



The TAVI Times

Bringing Local Journalism Back to Our Community



A Community Service of The Allentown Village Initiative

February 15, 2026 - Volume VI, Issue II

TAVI tells Hometown Hero's Story - Nominates Civil War flag bearer for Congressional Medal of Honor

At sunset on June 15, 1864, 27-year-old James B. Woby, born and raised on Church Street in Allentown, charged up a hill outside of Petersburg, Virginia in what was described as “a blizzard of Rebel bullets.” As his regiment’s color bearer, Woby was armed only with the Regimental flag, emblazoned with the motto “Sic Semper Tyrannis” – “Thus always to tyrants.” Woby survived the charge, “miraculously” unscathed, and turned the tide of the battle.

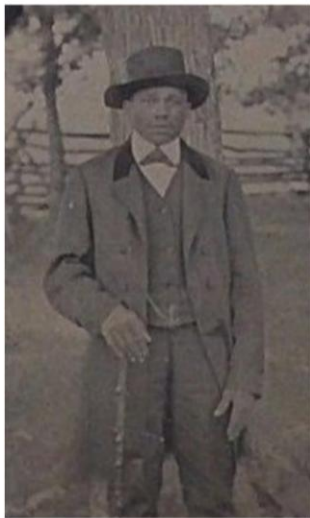
Join us for
**“The Story of
James Woby”**

**5 pm, Saturday,
February 21, 2026
In Allentown Methodist
Church, 23 Church St.,
Allentown, NJ**

*The program begins with a
pasta dinner –
suggested donation, \$5*

Please RSVP to

www.allentownvinj.org



James B. Woby

Although recognized by his commander and in the press at the time, Woby received no formal acknowledgement for his heroism. TAVI is seeking to correct this oversight and is working with New Jersey’s U.S. Senators Cory Booker and Andy Kim to formally nominate Woby for a

Congressional Medal of Honor – the nation’s highest award for valor in combat. A total of 1,196 Medals of Honor have been awarded to Civil War-era soldiers – including four color bearers with stories similar to Woby’s – but only 16 of the 180,000 African Americans (and no color bearers) who served in the conflict have been so honored.

To hear the rest of Woby’s amazing story, and learn more about TAVI’s efforts to honor him, come to “The Story of James Woby” on February 21st (details in sidebar). The program is part of TAVI250, a

year-long series of events celebrating America’s 250th

birthday, made possible in part by a grant from

Monmouth Arts, a partner of the NJ State Council on the Arts and the Monmouth County Board of Commissioners, as well as generous support from First Commerce Bank and Fulton Bank in Allentown.



TAVI250

*A celebration of America’s
250th Birthday*

Do you know these men?

TAVI seeks information on local servicemen killed in action

On Memorial Day each year the Allentown Lions conduct a service to honor those who served and read a list of 20 names – men from our community who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our nation and its freedom. It is the very purpose of Memorial Day – to solemnly express our gratitude for the lives given so that we might live.

This year, TAVI is working to honor and remember their sacrifice in a special edition of The TAVI Times dedicated to telling their stories. In addition, TAVI's participation in the annual Memorial Day Parade will include the servicemen's names, branch and dates of service, and, where possible, pictures of the brave men we lost.

Do you know any of the men on the list at the left side of this page? Are they members of your family? Did you go to school with them, work with them, or live next door? Are you aware of any other Allentown or Upper Freehold service member whose name

should be included on the list? If so, please help us to honor and preserve their memory. TAVI is grateful for any information you might have which we can share with our community this Memorial Day. Contact Mike McCormick at (609) 208-9991 or email

mccormicknj@aol.com

"We do not know one promise these men made, one pledge they gave, one word they spoke; but we do know they summed up and perfected, by one supreme act, the highest virtues of men and citizens. For love of country they accepted death, and thus resolved all doubts, and made immortal their patriotism and their virtue."

– James A. Garfield, May 30, 1868, Arlington National Cemetery

Andrew A. Cappola

Dominick Barissi

**John Frederick
Bradman**

Robert Bertis

Clyde T. Coate, Jr.

