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March 27, 2025

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Vol. 52, No. 36



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Bangor High School's Eric Goffinet Selected For PMEA ALL-State Wind Ensemble



Bangor High School band member Eric Goffinet has been selected to participate in PMEA All-State Wind Ensemble at the PMEA State Convention to be held at Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, April 9th-12th. The Wind Ensemble is composed of the best of the best from the state's region bands. Eric placed first in Region V band on Euphonium. The concert is on April 12th at 2 pm.

PA Recovers \$11.3 Million in Medicaid Fraud

Attorney General Dave Sunday's Medicaid Fraud Team recovered more than \$11.3 million in misused Medicaid funding in fiscal year 2024.

In fact, a federal annual report ranked Pennsylvania first in the nation for number of Medicaid fraud charges filed against individuals and third in convictions secured. The report also states that Medicaid Fraud units across the country recover \$3.46 for every \$1 spent by the

units. Retrieving this funding gave limited-income and vulnerable populations access to health care as intended.

The Medicaid Fraud Team prosecutes those who defraud the program through unlawful billing or failure to provide services. It also prosecutes those who neglect or abuse Pennsylvanians dependent on their care and those who financially exploit older adults or care-dependent persons.

Blairstown Junior Wrestling Team Excels in Norm Cella Memorial Wrestling Club Tournament



The Norm Cella Memorial Wrestling Club Tournament was held in the Hunterdon Central High School on February 23rd. At that event the Blairstown Junior Wrestling Team was among 14 other townships that competed. Blairstown had 29 team mates competing, they had 8 first place wins, 9 second place and 4 third place wins. Dominic Daleo went 2-1 for second place as did his team mate Ryder Brown, and other team mate David Togno took first place in that same event. This is in the 8 and under/61 pound bracket pound weight class. Pictured above are: Jackson Daleo, CeCe Togno, David Togno, Dominic Daleo, Kaylee Togno and Brianna Daleo. Photo by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press

Pen Argyl Alumni Board Holds Dedication Ceremony for the Alumni Association Memorial Brick Wall



The Pen Argyl Alumni Board, which consists of Margaret Wismer, President; Welsey Smith, VP; Ann Ehle, Secretary; Stephanie Ruggiero, Treasurer; and directors, Maria Coscia, Joe DePue, Craig Dally, Heather Hunter, Jim Hunter, William Ruggiero, Craig Reduzzi, Natham Roberts, Rianne Ealey, Rose Hoppe, George Hinton, Roy Clewell, Kacy Clowser, Eric Sampson, and Nolan Gerencser proudly dedicated the Pen Argyl Memorial Brick Wall on March 13th. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

New in the Bangor Public Library:

March 14, 2025 to March 20, 2025

Adult Fiction: The jackal's mistress: a novel by Chris Bohjalian 1962; Every precious and fragile thing: a novel by Barbara Davis; The summer guests by Tess Gerritsen; The Strawberry patch pancake house by Laurie Gilmore; The Bridge Kingdom by Danielle L. Jensen; The Inadequate Heir by Danielle L. Jensen; The Traitor Queen by Danielle L. Jensen; The endless war by Danielle L. Jensen; The writer by James Patterson 1947; Go luck yourself by Sara Raasch; The antidote by Karen Russell 1981; Story of my life by Lucy Score; The sinner by Shantel Tessier

Adult Non Fiction: I'll have what she's having by Chelsea Handler

Easy Fiction: Tori and the Muses by Tori Amos; The big Easter egg hunt by Cara J. Stevens

Junior Fiction: Mixed-up by Kami Garcia; A wrinkle in time: the graphic novel by Hope Larson; I survived the Great Molasses Flood, 1919 by Georgia Ball; Realm of the blue mist by Amy Kim Kibuishi 1980

Junior Non-Fiction: Who sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott?: Rosa Parks by Insha Fitzpatrick

Young Adult Fiction: To kill a mockingbird: a graphic novel by Fred Fordham 1985; The hobbit: or There and back again by J.R.R.(John Ronald Reuel) Tolkien 1892-1973

DVDs: Kraven, the hunter; Red One

Welcome Keith LaBrunda and Heather Montalbano To The RE/MAX TOWN & VALLEY Family!

We are thrilled to extend a warm welcome to two outstanding real estate professionals, Keith LaBrunda and Heather Montalbano, as the newest members of the RE/MAX TOWN & VALLEY family. Both Keith and Heather bring with them years of invaluable experience in the real estate industry, and we couldn't be more excited to have them join our team.

Keith and Heather have built impressive careers in helping their clients buy, sell, and invest in real estate across multiple counties in New Jersey. Their deep understanding of the local markets, combined with their unwavering commitment to providing top-tier service, makes them exceptional assets to our team and the clients they serve.

Whether past, present, or future clients, Keith and Heather's knowledge



and expertise will continue to make a positive impact on all those they work with. We are confident that their dedication to client satisfaction will align seamlessly with the values we hold dear at RE/MAX TOWN & VALLEY.

Please join us in welco-

ming Keith and Heather – we look forward to achieving new heights together and helping even more people find their perfect homes!

Once again, welcome to the family! We're excited for the future!

- The RE/MAX TOWN & VALLEY Team

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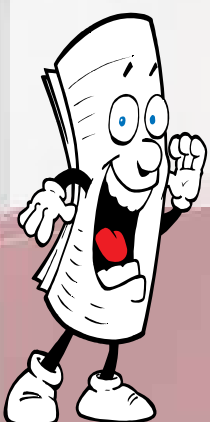
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Boscola Applauds State Efforts to Combat SNAP Benefits Theft, Calls for Stronger Penalties

In response to the Pennsylvania Office of State Inspector General's (OSIG) recent announcement of felony charges against an individual for stealing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits from 17 Pennsylvanians, Senator Lisa Boscola (D-Northampton) reinforced her commitment to protecting taxpayer funds and beneficiaries by introducing legislation to increase penalties for SNAP skimming crimes.

