

The People's Press

Quarterly Newsletter for Union Township

in Scenic Hunterdon County

Autumn 2022

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Letter From the Mayor

Dear UT neighbors and friends -

If I could encapsulate this particular newsletter into one word, it would simply be this: *community*.

Our community celebrated itself recently, with the return of Community Day, a brilliant display of camaraderie and affiliation. After a several year respite, the event brought the town together. Even the early-afternoon rain couldn't keep us away, the lightning no match for the fireworks coloring the sky above us.

Our community connected with *other* communities, for the inaugural Hunterdon Games, a multi-municipality competition held at our hidden gem, Finn Park. Teams of 25 people from eight townships and boroughs were pitted against one another across twelve events, in a raucous, joyous affair. It is the start of a new tradition in Hunterdon County, and it all started here. With us.

Our community's history is on the line, embodied perfectly by Hank Bonnell's lonely, singular drive to resurrect and revitalize the landmark Bonnell Tavern. The third, and final, part of his amazing journey is contained here, in these pages.

Our community's spirit was on obvious display when the Walchuk family lost their dog, Stevie. Neighbors (and strangers!) all took part in the search for the scurried-off pooch. Four days later, she was found, and our community rejoiced.

And our community's soul is laid bare - in all its glory - in the unflinching support of 16 year-old Jamie Sullivan, an extraordinary young woman, surrounded by loved ones and brimming with love.

It has been an absolute privilege for me to be the mayor of this extraordinary *community*. It is one of the great privileges of my lifetime. I take the role profoundly seriously, and I've been grateful for every second of it. This newsletter is my expression of gratitude to all of you. Through this 16-page quarterly vessel, I've been given the incredible opportunity to learn more about my neighbors and to do my best to convey their pulses, their energies in words. There is so much to love here, in our community, and I feel compelled and inspired to share it.

Our community is vibrant. It is ever-changing. And it is strong.
Union Strong.

These are your stories. These are our stories.

Welcome home.

David DeGiralamo, MD DMD



A new township seal has been chosen!

After several months of fielding inputs and ideas from numerous individuals, we are pleased to report that we have developed a new Union Township seal. Championed by Committeeman Rich Lordi and designed by fellow Union Township resident and friend Nicole Gratcofsky, the seal includes a number of features, including among other things: 1) the front facade of our municipal building, 2) a cannon, to symbolize Union Furnace, which sparked industrial growth in the township, 3) water, to symbolize Spruce Run Reservoir and 4) hot air balloons, because they are, well, everywhere. We are grateful to Nikki for her efforts, and we hope that this will remain our seal for a long time to come.



We also are in the throes of a township website re-design, making it more user friendly and streamlined. New features being considered include (among others): live streaming of meetings, a portal for the reporting of power outages and road damage, a prominent Recreation Committee section, and a photo gallery for residents.

Financial approval for removal of dead ash trees

Due to the ongoing damage caused by emerald ash borer on the ash trees in our region, the township committee at its July monthly meeting approved resolutions to hire an outside firm to remove dead trees and stumps within the township right of way. The township committee approved up to \$25,000 for removal of dead trees along municipal roads and up to \$50,000 for removal at Finn Park.

Stonebridge and Wolf's Farm Roads get a makeover

At a special meeting on August 30th, the township committee passed a resolution to award South State, Inc. the contract to make repairs to Stonebridge and Wolf's Farm Roads. We are expecting that the work will be completed in the coming weeks.

QuickChek facility construction keeps moving forward

Progress on the QuickChek convenience store construction continues at the corner of Perryville and Frontage Roads (at the site of the old Bagelsmith). The excavation phase is nearing completion, and fill dirt has been removed from the location and will be used for the Pattenburg Quarry Reclamation Project. It is estimated that the new QuickChek might be fully operational by year-end 2022.

From our township Recreation Committee

Fall Soccer and Girls Junior Lions Field Hockey are in full stride, kicking and swinging! Registration is open for UTREC Youth and Adult Basketball! Sign up NOW! Late fees start on 10/25, closes 10/31. No registrations after 10/31. Youth Basketball grades K-2 are fun instructional skill practices. Grades 3-8 are instructional skill practices and competitive games. The adult program is for local men and women residents over 30 years old. For more information, please visit the UTREC Website at: <https://utrecreation.com/adult-basketball/>. To sign up: register.communitypass.net (search "Union Township, Hampton NJ NJ").

Upcoming events include: Firemen at Finn (dates pending), PTA Trunk R' Treat / UTREC Pumpkin Glow at Finn Park (10/22, 6 to 7:30 pm), Fall Soccer Food Drive (Oct-Nov on Finn soccer Saturdays), and The Turducken Run (coming in November).

UTREC is 100% volunteer based and looking for new members at the Committee level to guide future and current programs and to expand the program base. There is an urgent need, and interested volunteers should email or attend a UTREC meeting. The next meeting is on 11/9 at 7:30 pm at the municipal building.

