

# THE FRANKLIN REPORTER & ADVOCATE

## Monthly Digest

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Top News of February 2024

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Vol. VII, No. III



### Live In Franklin

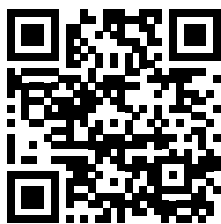
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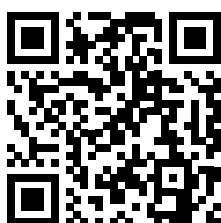
Lulu's Nutrition, 527 Hamilton Street, celebrated its 1st Anniversary on February 24. We spoke with owner Lucero Aquino about the store's offerings and why she chose Franklin to locate her business.



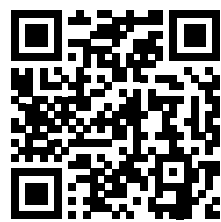
Project Graduation held the first of its two Clothing Drives on February 3. The organization accepts gently used clothing to raise money for the annual Project Graduation night after the FHS graduation.



Cedar Hill Prep School held its annual Black History Month celebration on February 23. This year's theme was "The Divine Nine," the National Panhellenic Council.



Dollars Up in Veronica Plaza at Route 27 and Veronica Avenue celebrated its Grand Opening on February 16.



## First Step Taken By School Board To Use Middlebush School As Pre-School Center



**EXPLAINING THE PLAN** – Schools Superintendent John Ravally explains the plan to use the former Middlebush School as a pre-school center to offer universal, free, pre-school to District children.

The Board of Education on February 22 took the first step in reclaiming the former Middlebush School building as a school.

The Board agreed to give district administrators

the authority to negotiate a lease with the Township that could lead to using the former school building as a pre-school center for 3- and 4-year olds.

If everything goes as currently sketched out, the build-

ing could be used in time for the 2026-2027 school year, said schools Superintendent John Ravally.

The Township took possession of the nearly 100-year-old Middlebush School building through

a 2018 land swap with the school district, through which the District gained three buildings on the former Consolata Missionaries property on Route 27. District offices have been housed in the Consolata main building for the last several years.

Ravally told the Board that using the Middlebush building as a pre-school center would allow the District to offer true universal, free, pre-Kindergarten education for all of the township's 3- and 4-year olds.

Ravally said the building could house roughly 240 students, which would "allow us to offer programming to all families who want to send their 3- or 4-year-old to a full day pre-Kindergarten program. That will be our first opportunity to do that since we set out to do this seven years ago."

"The 240 is a rough number," he said. "Another 250-300 seats really gets us to

*Continued on Page 7.*

## Black History Month Celebrated With Speeches, Performances And Food

Speaking to a cheering audience in the Township Senior/Community Center, Newark Mayor Ras Baraka on February 3 delivered a fiery speech honoring "champions of justice" in the African-American community and extolling those in attendance to continue the struggle toward racial equality in the United States.

Baraka was the keynote speaker in a Black History Month celebration sponsored by the Somerset County Democratic Committee's Black Caucus held at the center.

The Caucus also honored former Township Councilwoman and current Somerset County Commission Director Shanel Robinson.

The event featured speakers, several vocal and dance performances and a handful of vendors.

Celebrating American history, Baraka said, is impossible without "celebrating, commemorating or recognizing" African-Americans.

"America's strength and power in the world was born from the sweat on the brow

and the scars on the backs of Africans that worked from South Carolina to Brazil in cotton fields and cane fields

and the accumulated wealth from over 250 years of free labor, and they still haven't paid us yet," he said.

"Right now, across the country, they're banning books, taking us out of the

*Continued on Page 6.*

## ASM Tax Office Opens New Location In Franklin Park



**RIBBON-CUTTING** – Usman Siddiqui, third from left in front row, cuts the ribbon to his new business, assisted by Township Councilmen Ram Anbarasan and Alex Kharazi. Also in attendance, and in the front row, were Township Councilwoman Shepa Uddin and Chamber of Commerce president Nick DeMeglio.

After 20 years of serving clients in the Iselin section of Edison, Usman Siddiqui has opened a second location on Route 27 in Franklin Park.

Siddiqui owns ASM Tax Office, a full-service accountancy firm. The business held its Grand Opening on February 9.

"We offer full services accounting," Siddiqui said. "Accounting, booking, payroll. We do a lot of tax planning and strategizing to save on taxes, not only personal, but also businesses."

Other services include company formation and registration, non-profit bylaws and formation, and student

taxes.