"The theft of SNAP benefits is not just an attack on individual recipients—it's an attack on struggling families, children, and seniors who rely on this vital assistance to put food on the table," said Senator Boscola. "I commend the OSIG and law enforcement for taking decisive action against those who prey on the most vulnerable in our com-



munities. But we must do more to ensure these criminals face serious consequences."

The OSIG's announcement detailed felony and misdemeanor charges against an individual accused of using stolen EBT card information to make over \$8,000 in fraudulent purchases across multiple states. SNAP skimming, a sophisticated form of fraud involving illegal card-skimming devices, has become an alarming problem in Pennsylvania. As of August 2023, the Department of Human Services reported

nearly 2,750 incidents of electronic SNAP theft, totaling \$459,084 in stolen funds.

To further combat this growing issue, Senator Boscola has introduced Senate Bill 362 to significantly increase penalties for those convicted of SNAP skimming. Under her proposal:

- Theft of SNAP benefits of \$1,000 or more would be elevated from a third-degree felony to a second-degree felony, carrying a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine.
- Theft of less than

\$1,000, or an attempt to steal benefits, would be upgraded from a third-degree misdemeanor to a third-degree felony, punishable by up to 7 years in prison and a \$15,000 fine.

• Convicted offenders would face permanent ineligibility for assistance programs.

"Our laws must reflect the severity of these crimes," said Boscola. "Right now, criminal enterprises are exploiting hard-working taxpayers and low-income families with little fear of consequences. By strengthening penalties, we send a clear message that Pennsylvania will not tolerate this exploitation."

Senator Boscola urges her colleagues in the Senate to join her in supporting this critical legislation and ensuring that Pennsylvania remains proactive in protecting SNAP recipients from fraud.

Learn How to Eliminate Criminal Records at Local Expungement Seminar



Project Self-Sufficiency will host an Expungement seminar featuring attorney John Graves on Thursday, April 3rd, 7:00 p.m. Participants will discuss the steps required to seal the legal record of an arrest or criminal conviction, thereby removing it from the individual's criminal record as well as from the public record. The presentation, which will be offered through Zoom, is free and open to the public; interested attendees should call Project Self-Sufficiency, 973-940-3500, for log-in details.

Moul Bill to Allow Cash as Payment for School Events Advances

The House Commerce Committee unanimously approved legislation sponsored by Rep. Dan Moul (R-Adams), which would make cash an acceptable form of payment for admission to school-sponsored events.

"Currently, many schools across our Commonwealth are rejecting cash as a form of payment for school-sponsored activities and are instead requiring spectators to use credit or debit cards. To make matters worse, some events, particularly those involving the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA), conduct



ticket sales exclusively online through an app," said Moul. "These policies have disenfranchised many seniors, poor people and children who may not have credit cards, smart phones or the technical capabilities to access the internet to purchase tickets."

"Ticket purchases via

the internet or apps also require buyers to surrender a lot of personal information. This is particularly troublesome for senior citizens, a group often targeted by scams. People simply want to see their child, grandchild or friends play ball. My bill would permit anyone willing to

pay with cash – the legal currency of the United States – to gain admission to a high school sporting event or activity. We should be encouraging the public to attend, not shutting them out," Moul said.

House Bill 685 now goes to the full House for consideration.

To see Moul's comments and discussion in committee, visit <https://repmoul.com/video/latestvideo>

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Project Self-Sufficiency Opens “Sister-to-Sister” Prom Shop

Teens are invited to select free, new, or gently-used prom dresses and accessories from the popular “Sister-to-Sister” Prom Shop hosted by Project Self-Sufficiency. Formal wear including prom dresses, bridesmaids’ dresses, gowns for mothers-of-the-bride, evening bags, jewelry, wraps and shawls, as well as shoes in good condition are all available at no charge. All items are displayed in a boutique-like setting on Project Self-Sufficiency’s Newton campus, and space is available for dresses to be tried on. The public is invited, and no appointment is needed. The “Sister-to-Sister” Prom Shop will be open 3:00 – 7:00 p.m., April 1st, 2nd, 3rd; 3:00 – 6:00 p.m., April 4th; and 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., April 5th.

“We are delighted to be offering teens the opportunity to receive beautiful gowns and accessories free of charge at the ‘Sister-to-Sister’ Prom Shop,” commented Deborah Berry-Toon, Executive Director of Project Self-Sufficiency. “We believe that every young woman deserves the chance to have a beautiful dress for that special, once-in-a-lifetime event. Thanks



to generous donations from the community, we are fortunate to have hundreds of beautiful items in our collection again this year.”

Project Self-Sufficiency is located at 127 Mill Street in Newton. The Sister-to-Sister Prom Shop is a program of the Journey Family Success Center at Project Self-Sufficiency. For information about the Sister-to-Sister Prom Shop, or to find out more about any of the programs at Project Self-Sufficiency, call 973-940-3500 or visit www.projectsselfsufficiency.org.

Project Self-Sufficiency has assisted low-in-

come 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.projectsselfsufficiency.org or

call 973-940-3500.

The Journey Family Success Center at Project Self-Sufficiency is a program of support which includes parenting skills training, economic self-sufficiency services, family activities, legal education services, information about health and nutrition, referrals, advocacy, and other services. All activities are free and open to the public. Family Success Centers offer services to children, youth, families, individuals, and communities. Funding is provided by the New Jersey Department of Children & Families.



