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Happy Thanksgiving!



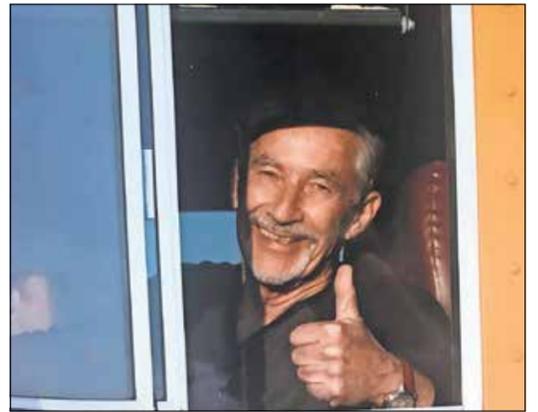
COVID-19 cases surge in Warren Township • 3

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Photos by Debbie Weisman

The all-volunteer Warren Township Lions Club gave hundreds of local families something to be thankful for this Thanksgiving, as the group purchased, packed and donated 372 Thanksgiving meals on Saturday morning, Nov. 21. Pictured outside the Watchung Hills Elks Lodge Saturday morning, from left, are Lions and Leos Mike Edwards, Patrick Flanigan, Bob Papazian, Rob Saum, Kelly Saum, Matt Saum, Neal Drasin, Larry Betsil, Emily Grigonis, Kaitlyn Roth, Maddy Papazian, Hallie Sussner, Micah Edwards, Tom Krutis, Kathryn Flanigan, Megan Saum, Lucia Spadoto, Mia Edwards, Burt Eng, Gina Mortillo, Josh Claxton, Toby Claxton, Amy Claxton, Lianna Bartnick, Bill Bartnick, Arjun Singh, Matthew Mina, Adam Claxton, Mark Claxton, Mark Renda, Eric Niemeyer, Anthony Mina and Terry MacConnell.



Enjoying his retirement, Gillette resident Jim Corcoran can be found driving Watchung Hills Regional High School athletes to sporting events in a Fred Dealaman Bus Company bus. He volunteers every year to drive military veterans to Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts at the Stirling Elks Lodge. Both events have been canceled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In time of great need, vols up their game

By ALEX PARKER-MAGYAR EDITOR

WARREN TWP. - The COVID-19 pandemic has taken food off the table from so many in the area, but local volunteers have increased their efforts to see that hundreds of local families have full plates and stomachs this Thanksgiving.

The all-volunteer Warren Township Lions Club donated some 372 meals to local food banks, families and non-profit organizations through its annual Thanksgiving Baskets event Saturday morning, Nov. 21, at the Watchung Hills Elks Lodge off Bardy Road.

The output is a marked increase over the usual 200 to 250 meals provided in past years as the volunteers sought to meet increased demand.

"This year this is even more important with the pandemic going on," said Lion Burt Eng, who coordinated the event. "A lot of peo-



The Warren Township Leos, the Lions Club's youth organization, packed hundreds of grocery bags, each filled with 10 different Thanksgiving food items. Among the volunteers were Leos Hallie Sussner, left, and Emily Grigonis. Please see more photos on page 3.

ple and a lot of businesses are facing challenges and a lot of people aren't working. I honestly wish we could have done even more." The Lions managed the

increase despite facing challenges of its own. The service organization was forced to cancel fundraisers like the annual Lions Expo carnival, an event that generates about \$50,000 each year, according to Lion Arjun Singh.

Eng said the club relied on safety funds and reallocated other funds to run the Thanksgiving Baskets event this year, and to expand it to meet growing demand.

Lions woke up bright and early Saturday morning, meeting at ShopRite of Stirling to fill a U-Haul truck and personal cars with thousands of food items.

Each "Thanksgiving Basket," or grocery bag, is stuffed to the gills. Each basket contains a turkey — or two rotisserie chickens for families without ovens — plus a loaf of bread, potatoes, canned corn, green beans, yams, gravy and cranberry sauce, plus boxes of stuffing and instant potatoes.

PLEASE SEE GIVING, PAGE 6

A tradition canceled

Gillette man, volunteers miss out on chance to give back

By ALEX PARKER-MAGYAR EDITOR

LONG HILL TWP. - Eight months on, the COVID-19 pandemic looms as a dark cloud over the most banal of everyday activities. But its presence is felt just as keenly in the void left by all those activities we are unable to do.

For Gillette resident Jim Corcoran, it means he won't be pulling a school bus up to the Lyons Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center campus this Thanksgiving, leaving minutes later with dozens of thankful veterans in tow.

Corcoran is part of a dedicated group of volunteers who make the Stirling Elks' annual Thanksgiving feast for veterans possible, choosing to spend hours away from his family to make the holiday brighter for local vets at the Stirling Elks Lodge on Valley Road. With more than 100 veterans attending the event in a given year, Corcoran buses a number of them to and from the feast.

The Elks event is just one of many local traditions canceled this year due to the pandemic, joining the likes of the Meyersville Tree Lighting and the Warren Lions Expo carnival, to name a few.

Stirling Elks volunteer Kelly Mazzocchi, the founder and coordinator of the Thanksgiving event, said the cancellation is "very disappointing" for the volunteers, but "especially disappointing for the veterans who enjoy this

meal each year." Corcoran, a 75-year-old Vietnam War veteran, says he relishes the opportunity to drive the veterans to the Elks Lodge on Thanksgiving and again on Christmas for another holiday feast.

"I have eight grandkids, and they'll ask how come you can't come over? I say listen, I've been doing this for years and I'm going to continue doing it. I'll see you after Thanksgiving or Christmas, or before each holiday," he laughs.

"I'm a veteran myself, and it just feels good to do it. A lot of these guys I'll sit down and talk to them, grab dinner at the Elks. It's a really nice day. This year it's a little disappointing because we can't have it with COVID, but it is what it is."

Corcoran is a retired firefighter, having served three decades in the Roselle Fire Department. He joined the department about a year after the conclusion of his army service.

A 16-year resident of Long Hill, he lives on Woods End with his wife of 46 years, Maryann. The couple have two sons, with the eight grandchildren ranging in age from 4 to 11.

Many in the community may recognize him as a friendly face behind the wheel driving Watchung Hills Regional High School students to sporting events. Though he is nominally retired, he drives the sports teams and picks up routes for Fred Deal-

PLEASE SEE TRADITION, PAGE 6

Republicans sweep as county certifies election results

It took nearly three weeks to count all the votes, but Somerset County certified its general election results on Sunday, Nov. 22.

The final results made victories official for Republican candidates in both Warren Township and Watchung.

In Warren, Republican Township Committee members George K. Lazo and Michael "Mick" Marion



GEORGE LAZO



MICHAEL MARION



RONALD JUBIN



FREDDIE HAYECK

defeated Democrats John Patrick Fahy and Ilana

Goldstein-Barsky in a four-way race for two, three-year

terms.

The final results showed Lazo with 5,720 votes, Marion with 5,637 votes, Fahy with 4,189 votes and Goldstein-Barsky with 4,115 votes.

Marion, the sitting mayor, and Lazo, who as deputy mayor will serve as mayor next year, will begin their fourth consecutive terms on

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