Siddiqui said he chose the Franklin Park location because he felt it was "happening."

"I see there's a lot of businesses over here," he said. "It is very happening on 27. Over the last couple of years, it just boomed."

*Continued on Page 7.*



FRANKLIN REPORTER & ADVOCATE

Monthly Digest

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COUNTY TAKES OVER – Somerset County will renovate Guglielmo Marconi Memorial Park after officials stopped unauthorized work being done by the Franklin Township Marconi Foundation.

## Foundation’s Unauthorized Plan For Marconi Park Renovation Scuttled By Somerset County

Plans by a private organization to refurbish the Guglielmo Marconi Memorial Park at Easton Avenue and JFK Boulevard have been scuttled by Somerset County officials, about two months after the Township ordered that work on the park be stopped because proper permissions had not been acquired.

The work, conducted under the auspices of the township-based Marconi Foundation, was to include the erection of a bust of Marconi, along with lighting, landscaping and other amenities.

It was discovered in early December 2023 that the Foundation had not secured permission from the County to do the work on what is a County owned property, nor had it received the needed permits from the Township.

The County established the park in 1974. The site where the park is now located once held one of Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co.’s transmitters.

The County will start refurbishment work on the park over the Spring and Summer, County spokesman Nathan Rudy said on February 21.

Included in that work will be “new access points for pedestrians, walkways, and fencing along the back,” he said.

“The park will be 90 percent landscaping with some pedestrian pathways leading to the marker,” Rudy said.

Rudy said the work will be “a full renovation of the plaza.”

A plaque installed on a large boulder was placed on the site in 1974 to commemorate the fact that it was the location of one of Marconi’s transmitters. That will be the only marker in the park, Rudy said.

Guglielmo Marconi is credited as being the “father of modern radio,” although his history is not without controversy, as he was a member of Benito Mussolini’s Fascist Party in the 1920s and 1930s, an issue not addressed by the County.

The controversy around Marconi stems from his joining the Italian Fascist Party in 1923, and his appointment by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini as his “goodwill ambassador” and president of the Royal Academy of Italy, which was the country’s scientific academy during Mussolini’s rule.


In 2002, documents were discovered showing that while academy president, Marconi marked the applications of Jews to the academy with an “E,” symbolizing “ebreo,” the Italian word for Jew. During his time as president, no Jews were admitted to the academy.

Marconi also publicly supported the leading proponent of the Nuremberg Race Laws, a series of laws passed in Germany in 1935 which stripped German Jews of their legal rights because they were not considered Germans, and expressed no reservation about the laws’ tenets.

The laws “were an important step in the Nazi regime’s process of isolating and excluding Jews from the rest of German society,” according to the Holocaust Encyclopedia.

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# Jain Center Wins Planning Board Approval For Driveway Arch



**TIRED OF THE FIGHT** – Planning Board member Robert Thomas said he just didn't care any longer about a house of worship's plans to construct an arch on their driveway on Cedar Grove Lane without realigning the driveway with one across the street.

It took about eight months, but the Jain Center on Cedar Grove Lane won approval for a proposed driveway arch at the February 7 Planning Board meeting.

The biggest stumbling block of the application – whether the Center was obligated by prior Planning Board decisions to align the driveway with that of Cedar Grove Center – was removed when the project's engineer said that aspect had been changed by Somerset County planning officials. Cedar Grove lane is a County road.

The planned archway would be 28 feet high and 56 feet wide, and positioned about 50 feet from the curb along Cedar Grove Lane.

The archway would display six signs, one at the top and one on each base, on both sides of the structure.

The application was for variances for the sizes of the signs, but the main issue for the last several meetings had been the alignment of the driveway with that of Cedar Grove Center, across the street.

The Board, led by Board member Robert Thomas, maintained that a prior approval for the Jain Center included a realignment of the driveway.

Center representatives argued that the idea of a realignment had been discussed, but was never a condition of any approval.

Project engineer F. Mitch-

ell Ardman was brought in by the applicant to try and clear up the dispute.

Ardman said that while the initial approval for the center in 2000 included a driveway aligned with the shopping center's, that was changed when Somerset County planners looked at the plans.

"As we checked our notes and what was in there, there was a County review comment about shifting (the driveway) because of drainage and inlets, and other restrictions in the County right-of-way," he said. "They were OK with the driveway being off-center with the Cedar Grove shopping center across the street."

"They had final say, and they're the ones who asked us to shift it," Ardman said.