The Slate Belt Heritage Center will hold their monthly historic program on Thursday, April 12th, 7pm. Melissa Hough, Local historian, President and Curator at the Center will present: “Unpacking Bangor’s Past: Rural Villages to Miniature City” that shows the town’s change from a cluster of farms to an industrial borough. Ms. Hough will showcase the Council Chamber Room where the new displays will feature: photos, original artifacts, paintings, documents and much loved objects that highlight Bangor as it celebrates its’ Sesquicentennial. Many of the items that will be on display are being shared for the first time in many, many years and in some cases ever. In 1875 Bangor became the first and largest borough, in what is now the Slate Belt and the second largest town, in Northampton County next to Easton. Come discover what has made the town unique enough to be on the National Historic Register status. As always, the event is free and open to the public. The Heritage Center is located at 30 North 1st Street, Bangor, PA. For additional information please contact: Karen Brewer at 484-894-5661.

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Corrado & Space Bill To Make Schools Safer With Portable Anti-Choking Devices Passes Senate Education Committee

Legislation sponsored by Senator Kristin M. Corrado (R-40) and Senator Parker Space (R-24) to require portable anti-choking devices in schools passed the Senate Education Committee.

S-908 would require nurses and school employees to receive training in the use of anti-choking devices and develop related policies. A portable anti-choking device must be available in the cafeteria, school nurse's office, and/or similar areas. The Department of Education will reimburse schools for costs incurred.

"Every second counts in an emergency, and this bill ensures that schools are prepared to act swiftly and effectively," said Sen.



Corrado. "With trained staff and devices in designated areas, we can be better prepared to respond to a choking emergency."

"No parent should ever have to worry about their child being at risk of choking while at school," said Sen. Space. "This bill is a vital step towards ensuring that every school is prepared to keep students safe in any situation."

You can read the full bill at: https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2024/S908?utm_source=New+Jersey+Senate+Republicans&utm_campaign=024352bb21-Corrado+Bill+Helping+Veterans+Reenter_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-75fcae2ae3-463346998

To speak with Sen. Corrado or Sen. Space, contact Kyle Fischer, SRO director of communications, at kfischer@njleg.org.

St. Luke's Pioneers AI-Enhanced Screening Technology for Early Diagnosis of Heart Disorders

St. Luke's University Health Network (SLUHN) heart specialists are first in the Lehigh Valley region employing advanced artificial intelligence technology, combined with echocardiograms, to detect and monitor potentially serious heart conditions, like aortic stenosis, before symptoms appear in patients.

The Network's Heart and Vascular Center has begun using the Egnite CardioCare AI digital health platform, which functions with the hospital's electronic health record (EHR) and echocardiogram images to aid in the diagnosis of various heart issues in the early stages of development. Echocardiography converts sound waves into images of the heart's structure, size and function, including its valves and

blood flow, to diagnose and monitor the health of the heart or presence of a cardiac disorder or disease.

St. Luke's Heart & Vascular is an eight-time nationally ranked 50 Top Heart Hospital dedicated to delivering unmatched, patient-centered care. Leading the region in heart and vascular care, St. Luke's was first in the region to do open heart surgery in 1983 and continues to be the first in the region to pioneer new and advanced surgeries to this day. From the most complex cases to routine procedures, St. Luke's embraces innovative technologies to deliver the highest quality outcomes for all heart and vascular conditions.

The new CardioCare AI digital health platform helps navigate the vast amount of patient data in the EHR to find the right patients so they can be treated at the right time. The system detects signs of aortic stenosis, at its early stages, which might otherwise go undetected and/or untreated. Patients with advanced aortic stenosis may be candidates for TAVR, or transcatheter aortic valve replacement – a potentially life-saving minimally invasive pro-

cedure.

The CardioCare AI platform analyzes all echocardiograms performed at St. Luke's, in hopes of finding aortic stenosis, and other diagnoses, in even early stages, so they can be addressed, monitored or treated in a timely manner. Approximately 50,000 echocardiograms are performed annually at St. Luke's. Currently, while St. Luke's is utilizing Egnite's CardioCare technology to assist with diagnosis of aortic stenosis and other valvular diseases, plans are under way to roll out this technology in electrophysiology (arrhythmia) and heart failure patients in the near future.

Stephen Olenchok, DO, St. Luke's Chief of Cardiovascular Surgery, said, "As the region's leader in heart care innovation, St. Luke's Heart and Vascular Center is pioneering the adoption of the Egnite CardioCare AI platform to expand our clinical toolbox to improve our ability to diagnose, manage and treat a range of developing cardiac disorders in their early stages, with the ultimate goal of improving patients' quality of life and long-term cardiac health."

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Low- And Moderate-Income Households In New Jersey Save Hundreds In Tax Prep Fees

Low- and moderate-income households looking to save hundreds in tax preparer fees can file for free using an online portal or self-file software offered through United Way of Northern New Jersey.

By visiting uwnnj.org/freetaxprep, individuals and families who are ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) or in poverty can access an easy-to-use online system to have their state and federal tax returns prepared and filed electronically all while saving the average \$300 fee paid preparers charge.

“Our neighbors who are struggling to afford life’s basics can safely and securely file their taxes for free using our online portal,” said United Way CEO Kiran Handa Gaudioso. “This service ensures ALICE households can file their taxes accurately and get back what they are due.”

The portal uses secure document uploads, encrypted email and video conferencing. Assistance and forms are available in both English and Spanish. Clients using the online portal can also expect a high-quality experience with IRS tax law-certified preparers, a double review process and completed returns within seven to 10 business days from document uploads, Gaudioso said.

For more than a decade, United Way and its partners the IRS, Norwescap and Greater Providence Missionary



Baptist Church, have been helping area households struggling to afford the basics by offering free tax preparation services.

In addition to accessing the online portal, individuals and families who visit uwnnj.org/freetaxprep can also use self-filing software to file their taxes for free. This tool allows households earning \$84,000 or less to file their federal and state returns, with the option for self-employed filers to complete a Schedule C. All filers using the software can schedule time with a tax coach for assistance.

