



Franklin Reporter 2022 Man Of The Year: Bill Grippo



Bill Grippo is the Franklin Reporter & Advocate's Man of the Year for 2022.

When the Franklin High School cheerleading team needed help raising money to go to the national championships in Florida, they knew who to turn to.

When a township family suffered the tragic loss of their toddler daughter in a pool accident, one person stepped up to rally residents' support for them.

And when the newly minted FHS varsity football coach was asked to expand the breadth of the Franklin Food Bank's Ambassador Program into sports, he couldn't say "no" to this man.

The person referenced in all three instances is Bill

Grippo, the Franklin Reporter & Advocate's 2022 Man of the Year.

Through his decades of living in the Eight Villages, Grippo has developed the reputation of being the "go-to" person when money needed to be raised, whatever the reason:

- Rebuilding the Villagers Theatre
- Conceiving the idea of and building the township's Cultural Gazebo
- Creating the Ambassador Program, a sustaining fundraiser for the Franklin Food Bank
- Raising money for the township's annual July 4 fireworks

• And countless fundraisers for individuals in sudden need.

He's also had a hand in rejuvenating the Franklin Township Chamber of Commerce and is playing a key part in fundraising for the proposed YMCA.

Grippo is also a former Township Councilman and Deputy Mayor.

A 45-year veteran of the township school system, serving last as the memorable principal of MacAfee Road Elementary School, Grippo has for the past two years served as a member of the Board of Education.

He's also a tireless volunteer.

Continued on Page 12.

Planning Board Takes Actions Toward Warehouse Ban



Township principal planner Mark Healey describes the Master Plan amendments to the Planning Board.

The ban on warehouse development in the township came a step closer to reality on January 18 with two actions taken by the Planning Board.

The Board approved amendments to the Master Plan that excised any mention of warehouses from township zoning, and also gave a favorable recommendation to the Township Council of proposed ordinance amendments that would do the same.

The Master Plan amendments were needed for the Board to find that the Council's proposed ordinance amendments were consistent with the Master Plan.

The Board first reviewed the Master Plan amendments at a workshop meeting on

January 11.

The B9 Schoolhouse developers received a chilly reception from the Planning Board at the first hearing on the application on January 4.

As was the case in the Summer of 2022, when the Township Council adopted an ordinance restricting where warehouses could be built, several developer's attorneys showed up to lodge their protests.

Frank Vitolo, the attorney for Heller Industries, said the Master Plan amendments, and the zoning ordinance amendments they were designed to accommodate, was "wrong, and you know it's wrong."

The amendments, he said, are "is ill-conceived, rushed, and not supported by any

credible evidence."

"How in the world can you move forward with this process in good faith when you have not even heard from the people and businesses who will be most impacted by what you're going to do this evening?" he asked.

In a veiled reference to residents of Canal Walk, who have lobbied for months to get the Council to ban new warehouse development, Vitolo said, "It's your job to make sure the interests of those most impacted are heard and treated fairly. Do not let the mob rule."

"Allow Heller and the pothers a meaningful opportunity to participate in this process so that we may together come up with a plan

Continued on Page 11.



The ballroom at the Double Tree Hotel was packed for the return of the annual Community Breakfast.

Hundreds Gather To Honor MLK, Contribute To Scholarship Fund

More than 300 people were encouraged to keep Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of racial equality and equity alive January 18 at the 25th annual Franklin Township Community Breakfast, sponsored by the Franklin Township Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Foundation.

The breakfast serves as

the foundation's major fundraiser. Money raised is awarded to graduating Franklin Township seniors who are attending college.

So far, the foundation has awarded 218 graduating seniors more than \$256,000 in scholarships.

The event's keynote speaker, state Lt. Gov. Shelia Oliver, talked about what current issues Rev. King

would become involved with if he were still alive.

Oliver noted several, including the Ukrainian defense against the Russian invasion, and access and equity to business and home ownership.

"When we allow people from grassroots communities to become business owners, they also become employers,"

Continued on Page 10.

Elizabeth Avenue School Students Raise \$500 For Franklin Food Bank

Students at Elizabeth Avenue Elementary School recently presented the Franklin Food Bank with a gift for the new year: a \$500 check.

The money was raised through the school's "EAS Gives Back" program, said school principal Greg Romero.

In the latest campaign, students paid \$1 to be able to

wear a hat to school, said the effort's organizer, 5th Grade teacher Silvia Hanech-Strzeminski.

"Many, many students participated, and we were able to raise a lot of money through students wearing their hats," she said.

"We educated kids through our presentations in morning meetings about why it was necessary to help the

food bank," she said. "The kids understand how important it is to help the community and make sure they have food and everything else."

The money raised by the students was matched by the school's Positive Behavior in Schools program, which is administered by 2nd Grade teacher Jenn Schellenberg.

EAS students have been

Continued on Page 12.

Video Story: Planning Board Gives Chilly Reception To B9 Schoolhouse Warehouses



Concerned residents packed the School District office community room at the January 4 Planning Board meeting to hear testimony on the proposed B9 Schoolhouse warehouse project

A proposal to construct two warehouses totaling nearly 250,000 square feet at Mettlers and Schoolhouse roads was given a chilly reception by the Planning Board at its January 4 meeting.

With about 200 people – most of them from the Canal Walk gated community – looking on, Board members grilled the project’s architect, and the Board chairman went toe-to-toe with the developer’s attorney over the introduction of a document.

Known as B9 Schoolhouse, the project entails two 40-foot-tall warehouses, one 171,135 square feet and the second, 73,600 square feet.

The development is near the Canal Walk and Summerfield 55+ communities. It is Canal Walk residents who have led the fight against the proposal.

At the Planning Board hearing, held in the school district’s community room on Route 27, representatives of the developer, Link Logistics, were met with some stiff questioning by Board members and an attorney hired to represent the Canal Walk residents.

Adding to the tension is the fact that the Canal Walk residents opposed to the development have split from their Home Owners Association’s board of trustees, who have also hired an attorney and have been working with the developer.

It was an HOA resolution

outlining mitigation efforts agreed upon by Link and the HOA that was the first major point of friction between the Board and developer.

Link’s attorney, Peter Lanfrit, sought to have the HOA resolution introduced as an exhibit into the record, but he was opposed by Board chairman Michael Orsini.