**Christopher
Chriswell**

Edgar Demaris

Robert Dunn

Joseph Lonnie Itts

Milton Klink

Gerry Hunter Laird

Anthony J. Merasik

Norman E. Parker

Paul D. Potter

John S. Sligler

Boyd Leroy Shook

Robert Barry Smith

James Sayden

Roland Tatum

Robert Tindall



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Paul Potter, killed in action August 23, 1968 in Vietnam

The US Constitution



TAVI250
*A celebration of America's
250th Birthday*

Editor's Note: *Following is the second installment in TAVI's 12-part series ("civics refresher") outlining our form of government and discussing duties that are critical to supporting it.* The US Constitution – a straight shot, right? Hardly. As with the Declaration of Independence, drafting of the Constitution was a complicated process, one that took a while to complete, largely because there was not uniformity in terms of what the endgame was supposed to be. A strong federal government or a weak one? If a weak one, what authority could effectively safeguard our national interests, including by collecting taxes, regulating commerce, mediating differences among states, and supporting an army.



James Madison, a 36-year-old delegate to the Constitutional Convention from Virginia, thought a federal government powerful enough to address these and other issues was required. (The Articles of Confederation, a previous attempt to reconcile the role of a federal government with that of individual states had proven largely ineffective.)

The Virginia Plan - Madison and his fellow Virginia delegates, including Edmund Randolph, proposed a plan where “a strong consolidated union in which the idea of states should be nearly annihilated” and where a federal government consisting of 3 branches – executive, legislative, and judicial – would have veto power over laws enacted by the states.

The New Jersey Plan - The Virginia Plan was a bridge too far according to New Jersey delegate William Patterson, supported

by delegates from other smaller states who were concerned about the potential impact on the sovereignty of individual states. Patterson's plan called for revising the Articles of Confederation so that Congress could more readily raise revenue and regulate commerce, with the additional provision that Acts of Congress and ratified treaties would serve as “the supreme law of the States.”

The Hamilton Plan - Alexander Hamilton, apparently enamored of the form the British government took (“the best in the world”), called for something very similar. Despite all the country had been through overthrowing British rule, a number of delegates supported Hamilton's plan, considering a return to monarchy to be inevitable.

The Great Compromise and Ultimate Approval - After much debate, the convention initially decided that the number of members of the House of Representatives from each state should be based on a state's population, thus, favoring more populous states. However, the debate was further complicated by the issue of slavery and how to count enslaved individuals for purposes of representation. The final compromise resulted in the numbers of representatives determined by the number of white inhabitants plus three-fifths of the number of enslaved individuals. This compromise then permitted a further compromise specifying that the Senate would have equal representation from each state. The Great Compromise allowed for drafting of the complete text of the Constitution and for further



David Brearley, first Chief Justice of the NJ Supreme Court, delegate to the Constitutional Convention, and resident of Allentown, was a signer of the US Constitution. Mark your calendar now to celebrate "David Brearley Day" with TAVI on June 11, 2026.

(continued on next page)

Constitution -

(continued)

debate between the so-called Federalists (supporters of a stronger Federal government) and the Anti-Federalists (supporters of a weaker Federal government). The Constitution was approved by the individual states over a period of time and by the last of the 9 required states in 1788. It would take a couple of more years for all 13 states to approve it. One of the principal concerns of the Anti-Federalists was the lack of a Bill of Rights. That would come next.

Source:

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/more-perfect-union>

Visit

www.allentownvinj.org

for a year-long
calendar of events
celebrating America's
250th birthday

EARLY ALLENTOWN: READY TO AID THE REVOLUTION



**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24
AT 6:30 PM**

**PRESENTED BY:
JOAN
RUDDIMAN
ED.D.**

Uncover Allentown's revolutionary
past and explore its pivotal role
in shaping history.

Registration required.