“As our in-person appointments near capacity, we encourage ALICE households to take advantage of our secure online portal or self-filing software,” Gaudioso said. “For over 15 years, United Way has been a trusted resource, helping thousands of struggling neighbors each year accurately file their taxes for free. These online options ensure we can continue providing this vital service to those who need it most.”

To learn more about filing options or for any questions, email

UnitedWayTaxPrep@UnitedWayNNJ.org or leave a message in English or Spanish at 973.993.1160, x5 and a tax scheduler will return your call.

United Way of Northern New Jersey is a nonprofit organization fighting to improve life for families and individuals in our five-county footprint who are ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) or in poverty. We believe that by securing racial and economic equity for ALICE we can improve life for all. We’re investing in ALICE’s future in the workplace, at home, and across the community. We do this through our initiatives that fill gaps in services, community partnerships, public policy work, and volunteer efforts. United Way of Northern New Jersey serves Morris, Somerset, Sussex, and Warren counties as well as portions of suburban Essex County including the Caldwells, Cedar Grove, Essex Fells, Fairfield, Glen Ridge, Livingston, Millburn-Short Hills, Montclair, Roseland, and Verona. To learn more, call 973.993.1160 or visit UnitedWayNNJ.org.

Parents Needed to Serve on Advisory Board - Project Self-Sufficiency Seeks Input from Parents about Needs and Services

Local parents are invited to attend an information session about the Journey Family Success Center Parent Advisory Board at Project Self-Sufficiency, Tuesday, April 8th, 5:00 p.m. Organizers are seeking input from families regarding area services, parenting challenges and concerns, and ideas for upcoming events. Family Success Center staff will highlight ways the agency can address issues facing local parents and incorporate feedback into future programs. Dinner and childcare will be provided for those in attendance. The gathering will also be available on Zoom; interested participants are invited to call 973-940-3500 to obtain log-in details. Advance registration for the in-person session is required.

“Input from parents is crucial to the success of the Family Success Center and we are excited about offering residents the opportunity to meet area providers, express their concerns about gaps in services, and identify strategies for moving

forward,” remarked Deborah Berry-Toon, Executive Director of Project Self-Sufficiency. “The Family Success Center has supported Sussex County parents and children for many years. Expanding the Parent Advisory Board will allow us to further respond to the needs of area families and incorporate their suggestions into existing and new programs for the community.”

Those who attend their first meeting of the Journey Family Success Center Parent Advisory Board will be eligible to receive a gift card. Project Self-Sufficiency is located at 127 Mill Street in Newton. For information about the Parent Advisory Board, or to find out more about any of the programs sponsored by the Journey Family Success Center at Project Self-Sufficiency, call 973-940-3500 or visit www.journeyfsc.org.

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.projectsselfsufficiency.org or call 973-940-3500.

The Journey Family Success Center at Project Self-Sufficiency is a program of support which includes parenting skills training, economic self-sufficiency services, family activities, legal education services, information about health and nutrition, referrals, advocacy, and other services. All activities are free and open to the public. Family Success Centers offer services to children, youth, families, individuals, and communities. Funding is provided by the New Jersey Department of Children & Families.

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habitat loss, pollutants, changes in the climate, parasites, and disease, causing great concern. Frogs and toads are essential for pest control and as food sources for other animals. They are extremely sensitive to environmental change, and changes in their populations can be early indicators of ecological problems.

The Frog & Toad Field Guide provided during training lists sixteen species, about ten of which live in our neck of the woods, from what I could tell, though I'm not an expert. And you don't need to be to become a Frog Watch USA volunteer. It only takes a few hours of training to learn how to choose a wetland site, listen for three minutes at least four times a year, and record your findings. The valuable data will help save our wetlands, critical to flood and erosion control and natural water filtration. Not to mention the threatened species that rely on wetlands, such as our essential and adorable frogs and toads.

I dusted off the CD provided to help memorize their mating songs now that I have a new species in my pond. I've had American Bul-

Hello, fellow readers, To my delight, new frog friends have landed in my pond—Wood Frogs! Their mating sounds sing for spring, inspiring me to revisit Frog Watch USA. Tedor Whitman, Executive Director of the Cora Hartshorn Arboretum, led a training hosted by Greenwood Gardens, also in Short Hills, long ago. I loved his statement, "They've been around since before the dinosaurs, and few people get angry at frogs."

Tedor joked frogs and toads might not be as famous as the "charismatic mega vertebrates" like the panda or humpback whale. However, there's been a considerable decline in amphibians in the last twenty-five years due to



Photos By: Blaine Rothausser, Ecologist and Natural History Photographer

Ifrogs, a feast for a Red Shouldered Hawk, and adore the annual chorus of the Northern Spring Peepers soon to start. Unbeknownst to me, my pond serves as a vernal pool.

Wood frogs (*Rana sylvatica*) are vernal pool obligate species, as are spotted salamanders and fairy shrimp. Meaning, they rely on temporary wetlands for breeding and completing their lifecycle. Although my pond is not temporary, it always has water, and the dam overflows during heavy rain or snow melts to feed Jacksonburg Creek along the edge of the property.

When Wood Frogs emerge from hibernation after the first warm rainy night, they migrate from the woods to a vernal pond to mate. Frogs can smell water, which guides them.

Wood Frogs travel a few hundred feet to a quarter of a mile to find their mating spot. How delighted I am they found their way to our pond. And I am thrilled that my friend Blaine Rothausser shared these stunning photos for all of us to enjoy.

Vernal pools, also called vernal ponds or ephemeral pools, are temporary pools of water in depressions that dry up seasonally, typically in the heat of the summer. Not all vernal pools dry out yearly, though they all do periodically. To protect our vernal ponds, do not use chemicals or fertilizers near them, maintain the canopy of trees above them, and keep the fallen debris intact as they harbor eggs.