Orsini’s contention was that the resolution would provide no new information that wouldn’t be provided by Lanfrit’s witnesses in testimony, and, he said, the resolution could prove prejudicial.

Orsini compared the resolution to third-party agreements some applicants have presented to the Board concerning their developments, in that the HOA board members, like the third parties, could change over time, effectively nullifying any agreement.

Lanfrit argued for submittal, but the document was not accepted.

Board members also expressed concern over the quality of exhibits presented by the project’s architect. Board members said they were expecting three-dimensional drawings so they could get an idea of what the warehouses would look like, and instead were given skeletal outlines.

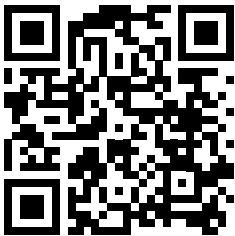
Board member Robert Thomas reminded the developer that they must be cognizant of the fact that the proposed development is close to two residential developments.

“One other little thing you can keep in mind as we go down the road here,” he said. “You property is adjacent to two intense residential zones. To me, that puts an additional burden on your client to go above and beyond what’s required and what’s just legal.”

“You have an obligation to show me there’s no impact, or very little impact, on residential zones,” he said. “Going above and beyond will go a long way to convincing me that your client is taking that seriously.”

The next hearing on the application is set for 7:30 p.m. on January 18 at the school district community room, 2301 Route 27.

Watch the live video of the hearing by opening your mobile device and scanning the QR Code:



FTPD’s Food Distribution Program Seen As Big Success

A food distribution program that is estimated to have given out about 12,000 pounds of produce a month for more than a year is still going strong, police say.

The program is run by the Franklin Township Police Department’s Community Relations Bureau at 935 Hamilton Street. The head of the bureau, Det.. Sgt. Rebecca Lea, said the program is well-known in the community.

About 1,000 boxes of produce are delivered to the CRB by the Franklin Food Bank for distribution on the first Wednesday of every month, Lea said.

The distribution begins at 11 a.m. and lasts until about 1:30, she said. Each

family can take two boxes of food, she said.

In addition to the Food Bank, other local organizations that help out with the distribution are the Greater Somerset YMCA and Islamic Circle of New Jersey on Hamilton Street, Lea said.

Lea said the CRB got involved in the distribution because, “We just saw there was a need in the community. We don’t have access to food ourselves, but we’ve got bodies and can hand it out, so the Food Bank got the food, and the cops hand it out.”

Lea said the program is quite well-known in the community, adding that there’s no need to advertise it now.

“It gets quite hectic here at 11 a.m.,” she said. “It’s definitely a successful program.”

Env. Commission Expands ‘Green Roof’ Sub-Committee Scope



Environmental Commissioner Robin Suydam.

The scope of an Environmental Commission sub-committee working on a “green roof” ordinance has been expanded.

The decision to expand the sub-committee’s charge came as a result of a suggestion by Commissioner Robin Suydam.

Suydam said her suggestion was spurred by a conversation with Township Councilmember Ed Potosnak, the Council’s liaison to the Commission.

The green roof ordinance was to be targeted at new warehouse development as a way to make the buildings more environmentally friendly.

Suydam said she questioned whether such an ordinance was even needed, given the Council’s recent introduction of an ordinance banning warehouses as conditional uses in all of the township’s planning zones, making it much harder for them to be built.

Suydam said Potosnak told her that the new ordi-

nance doesn’t mean there won’t be any new warehouses in the township, adding that warehouses are not the only large buildings that are constructed.

“There are also other large buildings, where you want to have required roofing, as well as other concerns like the pollution that might be introduced with a large building,” she said.

“He recommended that we might consider reframing this as a large building ordinance,” Suydam said.

Suydam said she looked at other green building-oriented ordinances across the country, and noticed that many of them were triggered by buildings of a certain square footage.

She said other factors could be incorporated into the ordinance, such as what affect a proposed large building would have on air pollution.

Suydam’s motion to expand the charge of the sub-committee was unanimously approved.

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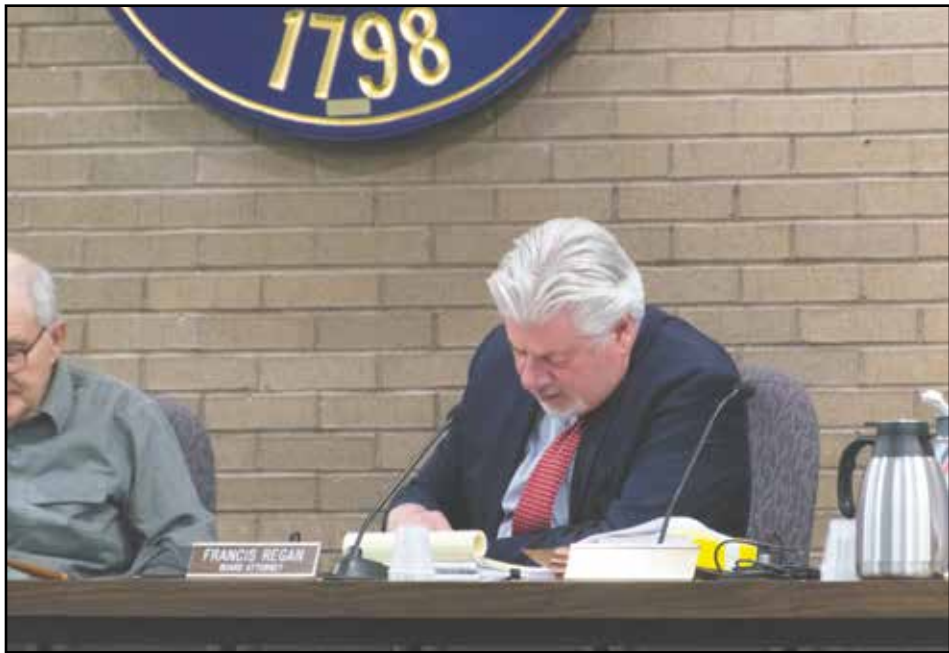
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Lawsuit Settlement Leads To Approval For Plaza Bus Parking



