The TAVI Times

Bringing Local Journalism Back to Our Community

A Community Service of The Allentown Village Initiative

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At Allentown's Kaczor Mum Farm, Tradition Still Blooms Every Fall

Cindy Kaczor

By Brandon Metrick

For nearly 40 years, the fields along Route 539 have turned into a sea of color each fall. A tiny stand sits in the middle of an array of golds, purples, and deep reds as the Kaczor family's mums reach their peak. The Kaczor Mum Farm has become a familiar part of Allentown's harvest season, but behind the postcard-perfect display is a story of consistency, hard work, and a deep love for agriculture.

"Well, my husband was already doing mums a year before we got married," said owner Cindy Kaczor. "And then we continued doing the mums. We were strictly wholesale when we first started. The retail kind of fell in our laps." Two years after they began growing mums, she said, "people started [stopping] because they saw all the mums, and that's how our retail started."

Kaczor said both she and her husband grew up on farms, she on a vegetable farm and he on a hay farm, but flowers became what she called "the happy medium." The couple has now been at the same Allentown property for 40 years. "We only grew the 9-inch mums when we first started," she said. "And I started listening to the customers and what they wanted. And that's how we gradually went into the larger sizes and different pots."

The property itself has a long agricultural history. "It used to be a potato farm," Kaczor said. "This whole road used to be a big potato farm. And in 1984, it was broken down, I believe, into what they call farmettes. And that's when my husband purchased the land."

Her husband had been working in greenhouses at the time, and with his background in agriculture, he began growing mums using the contacts he had developed in the industry. "He started growing mums at that time," she said. "And a year later, we got together. And I came from farming in greenhouses as well. And the rest was history."

The growing cycle starts early each year. "We start

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The last of this fall's mums on October 30th

Kaczor Mum Farm *(continued)*

planting the month of May," Kaczor said. "We start with cuttings. We put one cutting in each of our 9-inch pots." In April, "We fill all the pots and space them all out. Then we go back in May with a cutting and we put one cutting in each pot. We start just watering and fertilizing and pinching until we start selling them."

Asked what challenges come with running a mum farm, Kaczor didn't hesitate. "Weather," she said. "Weather is the biggest challenge." She explained that storms can bring diseases that threaten the plants. "If storms come in, any tropical storms come in, there's always a chance of diseases coming with them," she said. "Any type of rain that comes, you don't know what's in the air with the storms that come through. So you have to constantly keep a lookout for any kind of diseases on the plants. We constantly are scouting, looking to make sure no root rot has been caused by any of the rains that have come through or any kind of disease."

Despite the risk, the Kaczors have maintained a steady routine. "We grow the same amount every year," Kaczor said. "We have X amount of land. So we fill that land up with mums. The only adjustment would be if, and it's not now, but when we started growing the different decorative size pots, how many of each to do. And we've just done the same amount the past few years."

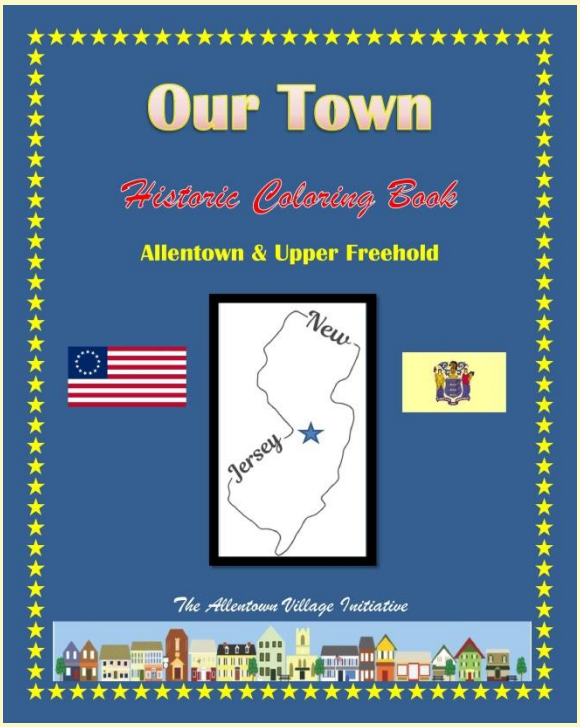
She added that they don't advertise. "Just here," she said. "I have my business cards that people pick up and pass around. It's all word of mouth. We do have a Facebook page, but very little time to post stuff on it." Even so, the farm has built a loyal following over time. "Actually, it's students going to school, listening to their parents say they're going to go for mums," she said. "And they go, oh, we know where to go. We see it on the way to school every day. So it's people who drive by every day and word of mouth."