"The next time the Board saw this plan was 2006, we came with a construction phasing plan," he said. "On that plan it was shown ... not aligned with the driveway across the street."

"Subsequent to that is when the County came in and did their roadway improvements, additional right-of-way, additional pavement and the turning lane in front of the shopping center," he said.

The Jain Center went

before the Board's Technical Review Committee in 2012 with a plan for realigning the driveway. Even though the TRC approved it, plans to do it never materialized.

In 2013, the Jain Center appeared before the Board with a plan to create a parking lot and a solar-topped roof for the lot. The plan included a realignment of the driveway, but it was never acted on.

"I don't understand why this research couldn't have been done before the application was presented," Thomas

said, after Ardman finished his presentation.

"I may be getting old, but I'm not senile," Thomas said. "The driveway was originally approved lined up, and I would like that to be clear to the attorney and to the applicant."

"I have no knowledge, and no Board member has any knowledge, if it goes to the County and they make a change," he said. "We don't get copies, or we don't follow the applications through to completion in that sense. My understanding is the County

made a comment about the drainage, not a recommendation, not a requirement. So to me that indicates the applicant was pretty willing to change it."

"At some point the decision was made to do it the way you wanted to do it, and the heck with the approval," Thomas said.

"For the first time in 30 years, I'm getting to the point where I don't care," he said. "If that's the way you want it, obviously, this is not one we're going to end up winning and it's not worth fighting."



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## Open Space Committee Votes To Help Meadows Foundation Pay Some Bills



**MAKING THE CASE** – Township Manager Robert Vornlocker told the Open Space Advisory Committee on February 20 that the Meadows Foundation needs help in paying some of its bills.

The Open Space Committee on February 20 voted to recommend that some of its money be used to help the cash-strapped Meadows Foundation pay some of its bills.

The recommendation will be sent to the Township Committee through Township Manager Robert Vornlocker, who told Committee members about the Foundation's issues.

The Meadows Foundation "is a 501c3 non-profit organization whose mission is to give the past a future by preserving and restoring historic sites with an emphasis on early Dutch and American heritage," according to its web site.

The Foundation maintains four Township-owned historic properties: the Van Duyn-Van Wickle House, the Hageman farm, the Wyck-off-Garretson Farm, and the Van Liew-Suydam House.

The Foundation is responsible for paying all costs associated with the properties, including utilities and any repairs that have to be made.

The Foundation relies on memberships and special events to pay those bills and others. Caretakers of properties also pay rent to live in the homes.

It's a slowdown in memberships that has led to a cash

squeeze, Vornlocker told the Committee.

"Due to the lack of membership, it has been impossible for them to do some of the fundraisers they have done in the past, so they're just short on cash," he said.

According to figures supplied by the Foundation, its anticipated expenses through April total \$24,921.65, while its anticipated revenue for that time period total \$10,700, leaving a more than \$14,000 shortfall. About \$6,000 is needed immediately, according to the figures.

Some of the anticipated expenses through April are more than \$8,000 for Suburban Propane, \$5,400 for PSE&G, and \$2,750 for oil.

Included in that list of anticipated expenses are some bills for which Open Space Trust Funds cannot be used,

Vornlocker said.

"We cannot pay their insurance, workers compensation and director and officer insurance," he said. "We cannot certainly pay their payroll for caretakers, nor their accountant, nor their construction loan payments."

"We certainly can pay for a push mower to maintain the lawn at Hageman, and then we get into the Suburban Propane, due and anticipated Public Service bill, and Skylands Oil," Vornlocker said.

"In the immediate, if there is an outstanding bill, the Open Space Trust certainly can be used for those purposes," he said. "We pay for the buildings that they don't maintain now. These are our houses, we own them. Since we are the owner, we certainly can use Open Space Trust Funds to pay those bills to maintain those houses."

Vornlocker said the Foundation is restructuring its agreements with the caretakers "to perhaps put them in a better financial position as far as that's concerned."

"I want to see the Meadows Foundation alive and well because they do a great deal of things for us with those houses," Vornlocker said. "I want to pay the bills we can pay."

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the Township Council that the open Space Trust Fund be used to pay those of the Foundation bills permitted.

## Safety Tips Offered By FTPD In Virtual Town Hall

Tips on staying safe in the wake of an uptick statewide of car thefts and home burglaries were given during a virtual town hall meeting February 15.

The town hall was hosted by Mayor Phil Kramer and Public Safety Director Quovella Maeweather.