Sadly, Wetlands Laws don't always protect vernal ponds because they are typi-



cally less than an acre in size. Builders often fill them in. But please don't. They are essential harbors of life and are classified as unique wetlands customarily devoid of fish, though certain fish have adapted to them in tropical areas. In these parts, vernal ponds don't shelter fish, so our essential amphibians and insects can readily reproduce out of reach from predatory fish. Mother Nature knows what she's doing.

There's no mistaking the first signs of spring, and hearing Northern Spring Peepers and Wood Frogs calling for a mate adds

to the delight. Take time to be in the presence of where you are, listening to the sounds of nature, enjoying the beauty, serenity, and comfort, and relishing the unity and oneness of the natural world we are all part of.

Garden dilemmas? AskMaryStone.com (and on your favorite Podcast App).

Do you know the difference between Frogs and Toads?

Frogs have teeth; toads don't.

Frogs live in or near water; toads live on land.

Frogs have smooth, slimy skin; toads have warty, dry skin.

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Pennsylvania Woman Embraces Middle Age Optimistically Thanks to DNA Answers

Jillian Leister learned that she carries a genetic mutation for breast and ovarian cancer through the St. Luke's DNA Answers research program.

"I was totally floored!" said the 40-year-old mother of two. "In an instant, my world flipped upside-down."

But Leister, of Green Lane, Montgomery County, was not left to process the news on her own. Within the hour, she was called by St. Luke's and was offered a consult the next day with one of the Network's genetic counselors for follow-up questions and guidance on next steps.

"I trust St. Luke's," she said. "I appreciate that this call came quickly."

DNA Answers is a no-cost community health research program, which St. Luke's is offering with their population genomics partner, Helix. The organizations launched the DNA Answers research study as part of an ongoing commitment by St. Luke's to the community it serves to offer the latest medical technologies that support a "precision medicine" approach in healthcare.

In January 2024, St. Luke's launched DNA Answers, which involves 'medical grade' analysis of participants' DNA through Helix's Whole Exome(+) Sequencing (WES), technology designed specifically for healthcare

purposes.

"We have arrived at a historic turning point in the history of medicine – the ability to use information stored in patients' DNA to improve the accuracy of certain treatments for the individual patient," said Aldo Carmona, MD, St. Luke's Senior Vice President of Clinical Integration.

Christopher N. Chapman, MD, Medical Director for SLUHN Precision Medicine and the Principal Investigator for the DNA Answers study explained, "Our study initially aims to enroll 100,000 participants over four years. Participating individuals, like Mrs. Leister, are provided genetic screening at no cost, informing them of important health information about inherited risks for serious conditions, such as a certain type of cardiovascular disease and certain types of cancer. This knowledge allows the participant to make proactive decisions in conjunction with their healthcare provider to potentially delay, reduce, or even prevent these conditions from occurring later in life. Leister's personalized DNA Answers report, shared with her via the St. Luke's confidential patient portal, revealed that she carries the BRCA2 gene. Mutations in the BRCA2 gene are associated with multiple cancers, including breast and ovarian cancers.

The genetic counselor, Corrine Fillman, MS, CGC, explained Leister's results in depth and offered to refer her to St. Luke's specialists for next steps to address the issues linked to the BRCA2 mutation.

Within a few weeks, Leister met with St. Luke's gynecologic surgeon Rick Boulay, MD, who advised her that preventive surgical removal of her reproductive organs would greatly reduce her chances for gynecologic cancer.

"It was a no-brainer," she said, and Dr. Boulay performed the operation within a few weeks. "He's fantastic!" she said, adding that the preemptive



"I felt like a ticking time bomb," she recalled. And it puts her young daughters, ages 7 and 10, at a 50% risk of inheriting the BRCA2 gene.

surgery was uneventful and "made sense since I'm through having babies." Her mother, who has no history of cancer, is having her own blood drawn this month on the advice of her daughter.

Participating in DNA Answers may also allow you to keep learning from your DNA in the future. Since each participant's genetic information has been sequenced and stored, it allows future clinical genomic tests to be run, with a provider's order and patient consent, without the

need to collect an additional sample. This could help providers tailor care options and prescribe medications even more accurately and effectively as well as provide patients access to ongoing genetic insights to continue learning about their health throughout their lifetime.

Currently, Leister is undergoing routine surveillance screening for signs of breast cancer, with alternating MRIs and mammograms every six months, with consultation from Fawn Wolf, CRNP, nurse

practitioner-breast specialist. She's planning to undergo a double mastectomy in early 2025, followed by breast reconstruction.

"I'm at peace now that I have knowledge, and knowledge is power," she said.

Her husband, who has been her rock of support during this ordeal, had his genetic testing done through DNA Answers, she said. "He's good, has no mutations."

Having recently turned 40, Leister said she's optimistic about her long-term health. "I think 2025 will be a good year to start middle age."

She encourages her relatives and friends to participate in DNA Answers: "Do it. It's provided at no cost and could save your life." Some friends, in addition to her mother, have taken this advice.

"I feel super-thankful to St. Luke's for offering this program and making their medical experts available," Leister said.

To learn more about St. Luke's community research study, DNA Answers, visit www.DNAanswers.org.

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NJDEP Advises Public To Be Aware Of Black Bears And Take Steps To Reduce Encounters As Bears Leave Dens In Search Of Food

With black bears emerging from winter dens and foraging for food, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection advises residents and outdoor enthusiasts to reduce the potential for black bear encounters by removing access to unnatural food sources, such as unsecured trash, that can attract and cause unwanted encounters with bears.