Asked how a mum farm remains profitable, Kaczor was blunt. "It's not," she said. "We're in it because we love agriculture, not because we're making a lot of money." She added that their prices are based on materials, not labor. "We put our costs in pot, soil, fertilizer, chemicals, plants, and then we gear our price towards that. Our time, our time, and that's a big thing. That's valuable. Our time is never ever figured in. Never. If you figured in your time, forget it."

The operation runs with just three people: Kaczor, her husband, and their son. During the winter months, her husband and son work in greenhouses, while she grows mountain pinks, a side business she started years ago so she could stay home with her children.

When asked about her favorite part of the mum season, she smiled. "Making people happy," she said. "That's it. If I can make people happy, isn't that what I'm here for?" As for advice to anyone looking to start their own farm, she was realistic. "Go another direction," she said, laughing. "If you're looking for income, you have to supplement with something else."

Though the work is demanding and not always lucrative, Kaczor said it's still rewarding, especially knowing her son will eventually take over. "He enjoys doing it," she said. "Loves doing it. Has all the contacts. It's all good." From a potato field to a landmark mum farm, the Kaczor family has built something that continues to color Allentown's autumn every year, powered not by advertising or profit margins, but by tradition, family, and love for the land.



New TAVI Coloring Book Now Available

Just in time for holiday gift giving, TAVI has published a historic coloring book for Allentown and Upper Freehold. The 40 page book features black and white drawings of 20 historic sites in the community including the Imlay House, Salter's Mill and Farmers' Bank, as well as others commemorating Upper Freehold's equine industry.

Each colorable drawing is accompanied by a narrative describing the site's historic significance and how it contributed to the development of Allentown and Upper Freehold. The professionally published coloring book is suitable for children as well as adults and is available for $10; All proceeds benefit TAVI's many community service projects and performing arts events. Please visit www.allentownvinj to order your copies today!

Allentown Boy Scouts Food Pantry Collection Seeks Support

The Scouts of Allentown Troop 180A are once again collecting non-perishable food and hygiene items for the Annual Scouting for Food Drive to benefit the Allentown Food Pantry.

The troop will be distributing the bags and flyers to local neighborhoods over the weekend of November 8th and will be collecting the donations and taking them to the APC food pantry on the morning of November 15th. Please place donated food items in the bag left at your door and place it on your doorstep so it is visible from the street before Saturday, November 15th, 9:30 a.m. Additional bags are welcome!

Some of the scouts of Allentown's Troop 180A

No time to shop? Donations are welcome and help the food pantry buy bulk supplies at cost. Mail your check to:
Allentown Food Pantry
20 High Street Allentown, NJ 08501.

Scouting for Food is a major source of supplies for the food pantry, which annually distributes over 100,000 pounds of food to over 4,200 area families. In 2024, Troop 180A's scouts collected over 4,000 pounds of food for the pantry. The food pantry is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and is staffed by over two dozen dedicated volunteers.

The Allentown Village Initiative (TAVI) Proudly Presents

Dinner With The President

A colonial dining experience with George Washington

Monday, January 19, 2026

At Woody's Towne Café
27 S. Main St., Allentown, NJ

Visit with our first president (as portrayed by Sam Davis) while enjoying a complete colonial-style dinner, including:

- Soup or salad
- Choice of meatloaf, pot roast, or turkey with stuffing
- Green beans, corn & corn muffin
- Cherry or pumpkin pie w/ ice cream

$29.99/person
(includes $5 donation to TAVI)
Seatings at 5 & 6:30 pm

Reservations required,
Visit www.allentownvinj.org

Take out available

Snow Date: Monday, January 26, 2026

TAVI250

A celebration of America's 250th Birthday

Borough Council Mulling New Trespassing Ordinance, Offers Stein Property Update

By Joshua Schulman

The Allentown Borough Council met on Oct. 14 to discuss several ongoing projects and policy updates while Mayor Thomas Fritts was away attending the Robbinsville Township Council meeting. Council President John Elder spoke in his absence and read a message from Fritts, who said his visit with Robbinsville Mayor David Fried was intended to strengthen ties between the two municipalities as Robbinsville begins its transition to a new elected official. Fried has been the mayor of Robbinsville since 2005 but announced earlier this year that he would not be running for re-election.