During the roughly 50-minute session, Maeweather reviewed a number of steps residents can take to keep their properties safe.

Maeweather said that statewide statistics show that car thieves are targeting higher-end models, such as BMWs, Range Rovers and Mercedes-Benzes, although there have been thefts of lower-end cars as well.

She said the best defense against car thefts is to keep cars in garages, if possible.

If not, Maeweather said, make sure the cars are locked and that nothing of value is left in them. It also helps to keep the cars in well-lit areas, she said.

"Under the cover of darkness, they can operate best," she said. "We've seen multiple videos, when the motion lights come on, they go away."

"If you don't have lighting on the exterior, there's things



**TALKING SAFETY** – Public Safety Director Quovella Maeweather and FTPD Capt. Sean Hebbon provided safety tips in a virtual town hall hosted by Mayor Phil Kramer.

that you can do," Maeweather said. "You have to make your area look alive and look like someone's there."

Maeweather said the bulk of the burglaries are not being committed by township residents.

"People from the outside come in and they see what we have and they want to take it," she said.

Two trends that law enforcement has noticed, Maeweather said, is that the home burglars do not want confrontations with homeowners, and that no home burglaries have occurred in homes with dogs.

"The Animal Shelter has many dogs who need a home, who need love," Kramer said.

Other steps homeowners can take to protect their properties is to notify police and pause mail delivery when they go on vacation, and ask a neighbor to check porches for packages.

She said the police can also be requested to check porches for package while homeowners are away.

"If you're not sure of what to do, if you need help with making your home safe, call us, we can send a detective there to do a (safety) assessment," she said.

The biggest thing residents can do, Maeweather said, is to call police when they see suspicious activity.

"If you see something, say something, immediately," she said. "Do not feel like it's too minor and you're bothering law enforcement, that the police have better things to do."

FTPD Capt. Sean Hebbon was also scheduled to participate, but had technical issues.

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# Laser Concerts Among Programs Slated at RVCC Planetarium in March



Photo: RVCC

From laser concerts featuring music by Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, and Shakira; to a light and music show designed for families with children on the Autism spectrum; to a special meditation program, the Raritan Valley Community College Planetarium in Branchburg will present a variety of offerings in March.

In addition, star gazers all over are gearing up for a total solar eclipse that will take place on Monday, April 8. Its path will run from Mexico, through Texas, up to Buffalo, NY, and Vermont. New Jersey residents will see about 90% of the Sun covered by the Moon. The RVCC Planetarium’s March astronomy shows will include a five-minute presentation explaining a solar eclipse and describing how to view it safely. Solar eclipse glasses also are avail-

able to purchase at the Planetarium’s gift shop.

The following shows will be presented at the Planetarium in March:

**Earth, Moon, Sun & Coyote**, Saturdays, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 3 p.m.

Coyote thinks he knows everything about the sky, but he’s surprised by how many misconceptions he has about eclipses, moon phases, and the motion of the day and night skies. This program also will include an introduction to the stars we can see in tonight’s sky, as well as information about safe ways to watch the upcoming solar eclipse. (Recommended for ages 6-12)

**Laser Magic**, Saturdays, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 4 p.m.

The laser concert features music by a variety of artists, with such tunes as “Fireworks” by Katy Perry,

“We Don’t Talk about Bruno” from Encanto, “Call Me Maybe” by Carly Rae Jepsen, and “Let It Go,” sung by Idina Menzel. (Recommended for ages 6-12)

**The Sky Above**, sensory-friendly program, Saturday, March 2, 5 p.m.

This sensory-friendly astronomy and music show, approximately 45 minutes in length, is specially designed for families with children on the Autism spectrum or those with developmental disabilities. Neurotypical children are welcome as well. The program, which is presented on a kindergarten level, is appropriate for audiences of all ages. During the show, the doors will remain open so children may freely leave and return if they choose. Lights will be left dim (instead of dark), and the audio will be lowered and kept at a consistent level. The show will include music, laser lights, stories, and information about the planets, the Moon, and constellations.

**Astronomy Tonight**, Saturdays, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 7 p.m.

There are only a few weeks left to prepare for the upcoming solar eclipse. Using the Planetarium’s DigitalSky digital theater, explore why

and when eclipses occur, how to view a solar eclipse safely, and experience a guided tour of the stars and constellations of the night sky. Weather permitting, the 3M Observatory will be open after the show. Solar eclipse glasses are available to purchase at the Planetarium’s gift shop. (Recommended for ages 8-adult)

**Laser Taylor Swift**, Saturdays, March 2, 9, 30, 8 p.m.

“Swifties” and friends are invited to sing along to some of Taylor Swift’s hit songs, including “All Too Well,” “Blank Space,” and “Anti-Hero,” while images are animated on the dome overhead.