Contact information: uniontwprecchair@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/utrecreation

The process of property revaluation continues

Earlier this year, Union Township (by order of the Hunterdon County Tax Board and NOT by the order of the township committee) commenced with the process of a revaluation, a program undertaken by a municipality to appraise all real property within the taxing district according to its full and fair value. The Tax Board ordered the revaluation in 2019, due to a failing ratio of assessment value to true value, a lack of uniformity between sales of all classes and the increase of tax appeals due to assessed value exceeding true value. The last revaluation in Union Township was initiated in 1988, and a re-assessment was completed in 2002. A revaluation program seeks to spread the tax burden equitably within a municipality. Real property must be assessed at the same standard value to ensure that every property owner is paying his or her fair share of the property tax.

Both the interior and exterior of each property will be physically inspected, and building dimensions will be noted. Recent home sales in the area also will be studied to inform the valuations further. To be clear, a revaluation does NOT mean that all property taxes will increase. It should be viewed as a re-apportionment of tax burden, toward an overall tax aggregate base requirement that will remain unchanged. Some residents will see their taxes go up, while some residents will see a decrease in their taxes. The revaluation firm is a registered company with the Division of Taxation.

WHAT'S NEW: The firm has completed initial inspections throughout the town. It is our sense that approximately 90% of residential assessments have been completed. The process of residential assessments is anticipated to be completed by the end of October. Commercial assessments are expected to be completed in September. Residents will be contacted up to three times to schedule interior inspections, and the firm will send letters with new valuations after November 10th, 2022. For more information, please reach out to our tax assessor, Michelle Trivigno, at (908) 735-8027 Ext. 14 (email: assessor@uniontpw-hcnj.org).

Baptist Church Road's repair work moving along

Baptist Church Road is one of Union Township's longest and most travelled roads.

Its renovation continues, and it is being completed in four phases. The first phase of the project was completed in late 2021 and involved the section of the road from County Road 579 to Scotch Willie Lane. The second phase was completed two months ago and involved the section of the "S" turn, ending at the southernmost entrance to Hoffman Park.

WHAT'S NEW: The third phase of the project was completed recently and involved the connection between the first and second phases.

One final phase is slated for completion by the Spring of 2023. When finished, the road renovation will reach the northernmost entrance of Hoffman Park. Future work is being considered, as well, extending to Frontage Road, but this has not been approved.

All meetings are held (unless otherwise stated) at the Municipal Building, located at 140 Perryville Road Hampton, NJ 08827

Township Committee Meeting:

<https://uniontpw-hcnj.gov/township>, 7:00PM
3rd Wednesday of each month

Board of Health:

Immediately following Committee Meeting

Planning Board and Board of Adjustment:

<https://uniontpw-hcnj.gov/planning>, 7:00PM
2nd and 4th Thursday of each month

Recreation Committee:

<https://uniontpw-hcnj.gov/recreation>, 7:30pm
2nd Wednesday of each month

Environmental Commission:

<https://uniontpw-hcnj.gov/enviromental>, 7:00pm
2nd Tuesday of each month

Agricultural Advisory Committee:

<https://uniontpw-hcnj.gov/agricultural>
Chair Scott Eichlin (908) 713-0575

Planning Ahead

So You Wanna Build A Shed?

For many of us, home ownership goes hand in hand with a seemingly never-ending need for home improvements. Frequently, we add on new rooms or pools or garages, or finish basements. As time progresses, we accumulate *stuff* and need a practical place to store this stuff. This new location could be an outdoor shed, whether for pool equipment, tools, or items that increasingly clutter a garage.

Obtaining proper approvals for a shed - as is the case with house extensions, additions and pools - can be a discombobulating and uncertain process. In the second installment of our "So You Wanna Build" feature, we provide some guidance on the principal steps for the permitting of a **back yard or side yard shed!**



Generally speaking, a "shed" is defined as a structure for the storage of objects owned by a resident. In our ordinance, it can be no larger than 300 square feet in area and no taller than 14 feet. The shed footprint is considered impervious, and as a result, total impervious surface calculations must be considered in the permitting of the structure. There are no restrictions on shed color, nor are there restrictions on the number of sheds permitted. However, while sheds are allowed in back yards and side yards, they are not allowed in front yards (most corner houses are considered to have *two* front yards). They cannot be placed over any property easements.

What should be your *first* step? Our township zoning officer, Leigh Gronau, recommends that you **know your property**. You should have a property survey and you should know the dimensions of existing structures, impervious surface calculations, any easements (like JCP&L, pipeline, roadway or conservation), and when applicable, other homeowner's association requirements or restrictions.

Your *next* step would be to **complete a Zoning Permit Application**, located at the zoning office or on the township website (under the "About" tab, then under "Forms & Permits"). It is a five-page document that requires only two pages of resident input. On page two, a description of the proposed project is required, including the specific type of shed being considered. In addition, under "Type of Zoning Permit Requested", you should select "Building Permit/Local Clearance". A plan of where you would place the shed on your property is very helpful. This doesn't need to be an engineering plan. You can sketch it in on a copy of your survey or on a google maps print out (although the zoning officer might request additional information). Once the application is submitted, the zoning officer will review the plans and the application for completeness and for any setback, impervious surface coverage and height compliance issues. The zoning officer usually will provide an approval or denial within 10 business days.

