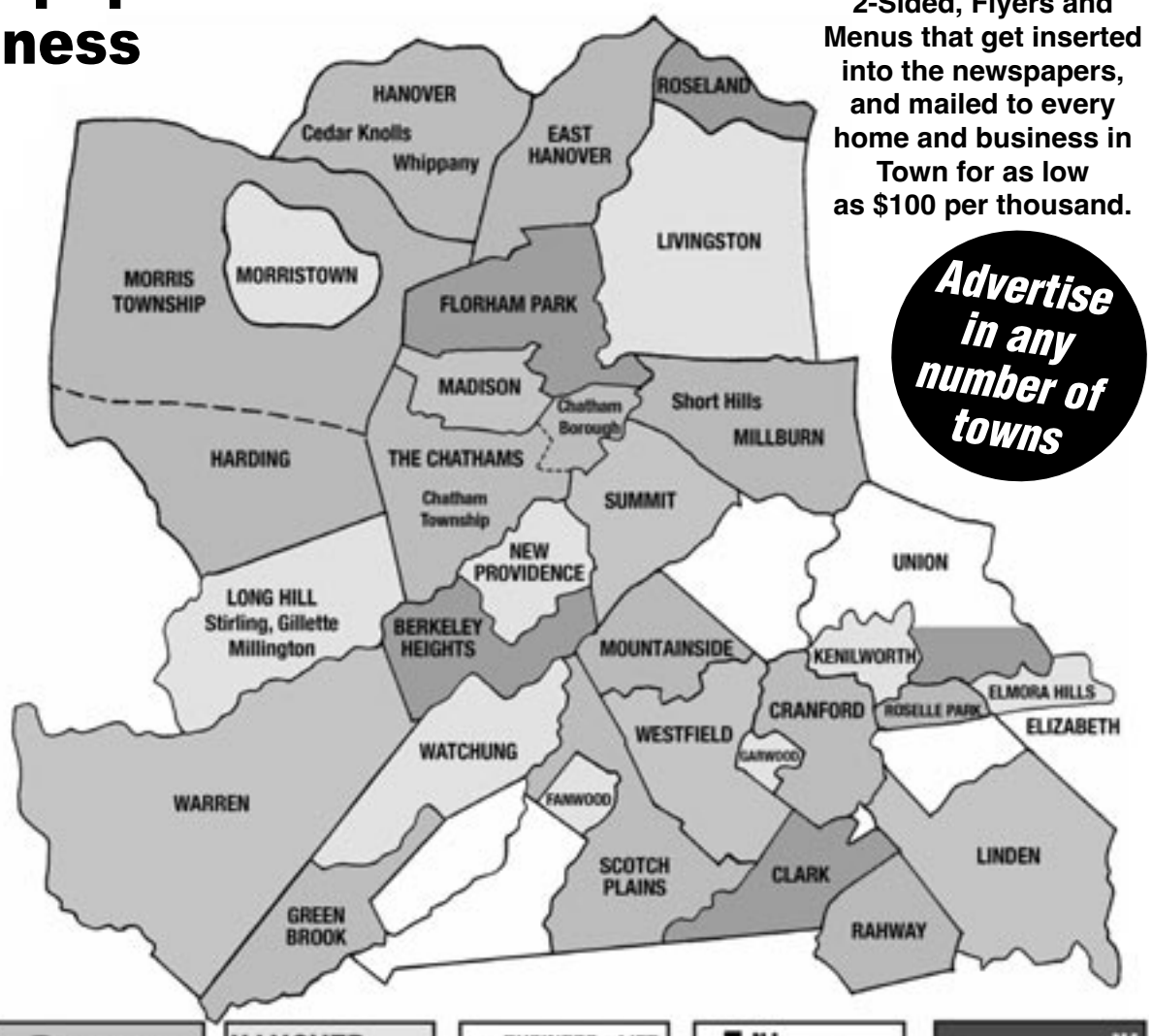


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# 7TH GRADE INITIATIVE AT THE GATEWAY FAMILY YMCA

***The Gateway Family YMCA***

Registration opens August 15th for the 2026-2027 7th Grade Initiative at The Gateway Family YMCA. Students entering 7th Grade are invited to visit the YMCA and join for free with proof of grade and a guardian's signature. Registration is available in person at The Gateway Family YMCA – Elizabeth Branch - 135 Madison Avenue in Elizabeth, Five Points Branch -201 Tucker Avenue in Union, Rahway Branch – 1564 Irving Street in Rahway and Wellness Center Branch – 1000 Galloping Hill Rd in Union.

As part of the NJ YMCA 7th Grade Initiative, a state-wide strategy designed to support and encourage teens to maintain a healthy lifestyle, The Gateway Family YMCA offers a complimentary membership for all 7th Grade Students, including activities for mentorship, volunteerism and wellness. Additional program opportunities include group exercise, strength training, basketball, pickleball, soccer, swimming, esports, STEAM, virtual YMCA360

and a variety of events specifically created based on their interests and feedback.

