

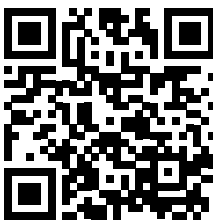


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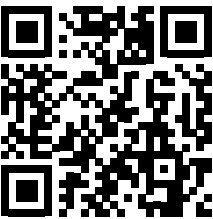
Scan the QR Codes with your mobile device to see the videos.



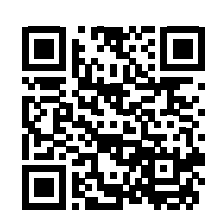
We speak with Bob LaCorte who brought the Little Free Library to the Quailbrook Park Playground, with more to come.



The Township held its annual September 11 commemoration on September 12 at the September 11 Memorial in the Municipal Complex.



A little sample of the Franklin High School Warrior Marching Band, seen here performing at halftime of a recent football game.



Frank Resta gives us an update on the reward being offered for information leading to an arrest in the 40-year-old Sharon Thor murder case.



Planning Board Denies Application For Warehouses Near Canal Walk



HAVING THEIR SAY – Residents, most of whom are from the Canal Walk development, were able to express their opinions to the Planning Board September 26 about the warehouses proposed near their homes.

An application to build two warehouses across from the Canal Walk housing development was unanimously rejected September 26 by the

Planning Board.

The vote came after months of Board hearings, sometimes acrimonious testimony and regular attendance at the meetings by more than

200 residents, most of whom live in Canal Walk.

It also came after pleas for its denial by 19 township residents who spoke during the public session, and summa-

tions by the attorney hired by the Canal Walk Homeowners Association, the attorney hired by a group of citizen activists and the applicant's attorney.

In rejecting the site plan application submitted by Link Logistics/B9 Schoolhouse Owner, Board members generally said they felt they did not receive answers to their questions about environmental and other issues, and in some cases did not get the chance to ask all of the questions they had.

"The bottom line is, I don't feel I have enough information to do anything other than to vote a no for this," said Board member Robert Thomas, who made

Continued on Page 7.

New Franklin Park Library Branch Opens

The new Franklin Park branch of the township library silently opened its doors on September 12, and the reviews were good.

The 5,500-square-foot building sits within walking distance to Franklin Park school, and holds about 17,000 books, as well as DVDs, magazines and newspapers.

"It's very exciting," said January Adams, the library's executive director. "We waited a long time for this."

The branch's Grand Opening was set for September 28.

The new branch has a separate community room



NEW BRANCH IS OPEN – Manisha Makwana, Branch Manager Amanda Decker, Library Executive Director January Adams, and Paul Doherty in the new Franklin Park library branch which had a "soft opening" on September 12.

for events, and also features a kids' section.

Adams said the new space

is a vast improvement over the 3,800 square foot unit formerly rented at the Franklin

Towne Square strip center on Route 27.

Continued on Page 6.

New Activity In Cold Case Investigation

The investigation into the longest unsolved murder in Somerset County recently took a new twist with the exhumation of the remains of the 15-year-old victim.

Sharon Thor was killed in October of 1982 after she was seen getting into a car with two males in front of her John E. Busch Avenue home. Her disappearance came after she took a phone call, tucking herself away from the rest of her family while she spoke to the person on the other end of the line.

Thor's bludgeoned body was found several days after her disappearance in a field

close to her home.

The revelation that Thor's remains have been exhumed was made by Frank Resta, a lifelong township resident who has been at the forefront of bringing renewed attention to the 41-year-old case.

"The family told me that they exhumed her body," Resta said. "Science has advanced ... so that hopefully now that can help" in the investigation.

Authorities have hinted at using DNA evidence to solve the case over the years, but nothing has as yet materialized.

The Somerset County Prosecutor's Office, which

is investigating the case with the Franklin Township Police Department, was mum on the most recent revelation.