**Sunset Meditation**, Friday, March 8, 7 p.m.

Mindfulness. Meditation is a powerful tool for maintaining psychological health and resilience. Since the Planetarium offers a dark and quiet space for relaxation, it is the perfect place for

meditation. Enjoy a guided meditation experience in the comfortable, reclined seats in the RVCC Planetarium. Relax under a night sky filled with stars, then “travel” from Earth to beyond our galaxy. (Recommended for ages 10-adult)

**Laser Ladies**, Saturdays, March 16 & 23, 8 p.m.

Celebrate Women’s History Month with a laser concert featuring all female artists. Music by such singers as Aretha Franklin, Madonna, Gloria Estefan, Beyoncé, and Shakira is highlighted in this show.

**Rockin’ Rocket Ride**, Saturday, March 30, 3 p.m.

Put on your space suit and blast-off into outer space to visit the Moon, Sun and planets. (Recommended for ages 3-8)

**Lasers for Littles**, Saturday, March 30, 4 p.m.

Our youngest audience

members can sing along with songs by a variety of artists. Songs such as “Kalien the Alien” by mr RAY, “I Don’t Want to Live on the Moon” from Sesame Street, “Fruit Salad” by the Wiggles, and “Baby Shark” are all part of this fun laser program. (Recommended for ages 3-8)

Planetarium tickets cost \$10 for one show, \$18 for two shows back-to-back on the same day. Reservations are recommended, but all ticket sales are done at the door on the day of the show. Late admission to Planetarium shows is not permitted. For reservations and information, call 908-231-8805 or email planet@raritanval.edu. For additional information, visitwww.raritanval.edu/planetarium. RVCC is located at 118 Lamington Road in Branchburg, NJ.

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# Black History Month Celebrated With Speeches, Performances

*Continued from Page 1.*

curriculum, trying to erase our authors, our intellectuals, our creators, our ideas,” Baraka said. “This makes this celebration, this program, more relevant than it’s ever been. We have a duty not to just remember our history, but to teach it, and live it in its present and evolving form.”

“We can’t sit back and watch basic freedoms be denied to African Americans, in fact, to any Americans,” he said. “We celebrate courageous leaders who made progress in wrestling these injustices and those activists all across our country who continue to stand and help right the wrongs of our past and extend the promise of

America to all of our people.”

“We come together to honor these champions of justice and the sacrifices they endured to bring us to this point, we celebrate the contribution of African-Americans throughout our history, and those who sit amongst us here today,” he said. “And we commit ourselves to realizing a nation where no one is marginalized, isolated, treated inhumanely because of the color of their skin, the language they speak, the religion they practice or the person who they choose to love.”

“It’s not enough to say it’s wrong, we have to do something about it,” Baraka said.

The Black Caucus honored Robinson for being

a “trailblazer” in Somerset County politics.

In his introduction of Robinson, Terence Byrd noted her accomplishments, and said, “That’s commitment to all of us, that’s commitment to the County and that’s commitment to the state of New Jersey.”

Among other firsts, Robinson was the first Black woman to be named a Director of what was then known as the Somerset County Freeholders.

“Understanding that being the first, I don’t want to be the only, and the last,” she said. “For the young people in the room, stay engaged, get involved, and stay connected. We as adults haven’t done a

great job in embracing your ideals. Where we may have the knowledge and the wisdom, you all have the energy and the movement.”

“We need to come together to continue to move not only our community forward, this county, this state and this country forward,” she said.

“The blueprint has been given to us, we just have to continue to do the work,” Robinson said. “Our unity and our community is our power.”

“Let us not forget that we have a responsibility and obligation to continue to the good and to stay in good trouble,” she said.

Somerset County Democratic Committee chairwoman Peg Schaffer told the crowd that they have an obligation to continue what the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis of Georgia called “good trouble.”

“Let’s not lose sight of the fact that we still live in a country that’s systemically racist,” she said.

“We must understand that we have an obligation to do something,” she said. “Whatever you can do, as little as it might be, it’s important to maintaining and creating a more level playing field.”

Speaking to its members, Mayor Phil Kramer said the Black Caucus is “a party

within a party to remind the rest of us how important the cause is. How important it is to reach out to all people.”