One of the evening's main topics was the introduction of an ordinance addressing trespassing within the borough. The proposal is listed as Ordinance 09-2025 and would add new language prohibiting individuals from entering properties where a warning has already been issued. While this is commonplace in most towns across the state, Allentown technically never had a sufficient trespassing ordinance. Council members said the update would give the Allentown Police Department the choice to handle a case as a municipal ordinance violation or as criminal trespassing. The council also discussed whether to pursue a "no fishing off the bridge" ordinance for the dam on Main Street, and temporary signs are being considered while the matter remains under review.

Financial and administrative matters made up much of the rest of the meeting. The council approved raising the borough's bid threshold to $53,000 with a qualified purchasing agent, appointed Dawn Harmon as a part-time office clerk, and authorized Roberts Engineering Group to begin preparing documents for upcoming water tower repairs. In addition, attorney Michelle Donato was approved to represent the Planning Board in litigation connected to 11 Church Street, LLC.

Borough Administrator Laurie Roth presented the annual Best Practices Inventory for 2025, reporting a score of 37.5 out of 32 points (“bonus” points are awarded for exceptional performance). The strong rating means that no portion of Allentown's state aid will be withheld. Roth said the borough continues to meet all required financial reporting deadlines.

Councilwoman Nikki Darling spearheaded a discussion on the upcoming recycling contract, which expires at the end of this year. Members compared costs between continuing manual pickup and switching to a mechanized system that would use 96-gallon recycling cans. The new method would reduce windblown litter but carry a higher cost, estimated at roughly $6,000 more. Several people voiced support for the current manual approach to avoid additional spending, so the discussion was set aside for further review.

Only two attendees present at the meeting made public comments. When asked for an update on the Stein property and its ongoing legal battle with the proposed warehouse complex, one council member said there was 'promising news on the horizon' but that nothing definitive would come out until after the November election. A full announcement is anticipated sometime between November and January. The meeting concluded when the council entered a closed executive session to discuss pending litigation for three cases. Details of those discussions were not made public in accordance with Section 8 of New Jersey's Open Public Meetings Act.

Borough Food Drive

Allentown Borough is sponsoring a food drive benefitting the Food Pantry at Allentown Presbyterian Church now through the end of the year. Canned goods, snacks, breakfast foods, meats, dairy, hygiene products, pet food and basically anything you would buy for your own family are all needed. Donations can be dropped off at Borough Hall, 8 North Main Street any weekday between 9 a.m. and 3 pm. For more information, contact the Borough at (609) 259-3151 or email the Clerk’s Office at clerk@allentownboroughnj.com Cash donations can be made by scanning the QR code below.

U.F. Sanctuary Protects Retired Racers

The Standardbred Retirement Foundation was created 36 years ago in response to the slaughter of Standardbred racehorses who had reached the end of their racing careers. Today, 77 retired race horses are living out their days in Cream Ridge, thanks to the Foundation's volunteer efforts. Virtually all funds needed to sustain the horses is raised through donations (*See the "Holiday at the Horse Farm" event below*).

While a number of breeds are found in Upper Freehold, in sheer numbers the standardbred predominates. These harness racehorses train, or have trained at various times, at farms like White Birch Farm and American Viking Racing Stable (*see the August 2025 edition of The TAVI Times*). Many of the large standardbred breeding farms in Upper Freehold are in the state farmland preservation program, such as Walnridge Farm, Concord Stud Farm, Heritage Hill Farm, and part of Fair Winds Farm in Upper Freehold.

The Standardbred is a breed of horse derived from Thoroughbred and Morgan bloodlines. Initially known for their incredible ability to trot at high speeds, all Standardbreds can trace their heritage to the stallion, Hambletonian. The breed name comes from a time when racing Standardbreds had to qualify by going a mile in a 'standard' time, which has dropped drastically over the years. Stereotypically, Standardbreds are the harness racing horses you see at tracks like the Meadowlands. They are known for pulling carts, called sulkies, at a trot or pace. Except for about 5% of Standardbreds, their natural gait is the trot and they generally trot five miles a day to keep fit while racing. They have a tremendous work ethic and try very hard to please.

Consider a holiday horse adoption this year!