"(T)he investigation remains open as an on-going Homicide Investigation which is being conducted by the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office and Franklin Township Police Department," Chief Francisco Roman Jr., the Prosecutor's Office spokesman, wrote in an email. "With all on-going investigations we cannot comment further to maintain the integrity of the investigation."

Resta is a local business owner who attended high

school with Thor. His interest was piqued when he attended the FTPD's Community Police Academy, during which the Thor case was discussed.

Resta started a reward fund – separate from the CrimeStoppers of Somerset County's \$5,000 reward established in 2019 – with \$500.

A production at Villager's Theatre of a play written by a friend of Thor's family raised more money for the reward fund and that, combined with additional donations, helped it grow to \$4,000.

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Environmental Commission Likes Bottle Bill



BOTTLE BILL SUPPORT – Environmental Commissioners discuss a potential “bottle bill.”

The Environmental Commission on September 18 voted to support an effort to establish a bottle bill in New Jersey.

Ten other states in the country have such bills, which are designed to increase recycling rates for bottles made of glass, plastic and aluminum.

The effort is being led by the Washington, D.C.-based Clean Water Action.

“I don’t see a reason why we shouldn’t consider sending a general letter of support,” Commissioner Robin Suydam said.

“I think it makes sense. I’m the one who’s out there on Skillman’s Lane picking

up the trash,” she said.

As envisioned by Clean Water Action, the Bottle Bill would set a 10-cent refundable deposit on beverage bottles. States that do have the so-called Deposit Return Systems recycle approximately 60 percent of beverage bottles, while those states that do not have a system recycle

approximately 24 percent of beverage bottles, according to Clean Water Action’s web site.

Commissioner Ted Chase noted that the idea of a deposit on bottles has been kicking around in New Jersey for a long time, but is opposed by bottle manufacturers, many of which are located in New Jersey.

“The glass producers want to sell as many bottles as possible, so they don’t want the bottles (recycled),” he said. “And if you’re going to have a bottle reused, the glass has to be thicker, so it’s more expensive” to produce.

The last time a bottle bill was introduced in the state Legislature was 2020, said Tara Kenyon, the Township’s Open Space consultant.

Danielsen Gives Backpacks To Students

More than 900 backpacks containing school supplies were recently donated to children in need across the 17th Legislative District by state Assemblyman Joe Danielsen.

Danielsen has conducted annual backpack drives for a number of years.

Throughout the summer, the Assemblyman’s office has collected supplies including

backpacks, colored pencils, hand sanitizer, highlighters, pencil cases/pouches, pens, folders, notebooks, and rulers, according to a press release.

The success of this year’s backpack drive could not have been accomplished without the help of exceptional individuals and groups who donated these supplies at drop-off locations, according to the release.

In addition, the work of volunteers in assembling these backpacks and supplies was essential in the success of the Backpack Drive, according to the release.

“The backpack drive is an essential service for our communities here in LD-17, as many families struggle to af-

ford the expensive costs associated with school supplies,” Danielsen said in the release. “By providing school supplies and backpacks for the children of these communities, we are ensuring that they have the tools needed to excel in their education and build their future. Because when our children’s future is bright, the future of our state and nation is brighter as well.”

The following groups were essential in the success of the backpack drive thanks to their donations along with assistance in organizing and distributing the backpacks:

Sterling Point Community, Somerset Run Community, Franklin Township JFK Club, The Church of St. John The Evangelist,

Keller Williams Real Estate, the American Federation of Teachers New Jersey Chapter AFL-CIO, Franklin Township PBA Local 154, Franklin Township Fire Marshals, AIMS Education, along with individual donations from people across the 17th Legislative District.

Further thanks is extended to the help provided by libraries in Franklin Township, North Brunswick, Piscataway, who graciously allowed for drop off locations at their branches, according to the release. In addition, special thanks is extended to South Bound Brook for allowing a drop off location at their municipal building.