The process for a shed permit varies largely by the size of the shed, but in all cases, a zoning permit is required. For sheds that are smaller than 100 square feet, a 12-foot minimum property setback is required. For sheds that are between 100 and 300 square feet, you must satisfy the specific setbacks of your particular zone district (the zoning officer can assist with identifying this). And for sheds that are 200 square feet or more, a building/construction permit is required from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), which you should contact directly for additional requirements. As per our ordinance, sheds over 300 square feet are not permitted.

The zoning officer will issue a zoning certificate. In the event that the zoning officer does NOT approve your application, you will receive an explanation. You can choose to make amendments to the shed plan (moving its location, changing the size, etc.). Alternatively, you can choose to **seek a variance** from the Planning Board. The Board may give you assistance on whether a variance is necessary, and the Zoning Officer can help you navigate through the process.

The planning board meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of every month, at 7pm at the municipal building. Residents are, of course, welcome to attend and learn more! Happy Shedding!

About Our Schools



From Our Superintendent Nicholas Diaz, EdD...

Union Township Schools are back in swing for the 2022-2023 school year. This year, the District has made significant upgrades to our school security measures. We will continue to work with law enforcement as part of our continuous improvement efforts.

Unlike most communities in New Jersey, our enrollment continues to grow at both schools. The new development from Ryan Homes is certainly a contributor to the increase. We are excited to welcome all of the new families who choose to live in #TheU.

Union Township Schools is once again partnering with Raritan Valley Community College to offer the CURRV Academy. This strategic partnership allows us to enhance arts education for our students. Clinton-Glen Gardner School District, Union Township Schools and Readington Township Public Schools have joined with RVCC to form the CURRV Arts Collaboration. CURRV stands for Clinton, Union, Readington, and Raritan Valley.

The District has applied for two STEM grants for its schools. The first grant is dedicated to encouraging female students into careers in Computer Science. The second grant is dedicated to providing students with the opportunity to design, build, and race electric cars. The District hopes to hear a decision on their applications in the near future.

Information From Our Local School Board...

The Union Township Board of Education hopes that everyone has been having a positive school experience and enjoying all that Fall has to offer in our beautiful community. The change to a full day pre-K program and the 4th grade moving to the middle school to address the potential space concerns that have arisen out of climbing enrollment numbers have both been positively received by the students and school community. In other exciting news, the UTEA and the UT BOE were able to come to an agreement and a 5-year contract was recently signed. This is a change from the traditional 3-year contracts that have historically been passed.

Two important items to highlight: First, this November is the upcoming school board election and there are currently four candidates who have submitted petitions for three open seats. And second, in January, there will be a special vote for a bond referendum that will include completely upgrading the HVAC system at the middle school and replacing all of the doors at both schools. The HVAC has been an item on the long-range facility plan that would greatly benefit from the reduction in cost due to potential state aid, and the replacement of doors was an item that came up on a security review that the BOE would like to address. The doors are also potentially eligible for state aid with this referendum. More info will be provided to the community as we get closer to the January date.

The BOE encourages public attendance at meetings, which are currently being held in person at the UT elementary school media center/library and there is no longer a virtual attendance option provided. The upcoming remaining meetings for this year will begin at 6:45PM and are scheduled for the following dates: Oct 24, Nov 21, and Jan 4 (2023).

Student Spotlight

Dancing on the Upbeat With Jamie Sullivan

Jamie Sullivan wore her rose gold dress on her special day, the sequin sparkles popping for extra bling on the Mountain View Chalet dance floor, and, of course, the mismatched socks. It was the Sweet 16 party of her dreams. Her family's dreams. Thanksgiving in July. One hundred of her closest loved ones were invited to join her; all said yes. They gathered to celebrate the beautiful young woman, coming of age, the belle of the ball, the most popular gal in town. The mother-daughter dance was special. More hugs than dance moves (typical Jamie), and she led her younger cousins into the circle without flinching. The father-daughter dance was special, too, an even larger sphere of her fiercest protectors ("my boys", she calls them), a towering orb of affection. She is loved, she feels it in her bones, and she is grateful for it all.



Each of those sixteen candles meant something to Jamie as she lit them, and they all got call-outs. Her mom, Barb, is her everything, her best friend, her ride or die. Her older brother, Brandon, is her bomb.com. "I am so happy to be his sister forever, every day", she noted proudly in her speech. Her extended family – her army of aunts, her company of cousins, and her formation of friends – light up her life at all times, filling her with laughter and purpose and support. She talks to her friend Shane (the sixteenth candle) all the time on the phone. One afternoon last September, he decorated a poster board, surprised her on her way out of school with a request to take her to her first homecoming dance, and her spirit took flight.