Zoning Board of Adjustment attorney Francis Regan reads off the list of conditions attached to the approval of the Saharose bus company's application.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment was forced on January 19 to approve a bus company's application to park 15 buses in the rear lot at JFK Plaza on John F. Kennedy Boulevard. The application for a Use Variance was originally denied by the Board on November 4, 2021, but the applicant, Saharose, appealed the decision and won in state Superior Court. As a result of a settlement of that suit, the Board was required to approve the application, albeit with about 20 restrictions. Among those conditions are that a fence must be erected around the parking area, security cameras and lights must be installed, no other buses or personal cars can be parked there, and the only maintenance work that can be done on the buses is the changing of tires. "No idling" signs and signage restricting parking to Saharose buses will also have to be installed, under the agreement. "This is not what the Board wanted, the Board wanted nothing," Board chairman Robert Thomas said after the final vote was taken. "But under the circumstances, you got about

as tight a set of conditions as possible." "I look forward to the cooperation of the applicant and especially the owner to make this work because people are not leaving here happy," he said. At the November 2022 hearing, Board members expressed skepticism that neither Saharose nor plaza owner David Rubin could keep another bus company, Sunset Transportation, from parking its buses there. Three members voted "no" at the November hearing, Board member Robert Shepherd was the only one to

give a detailed explanation of his vote. "Generally speaking, it's a good idea, but it feels like there's going to be a situation where nobody's going to claim responsibility when things go south," he said at the time. "It's just not something that feels like its sufficiently buttoned up." "I think the net use of this particular situation with this particular owner and this particular applicant and the renegade buses that seem to be coming on, and the lack of enforcement, they lead me to say no to this application," he said at the time. The proposed ordinance also stipulates the amount to be paid; a previous version of the ordinance merely stated that the contribution to the Tree Fund would be reviewed annually by the township engineer, who would then set the rate. The second ordinance would set \$5 as the flat late fee for dog licenses. Final votes are set for the Council's January 24, 2023 meeting.

Ordinances Tackle Dog License Late Fees, Tree Fund

Ordinances increasing the amount some developers must pay into the township's Tree Fund, and creating a flat late fee for dog licenses were introduced at the December 13 Township Council meeting. Developers who cannot meet township requirements for tree replacement when a development results in tree clearing must pay \$300 per tree that they cannot replace to the Tree Fund, under the

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Car Thefts, Burglaries Usher Out 2022

There were a rash of car thefts and burglaries to autos in the township during the last two weeks of the year, according to police. Here are the incidents, as reported by police: **December 18** A township resident's vehicle was stolen while it was left running outside of an auto business on Somerset St. during the afternoon hours. Two black males were captured on surveillance entering the \$70,000 vehicle and speeding off. The vehicle was later recovered in our jurisdiction. **December 19** A township resident's vehicle was stolen while it was left running outside of a business on Somerset St. during the evening hours. The \$10,000 vehicle was later recovered in an outside jurisdiction. One adult black male and two juvenile black males were apprehended and charged with multiple offenses. **December 20** A business located on Somerset St. was the victim of an auto theft on December 10 during the overnight hours. The vehicle, valued at \$19,000, was stolen by a male suspect from the business parking lot. **December 21** A township resident's vehicle was stolen during the

overnight hours in the area of JFK Blvd. The vehicle, valued at \$18,000, was later recovered in an outside jurisdiction. The suspect(s) is unknown. A township resident was the victim of a burglary to auto in the area of JFK Blvd. during the overnight hours. Patrol was in the area and observed the victim's trunk open. Nothing of value was taken by the unknown suspect(s). **December 26** A Somerville resident was the victim of a burglary to auto while at a local park during the afternoon hours. The unknown suspect(s) stole credit cards and \$200 from the victim's purse and later made purchases with the credit cards. The vehicle was also ransacked. A Nyack, NY resident was the victim of a catalytic converter theft on December 10 in the area of Green Hill Manor Dr. The part was valued at \$2,000. The suspect(s) is unknown. **December 29** A township resident was the victim of an auto theft while at a business on Hamilton St. The \$20,000 vehicle was left running and unattended outside of the business. The vehicle was later located in an outside jurisdiction. A township resident was the victim of a burglary to

auto during the overnight hours in the area of JFK Blvd. The unknown suspect(s) entered the unlocked vehicle and stole a wallet containing credits cards, which were later used locally by the suspect(s). A North Brunswick resident was the victim of a burglary to auto during the evening hours. The unknown suspect(s) gained access to the victim's vehicle while it was parked in the area of Somerset St. and stole multiple credit cards, IDs, and \$90 cash. There were no signs of forced entry. **December 31** A township resident was the victim of a motor vehicle theft during the overnight hours in the area of Easton North Dr. The unknown suspect(s) stole the vehicle by unknown means. The vehicle was valued at \$10,000. A township resident was the victim of a burglary to auto during the overnight hours in the area of Stanwick Ct. The unknown suspect(s) stole a wallet that contained a \$50 gift card. A township resident was the victim of a burglary to auto during the overnight hours in the area of Easton North Dr. The unknown suspect(s) rummaged through the vehicle but nothing of value was taken.

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TEECS Earns Dual AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award

Thomas Edison EnergySmart Charter School (TEECS) has earned the College Board AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award for achieving high female representation in AP Computer Science A (CSA) and AP Computer Science Principles (CSP).

Schools honored with the AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award have expanded girls' access in AP computer science courses.

More than 1,100 institutions achieved either 50 percent or higher female representation in AP computer science courses or a percentage of the female computer science exam takers meeting or exceeding that of the school's female population during the 2021-22 school year. In 2022, TEECS was one of only 64 to be recognized for closing the gender gap in both AP computer science courses.

"We're thrilled to congratulate our female AP computer science students and their teachers on this step toward gender parity in computer science education," Dr. Oguz Yildiz said in a release about the award. "We're honored that our school earned this distinction and look forward to seeing these young women and others pursue and achieve success in computer science education and careers."

"Computer science is the source code of our economy and so much of our daily lives," Trevor Packer, College Board Head of the AP Program, said in the release. "In the five years since we began the AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award, it's been heartening to see schools like TEECS welcome so many more young women into this vital field."

The first year of AP Computer Science Principles in 2016-17 attracted more students than any other AP course debut, and participation is on the rise.