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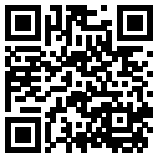
Franklin Park School Welcomes New Principal



PRINCIPAL'S FIRST DAY – Jennifer Stein reflects on her first day as principal at FPS.

September 7 was the first day of school for township students in grades K-12. In addition to welcoming new students, several schools in the District welcomed new administrators, one of whom was Franklin Park School principal Jennifer Stein. Stein, who came to FPS from being the vice-prin-

cipal at Elizabeth Avenue School, took some time to speak with the Franklin Reporter & Advocate at the end of her first day in her new job. Scan the QR Code to watch the video.



Parker At Somerset Wins Zoning Board Approval For New Outpatient Area

The Parker at Somerset rehabilitation center won Zoning Board of Adjustment approval for its plan to re-stripe its parking lot and create an outpatient rehabilitation facility at the September 7 Board meeting. Meanwhile, a township couple wishing to build a home for themselves was told to return to the Board in October with more detailed plans. Parker's experts told the Board that more than enough parking – including an excess of handicapped parking – would be provided in its lot. The out-patient facility will replace the center's in-patient facility, the Board was told. "There will be no changes to the outside, only internal renovation," Josh Hanrahan, the company's engineer, told the Board.

Tanvi Desai, Parker's director of rehabilitation, told the Board that the center services about 100 Franklin Township residents, and that outpatient rehabilitation services are also provided in patients' homes. The couple wishing to build a home on Battle Place, Venkateswar and Padmaja Vakkalagadda, was told that they needed to return to the Board to show new architectural drawings, and to show some proof that they had contacted neighboring property owners to see if they wanted to sell their land, or buy the couple's. The new drawings are needed because the project was slightly redesigned after the plans had been submitted to the Township. The project needs variances from Township codes on sideyard setback and total lot coverage; the proof of the couple looking to buy neighbors' land or sell theirs is a necessary component of getting those variance applications approved. The couple wish to build a two-story, four bedroom home with a one-car garage at Battle Place and Davis Avenue. The land is currently vacant. The house was redesigned to give it a smaller footprint and give the couple more of a backyard, the Board was told. "It won't be the largest house in the neighborhood, but that's OK," said Marc Leber, the project's engineer.



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Life Stories

Kelton C. Harrell, 55; Had Many Hobbies, Passions



Kelton C. Harrell, of Somerset NJ, passed away on August 26 in Columbia, South Carolina at the age of 55. He was born in Rahway and lived in Edison before moving to Somerset in 1999.

On February 19, 1968, Marvin and Jessie Harrell were delighted to welcome their newborn son, Kelton Charles Harrell, and their family was complete. Through the years he worked

side-by-side with his dad learning to build anything and fix everything. His mom enjoyed the great conversations they had about the bible and made sure he knew how to clean and cook. He surprised his parents at 6 years old when he found a book, read the ingredients and made bread for himself.

His first adventure away from home was when he spent the summer with his grandmother in Mayesville, S.C. And although he was far from happy about it, he formed a longing to see his uncles, aunts and cousins in South Carolina and Georgia. Family reunions were a staple throughout the rest of his life.

Kelton was educated in the Rahway school system. When he completed his pri-

mary education, he attended DeVry Institute and began his career in Information Technology. He went on to work for corporations such as Coopers & Lybrand and William Grant & Sons until he found his true passion in real estate and worked hard to build his own business, renovating and flipping houses. He was amazing at whatever he set out to do.

His hobbies were numerous. Fishing, building remote control cars and boats, playing bass guitar, riding motorcycles, ATV's and driving fast cars. His classic 1982 Porsche Targa was his ultimate toy. Talking was his favorite pastime. He would talk about his goals and dreams, favorite memories, give advice and gladly debate any subject,

even if he was the only one enjoying it. His favorite music was house music.