Be careful underestimating Jamie, as she has outpaced expectations all her life. She has been educated and reared from the beginning by the Union Township public schools and particularly by Mrs. Murray, who taught her core subjects and important life skills from first grade to middle school. Now a sophomore at North, and an honor roll student several times over, she is readying for the world. Jamie's first year as a runner for the Law Enforcement Torch Run was in eighth grade, and she has been recruited heavily to do more legs each passing year. She has competed in the 25-, 50- and 100-meter runs at the area's Special Olympics, and she frequently excels. Once, she was accidentally placed in the boys' heat, but it didn't matter: she beat them.

Jamie knows what she loves, too. She loves to read, and she loves her friends. She loves nuggets and applesauce and frozen hot chocolates from Dunkin. She loves dancing and Miley and Justin. She loves writing her own songs and playing guitar, giggling and making music with her cousin in her bedroom, while her Aunt Carol presses her head closer on the other side of the door to listen with joy at the makeshift reverie. She loves her three dogs and helps to walk them (Charlie is her fave, though it's Sallie who, without fanfare, keeps a purposeful maternal eye on her at all times). She loves laughter, and she loves love.

Like most high school kids, Jamie's future remains uncertain. She'd make an excellent assistant at Gymnastics Unlimited, where her mother's a mainstay. Or if mom ever retires, the two might set up shop together in a traveling food truck, serving meals and coffee at events or to park patrons. Whatever it is, it will involve people, being in and among them, as she always has. "All I wish for her is success and happiness", her mom acknowledges. "And to be given a chance in this world." Her wish resonates and is universal. For now, though, it's about celebrating the last days of adolescence. Several weeks ago, Jamie met up with her lifelong friend Andrew at her second homecoming dance. It was an awesome affair, the ever-smiling Jamie at her rightful place at the center of the dance floor. She was surrounded by long-time friends who adore her, a whirling dervish of zest, fist-pumping dance moves and love, all feeling the warmth of her high fives and embraces.

It was a chance to experience unbridled joy – to exhale it and to inhale it – like air. It was a chance to dance to *Footloose* and to Miley, effortlessly and shamelessly, hoping the music would never stop. And it was a chance to *sparkle*, the power of love and support lifting her feet and mismatched socks off the dance floor, as brilliantly and as colorfully as the sequins on her rose gold dress.

A Sense for the Past...

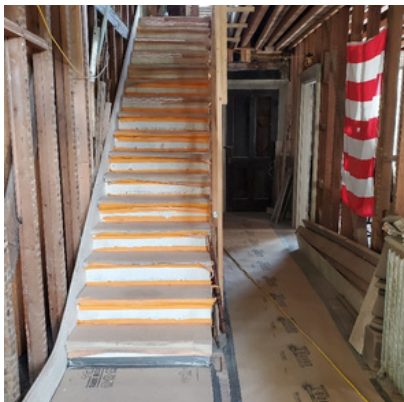
The Revolutionary Revival of Bonnell Tavern



Hank Bonnell is throwing a party, and he wants us all to come.

It is the celebration of the century – the 18th Century, specifically – when the minutemen met, the forefathers fought and our country was conceived.

Bonnell Tavern idles there stolidly, as it always has, the square-framed bulwark on its triangular plot, lying in wait for its relentless overseer to resurrect it from its ashes and return it to glory. How it will look once completed, however, remains somewhat unclear. Over the last decade or so, Bonnell Tavern has gone through innumerable iterations in Hank’s mind and over prior, but scrapped, site plans. It has expanded and contracted, become more complicated and then more streamlined. The current, and most likely final, plan is to re-purpose the property to become a brewery and museum, a gathering place for Hunterdonites and others to enjoy and to honor.



The micro-brewery will fill the seats (an anticipated 96 of them), serving what is hoped to be four to five staple brews and a few seasonals on a ten-barrel system. Historical beers are expected to be in the offing, as well, codified through trial and error experimentation from preserved and documented recipes, the more undrinkable, molasses-laden ones left on the cutting room floor. A brewer will be hired, and a lean, three- to five-person staff will steward the landmark location each night.

The décor hasn’t been finalized yet, but it will be purposeful and proper: Victorian Greek revival elements combined with possibly, at its most contemporary, subtle rustic industrial updates. The structure’s delicate insides will be exposed and featured in spots, like a Colonial American version of Paris’s Centre Pompidou: the original mortis and tenon support joints, the family fireplace, the mud-packed insulation encased in plexiglass, the polished brass chandeliers. Patrons will imbibe micro-brews and history all at once, sitting alongside a bar constructed from planks of local, sawn wood and staring upwards at the hay trolleys and naked beams that no doubt will add to its charm.



There is much to showcase of the past, too, all dripping with town and county history, including, among other noteworthy trinkets: the original liquor license – signed by the Union Forge Turner family and William Maxwell (or “Scotch Willie”), the sheepskin deed to the property, several prominent William Bonnell heirloom paintings and centuries-old coins, counterfeit and otherwise. It’s “enough stuff to fill up a room or two” and provoke pangs of nostalgia for an erstwhile era.