The goal of the 7th Grade Initiative is to increase physical activity and support teens in the development of lifetime healthy habits, volunteerism and leadership skills while providing a safe and supportive environment with supportive role models at the YMCA.

"Sports become more competitive entering the teen years, and there is a chance of becoming sedentary. The Y is here to provide activity, socialization, leadership skills, and staff role models to encourage healthy habits to last a lifetime," stated Susan Butler, Senior Director of Community Wellness, The Gateway Family YMCA.

The Gateway Family YMCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, health and community service organization of caring staff and volunteers dedicated to strengthening community and stands For Youth Development, For Healthy Living and For Social Responsibility. The Gateway Family YMCA has been proudly serving Eastern Union County and Northern Middlesex County, for 126 years.

For more information about The Gateway Family YMCA's 7th Grade Initiative, visit www.tgfymca.org or contact the Elizabeth Branch at 908-355-9622, Five Points Branch at 908-688-9622, Rahway Branch at 732-388-0057 or Wellness Center Branch at 908-349-9622.


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**YMCA Summer & Fall Programs**

SUMMER CAMP

the Y

**Register NOW at tgfymca.org**

Camp – Sports – Swimming – STEAM
Gymnastics – Child Care – Family Fun!

Join online at www.tgfymca.org
Flexible Membership Options For Your Family!
Free Membership for all 7th Graders

NOW enrolling for Child Care, Before & After School Care and Vacation Day Camps!

THE GATEWAY FAMILY YMCA tgfymca.org

**YMCA Residential Housing Programs**

We're Hiring!

Supporting Our Community through Caring Staff and Dedicated Services

The Gateway Family YMCA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening community.



**TOWN WIDE GARAGE SALE**

**MOUNTAINSIDE PAL**

**Saturday, September 19, 2026**

*9am - 2pm (rain or shine)*

**Application Deadline: September 14th 5pm**

*Email J.Ruban@verizon.net for registration link*



**I BUY OLD MOTORCYCLES**

**All Types - Running or Not**

**Call or Text Glenn**
**732-556-7636**

**Same Day Pick-up**

**We Pay Cash**

# MURSELI PRO CONSTRUCTION

# 908-361-6372

- All Work Guaranteed
- 24/7 Emergency Service
- 15% Senior Discount
- Major Credit Cards
- NJ Lic. 13VH08570100

Family Owned & Operated For 20 Years

## FOUNDATION

- NEW FUNDATIONS
- REPAIRS
- WATERPROOFING

## MASONRY

- DRIVEWAYS
- STEPS
- BRICK & BLOCK
- SIDEWALKS
- REPAIR

## ROOFING

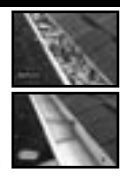
- RE-ROOF
- NEW ROOF
- ROOF REPAIRS
- SHINGLES
- FLAT ROOF

## CHIMNEY

- CLEANING
- RE-LINE
- REPAIRS
- REBUILD
- CAPPING

## GUTTERS

- CLEANING
- INSTALLATION
- SCREENING
- REPAIRS
- REPLACEMENTS



## COMPLETE SET OF STEPS

### Brick, Limestone & Concrete

With coupon. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Some restrictions apply. Expires 8/31/26.

## $700 OFF FULL BATHROOM REMODELING

- Demolition
- Plumbing & Electrical
- Modifying the layout.
- Installing new tiles cabinetry, countertops toilets, and lighting

With coupon. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Some restrictions apply. Expires 8/31/26.

HomeAdvisor
You Home Improvement Connection

SUPER SERVICE AWARD

Like us on facebook

GAF MasterElite

DANGER CARBON MONOXIDE
Carbon Monoxide is invisible, odorless, and can kill you!

## Save $1,000 ON ROOF REPLACEMENT

With coupon. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Some restrictions apply. Expires 8/31/26.

## *Spring Special* CHIMNEY LINER $1,300

With coupon. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Some restrictions apply. Expires 8/31/26.

## $600 OFF NEW SIDING JOB

With coupon. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Some restrictions apply. Expires 8/31/26.

## $350 OFF ANY CHIMNEY REPAIR of $1,000 or more

With coupon. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Some restrictions apply. Expires 8/31/26.

## $350 OFF ANY ROOF REPAIR of $1,000 or more

With coupon. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Some restrictions apply. Expires 8/31/26.

## $400 OFF ANY FOUNDATION JOB of $2,000 or more

With coupon. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Some restrictions apply. Expires 8/31/26.

## $150 GUTTERS CLEANING (any Average House)

With coupon. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Some restrictions apply. Expires 8/31/26.