In 2022, 134,651 students took the AP CSP Exam—more than triple the number of exam takers in the course's first year. In 2022, 44,811 women took the AP CSP Exam, more than three times the number who tested in 2017.

AP Computer Science A, which first debuted in 1988, continues to grow. In 2022, 77,753 students took the AP CSA exam, including 19,786 women – a 39% increase in female participation since 2017.

Providing female students with access to computer science courses is necessary to ensuring gender parity in the industry's high-paying jobs and to driving innovation, creativity, and representation. The median annual wage for computer and information technology occupations was \$97,430 in May 2021. However, women represent just 24% of the five million people in computing occupations.

According to a Google study, 54% of female computer science majors took AP CSA in high school. College Board research about AP CSP also finds AP CSP students are nearly twice as likely to enroll in AP CSA, and that for most students, AP CSP serves as a stepping stone to other advanced AP STEM coursework.

Two More Cannabis Retail Applications Get Council Resolutions

Resolutions of appropriateness for two more retail cannabis shop applications to the state Cannabis Regulatory Commission were passed by the Township Council at its December 13 meeting.

The resolutions, which state that the Council "believes the intended sites, consistent with Township Ordinances, are appropriately located and suitable for activities related to the operation of the proposed cannabis businesses," are for Silverleaf Dispensary, to be located at 1743 Route 27, and Somerset Green, to be located at 729 Somerset Street.

This brings to 35 the number of appropriateness resolutions the Council has passed for retail cannabis business applications since September.

Township Council Approves CDBG Grant Amendments



Deborah Mitchell, the township's CDBG program coordinator, speaks to the Township Council.

Left-over money in previous years' Community Development Block Grant program was good news for four township organizations that had project funding approved at the December 13 Township Council meeting.

The township had a total of \$92,871.36 in left-over CDBG funds from 2019, 2020 and 2022, according to the resolution approving the awards.

"It's in our best interests to spend this money as fast and as best as we can so that we can move on to our new grant funding," Deborah Mitchell, the township's CDBG program coordinator, told the Council.

CDBG grants are awarded in three categories, Public Service, Public Facilities and Housing. Mitchell said the township's share of Public Service funds had been expended. The money comes from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The applications were from current grant awardees and from some who had not received money in 2022, Mitchell said.

The December 13 meeting served as the public hearing for the amendments, but there were no comments from the public.

The projects getting grants are:

- Alternatives, Inc., 558 Madison Avenue – Exterior Deck for Transitional Housing Facility in the amount of \$15,000
- Center for Great Expectations – New Windows for 19 A/B Dellwood Lane – Transitional Housing Facility in the amount of \$13,400
- Franklin Food Bank – Installation of Permanent Freezers and Refrigeration Equipment, Freezer Curtains and Scale in the amount of \$30,000
- David and Lena T. Wilentz Senior Housing – Four (4) New Bath-tubs and an Emergency Call System and Central Monitoring System in the amount of \$34,400.



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Life Stories

Priscilla J. Yates, 92; Was Special Ed Teacher



Priscilla J. Yates of Somerset passed away on January 8 at home. She was 92.

Born and raised in New Brunswick, she was a long-time resident of Somerset.



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She worked as a Special Education Teacher for the Franklin Township Board of Education until her retirement.

Priscilla and her husband of 72 years, Steve, were founding parishioners of St. Matthias Church, where she was an active member volunteering for various ministries. She had also been active with the Franklin Township Girl Scouts and enjoyed traveling, gardening, helping others in need and especially spending time with her family.

She was predeceased by her parents, Frank Deak and Pearl Revak Pfenniger.

Surviving are her husband, Stephen L. Yates; daughter, Priscilla Yates of Pennsylvania; son and daughter-in-law, Stephen and Adrienne Yates of North Carolina; son, Kevin Yates of Pennsylvania; sister, Elizabeth Moore of Florida; six grandchildren, Cheryl, Stephen Alexander, Colleen, Megan, Dylan and Travis; and six great-grandchildren, Anthony, Stephen Xavier, Evelyn, Kolbe, Jacob and Felix.

Donations in her loving memory may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, Tennessee 38105, or click [HERE](#) to donate online.

Professional services are being handled under the direction of the Gleason Funeral Home, Somerset, New Jersey.

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James F. Renner, 90; Worked For NYC Bank



James F. Renner, of Somerset passed away peacefully at home on January 3. He was 90.

Born and raised in Jersey City, he married the love of his life, Dolores in 1956 and moved to Metuchen in 1961 to raise their family before moving to Somerset in 2003.

Jim graduated from St. Michael's High School in Jersey City then joined the United States Navy, serving overseas during the Korean War. He was a communicant of St. Frances of Assisi Cathedral, Metuchen.

He worked for the Morgan Guarantee Bank in New York City his entire professional career before retiring in 1992.

Jim was an avid fan of the NY Giants, the NY Yankees and enjoyed horse racing and many other sports. Above all he was a beloved husband, father, brother, uncle, grandfather and great-grandfather who was loved by all. He was especially fond of his six grandchildren, whom they

affectionately called 'G-Pa' and his great-granddaughter.

He was predeceased by his beloved wife, Dolores in 2008; daughter, Patricia McLaughlin in 2005; sister, Dolores Wolfrum in 2017; and daughter-in-law, Cathy Renner in 2007.

Jim will be greatly missed by his son and daughter-in-law, Jim and Cindy; daughter, Susan; grandchildren, Shawn, Christine and Jeffrey Renner, and Kelly, Kate and William McLaughlin; son-in-law, Bill McLaughlin; great-granddaughter, Mona June Renner (whom he loved to call 'Junie Moon'); brothers and sister-in-law, Phil and Phyllis and Bob and Pat; and many close nieces and nephews.

Council Approves \$40K For New Carpeting

Contracts totaling more than \$40,000 for new carpeting in the Council Chamber, the Court and Police Department were awarded December 13 by the Township Council.

Both contracts went to The Gillespie Group of Dayton.

The largest, \$23,301.71, is for installing new carpeting in the Court and Police Department.

The second contract,

worth \$16,972.16, is for the Council Chamber installation.

Township Manager Robert Vornlocker said the township's Public Works Department will remove all of the chairs from the Chamber prior to the new carpet being installed.