At least that’s the plan.

This is the last of a three-part series on Hank Bonnell and the ongoing story of Bonnell Tavern. The first and second parts of the story were published in the township’s Spring and Summer 2022 Newsletters, available in the archive section of our website: www.uniontp-hcnj.gov.

In order to get his historical landmark to its future destination, Hank must navigate it through a veritable battlefield of modern-day rules and a landmine of regulations. There are so many governing bodies involved, it would serve as the perfect final exam case study for an earnest planning board aspirant. Because of its boundary breaching borders, approvals must be gotten on impervious surface calculations and setbacks from both Union Township and the Town of Clinton, singularly and in combination. The DOT will be approached for an additional, and more convenient, ingress and egress portal. The DEP might even get involved, as well, if stormwater management remediations become persnickety, and if culvert bridges are planned over streams that were created ironically – in part – by the impervious, emotionless highway that split the property in two.



Taking the past into the future will involve a presence in multiple meeting rooms. Decision nodes leading to modifications and evolutions. Revolutions.

And all of it – the plans, the studies, the experts, everything – will cost Hank a fortune...and a good chunk of his remaining life. The sheer scope of the quest, and the extraordinary obstacles that must be surmounted to bring this story to its rightful conclusion, is enough to turn the face of the starry-eyed Hank saturnine. The challenge is burdensome and it is weighty, with a long gestational period and a mountain of risk. Sitting with him, amid the papers and drawings that draft its revolutionary revival, two natural impulses emerge. You simply can't help but *root* for the man and his mission, but equally present: you probably wouldn't *invest* in this mission yourself. The odds for its success are about as even as the prospect for it being razed and expunged, yet another casualty in a war of unflinching progress and uprooting.



Nevertheless, Hank can't turn back now. "I'm all in at this point", he laments acceptingly. "And what keeps me excited is the local people, who are encouraging me to move forward with it. It seems to *mean* something to them. They are watching, and it inspires."

The connection, the linkage is obvious the second you enter, for the very first time. The structure and the man inhale and exhale in unison, their arteries intertwined and circulated, as one.

The revelation unsettles. This isn't just Hank's house: *this house is Hank*, as naked and exposed as the very joists that support his dream.

"I want to save this house", Hank offers candidly. "I want to save it for the town. I want to save it for its history. For its heritage. For my family name. And for me."

The eighth-generation Bonnell pauses, as he does, in thought, casts his eyes downward, in the direction of his dust-strewn floor and worn-well Timberlands, and then back up again, with the prideful, unabashed resilience of a Son of the Revolution, keeper of the keys, stoic and purposeful and solitary as ever.



"It's all I have."

At Your Doorstep

Meet the Walchuks of Wellington West



Chris and Orest Walchuk met at a Ukrainian dance thirty-five years ago, and they've been partnered up ever since. Orest was a tall, slender aspiring engineer in his late twenties, the product of public schools (including the prestigious Bronx High School of Science) and a graduate of The Cooper Union (where he also received his masters in engineering). Chris was a few years younger than Orest, herself an alumna of an all-girls Catholic high school, and then a graduate two times over at Fordham, where she earned her Masters in Education (MSEd). Two years after meeting one another at that dance, they were married, and they moved into their first home in White Plains, New York. Less than a decade later, work called Orest to suburban New Jersey. His brother had lived in

Annandale for some time. Through him, he learned firsthand of the "incomparable bang for the buck" that Hunterdon County living would afford. They found a home in the then-sprouting development of Wellington West in Union Township almost twenty-five years ago, and they haven't left.

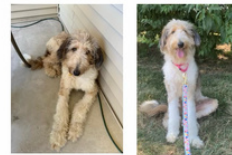
Chris and Orest raised two young women (and a couple of dogs) in that house. Both daughters are Fordham women like their mom: the oldest, Juli, 24, is your classic thoughtful older sibling, who recently got her masters degree from Columbia University. She is now pursuing a career in clinical therapy. The younger, Katrina, 19, is a current collegian and the free spirit of the family, marching to her own drummer, and preferably one from the vintage 60s or 70s. Both turn to Mom, the caring, nurturing one, for any interpersonal problems (and to Dad, the knowledgeable, serious but silly one, for more practical reasons, like finances or fixing a leaky toilet).

The Walchuks have stayed in Union Township for the people and for the community. "When our kids were younger, we were so involved in everything", Chris notes. "It felt like a small place to live, which was nice." But the strength of the Union Township community was perhaps demonstrated best to the Walchuks in the last two months, coming at a time of one of the family's most anxious moments, when their dog Stevie went missing. Only six weeks prior, the family acquired the collie doodle from a rescue organization and named her Stevie (after Stevie Nicks of Fleetwood Mac). The Walchuks embraced the dog's skittish disposition, recognizing that it might take time to get her comfortable. One morning, during a casual walk with Chris in the development, Stevie got spooked by something and the leash broke free from Chris's hand. Stevie ran away frantically like a wayward gypsy.