Although Kelton was an only child, he had a lasting bond with his best friend, John and his cousins Darrell and Stacey. They were like brothers, constant figures, sharing many of his adventures, hobbies and passions in life.

He dedicated his life to Jehovah soon after high school and met his loving and supportive wife of 31 years, Tonie Goodman, at a circuit assembly at the Stanley Theater Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in Jersey City. They walked by each other, going in oppo-

site directions, and he went back into the crowd to find her. They wed on October 26, 1991 and their family was complete when they welcomed their daughter Nadia Deneé Harrell. He proudly taught her things like riding a bike, driving a car, building a fire and managing finances. He was her best friend.

With Tonie, Kelton acquired five sisters with their families and so lovingly embraced them all. The warm home he created for his family became a second home to all of his nieces and nephews as well. It was open to one and all for vacations, getaways, hideaways, rest and relaxation or just because—

any excuse to come. To make things happen, he lovingly carried out any request his wife would make.

To mourn his passing, Kelton leaves his loving and supportive wife, Tonie, his cherished daughter, Nadia, loving parents, Marvin and Jessie Harrell, a host of uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, cousins and extended family members, sisters and brothers of his heart (John Ellis, Darrell Brown, Stacey Gore, Latease Bradley, Tara Gannon, Gayetta Goodman, Kinya Goodman, Terri and Pete Bell, Michele and Corey Rogers).

Dezheng Li, 84; Lifelong Animal Lover

Mrs. Dezheng Li, 84, passed away September 8 peacefully at her home in Somerset.

Li was born in Shanghai, China where she resided before moving to the United States five years ago to live with her loving daughter Tracy. She was a lifelong animal

lover and devoted teacher who was always willing to learn.

She had numerous hobbies which included playing the piano, listening to music, painting animals and caring for the cats and dogs in her local community. She gave many helping hands to many people and touched many

hearts.

Li is now together with her loving husband Mengxu. Li is survived by her two daughters, Tracy and her husband Vlad, Shirley along with her husband Changluo, her siblings, Yanchang and Wanzhen, and loving grandchildren Paul, Linfei and Linhan.

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Life Stories

Mary Barrood, 94; Matriarch Of Prominent Township Family



On September 7, 2023 Mary Barrood was reunited with the Lord and her husband David. She was 94 years young.

Mary was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania to Peter and Freda Abdalla, who emigrated from Lebanon in the early 1900's. She was the youngest of eight children. She was an avid reader and writer, and excelled at school, even jumping a grade in middle school. She loved playing sports with her brothers, was an accomplished pianist, and played the organ for St. Ann's in Scranton. She was a mentor and friend to her many nieces and nephews who con-

tinue to call, write, and visit to show their appreciation for her endless support, wisdom, and love over the years. After graduating from nursing school in Atlantic City, she was hired as the head nurse of the ER at Hahnemann Hospital in Scranton where she worked for nine years.

She met David Barrood, the love of her life, at a Maronite Church convention in Asbury Park, married him soon afterward and started a family in Somerset, NJ. They had five children, the other five loves of her life: David (Sonia), Paul (Robyn), Karen (Claude), Louis (Amal) and James. She was very active in their children's school and social lives, exposing them to all that life had to offer, whether through school, church, sports, music, etc. She and David attended their numerous school, church, and sports events, recitals, and school or community plays. She belonged to the PTA for many years and sometimes

substituted in the schools.

Mary was very involved in her husband's real estate business, becoming a sales person and then a Broker. Together, they were quite a team and built a successful business in Franklin Township for many decades. She joined many organizations and clubs within the community: League of Women Voters, Cedar Wood Women's Club, St. Matthias Prayer Group, Franklin Township Senior Center, and St. Sharbel's Ladies Sodality to name a few. Her dream was to earn a degree in English Literature and she did just that, graduating from Douglass College in 1977.