Both purchases were made through an Educational Services Commission of New Jersey co-operative purchasing agreement.

Township To Apply For Williams Park Grant Money



Tara Kenyon, the township's Open Space Consultant, describes the grant to Open Space Advisory Committee members at the January 17 meeting.

Township officials are preparing a grant application targeted to fix up the trail and make other enhancements at Naaman Williams Park.

Plans are to apply for a grant offered by Sustainable Jersey, a statewide organization whose mission is to help New Jersey's towns create a sustainable future.

The grant will be either for \$10,000 or \$20,000. The final amount will be determined after a cost analysis is conducted.

The idea for the grant originated in the township's Trails Advisory Committee; Tara Kenyon, the township's Open Space Consultant, brought it to the Open Space Advisory Committee at its January 17 meeting.

Trails committee members suggested the township try for a \$10,000 grant, 10 of which are available, Kenyon said.

But the Open Space committee members voted to apply for a \$20,000 grant, five of which are available.

Township Manager Robert Vornlocker said the township would conduct a cost analysis "to see what we can do with what kind of money, and go from there."

Vornlocker said the park "gets used often by many people. It's a very heavily used trail system around the perimeter of the park."

Kenyon said the Trails Committee members suggested applying for the \$10,000 grant to remediate the ponding and flooding on the Williams Park trail, and then work on connecting the trail to other woodland

Vornlocker said Naaman Williams Park is heavily used by area residents.

Trails Township Councilman Carl Wright (D-Ward 4) also attended the meeting. Kenyon asked him if the people in his Ward would want the work to be done.

"Because we don't want to do something that people don't want to be done," she said.

Wright said they would want the work done.

"Anything that makes the neighborhood better, people want," he said.

"Being that it's attached to the senior housing complex, they use it more than anybody else because it's in their back yard," he said.



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Somerset County News

RVCC Holocaust Institute to Host Virtual Events With Museum Exhibition



Eva Kuper.



Marie-Blanche Fourcade.

The Institute of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Raritan Valley Community College will offer two virtual programs in January in conjunction with the College’s hosting of Witnesses to History, Keepers of Memory, a traveling exhibition from the Montreal Holocaust Museum. The exhibition will be on display at RVCC’s Branchburg campus through May 10.

The exhibit highlights the remarkable life stories of 30 Holocaust survivors who, for over 40 years, have shared their testimonies with school groups and visitors at the

Museum in Montreal.

The following virtual programs have been scheduled:

Friday, January 20, 2023: 10-11 a.m.: The online program will feature the opening of the new exhibition, Witnesses to History, Keepers of Memory.

Participants will hear from Eva Kuper, a Canadian Holocaust survivor featured in the exhibition.

Kuper will share her story and discuss her part in the exhibition.

Marie-Blanche Fourcade, head of collections and exhibitions for the Montreal Holocaust Museum, also will

speak during the program.

Those interested in registering for the virtual event should visit https://raritanval-edu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Wn4ro_5oRWubDHBPeWdKVg

The events are free of charge and open to the public. Registration is required.

The exhibition and programs are being co-sponsored by The Jewish Federation of Somerset, Hunterdon, & Warren Counties, with support from The New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education.

For information about the events or scheduling a tour of Witnesses to History, Keepers of Memory, contact Michelle Edgar, Program Specialist for the Institute of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, at michelle.edgar@raritanval.edu.

RVCC is located at 118 Lamington Road in Branchburg. For further information, visit www.raritanval.edu.

Environmental Education Center Presents Winter Programs

Outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers of all ages can register for the Somerset County Park Commission’s new winter programs to be presented by the Environmental Education Center (EEC).

The new activities include outdoor exploration with nature-related experiments, tips for staying warm, birding and breakfast, and story time for kids. Participants must pre-register.

Joining winter outdoor activities is mentally and physically beneficial for a person’s health.

According to the American Heart Association, people who participate in outdoor winter activities can boost their immune system, increase their Vitamin D intake, improve their mood, and help burn calories.

New Programs in January

Trailblazers: Participants will explore the outdoors and conduct nature-related experiments in this Naturalist-led program, on Wednesdays Jan. 11, 18, and 25, from 4 to 5 p.m. This program is

appropriate for children ages 11-13. The cost is \$30 per person for a three-day session. Activity Code 52009, EEC-01.

Birding Over Breakfast: Place a breakfast order with the Naturalist, then embark on a birding walk, burn calories, and return for a delicious breakfast. This program is for adults only and will occur on Saturday, Jan. 28, from 8 to 10 a.m. The cost is \$17 per student and senior citizens and \$19 per adult. Activity Code 51948, EEC-01.

Storytime Adventure: Children-geared program (for infants to age five years and must be accompanied by an adult) to help develop their appreciation of nature. The program includes animal stories, and kid-friendly adventures, meeting live critters, taking a short hike, participating in crafting, or enjoying show and tell on Sunday, Jan 29, from 10 to 11a.m. Activity Code 51947, EEC-01.

Registration

Pre-registration is required. Online registration ends 24 hours before the start of a program. Enrollment

may still be possible if there is room in the class. For more information, and to register call 908-722-1200 Ext. 5002.

Program Guidelines

Children under the age of 15 years must be accompanied by an adult who is registered in the program.

Participants must dress appropriately for the weather and wear waterproof boots.

Cancellation Policy

Programs could be canceled by the EEC due to low enrollment or weather conditions. The Park Commission will notify participants by phone and give them the option to receive a full refund or a credit to use toward another program.

Participants who need to cancel their registration must notify the EEC a minimum of seven days before the start of the program to receive a full refund.

COVID-19 Guidelines

Participants should not attend any programs if they are not feeling well, have a fever, or have tested positive for COVID-19 within five days before the start of the program.

Reservations Taken For Photo Shoots At Somerset County Parks

Anyone seeking an ideal location for an event, wedding or posed photo shoot should consider the Somerset County Park Commission’s Colonial Park Gardens and photo shoots only at Leonard J. Buck Garden.

Both gardens provide scenic locations with pic-

turesque settings. The Park Commission is currently accepting reservations for both gardens.