Chris started contacting neighbors immediately, and within minutes, the search was on, and the landslide of support began. Neighbors looked everywhere, taking to bicycles and cars within 20 minutes, on a mad dash to locate and retrieve the elusive Stevie. As the hours and days progressed, family members, including Juli's boyfriend in Manhattan, sent out anxious, desperate posts on Facebook with Stevie's picture and details on it, and the search party expanded. Possible sightings were broadcast, and residents (and strangers to the Walchuks) from all over town read the chain and bee lined it to the locations, only to come up empty on several occasions. Prospects for Stevie's return began to look bleak, and the ever-rational Orest started preparing his wife for the worst.

At long last, however, a fellow resident spotted Stevie four days after she had broken free. After an intense chase through the woods by Katrina, her boyfriend Matt and fellow neighbors, Stevie found herself back in Wellington West, where Katrina was able to grab hold of her. The dog was scared but safe, and the Walchuks were relieved and grateful. It quickly became the feel-good, big-love summer story for Union Township. "We knew people in our neighborhood would be wonderful", Chris remarked, "but not complete strangers, who just don't stop caring. That tells you what kind of place this really is."

LOST DOG



"Stevie"

-Got loose in Wellington West development off Route 513 in Pittstown on Sunday morning 9/4 at 8:30
-Spotted by Finn Road/Cooks Cross Sunday evening
-Collie Doodle- mixed colored coat- tan, brown, white, gray
-Anxious/very skittish temperament so please call if you spot her, do not chase! She may have collar and leash still on her

We're pleased to know that the Stevie search story has a happy ending. And since she is named after the Fleetwood Mac icon, we figured it might be fun to throw in some Fleetwood Mac songs in the text above. Can you find all six?? Answers on page 15!

The Hills Are Alive With the Sound of Theatre

Tucked away delicately among the trees of Jutland Mountain – a safe distance away from the turbulent pulsations of Route 78 and at the end of a winding stretch of road that marks its inlet – sits the picturesque 90-acre property of **Hunterdon Hills Playhouse**, the premier dinner theatre in New Jersey and an historic Union Township presence since the turn of the 20th century.



There's real history here in them thar hills. In its earliest days, the playhouse existed two miles south of its present location, north of Mechlin's Tavern and behind what is now Country Acres. The original theatre complex was built by a wealthy actress from the township, Ione Hutaine, who lived on the property. In its heyday, the theatre was once a Summer Stock hotspot and attracted the A-listers of their times: Glenda Farrell, Fabian, Rock Hudson, Gloria Swanson and others. Performances attracted so many people back then that a special bus service was created (The "Golden Arrow"), running between New York City and eastern Pennsylvania.



In 1977, the property and playhouse were sold to founder Jack O'Brien, one of Jack's business colleagues, and Jack's then-23 year old nephew, Richard. One month after the team purchased the playhouse, the theatre (and its vulnerable hand-hewn wood) burned to the ground. Nearby townsfolk resistance to its rebuild forced the new owners to call an audible, and they ended up finding another location, in the township's commercial zone, that could serve as the permanent grounds. This is where it sits today.

Richard, now 68, has been its primary proprietor, expeditor, fixer and inspiration ever since. He is the last surviving member of the old guard and is virtually synonymous with the playhouse. Prepare yourself, when talking to Richard, for an exercise in directness, an earnest conversation not for the feint of heart. He is honest, he pulls no punches and he doesn't suffer fools. And he shouldn't. It is single-handedly through the man's instincts, perseverance, and commitment to perfection that the playhouse has stood as long as it has: through demographic changes, through numerous recessions and even through COVID (imagine a business model more flat footed for a pandemic than a theatre catered to an older population that arrives in buses and sits together in one room). The playhouse, and Richard, endure. They always have.

The four-plus decades of ownership and management have been, generally speaking, good and prosperous ones for Schulman and his playhouse. Since re-opening in 1981, 4 million people have attended performances at Hunterdon Hills. Nine thousand shows, spanning nearly 300 productions. The playhouse engine, at its peak, runs with a team of about 100 people, and while the talent comes typically from New York, the performances are generated largely from within: in-house costume designers, musical directors, set builders, and a live orchestra.

The main building itself, which houses the theatre, the kitchen, the atrium and business offices, is a 22,000 square foot marvel. Walking through the building off-hours – the wide aisles of the massive kitchen and the brass-railed adjacent theatre – feels like a journey through the set of *The Shining* without Nicholson or the scares. One can feel the history here: the applause, the laughter, the throngs. The audience and performances have left their marks.

Richard feels a sense of kinship with Union Township and with its residents. "What I've come to recognize over the years is how important a business relationship is with the town", he offers. It is one of the reasons why he has hosted – on his sprawling compound – approximately 10 township Community Days over the last two decades (including the most recent restart this past September). "This town has allowed me to expand, to get approvals and to thrive. I feel an eternal gratitude to Union. They've given me a really good life. It has *been* my life. If they ask me to do something, I will never say no."