LOCAL AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY EXCAVATED:

America 250 and Area Free Black Communities

By Sue Kozel

The American Revolutionary War can be seen as part of a many-pronged Revolution: one aspect addressing the grievances by white people seeking their freedom from British tyranny, and a second aspect marking a new beginning for enslaved African Americans fighting for their freedom from the tyranny of slavery. Such was the case in Western Monmouth County and the Township of Upper Freehold, that included the villages of Allentown, Imlaystown, and Walnford. The *TAVI Times* will feature different stories about the African American experience from enslavement to freedom and discuss emerging African American communities and invite our readers' questions and comments.

Upper Freehold's free Black community began to grow with the manumission of enslaved people by Quakers before and during the American Revolution, with more manumissions after 1797, and the actions of enslaved people who self-emancipated themselves by running away. During this period, Allentown was one of the villages within the large Upper Freehold Township.

Looking at select examples of free Black people, we can better understand the African American experience from slavery to freedom. In this example, we can trace part of the life of Gilbert Wooby, sometimes listed in Tax Records and other documents related to his being a taxpayer, a farmer, a worker for a local abolitionist, and more.

On the 2nd month, 22nd day of 1797, Quaker Abolitionist and Upper Freehold Resident Richard Waln paid an African American worker his final payment for jobs performed at Walnford, a plantation in Upper Freehold, New Jersey.

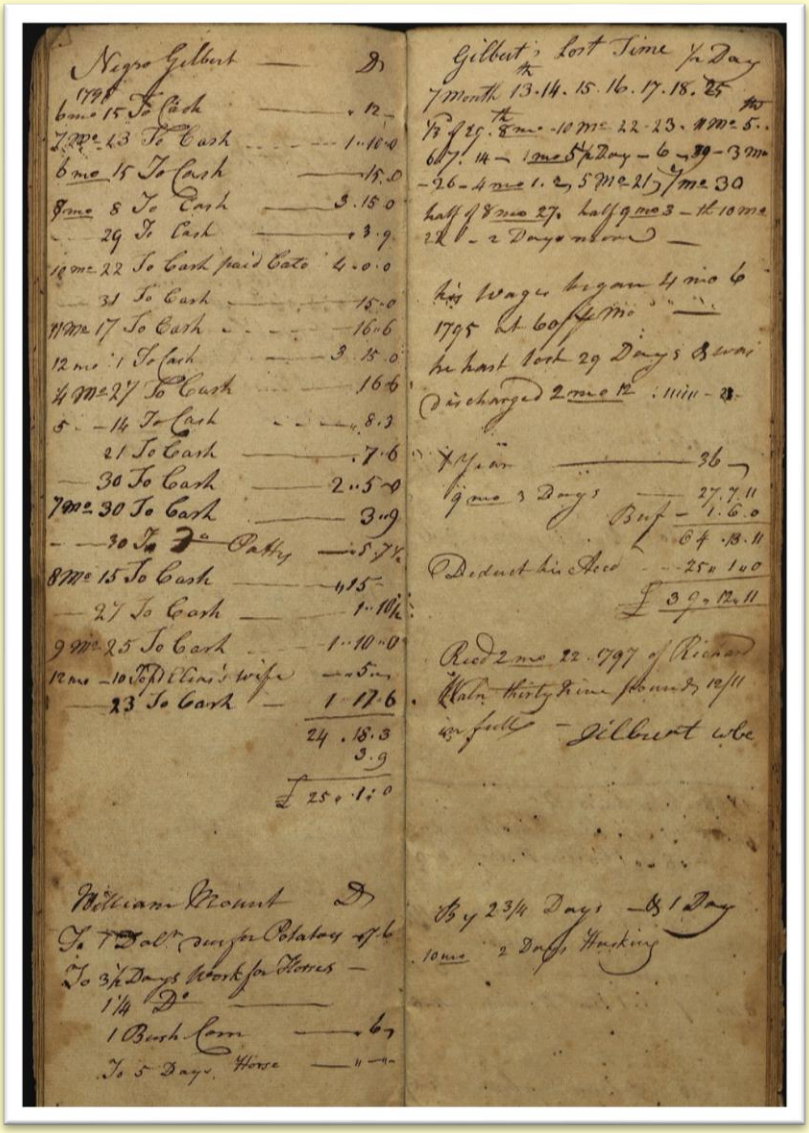


Figure 1: Inventory Page listing "Negro Gilbert" and his wages, debts and final payment while working for Abolitionist Quaker Richard Waln in Walnford, Upper Freehold, New Jersey from 1795-1797. **Permission Granted** by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), "Two pages from Rough Ledger 1790-1799, describing wages of "Negro Gilbert," 1795 -1797 [Waln Family Papers (#1651), Box 13, Folder 4, DAMS # 19451]