Like her husband David, Mary loved life, was hard working, generous, loving and had a huge heart for those in need. In the 80s while continuing to work in the family business handling the marketing, selling homes, and collecting food, toys and funds for various charities, she also volunteered at the

Hyacinth AIDS Foundation hotline educating callers on how to prevent the spread of the disease. She was well educated, well spoken and was a woman ahead of her time fighting for many causes.

Apart from her work, committees, and volunteer work, Mary had numerous passions: Jeopardy, NYT crossword puzzles, of which she was a whiz, reading the newspaper, non fiction and medical books, Scrabble, the theatre, playing tennis (til the age of 91), and sampling and savoring desserts! But her favorite passion was vacationing at the family's Pocono mountain home for over fifty

years, enjoying all seasonal activities; learning to ski and play tennis in her 50's! This was her Heaven on Earth, her Innisfree.

Mary and David were blessed with a dozen grandchildren: Analis, Nicholas, Christopher, Alexander, André, Brianna, Amandalis, Juliette, Karl, Ryan, Isabelle, and Liam. They brought them much love and happiness, and were always there to celebrate their accomplishments. As they did with their children, Mary and David encouraged their grandkid's involvement in family, school, church, sports, the fine arts, and of course, the love of

their mountain home community.

Mary will be remembered for her endless love for her family, her compassion, determination, and intellect. She will be dearly missed by her family, her adoring nieces and nephews, and her many friends.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in her memory to St. Jude's or your preferred charity.

Internment was in St. Peter's Cemetery, Route 27 North, North Brunswick.

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New Library Branch Opens

Continued from Page 1.

She said that branch was more of a test pilot program.

“When we had the branch in the strip library, we wanted to see if people would use it, and they did,” she said.

“Also, because it was one big room, we often had problems when we had kids’ programs, because people might be there to read or study and they’d have difficulty with the commotion of the kids’ program,” Adams said.

“So we thought that it would be better to go someplace else where we could spread out and have things more separated,” she said.

Adams credited Nick Ciampa, the chairman of the library Board of Trustees,



with finding the property on which to build the branch.

Ciampa said he first looked at a piece of property on Route 27, but the seller backed out of the deal.

Next was a tract at South Middlebush and Claremont roads, but they were warned off of the land because of how much remedial work would have to be done, and neigh-

bors that might not want the project there.

Ciampa said he looked at several other pieces of property before buying the Eden Street property.

The branch is open 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; 1:30-8 p.m. Thursdays, and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays.


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B9 Warehouses Application Denied By Planning Board

Continued from Page 1.

the motion to deny the application.

The plan was to construct one 144,450-square-foot warehouse and one 70,970-square-foot warehouse on a 20-acre plot at Schoolhouse Lane and Mettlers Road.

Residents, some of whom formed a citizen's group and hired an attorney and their own experts, objected to the plan on mainly environmental reasons. The residents said the warehouses, with their constant truck traffic, would create air and noise pollution, and would violate the serenity of the portion of Mettlers Road that has been designated a scenic corridor.

Link's attorney's argued that the plan, after it had been modified, met all Township zoning ordinances and should be approved.

The project also spurred a number of Township ordinance amendments by the Township Council which concerned where warehouses could be located and what types of activities could occur near areas designated as scenic corridors. Those amendments are the topics of more than a dozen active lawsuits filed by current and potential

warehouse developers.

The Planning Board denial is widely expected to spawn another lawsuit, although Link's attorney, John DeLuca, said he had no comment after the vote.

Not so for Stuart Lieberman, the attorney representing the Citizen's Warehouse Action Group, the group formed by Canal Walk residents.

"We're very gratified by the Board's decision," he said. "We think it was appropriate, there were a lot of deficiencies in the application."

"We think it was the right decision," he said.

As is their custom, Board members gave their reasons why they supported denying the application.

"After all these months and all these hearings, there are more questions in some areas unanswered than we have answers for," Thomas said when he made the motion.