"Bears are actively searching for food in early spring as they leave their dens and have an extremely keen sense of smell that allows them to identify food sources over long distances," said NJDEP Fish & Wildlife Assistant Commissioner Dave Golden. "It's important to secure your garbage and other potential food sources as the smell can draw them into neighborhoods looking for an easy meal. The risk of an unwanted encounter rises if bears associate you or your property with food."

It is essential to remove and properly secure trash, pet food, bird seed, and even small livestock. Bears that have access to these food sources will learn to associate food with people and their homes. This can lead bears to regularly forage in neighborhoods and approach humans, potentially resulting in property damage or unwanted encounters with

people. The use of bear-resistant trash receptacles can help deter bears. Last year, the DEP purchased and distributed approximately 2,900 bear-resistant trash cans to residents of Hampton, Jefferson, Sparta, Rockaway, West Milford and Sparta as part of a pilot demonstration project.

It is also critically important to never feed black bears. Intentionally feeding bears is illegal in New Jersey and carries a fine of up to \$1,000. It is extremely unsafe and may result in bears becoming aggressive.

Most of New Jersey's black bears live in the northwest portion of the state, particularly Morris, Sussex, Warren and northern Passaic counties, in addition to portions of Hunterdon, Somerset and Bergen counties. However, black bears have been sighted in all of New Jersey's 21 counties.

Black bears are not true hibernators. During the winter, they enter a state of winter dormancy called torpor. Over the winter, they den in ground nests, excavation sites, brush piles, hollow trees, rock cavities and sometimes beneath houses and other buildings. They may leave dens periodically to forage during warmer periods of the winter.

However, they mostly

live off their body fat, which is metabolized to produce the calories and water that they need to survive. They generally lose about 20 percent of their body fat while denning. When they emerge in the early spring, black bears must regain their body weight.

Black bears are omnivorous and as opportunistic feeders they will consume whatever food is available. About 75 percent of a black bear's diet is comprised of plants. They will naturally consume berries, fruit, nuts, insects, bird eggs, small mammals and carrion. When black bears emerge from their winter dens, they will primarily eat newly emergent skunk cabbage, grasses, forbs, tubers, bulbs and insects. They may also feed on carrion, such as white-tailed deer carcasses.

Black bears have a remarkable sense of smell and are able to detect scents at more than two miles away from a food source. Their excellent sense of smell is what sometimes leads them on a search for food in residential neighborhoods and campgrounds. Carefully controlling these sources of food and associated odors can help prevent black bears from being attracted to people's property and teaching them to associate people with food.

NJDEP Fish & Wild-

life continues to use its Know the Bear Facts outreach campaign to raise awareness of bears and bear safety. The yearly campaign includes public service announcements on social media, streaming services, radio broadcasts and more during periods of peak bear activity in the spring, summer and fall.

Additionally, Know the Bear Facts includes an educational program that is available free of charge to schools, summer camps, campgrounds, nature centers, scouts, hiking clubs, and municipalities. The program includes an interactive presentation on coexisting with bears and bear safety publications for distribution. To request a presentation, safety literature, or staffed black bear education exhibit, visit <https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/bears/>.

It is extremely important to be familiar with ways to avoid encounters and how to safely react should an encounter occur. The DEP offers the following tips for property owners to minimize conflicts:

- Secure trash and eliminate obvious sources of food such as pet food bowls, easy-to-reach bird feeders, and food residue left on barbecue grills.

- Use certified bear-resistant garbage containers if possible. Other-



wise, store all garbage in containers with tight-fitting lids and place them along the inside walls of your garage, in the basement, a sturdy shed, or other secure area.

- Wash garbage containers frequently with a disinfectant solution to remove odors. Put out garbage on collection day, not the night before.

- Avoid feeding birds when bears are active. If you choose to feed birds, do so only from Dec. 1 to April 1 during daylight hours and bring feeders indoors at night. Suspend bird feeders from a free-hanging wire, making sure they are at least 10 feet off the ground and 10 feet away from any object a bear could climb, such as a tree. Clean up spilled seeds and shells daily.

- Immediately remove all uneaten food and food bowls used by pets fed outdoors. Walk dogs on a leash if you live in bear country and keep them indoors or in a secure kennel at night. For more tips on safety with pets, visit: <https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/bears/pet-owners/>

- Clean outdoor grills and utensils to remove food and grease residue. Store grills securely.

- Do not place meat, dairy, or sweet foods in compost piles.

- Remove fruit or nuts that fall from trees in your yard.

- Properly install electric fencing as an effective way to protect crops, beehives, and livestock.

If you encounter a black bear in your neighborhood or while hiking or camping, follow these safety tips:

Remain calm. Never run from a bear as this may trigger its predatory instinct. Instead, slowly back away. Avoid direct eye contact, which may be perceived by a bear as a challenge. Make sure the bear has an escape route.

To scare the bear away, make loud noises by

yelling, using a whistle, banging pots and pans or blowing an air horn. Make yourself look as big as possible by waving your arms. If you are with someone else, stand close together with your arms raised above your head.

Make bears aware of your presence by speaking in an assertive voice, singing, clapping your hands or making other noises. If hiking through bear country, always make your presence known through loud talking or clapping of hands. Hike in a group whenever possible.

If a bear utters a series of huffs, makes popping sounds by snapping its jaws or swats the ground, these are warning signs that you are too close. Slowly back away and avoid direct eye contact. Do not run. If a bear stands on its hind legs or moves closer, it may be trying to get a better view or detect scents in the air. This is usually non-threatening behavior.

Black bears will sometimes "bluff charge" when cornered, threatened or attempting to steal food. Stand your ground, avoid direct eye contact, slowly back away and do not run.

If the bear does not leave, move to a secure area such as a vehicle or a building.

Families who live in areas frequented by black bears should have a "Bear Plan" in place for children, with an escape route and planned use of whistles and air horns.

Black bear attacks are extremely rare. If a black bear attacks, fight back.