Colonial Park Gardens offers scenic sites with botanical gardens, an award-winning rose garden, a flourishing perennial garden, an ornamental grass collection, a fragrance and sensory garden,

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Disagreement Over Appointment To Zoning Board Of Adjustment Leads To Township Council Shouting Match



Township Councilman Carl Wright objecting to an appointment to the Zoning Board of Adjustment at the January 2 Council meeting.

A one-year appointment to the Zoning Board of Adjustment of a vocal warehouse critic caused a brief dust-up at the January 2 Township Council reorganization meeting.

The disagreement between Mayor Phil Kramer and Township Councilman Carl Wright (D-Ward 4) had no effect on the appointment.

The appointment in question was that of Kiki Anastasakos to the unexpired Alternate 4 seat to the Zoning Board, an appointment which expires on December 31.

Anastasakos' appointment was one of three to the Board.

Wright's said his concern with the appointment was that Anastasakos is only

concerned about warehouse sprawl in the township.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment consists of seven regular members and four alternates. The alternates can participate in discussions about applications, but can only vote in the absence of regular members.

A combination of four regular and alternate members would have to be absent from a meeting before Anastasakos could vote on an application.

"We put someone on the Zoning Board who I wouldn't have voted for," Wright said. He said he didn't want to say anything at the time the appointments were voted on because, "I wouldn't hold up any other candidates over this."

Wright said he objected to what he believed was An-

astasakos' single-issue focus.

"When we put somebody on for a one-issue write off, warehouses, then I believe that we should put people on any committee, from zoning board to open space that only have one little pet problem or peeve or want, and we should just put them on there and say the hell with it," he said.

"She might be a beautiful individual, of course she is," Wright said. "But how long has she been in town? She said her only thing was to stop warehouses. We're going to put her on the Zoning Board?"

"Everybody that goes on that zoning board has a thought process to do things as a whole to make sure things come out properly," he said. "They're not here to knock somebody down, they're not here to boost somebody up. If

it fits Franklin Township, put it there."

"I'm not advocating warehouses, I am advocating that if we're going to do this candidate, which is already done then where do we end up?" he asked. "We're here to make

we've just done."

"If we don't do things right, what do we look like?" Wright said. "A bunch of clowns, all nine of us. Because we all voted for something."

Wright and Kramer clashed before his statements over whether he should be able to make the statements at all in the section of the meeting reserved for Council discussion items.

Normally, Kramer said, discussion items are scheduled. The discussion item at this meeting was a planned February town hall on property assessment.

"Usually, we do not have council discussion items, we just go right past them as a norm," Wright said. "Tonight, I don't think so."

"The norm is we plan a council discussion item for a particular item that requires a council discussion in order to make a decision," Kramer responded.

"If you're saying that you want to squash something when another council member wants to say some-

thing" you're saying that "Mr. Wright has something to say that I don't want to hear," Wright said to Kramer, his voice level rising.

"I'll blow this thing up this meeting, next meeting, and every damn meeting after this," Wright said. "So either you let me say it now, or it's going to get real ugly real fast."

"You're out of order, but go ahead," Kramer said.

Anastasakos is a founder and vocal member of the Canal Walk-based anti-warehouse group called the Citizens Warehouse Action Group.

She and her fellow group members successfully lobbied the Council to pass ordinances limiting where warehouses can be built in the township.

The group has raised nearly \$11,000 in a GoFundMe campaign to fight two proposed warehouses near the Canal Walk development. The Planning Board began hearings on that application on January 4.

First Baptist Church Of Lincoln Gardens Receives Grant

First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens is one of 13 local organization receiving a total of nearly \$500,000 in grants from the St. Peter's Healthcare System.

The church, located on Somerset Street, received the grant to "support their wellness and care initiatives that addresses health care inequities," according to a press release about the awards.

The grants were given in support of efforts that address social determinants of health, according to the release.

"We are excited and honored to be able to award these one-time grants to a diverse range of organizations that

are helping to enhance the lives of the residents in the communities we serve," Leslie D. Hirsch, FACHE, president and CEO, Saint Peter's Healthcare System, said in the release. "Our mission at Saint Peter's is to provide humble service to humanity and we are proud to extend our good work beyond the walls of the hospital and support the efforts of those mission-driven entities who lift up those in need spiritually, emotionally and physically."

Through the grants, St. Peter's is reciprocating to the community for supporting its healthcare workers during the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic, the release said.

"We understand that there are many factors that impact one's health and overall well-being," Hirsch said in the release. "We have been addressing social determinants of health to help improve the lives of those affected by food insecurity, mental health issues or lack of education and resources."

The grants we have awarded will help address the environmental and socioeconomic factors that affect one's health by providing funds for tuition, mental health support, nutritious food, and pathways to career success, among other benefits," Hirsch said.

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GSC YMCA Celebrates Its Saturdays in Motion Program

The Greater Somerset County YMCA (GSCYMCA) held its first in-person Saturdays in Motion (SIM) Holiday Party since 2019 for special needs children and their families on December 10, 2022. During the pandemic, the SIM regular programming and special events were virtual through an off-shoot program called SIM Connect. A virtual holiday party during that period even featured video season's greetings from Senator Cory Booker. This past year, the SIM program began meeting again in-person. The Saturdays in Motion program at Somerset Hills YMCA, a branch of GSCYMCA, is the nation's longest running non-public recreational program for children with autism and their families. In the program, teen volunteers work in the Y's gym and pool with children who have autism and other special needs and their siblings.

"The Saturdays in Motion program has been a pillar of our special needs programming for many years. We are so proud of our SIMs program and our staff and volunteers who dedicate themselves to serving and strengthening our community. Today, we couldn't be happier to see all those smiling faces enjoying a variety of activities designed just for them for the holidays," said David M. Carcieri, President and CEO, GSCYMCA.

The holiday party was held at Somerset Hills YMCA, where volunteers met early to assemble more than 80 gift bags for attendees. Activity stations were operated by volunteer "santas and elves" who later ushered them together for parachute playtime. Like their usual SIM sessions, the holiday party included an hour of playtime and an hour of pool time. "Santa" stations were optional for children who wanted to experience the holiday addition; everyone could participate in their usual SIM activities. Organizers wanted to make the festivities accessible, to not overwhelm the children, but still provide them with ample opportunities for added joy.