**MONMOUTH
COUNTY LIBRARY**

MONMOUTH COUNTY LIBRARY - Allentown Branch
16 S. Main Street, Allentown, NJ 08501 • 609-259-7565
MonmouthCountyLib.org • @MonCoLibrary



Applications Open for TAVI Newell Award

TAVI will once again sponsor *The Newell Award*, an annual prize of \$500 awarded to a high-school senior who exemplifies outstanding service to the local community. Allentown resident William Augustus Newell was a physician, 3-term member of the United States House of Representatives, and 18th governor of New Jersey. He is probably best known for the Newell Act, which created the United States Life-Saving Service, (which eventually became the US Coast Guard) and as Abraham Lincoln's personal physician. The Award honors Governor Newell's service to our state and to Allentown (he resided at 81 S. Main St.).

To qualify for *The Newell Award* an applicant must write a 100-word personal statement, participate in **15 hours of community service** and **20 hours of a TAVI-related project or a local history related project and/or event for a total of 35 hours of service**. The award winner will be chosen based on their **significant and tangible contributions** to the community which like TAVI focuses on historic preservation and education; support of the local business community; natural resources and beautification; and/or advancement of the arts and culture. For details and to apply, visit www.allentownvinj.org



William Augustus Newell

Court Orders Borough to Hold Hearing in 1st Amendment TAVI Case

A Superior Court Judge has told the Allentown Borough Council to hold a public hearing to reconsider its rejection of a TAVI application to offer free student-led tours of the Old Burying Ground on Lakeview Drive.

Judge Mara Zazzali-Hogan reversed the Allentown Borough Council's rejection of TAVI's permit application because she said TAVI did not receive proper notice of the council's August 11, 2025 meeting. TAVI had asked the Council to reconsider its rejection, and in response was told the Borough had already done so on August 11th.

The cemetery tours had been organized by TAVI during fall festivals and spring strolls for several years before the Borough began denying TAVI's permit requests in 2024 because "negotiations with the Swal family continue, and potential reconfigurations of structures and property interests are being negotiated" by the Borough, according to

Borough attorney Gregory Cannon. The Swal family has alleged it holds an access easement on an area outside the fenced cemetery from the rear of its Main Street properties to Lakeview Drive.

TAVI noted that its tours were only conducted within the currently fenced cemetery area and argued its Constitutional rights to assemble and free speech were being violated by the Borough's repeated refusal to allow the historical tours to take place on public property. The Court noted that the Borough had failed to address the Constitutional issues in the case.

The Borough has not yet set the date for the Court-ordered public hearing. TAVI has filed another permit application to offer the free tours during Allentown's Spring Stroll on April 25, 2026.

With graves dating back to 1730, the Old Burying Ground holds the remains of many town founders as well as Revolutionary War veterans. There are also at least 12 graves under the present-day pavement of Lakeview Drive. Allentown High School students serve as tour guides.



MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

AFRICAN AMERICAN PEOPLE in QUAKER RICHARD WALN'S World



**SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 28
1-3 P.M.**

The Waln House at
Historic Walnford,
Upper Freehold

To celebrate Black History Month and Monmouth 250, learn about Revolutionary Era Quaker Richard Waln, his abolitionist efforts, and the African Americans he employed and helped in Western Monmouth County during this lecture presented by local historian Sue Kozel in cooperation with The Allentown Village Initiative (TAVI).

The lecture will begin promptly at 1 p.m. in the historic Waln house with light refreshments to follow.

Capacity is limited, so reservations are required for this free program. To reserve your spot, call Historic Walnford at 609-259-6275!



WWW.MONMOUTHCOUNTYPARKS.COM

APC Food Pantry Seeks Support

Fill the Box February!

Let's **fill the donation box** outside the Allentown Presbyterian Church Food Pantry with non-perishable food items during February!

On the left side of the church - down the stairs
Drop your donations anytime to the donation box!



There's a new way to support the Allentown Presbyterian Church's food pantry. Thanks to Graham Guttadora's Eagle Scout Project, a drop-off box was built and donated by Allentown Boy Scout Troop 180A and the food pantry can now accept 24-7 contributions of needed non-perishable food items. Current needs include: rice, tomato sauce, ready-to-eat meals (beefaroni, etc.), pancake mix and syrup, boxed spaghetti, tea, coffee and other beverages.