Report black bear damage or aggressive bears to your local police department or to NJDEP Fish & Wildlife by calling 1-(877) WARN DEP (1-877-927-6337).

For more information about black bears in New Jersey, visit dep.nj.gov/njfw/bears/.



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Tips for Homeowners to Make Summer Home Project Planning More Affordable

(NAPSI)—If you're like most American homeowners, you are eager to enhance and update your living space. According to a 2024 U.S. Houzz & Home study, the median planned budget for most households hovers around \$15,000 and kitchens remain the most renovated rooms (29%), with living rooms also popular (21%).

The Barriers:
For many, the rising costs of home upgrades can be a significant barrier. Investments in improvements typically help increase the value of a home in the long term, but paying for them today can be difficult. It's important for homeowners to know what options they have to pay for the goods and materials that accompany a home upgrade. Financial solutions that offer promotional financing give homeowners options that can help them pay for their projects in a way that fits



their payment timeline and budget.

A Solution:
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ancing: Homeowners can enjoy everyday promotional financing for six months on purchases from \$299 to \$1,998.99 and 12-month purchases over \$1,999. Homeowners can also access promotional financing from 12-60 months at select retailers.

• Wide Acceptance: The card can be used at more than 16,000 locations nationwide, making it easier for home-

owners to purchase what they need.

• Increased Affordability: According to Synchrony research, 66% of major purchase shoppers agree that financing makes larger purchases more affordable, allowing them to take on more extensive projects without financial strain.

“Summer is the perfect time for home upgrades, but the rising costs of goods and materials can be daunting,” said Curtis Howse, CEO of Synchrony’s Home & Auto platform. “Our financing programs empower homeowners to tackle their dream projects now and pay over time, making it easier to manage their budgets and enhance their living spaces.”

For information on the Synchrony HOME Credit Card and a directory of retailers nationwide that accept it, visit <http://www.synchrony.com/home>.

*April 1st is the day dedicated to fools who think they are wise.
~Mary Wilson Little, Reveries of a Paragrapher, 1897*

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Route 18 Northbound To Be Closed And Detoured In East Brunswick, Middlesex County Closure Necessary To Reconstruct The Roadway

Route 18 northbound is scheduled to be closed and detoured tonight through Friday night, and again next week, Monday, March 31 through Thursday, April 3, between West Ferris Street and Tices Lane as a pavement project advances in East Brunswick, Middlesex County. In the event of inclement weather, work will take place the following night.

Monday, March 24 through Thursday, March 27 Beginning at 8:30 p.m. tonight, Monday, March 24, until 5 a.m. tomorrow,

Tuesday, March 25, and continuing on Tuesday, March 25, Wednesday, March 26 and Thursday, March 27 at the same times, Route 18 northbound is scheduled to be closed from West Ferris Street to Tices Lane. The closure is necessary to reconstruct the roadway.

Friday, March 28 Beginning at 9 p.m. Friday, March 28, until 5 a.m. Saturday, March 29, Route 18 northbound is scheduled to be closed from West Ferris Street to Tices Lane. The closure is necessary to reconstruct the roadway.



Monday, March 31 through Thursday, April 3: Beginning at 8:30 p.m. Monday, March 31, until 5 a.m. Tuesday, April 1, and continuing on Tuesday,

April 1, Wednesday, April 2 and Thursday, April 3 at the same times, Route 18 northbound is scheduled to be closed from West Ferris Street to Tices Lane. The closure is necessary to reconstruct the roadway.

The following detour will be in place each night:

Route 18 northbound

Detour:

- Motorists on Route 18 northbound will be directed to turn right onto West Ferris Street
- Turn left onto Old Bridge Turnpike/CR 527
- Turn left onto Tices Lane, back to Route 18

This work is part of the \$86.1 million federally funded Route 18, East Brunswick, Drainage and Pavement Rehabilitation project that will make repairs on approximately four and a half miles of Route 18 in East Brunswick, Middlesex County. Work includes milling and paving, improvements to the drainage systems and storm water basins, utility relocation, installation of new sidewalks and ADA-compliant curb ramps and upgrading guiderail. Improvements

will also be made to various intersections throughout the project limits. The project is expected to be completed in late 2027.

Variable messaging signs are being utilized to provide advance notification to the motoring public of all traffic pattern changes associated with the work. The precise timing of the work is subject to change due to weather or other factors.

Motorists are encouraged to check NJDOT's traffic information website www.511nj.org for construction updates and real-time travel information and for NJDOT news follow us on X (Twitter) @NewJerseyDOT, on the NJDOT Facebook page, or Instagram @NewJersey.DOT.

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Ceramic • Marble • Laminat
Wood Floors • VCT Tile
Countertops • Floors • Walls

Bathroom & Kitchen Remodeling

INSURED FREE ESTIMATES

Call Tim Vicario
610-588-1620

TREE SERVICE

Hawk Mountain Tree Service

570-807-7746

Serving the Slate Belt, Blairstown, Sussex & Warren Counties

Tree Trimming/Removal
Stump Grinding • Firewood
60' Bucket Truck • Lot Clearing
Brush Chipping

Fully Insured Free Estimates

YOUR AD COULD GO HERE FOR ONLY \$230 For ALL 12 Weeks

Classifieds

Help Wanted

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

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

Saturday & Day Shift Servers Wanted At Hunter's Lodge in New Jersey Please Call 610-888-6613

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

CDL & LABORERS WANTED

Henry Yeska & Son Septic Service Hiring CDL Drivers Class A & B and Laborers. Full time & part time available. Experience preferred but not required. Will train on the job. Please call the office at 610-759-3290. TS

Looking for an Experienced Sewing Person Needed for Creative Private Label. High Fashion, Custom Clothing Studio. Part Time in Blairstown, NJ. Call Julia at 610-573-8313 or email: julia.robin.rutherford@gmail.com

NOW HIRING SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS
CDL Class B
P & S Endorsments
Will Train.
Call 973-383-2786
stockerbus@gmail.com

NOW HIRING FOR 2024 SEASON!
Ground Men, Climbers & CDL Drivers Needed
Call Us at 570-807-7746

Part time Outdoor Educators wanted - training provided. Flexible hours. Pays \$17 per hour. Call Sara at 908-362-8217.