Listed as "Negro Gilbert" in Waln's records, this man appears to have signed his name as "Gilbert Wbe," (who I believe was also known as Gilbert Wooby). Above is the record for his final payment for work at Walnford records the goods the free Black man purchased or borrowed against from merchant Waln and his wages. Often Waln would allow Black and white employees to purchase goods or borrow cash on a running account, in addition to documenting the worker's tasks and payments. The debt would be paid against wages when the worker was ready to settle. **Figure 1** shows the payment by Waln to "Gilbert Wbe." There are some questions raised by Historical Society of Pennsylvania Staff as to whether Gilbert signed the document or another individual signed his name. As a researcher who found this entry while working on a New Jersey Historical Commission grant in 2009, I side with the view that Gilbert signed his name. The finding aid was updated to include a reference to "Gilbert Wbe." Had he not signed his name, normally, there would have been an X representing his mark.Waln operated a grist mill, sold pork, delivered goods to Philadelphia, and sold sundries and other goods as part of his Walnford operation. Waln deducted just over £25 from Wbe, and it appears that interest was included. Many modern people are unaware that often the British pound was still used in New Jersey after the American Revolution as in this case.

Look for more about African American history in our community in future editions of The TAVI Times!

Sign up TODAY ---

TAVI's Great Christmas Light Driving Tour

TAVI is ready to welcome your home to the 6th Annual Great Christmas Light Driving Tour. Born out of necessity during the Pandemic, thousands each year now "Do the Drive" through Allentown and Upper Freehold neighborhoods bedecked for the season. Let us know you'll be decorating this year by registering at www.allentownvinj.org . There's no charge to be included on the driving tour map, which goes "live" on December 1, 2025 and will be updated regularly with additional homes through December 25th. There's no cost to take the tour either – it's just old-fashioned family fun.

Once again this year the Tour begins at the McCormicks' drive-through display of over 100,000 lights and 200 decorated trees at 153 Route 526, Allentown, NJ. It's free – donations to the Allentown Food Pantry are welcome. The interior of the McCormick home – featuring over 100 more decorated trees -- will also be open on select dates in December – watch Facebook for details.

New County Map Celebrates Monmouth's Revolutionary History

Step back in time and explore the places in Monmouth County where history was made! We're excited to share "Echoes of 1776: A Journey Through Monmouth County Revolutionary Sites" — a map featuring 44 incredible historic locations tied to America's fight for independence. Discover hidden stories behind Monmouth County landmarks, interactive insights and driving directions on your phone and a deeper connection to the events that shaped our nation. Access the free digital map at https://monmouthnj250.org/interactive-historic-sites-map/ and start your revolutionary road trip today!

Prefer something to keep? Look for the Monmouth 250 truck at community events to grab your commemorative printed edition.

Monmouth County was the scene of vicious fighting and skirmishes during the Revolutionary War period – most notably at the pivotal Battle of Monmouth, where General George Washington led the Continental Army in an attack on the British on June 28, 1778. But Monmouth County's Revolutionary War story is much more than the Battle of Monmouth. Over 100 skirmishes took place here, and Monmouth's people were politically, socially and morally divided in the fight for independence.

Jersey Shore Comes to Upper Freehold

Join the Upper Freehold Regional Education Foundation at Bent Iron Brewery on Friday, November 14, 2025 from 6 – 9 pm for a fun night out with friends. Meet and Mingle with cast members from the Jersey Shore including Mike "The Situation" and Deena as well as surprise cast member appearances! Tickets are $40 and available in advance at https://www.ufref.org/index.php/event/bent-iron-brewery-event/ Bent Iron Brewery is located at 70 Extonville Road, Hamilton Township, NJ 08620.

UFREF invests in innovation in education. The Foundation provides the means to keep Upper Freehold's schools and teachers at the forefront of new, ground-breaking, and essential educational programs. Innovation in education often makes the difference between an average and a high-quality education. By investing in innovation, we ensure our schools remain among New Jersey's finest.

Imlaystown: A Community With a Storied Past

By Joshua Schulman

Today, Imlaystown is a small village hidden in the farmland of Upper Freehold Township where time seems to have stood still. Its historic buildings and narrow roads could easily be missed by those traversing the more major roadways of the township, but in its heyday, Imlaystown was a busy, thriving community in the heart of Monmouth County.