During the holiday party, program organizers celebrated well-attended SIM sessions. Some highlights include:

- November 5: 50 families attended along with many volunteers, including members of the Rutgers Cross Country and Golf Teams.
- October 29: 50 families attended along with many volunteers, including members of the Rutgers Rowing Team.
- October 1: This was the second session of the year. More than 80 families and an additional 100 volunteers were in attendance. Members of the Rutgers Women's Swimming and Diving Teams, and the Women's Softball Team volunteered.
- September 17: This session was the first of SIM's 31st year. Members of the Rutgers Men's Basketball, Women's Lacrosse, and Women's Tennis Teams volunteered. More than 50 families were in attendance.

"We are so pleased to once again be able to provide this program to so many families. The strength of our volunteers is what helps to make this program the success that it is year after year. Art Raynes's commitment and dedication to this program is beyond compare," said Kendra de Zutter, Associate Program Director of Somerset Hills YMCA.

GSCYMCA and the SIM program are especially thankful for the commitment of Rutgers volunteers throughout the years. Prior to the pandemic, they held one "Rutgers Day" each year with student athlete volunteers. Today, their support has expanded to include presence at every SIM session since the program resumed in-person sessions at Somerset Hills YMCA in February of 2022. The SIM program thanks all of its volunteers and community support for families. The holiday party was a celebration for everyone involved and a much needed reprieve for families during the busy season.

Visiting Volunteers:

- Rutgers Baseball
- Somerville Wrestling Team
- Delbarton Swim Team
- Watchung Hills Acapella Chorus caroling
- Volunteer and SHY Board Junior Advocate: Jenna Langer
- String Instrumentals, volunteer: Matilda Han
- Santa: Steve McKenna, a Basking Ridge resident with more than 20 years SIM involvement; father of two former volunteers, Own and Caroline, and a SIM participant, Patrick. Owen and Caroline served as carolers this year.

Art Raynes, founder of Saturdays in Motion, and Somerset Hills YMCA branch board member, concluded the holiday festivities by saying that, "It is heartening to see the connections and relationships that have formed between our teenage volunteers and the children in the program. It is really a credit to the volunteers of our community, and we are so happy to celebrate the holidays with this expanded family today."

For more information about Saturdays in Motion, please visit gscymca.org.

Submitted by Greater Somerset County YMCA.

'Porch Pirates' Busy At End Of 2022

So-called "porch pirates" – people who steal delivered packages from people's porches – were busy in the township during the waning days of 2022, police said.

Here are the reported cases, furnished by the Franklin Township Police Department:

December 19
A Township resident was the victim of a package theft during the afternoon hours in the area of Sunflower Rd. The black female suspect stole the package which contained contents valued at \$47.

December 22
A Township resident was the victim of a package theft on December 5 in the area of JFK Blvd. The unknown suspect(s) stole the package off the victim's front porch. The contents were valued at \$429.

A Township resident was the victim of a package theft between November 30 and December 13 in the area of McAuliffe Ct. while out of the country. The package contained two iPhones valued at \$1,200 each. The suspect(s) is unknown.

December 28
A Township resident reported a package theft in the area of JFK Blvd. on October 31. The contents were valued at \$165. The suspect(s) is unknown.

December 29
A Township resident was the victim of a package theft in the area of Rachel Ct. The unknown suspect(s) stole a delivered gaming device valued at \$4,680.

December 30
A Township resident was the victim of a package theft in the area of Barron Circle on December 18. The package was delivered to the mailroom but was not there when the victim went to pick it up. The contents were valued at \$3,000. The suspect(s) is unknown.

A Township resident was the victim of a package theft in the area of Emerson Rd. The unknown suspect(s) stole two packages valued at \$270.

Planning Board Approves Cedar Grove Lane Subdivision

An application to create two "flag lots" on Cedar Grove Lane was approved December 7 by the Planning Board.

The applicant, Stephen Sliwka, will eventually build one house on each of the two new lots. A house currently exists on the smaller lot created by the subdivision.

A flag lot is a rectangular-shaped lot that has access via a long driveway, colloquially known as the "flag pole."

The two houses would be built facing Cedar Grove Lane, the Board was told.

One of the new flag lots measures slightly more than 1.5 acres, while the other measures about 2.4 acres. The remaining lot measures about 1 acre, the Board was told.

Both new lots would be served by the one long driveway in an effort to "reduce impervious coverage and ensure safety for both dwellings," the project's engineer, Michael Ford, told the Board.

Ford said a total of 146 trees would be removed, with 45 trees planted to replace them. A contribution to the township's tree fund will be made in lieu of planting the remaining 39 trees that are required to be replaced by the township's tree ordinance.

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Hundreds Gather To Honor MLK, Contribute To Scholarship Fund

Continued from Page 1.

she said. “They also circulate dollars within their communities.”

“That is really the next level of Dr. King’s freedom fighting that we have to undertake: business development and access to capital for small minority and women-owned businesses, veteran-owned businesses,” she said.

King, she said, “was a phenomenal leader, he was a renaissance leader. I don’t know if we’ll ever see someone who will be a renaissance man like Martin.”

“Martin had a red badge of courage,” Oliver said. “To change the course of history, to be transformative in people’s lives, you must be willing to pin that red badge of courage to your chest.”

“So if we want to continue on the trajectory of social, economic, educational justice, equity, each one of us in our own way has to pin on the red badge every now and then,” Oliver said. “I think that this room demonstrates that, because of who each one of you are who you represent, the fact that you saw it not robbery to make a contribution to this scholarship fund and by having a fundamental understand that we should all live the concept that we climb as we reach.”

Other speakers included two of the township’s religious leaders, Imam Syed Rizwan Rizvi of the Masji-e-Ali mosque and Rabbi Eli Garfinkel of Temple Beth El.

After recounting some notable moments in King’s life, Rizvi said, “Dr. King

saw a dream, he didn’t expect things to change overnight. We need the same dedication to be successful.”

“If Dr. King had given up, he may still have been alive today, but his message would have never existed,” he said. “Therefore, if you want inspiration when you go home today, read about Dr. King, read about Mahatma Gandhi, read about Imam Hussein, and you will not be disappointed.”

Garfinkel told the story of Robert Smalls, a slave who served as a wheelman on a Confederate gunboat. Smalls managed to steam the boat from the mine-infested harbor at Charleston S.C. to a Union blockade. He was later made captain of the boat, and eventually was elected to the U.S. Congress.