Housekeeper Wanted. Flexible hours. Pays \$16 per hour. Call Alison at 908-362-8217.

Firewood

Seasoned Firewood
\$190/cord
\$95/half cord
570-202-6902

Firewood for Sale. \$120 pick up truck load. Call Craig Wickett at 610-599-6882. Pick Up Only No Delivery!

FIREWOOD
Cut-Split-Delivered
\$210 a Cord
570-202-6902

Firewood for sale \$200 a cord All different sizes 14, 16 or 18 inches long. Call 610-588-7513

Firewood for Sale. Mixed Seasoned Hardwoods. \$450 per dump truck load. approx. 1 3/4 cord. Free delivery within 10mi radius. Call Craig Wickett at 610-599-6882 or 610-442-2996.

Campers

5th Wheel Camper 40ft with 4 Slide Outs For Sale
Call 570-897-0512

LOOKING TO GET THE WORD OUT BUT KEEP ADVERTISING COSTS LOW?
Contact Melissa for ONLINE ONLY
Advertising options at thepressads@gmail.com

Rentals

10 x 20 Garage for Rent! Electric Overhead Door w/ Concrete Floor. \$125/mo. William St., Pen Argyl. Call 484-330-0093

Slate Belt Band is looking for new members, especially trombones. Practices are every Wed. from 7-9 p.m. at the Roseto American Legion, 143 Garibaldi Ave., Roseto, PA. FMI, email: slatebeltband@gmail.com

Classified Ad Order Form

All Classified ads are \$15 per week, per inch, with the exception of Yard Sale ads, which are \$5. There is no charge for items being listed as FREE. Please specify the category in which you would like you ad to appear (ex: Help Wanted, Real Estate, Rentals, Vehicle...Etc.) Please specify which size ad, and how many weeks you wish to run.
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

Ads with Photos!
\$20

NAME: _____
PHONE: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CATEGORY: _____

One inch
(actual size shown here)

WEEKS RUNNING: _____ AMOUNT PAID: _____
Please PRINT Your Ad Information Below

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
CLASSIFIED ADS CAN BE SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL TO: THEPRESSADS@GMAIL.COM OR BY MAIL TO: THE FREE WEEKLY PRESS, PO BOX 606, BANGOR, PA 18013
Help Wanted ads are free for current advertisers. Classifieds are NOT accepted by phone
Make Checks Payable to: The Free Weekly Press, LLC

You May Bloom Where You're Planted ...but We Can Help You
Grow Locally
Spring Sale
1/4PG ADS FOR \$125
3X3 ADS ONLY \$65
2X4 ADS ONLY \$45
NOW - APRIL 30TH
EMAIL THEPRESSADS@GMAIL.COM FOR DETAIL AND OTHER PRICING OPTIONS!

LIQUOR LICENSE FOR SALE
Frelinghuysen Township, Warren County, NJ
Plenary Retail Consumption License: Type 33
Contact: Liquorlicense908@gmail.com



WINTER HOURS: Mon-Fri 8am-5pm, Sat 9am-4pm, Sun 9am-3pm

Proudly Stocking



We Carry All Horse, Chicken, Sheep, Rabbit, Pig, & Goat Feed From: Albright's Mill, Buckeye Nutrition, Kalmbach, And Purina

- Kleins Raw Milk And Cheeses
- Heinsohn Honey - 1lb, 2lb, 5lb Jars
- Hop A Long Farms Grass Fed Beef
- Raviolis & Pierogies
- We Also Carry Chicken, Turkey & Pork
- Watergap Coffee - All The Specialty Flavors
Whole Bean • Decaf • Regular Ground

Wines From Tolino Vineyards

We Carry A Large Variety Of Bird Seed Including Black Oil Sunflower, Safflower, Millet.



Why Did The Chicken Cross The Road?

To Try Our Very Own CHICKEN FEED!
Made From Our Own Corn With Black Oil Sunflower Seeds Added
\$16.95

ALL OF THIS PLUS: Eggs & Produce! Stop By For Your One Stop Shop!

JOIN US FOR OUR 3RD ANNUAL FREE EASTER EGG HUNT

EASTER EGG HUNT

Saturday April 19th, 2025
TIME: 1:00-4:00pm
Scooters at Millers
96 Mt Bethel Hwy
Bangor, PA 18013
610-419-4584

Easter Bunny Photos 11am-1pm **Food Truck**

Prize Eggs

Age Groups
0-3 yrs old
4-5 yrs old
6-8 yrs old
9-12 yrs old
Sensory friendly egg hunt (all ages)

Special Egg Hunt: We would like to welcome our friends with autism (or other disabilities) to join a sensory friendly egg hunt for kids who would enjoy less stimulus, noise, and crowds! This egg hunt will start at 1:30pm

Age category egg hunts: 0-3 will start at 2pm and then the other ages group will follow one at a time after each other



50lb Bags of Shell Corn - \$11

25lb Black Oil Sunflower Seeds - \$15.95

We Sell Hay & Straw! Rye & Wheat



Plan For The Winter Barefoot Wood Pellet SPRING BUY IN Starting at \$349/ton

Prepay for wood pellets & we will store them until December 31st, 2025. All pre orders MUST be paid for by May 15th, 2025.



STOP IN FOR FRESH BAKED GOODS

We fill propane tanks of all sizes



20lb Propane Refills are ONLY \$13/tank

WOW