“I thank you for what you do, it’s wonderful working with Shanel, she’s a great leader,” he said.

Performing at the event were the Movie Brothas, East Side Dance Project, Jaiden Freeman of NJ Orators, the Dew Ministries Liturgical Dance Group, Samora Karen Williams, Dale Genesis Harris, Adrienne Sykes, Herrin Fontenette, and Enydia Lynn Haynes. Music was by Sidikie Jabatch.

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# First Step Taken By School Board For Pre-School Center

*Continued from Page 1.*

what our full universe is.

He said the Pre-K program has grown from about 100 students seven years ago to 731 students now.

“Space-wise, we’re at capacity,” he said. “We’ve also entered partnerships with private providers, which has offered opportunities for students to have seats, as well. And those programs are under our guidance, using our curriculum. We still have, if we’re going to get to a true universal program, the need for a couple hundred more seats for our students.”

“So this is the solution that will get us, In a few short years, to a universal Pre-K 3 and 4 program,” Ravally said.

Ravally said the lease would be paid for with a state grant – Pre-School Education Aid – that would allow a yearly payment of up to \$1 million.

He said the building could accommodate 16 classrooms, which would be space enough for roughly 240 students.

Terms of the deal haven’t been sorted out yet, but Ravally said that generally, the Township, as the building’s owner, would be responsible for its renovation.

Ravally said the District has about \$3.5 million in pre-school grants that it hasn’t been able to use because it couldn’t find a location which could be put in escrow “and allow the Township to start drawing from (it) to help support some of those renovations, and the district can pay ... within the structure of the grant, up to about \$1 million per year in subsequent years of the lease.”

The lease would probably be for a 15- to 20-year term, he said.

Ravally said the next step will be the District administrators and attorneys meeting with Township Manager Robert Vornlocker and Township attorneys to strike a lease deal.

The Board and Township Council would then both have to approve the lease, he said.

The building could be occupied by the Fall of 2026, Ravally said.

The plan was welcomed by Board members.

“The township getting \$1 million is huge ... and our kids are getting more educated,” Board member Sami Shaban said.

Board member Bill Gripo said the pre-school center is a good idea because it would get township kids in township schools at an early age, and would make the transition into Kindergarten less traumatic than if the students had never set foot in a classroom.

“For me, the reason why this is so important is that ... we get our children in the school district at a very early age,” he said. “And for learning, getting children in at age 3 and 4 develops the root structure ... much earlier, much healthier.”

Middlebush School was built in 1926, and was used as a school until 1979, three years after the auditorium ceiling collapsed.

The building housed District offices until several years ago, when the move was made to the former Consolata property.

# The Marigold Holds Fundraiser For Franklin Food Bank

The Marigold catering hall was the scene February 13 of a special fundraiser for the Franklin Food Bank.

The “Love They Neighbor” event was sponsored by the catering hall itself, and probably won’t be the last one it holds.

Lisa DiCenzo, the Marigold’s Director of Catering, said the idea for the fundraiser was borne last year after an unsuccessful attempt by the hall and food bank to partner on an event.

“Last year, they attempted to do an event with us, but it didn’t work out financially, so I felt bad that it didn’t work out,” she said. “I wanted to make up for that and host this event in lieu of the event that we couldn’t host.”

She said the evening was meant to bring in businesses “out for a night out prior to Valentine’s Day, and a celebration of the Franklin Food Bank.”

“The Franklin Food Bank is our neighbor, so hence the theme, love thy neighbor,” she said.

Derek Smith, the Food Bank’s Executive Director, praised DiCenzo and The Marigold for the event.

“Thank you so much for inviting us here and celebrating the Franklin Food Bank,” he said to DiCenzo.

Noting that the audience was comprised of food bank supporters and volunteers, Smith said, “The work that we do is built off the back of this incredible community.”

“We live in an incredible town, a town that supports the work that we do,” Smith said. “A very affluent town, a very affluent county, a very affluent country. But unfortunately, there’s a lot of food insecurity right here in Franklin.”

# ASM Tax Office Opens New Location

*Continued from Page 1.*

Siddiqui holds an MBA and is certified to represent clients before the IRS and tax authorities in all 50 states, he said.

He also holds a degree in Information Technology, Siddiqui said.

“It’s a combination of a lot of things over a lot of years,” he said.

ASM Tax Office is located at 3001 Route 27 in Franklin Park. The phone number is (732) 850-5054.

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