Connecting Small’s escape from slavery to the point of the breakfast – fostering higher education – Garfinkel said, “We want our kids to get a college education so that they will be able to steam out of the minefield of dead-end jobs that don’t pay a living wage. We want them to get a college education so they will be able to fight back against the unfairness of life. We want them to get a college education because that is where you learn how to network with people. What you know in this world is important. Whom you know in this world is crucial.”

Like Smalls, Rev King “weaved through a dangerous mine field, the mine field of American culture,” he said. “He started a movement that led to the passage of the Civil

Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Both of which were game changers for Black America. These laws gave teeth to the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. There’s so much more to do.”

“Keeping the dream alive is simply not enough anymore,” Garfinkel said. “The real goal should be to make the dream come true. Keeping the dream alive, nothing changes, because it’s still a dream, on life support.”

“We have to make Dr. King’s dream become our shared reality,” he said.

Also on the bill for the event was Franklin High School student Isatu Jollah, who sang the National Anthem; Abigail Ibironke, a member of NJ Orators who delivered Malcom X’s

“By Any Means Necessary” speech; the Franklin High School and Franklin Middle School dance troupes; Community Baptist Church Pastor Jamin Powell, who gave the benediction; Franklin High School student Torie Schenck, who sang, “Lift Every Voice & Sing,” and Franklin High School student Gabriella Stewart, who sang, “God Bless America.”

Early music was provided by the jazz duo of Franklin High school students Saish Nellutia and Gykee Wheeler.

The Franklin Township Police Honor Guard presented the colors, and the event was MC’d by FTPD Capt. Sean Hebbon, the Foundation’s president.

Following are some photos from the event:



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Reconstituted Chamber Of Commerce Holds Winter Party

The new Franklin Township Chamber of Commerce Executive Board introduced itself January 19 with a Winter Party, held at AVE on Pierce Street. The recently elected Executive Board members are: President, Nick DiMeglio; Vice-President, Bill Grippo; Second Vice-President, Peter Stavrianidis; Secretary, Montese Anderson; Treasurer, Evrim Cicek; Policy Director, Namik Sercan; Communications Director, PJ Parker, and Social Media Director, John Park. Here are some scenes from the event:



Photos submitted by Nick DiMeglio.



Planning Board Takes Actions Toward Warehouse Ban

Continued from Page 1.

to limit warehouse growth that satisfies the legal requirements and recognizes the decades of contributions that my client's and others represented here tonight have made to this community," he said.

Francis Linnus, who represents Northern Nurseries on Elizabeth Avenue, referenced the township's last major Master Plan revision, which took four years to complete before final adoption in 2020.

"In 2016, this town did a real Master Plan update, because it was backed up by studies and certain strategic plans," he said. "After four years of study, in 2020, a Master Plan that the township should have been proud of and was proud of, and apparently is no longer proud of."

"It is our opinion ... that this particular update of the Master Plan is rushed, there are no studies supporting that Master Plan amendment, and it just doesn't work," he said.

Linnus spoke about how the new ordinance has hurt his client.

"My client entered into a contract to sell the nursery to a warehouse developer," he said. "We're told the warehouse developer was 30 days away from filing an application with the township ... (but was told that warehouses were) no longer a permitted use in the BI zone. It appears they'll be losing that contract."

"My question to the Board is, how fair is that?" he said. "Has the Board ... looked at the site-specific information that's necessary to accept or reject a warehouse use in the BI zone?"

Canal Walk residents were on hand to support the Master Plan changes.

Sarah Zacharczyk said that she was not anti-business, but that she does not "believe that a town does not have the right to set a vision for itself, and to set a Master Plan and reset it to a degree and first and foremost, for the health, safety and well-being of its citizens."

"I sincerely hope that this town does take all of those things into play and proceeds to pass a moratorium because there are other places in this state where more warehouses can be built," she said. "I think we've done our fair share to accommodate that business."

Marlon Kwan told the Board that residents should come first in their deliberations.

"When the BI zone was created, I think there was a little bit of a lack of foresight in terms of how that BI zone was going to rear its head along residential properties," he said.

The proposed ordinance amendments now go back to the Township Council for a public hearing and final vote, scheduled for 7 p.m. January 24 in the Municipal Building on DeMott Lane.

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✓ Pain when you walk

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✓ Muscle weakness

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Bill Grippo Is Franklin Reporter 2022 Man Of The Year

Continued from Page 1.

teer for the Franklin Food Bank, organizing its annual golf outing and creating the aforementioned Ambassador donation program.

Over the past several years, said Mayor Phil Kramer, “Bill has spent much of his time finding ways to make Franklin better.”

“From Gazebos, to getting Franklin a YMCA, to feeding the hungry, to helping families in need, turn around, there’s Bill,” he said.

Nick DiMeglio, a close friend of Grippo’s, called Grippo “a true Franklin Champion.”

“He is widely recognized by the community,” DiMeglio said. “He has received many awards for his public and volunteer service.”

DiMeglio noted that Grippo’s efforts to bring a YMCA to the township “was awarded the YMCA Spirit Award at their Annual Campaign Ceremony for his commitment as Task Force Chairman.”

Board of Education president Nancy LaCorte said Grippo is “probably the best fundraiser.”

“He’s definitely an asset,” LaCorte said. “I couldn’t think of anyone better. He’s well-deserving.”

Allie O’Brien, the Food Bank’s development director, said Grippo “is an idea person. Creative. Unique. Thoughtful.”

“It’s fun to work to make his visions come to life and it’s inspiring to watch one of his ideas form fully in front of one’s eyes,” she said.

“Bill is a true philanthropist,” O’Brien said. “He is always thinking about Franklin families and his most emotive moments are when he makes a real difference in the lives of children.”

EAS Students Help Food Bank

Continued from Page 1.

working with the food bank for four years, said school vice-principal Jennifer Stein.

Allie O’Brien, the food bank’s development director, said the money raised will pay for 1,000 meals.

“Silvia and the rest of the team at EAS has been unbelievable in all of their fundraising and gathering of donations for the food bank,” she said.

Also part of the organizing team was Abbie Staton-Schmidt, a school guidance counselor.

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