Located along Doctors Creek, Imlaystown's history dates back to May of 1690 when John Baker patented over 2,000 acres of land. He subsequently sold that land to George Willocks, who transferred it to Richard Salter, Sr. The last of these early transactions was in 1727 when Peter Imlay purchased the property for £650. The town was later named after the affluent Imlay family since they were significant landowners in the area, particularly John Imlay, a West Indian merchant.

The settlement developed around a gristmill built by Salter in 1695 named Salter's Mill, where local farmers brought wheat, corn, oats, and barley to be ground into feed for their animals. It was situated on the town's Main Street, which was an old Native American trail. Salter operated it with his son-in-law Mordecai Lincoln, the great-great-grandfather of future U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. The mill operated for over 200 years and, for a long time, was the principal business in town.

By the mid-1800s, the small community was home to a sawmill, a blacksmith shop, a tannery, a tavern, a store, and a handful of Colonial and Victorian houses.

Imlaystown served as the economic and social center of Upper Freehold and the surrounding area. It was also a stop for stagecoaches traveling between Trenton and the Jersey Shore. However, the rapid decline of Imlaystown's industrial enterprises started on September 19, 1897, at 2 a.m. when a fire began in

Continued on next page

Imlaystown *(continued)*

Salter's Mill still stands in Imlaystown - Home of Abraham Lincoln's great-great grandparents.

Waldon's Store, located next to Salter's Mill. Approximately 75 local residents formed a bucket brigade, but the damage had been done. The fire destroyed seven buildings and resulted in damages estimated at $40,000 at the time. Salter's Mill was rebuilt, but ceased operations a few decades later. Although many of the buildings and businesses were moved to different sites, Imlaystown was not able to reclaim its former status.

The 20th century brought few changes to Imlaystown. The post office stayed open until 2009, but most of the stores closed long before that. Landscape architect Robert Zion can be credited with the restoration of Salter's Mill. His firm, Zion and Breen Associates, Inc., saved the deteriorating building from demolition in 1972 and successfully had it registered to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. In 1985, Imlaystown's historic district was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Ye Olde Robbins Burial Place, better known now as Robbins Burial Ground or the Covill Hill Cemetery, is one of the area's most well-known historic landmarks that can be found off Route 524. Buried there is Deborah Lincoln, President Lincoln's great-grand aunt who died in 1720 at just three years old. There have been many efforts to conserve the cemetery, including the Eagle Scout project completed recently by the Kiely family as reported in the September edition of The TAVI Times.

Imlaystown never expanded beyond its 19th-century footprint, instead retaining its historical character over the years waiting for the time when financial constraints, regulatory hurdles, and other factors can be addressed, which could help restore the town to its former glory as a bustling economic hub and center of social activity.

TAVI Phantom Celebrates Classic's Centennial

TAVI's "Allentown Arts" performing arts series continued on October 25, 2025 with a screening of the original "Phantom of the Opera" – a 1925 silent movie, with live organ accompaniment. Allentown Methodist Church graciously hosted the performance, and was filled for the occasion with classic movie-goers. Pictured at left are organist Mike McCormick, Denise Erb, TAVI member and Allentown Methodist Church parishioner, and Kevin Jean-Louis, TAVI member and IT coordinator.

Start your holiday shopping in Allentown. For specials and details visit https://www.facebook.com/AllentownBusinessCommunityAssociation/

TAVI members participated in this year's Halloween Parade as "The Signing of the Declaration of Independence" - a kick-off to TAVI250, celebrating our nation's upcoming 250th birthday in 2026.

AHS Honor Society Gathers Halloween Treats

Special thanks to the Allentown High School Honor Society and its advisor, Melody Appel, for coordinating this year's Halloween Candy Drive. The students gathered over 15,000 treat donations which were given to 31 homeowners along Main Street in Allentown to help defray the cost of this year's Halloween extravaganza. Houses along the Main Street parade route welcomed up to 2,000 trick-or-treaters on Halloween night, so the students' efforts were very much appreciated!

Are you marking a birthday, anniversary, graduation, marriage or other milestone event in your family? Let TAVI celebrate with you – Send your announcements to mccormicknj@aol.com so we can include them in The TAVI Times.

The Allentown Village Initiative (TAVI)

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Donations are always gratefully accepted at
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