Thomas cited no agreement on the warehouses' operating hours, landscaping, tree removal and replacement, a third driveway suggested by the Township engineer, and the impact of noise from trucks and the warehouse operation.

"We got a lot of wishy-washy answers and actual refusal to answer from experts on both sides of the fence," he said.

Councilman Ram Anbarasan, who seconded Thomas' motion, said his vote was guided by the residents' concerns.

"I think I've heard the people's call, and it is my duty and responsibility to listen to their call," he said.

Board member Sami Shaban said he "found the application incomplete."

"Whether it was around noise concerns or environmental studies, there were overreaching statements like there will be no impact to the community," he said. "We had a lot of questions come up with no complete answers."

Board member Erica Inocencio said she felt there was more information that she would like to have heard.

"Aside from whether or not if it was something that was required, it would have been helpful to the Board," she said. "That's the thing that's most concerning to me."

Board member Ted Chase said he was voting for denial basically on the issue of noise.

"I understand the applicant has refused to entertain a restriction by which trucks should not operate on the property between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. or some such hours," he said.

Also, he said, "There was no consideration of air pollution by heavy truck traffic, which residents have indicated was a major concern."

Board member Meher Rafiq said that she considered both sides' presentations, and that she felt "the applicant has failed to answer satisfactorily the questions I

had. The noise, the pollution, the landscape, the amount of trees; there just wasn't clarity in all of those."

Rebecca Hilbert, an alternate Board member, said her vote to deny was based on the "lack of proper information around noise, the (Environmental Impact Statement), scenic corridor and a number of other things we've talked about."

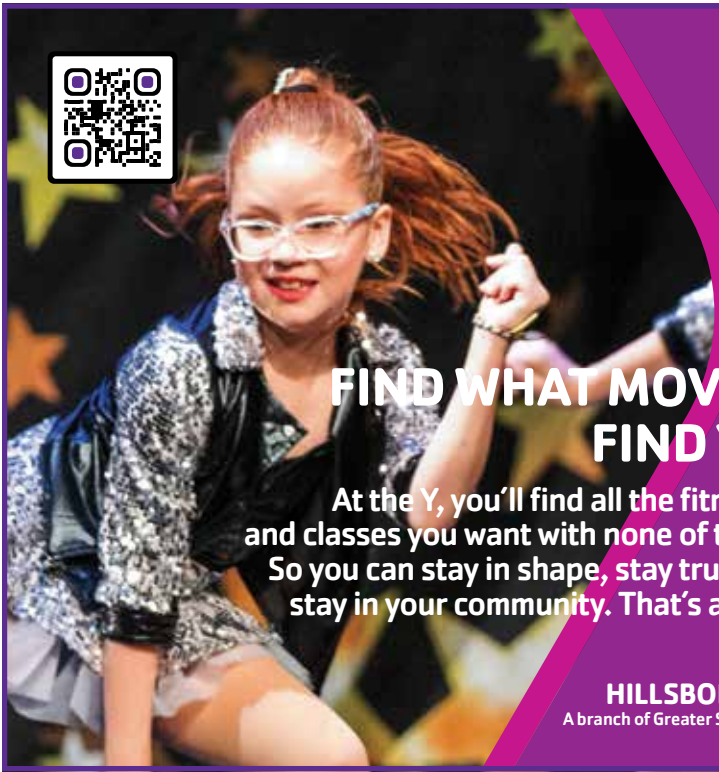

Board chairman Michael Orsini said he did not believe that the applicant's expert's answers to questions "were satisfactorily addressing the


concerns of the Board, which were made quite clear."

"I don't believe (the application) meets the standards legally outlined by municipal law and case law," he said.

Residents' opposition to the plan focused on charges that the warehouses would ruin Canal Walk residents' quality of life, and would affect the overall environment.

Nancy Beirne of Bryant Court told the Board that her bedroom, den and kitchen windows face the area targeted for the warehouses.






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