Around Town

The Hunterdon Games Brings North Hunterdon County Together in Friendly Competition

On August 20th, Union Township hosted a well-attended inaugural event, “THE HUNTERDON GAMES”, at our Finn Park. The gathering was a one-of-a-kind multi-municipality competition, pitting teams of 25 people from eight municipalities (Alexandria Township, Bethlehem Township, Town of Clinton, Clinton Township, Franklin Township, Borough of High Bridge, Lebanon Borough and Union Township) against one another in a cross-town throw down for the ages, in front of hundreds of interested spectators. Teams competed across a number of events, ranging from physical challenges to slightly more cerebral ones, including: kickball, tug of war, volleyball, pie eating (in which the winning competitor consumed more than four pounds of pie in twelve minutes), wiffle ball home run derby, spelling bee, hula hoop, cornhole, Name That Tune, Giant Jenga, relay race and inflatable joust. Performances and points were tallied for each event, and by the end of the day, the host township, Union, pulled out a decisive victory (winning nine of the 12 events during the day). Town of Clinton, Clinton Township and Bethlehem Township finished in second, third and fourth places, respectively.



The event was the brainchild of Mayor DeGiralamo, who originally conceived the idea as a means of continuing to foster a sense of Union Township community and, specifically, as an “Olympics” against the neighboring Town of Clinton. “Town of Clinton Mayor Janice Kovach and Councilman Kyle Perloff and our School Boardmember and friend Kara Cherney and I met at the Clinton House for dinner a few weeks back to brainstorm ways we could all embarrass ourselves”, said Mayor DeGiralamo, “and one of us thought, hey, I wonder if other towns might want in. Within 24 hours, our little contest became a county spectacle, and it’s now taken on a life of its own.”

The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick of Hunterdon County sponsored the event alongside the township, largely through manpower and voluntarism throughout the day. In addition, light fare was donated by local restaurants, including The Pattenburg House, Jerzees, Cree Wine Company, Designer Dawgs and Dominick’s Pizza. Kona Ice was an oasis for kids and adults alike on a very warm day under the hot sun, as well.

Tug-of-war anchorman Ronnie Burns noted, “We brought the muscle and the brains to crush our neighbors”. “And in the end, people now know where Union Township lives.” Resident Kara Cherney, who herself was part of a pair of winning spellers for Team Union, summarized: “First, it was an extraordinary way to bring together in a most unique way multiple communities and municipalities, in the spirit of camaraderie, fun and competitive energy. And second, we beat our rival Clinton, which meant something to all of us.” There already are plans to expand the Games to include other municipalities next summer and perhaps rotate the venue annually.



Around Town

Community Day Makes Its Triumphant Return

After a several-year respite, our COMMUNITY DAY returned and was better than ever. It took place on September 25th, 2022, at the Hunterdon Hills Playhouse, spearheaded once again by our indefatigable community leader Debbie Hirt and co-organized by the playhouse owners (Richard Schulman and Rich Ollwerther), township committee members and local DJ extraordinaire Dan Torrone ("Dr. D"). More than 50 volunteers, including our Pattenburg Volunteer Fire Company, supported the event, helping to make it a seamless experience for all.

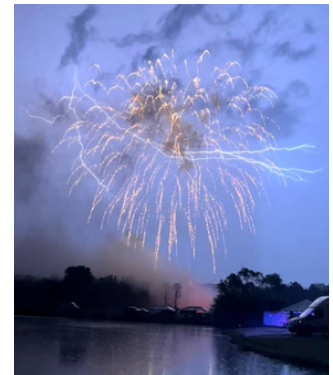
There were two exciting additions to this year's event. First, residents were treated to an all-day music festival, with four bands from the area (The Toga Party Band, Mike Frank and Friends, Bryan Hansen Band and Jimmy Leahey's Grey Man Group) lighting up the stage. And second, Pattenburg House closed its doors on that day and moved its restaurant to the event, with nearly 150 residents enjoying a sit-down meal in the playhouse atrium.

In addition, there were numerous other features to this year's day and included (among other things) more than 40 local food and other vendors, a petting zoo, bounce houses, a fishing derby and the appearance of the state police helicopter (which always thrills the kids). The dunk tank was there, as well, but no one had the gumption to hover over the briskly cold September water.

The night was capped off by a spectacular fireworks display, made all the more climactic by the concurrent presence of a passing thunderstorm with lightning.

We are also pleased to report that the township successfully applied for a \$5,000 Rediscover Hunterdon Communities Grant through the county, with the funds being put toward expenditures associated with Community Day. With this, and the contributions of numerous generous sponsors, little to no township funds were required to put on the event this year.

"I grew up going to Union Township community days, and I'm so glad they're back", long-time resident Nicole Charles offered. "Our family had a blast this year, and we got the chance to reunite with so many of our neighbors, too. What a triumphant return!"

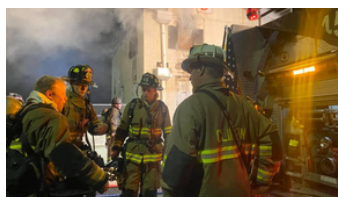


Fire and Rescue



The Heroes of Clinton Fire Department

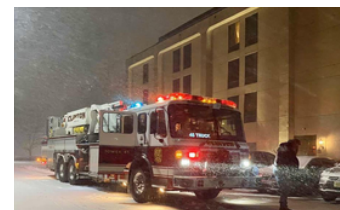
The Clinton Fire Department has been serving the community for 140 years, and it has counted parts of Union Township in its coverage area for nearly all of those years. The team proudly serves as the *primary* provider for the northeastern section of Union Township, including (among other areas) Union Gap and Union Hill apartments, Rupells Road, Race Street, Albert Drive, Route 78 (between Exits 12 and 15), Pittstown Road to Cooks Cross, the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, the Hunterdon Developmental Center, and Country Arch Nursing Home. In addition, it provides coverage to the *entire* township for more severe incidents. Located at New Street in the Town of Clinton, Station 45 boasts a roster of 26 volunteers, operating an Engine, a Tower Ladder Truck, a Squad Truck, a Utility Truck, and a Special Services Truck. The company still proudly maintains the original motorized fire apparatus - a 1926 American LaFrance pumper, affectionately called "Lulubelle". Department services provided include Fire, Rescue and EMS assists.



The company responded to 275 calls in 2021 and 252 through the first nine months of 2022. The department provides duty crews at all times of day and night, which gives existing and prospective volunteers the opportunity to donate their support and community service when it is most convenient for them.

Clinton Fire holds multiple fundraising events during the year, including grill nights on Fridays throughout the summer, a coin toss around the Thanksgiving holiday, and take-home pizza kits in the winter and spring. The department is always on the lookout for new volunteers, both active and associate memberships. In addition, the department also has a Junior Firefighter Program for teens as young as 16 and offers Length of Service and stipend programs.

Jeff Hedden, 46, is in his third year as Chief of Clinton Fire. Jeff was Deputy Chief for the first major Union Hill fire (back in 2013) and Chief for the most recent Union Hill fire in May. He began his firefighting career 30 years ago, as a junior firefighter in Morris County. He and his wife, Liz, moved to the Town of Clinton in 1998, and he joined Clinton Fire shortly thereafter. Jeff served as Engineer, Lieutenant, Captain and Deputy Chief before taking the leadership reins in 2019. Clinton Fire has become a family affair for the Heddens: Jeff's son, 18, is a member of the department, and his daughter, 16, and wife are associate members. All but one of the members of Jeff's wedding party were Clinton Fire colleagues.



The department maintains at all times a warm, friendly-oriented environment at the firehouse. The company hosts a holiday party/banquet for fire department members and families, as well as a member recognition picnic in the fall. "We are a tight group here", Chief Hedden notes. "We have a lot of friends that have come through Clinton Fire, and it's that camaraderie between us that makes this experience special."

The community is welcome to come down to learn more about the team and the Clinton Fire experience on any Monday, from 7pm to 9pm. In addition, residents can learn more about the department on its website (www.clintonfd.org) or on its Facebook page.



The People and Contacts Behind Our Town

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Local Event Calendar

PUMPKIN FEST

Downtown Main Street
CLINTON, NJ
Date: 10/21
Time: 5pm-8pm

A CHRISTMAS STORY

Music Mountain Theatre
LAMBERTVILLE, NJ
Dates: Running from 11/4-11/20
Times: Vary by date

SWAN LAKE

State Theatre
EASTON, PA
Date: 11/11
Time: 7:30pm

ROCK THE VETS FUNDRAISER

To benefit Veterans Haven North
Pattensburg House
UNION TOWNSHIP, NJ
Date: 11/12
Time: 8pm

HOLIDAY MUSICAL

Hunterdon Hills Playhouse
UNION TOWNSHIP, NJ
Dates: 11/15-12/20
Time: Vary by date

MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET

Bucks County Playhouse
NEW HOPE, PA
Date: 11/18-1/1 (2023)
Time: Vary by date

WILSON BROTHERS

Pattensburg House
UNION TOWNSHIP, NJ
Date: 11/25

HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING

Downtown Main Street
CLINTON, NJ
Date: 11/25
Time: Approx 6:30pm

DICKENS DAYS

Downtown Main Street
CLINTON, NJ
Dates: 11/25, 11/26
Time: All day

WINTER VILLAGE

Red Mill
CLINTON, NJ
Dates: 11/25, 11/26, 11/27
Times: 11am-6pm

CHRISTMAS PARADE

Downtown Clinton
CLINTON, NJ
Date: 12/2
Time: 6pm-8:30pm

HOLIDAY LIGHTING

Municipal Building
UNION TOWNSHIP, NJ
Date: 12/9
Time: 5pm-8pm

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS

Music Mountain Theatre
LAMBERTVILLE, NJ
Date: 12/3, 12/10, 12/17
Time: Vary by date

MEMBERS ART EXHIBITION

Hunterdon Art Museum
CLINTON, NJ
Date: Running through 1/8/23