The collection box, located at the base of the stairs on the left-hand side of the Church, received 834 pounds of donated food between November 2025 and January 2026. Allentown Presbyterian Church is located at 20 High Street, Allentown.

First Baptist Church of Allentown

PLEASE
JOIN US FOR

SOUPER Saturday

HOMEMADE SOUPS - TRICKY TRAY - VENDORS

FEBRUARY 28TH, 2026

STARTS AT 10:00 AM
AUCTION DRAWING WILL BEGIN AT 1:30PM

72 WAKER AVE, ALLENTOWN, NJ 08501

609-259-9177



Puzzle Drop-In

Join others in your community to collaborate and solve a puzzle.
Come and see if you can find the next missing piece.

Children under 12 may participate with adult supervision.

Every Tuesday
from 6:00 pm to close



Monmouth County Library - Allentown Branch
165 Main St. Allentown, NJ 08501 - 609-259-7565
MonmouthCountyLib.org - @MonCoLibrary

Random Acts of Kindness Improve Your Mood & Mental Well-being

By Justin Kahn, LPC, NCC, SAC, ACS

People may think boosting their mood means big changes or long routines. That's not true. Small actions can shift your mental health in minutes. Random acts of kindness offer quick, [simple kindness ideas](#) that bring real benefits of kindness and improve mood instantly. Keep reading to find easy acts of kindness you can do today to support positive mental health and community kindness.

When we perform acts of kindness, our brains release chemicals like dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin. These neurotransmitters create what scientists often call a "helper's high," a pleasant sensation that promotes positive feelings and reduces stress. This biological reaction explains why kindness and mental well-being are so deeply connected. Research shows that practicing random acts of kindness can lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety and depression, strengthen immune-system function and decrease stress hormones like cortisol.

One fascinating aspect of kindness is its ripple effect. When someone receives a kind gesture, they become more likely to extend kindness to others, creating a positive cycle in communities. This multiplier effect means your single act can trigger numerous positive interactions beyond what you witness directly.

Quick Acts of Kindness for Mental Health Improvement

- Hold the door open for someone – This small kindness gesture takes seconds but acknowledges another person's presence and worth.
- Leave a positive note on a windshield – Writing "You're doing great!" or "Hope you have a wonderful day" can transform someone's mood.
- Pay for the person behind you in a drive-through – This surprise act creates joy for both the recipient and the staff who get to deliver the good news.
- Give a genuine compliment to a service worker – Retail and service employees often deal with complaints; a kind word stands out dramatically.



Justin Kahn

For Friends and Family

- Send an encouraging text message – A simple "I'm thinking of you" or "You handled that situation really well" can provide emotional support.
- Share a helpful article or resource – If you know someone struggling with a specific issue, sending relevant information shows you care.
- Offer to pick up groceries when you're already shopping – This easy act of kindness saves someone time and energy with minimal extra effort.
- Listen actively without interrupting – Sometimes the kindest gift is your full attention, especially in our distraction-filled world.

For Your Own Mental Health

- Practice self-compassion through positive self-talk – Speaking kindly to yourself is an act of kindness that improves your own mental well-being.
- Take a short nature break – Giving yourself permission for a 10-minute outdoor reset is a form of self-kindness that can improve mood immediately.

Consistently practicing random acts of kindness creates lasting positive changes in your outlook and

Continued on next page

Random Acts of Kindness *(continued)*

mental-health. Regular kindness practitioners report higher levels of life satisfaction, greater sense of purpose and meaning, reduced symptoms of depression and improved relationships and social connections.

When we focus on helping others, we often gain perspective on our own challenges. This shift in attention can build emotional resilience, helping us better manage stress and difficulty. Small kindness gestures train our brains to look for positive opportunities rather than dwelling on problems.

Start each day by setting an intention to perform at least one random act of kindness. This simple commitment primes your brain to notice opportunities for positive action throughout your day. Random acts of kindness provide an accessible path to mental health improvement that requires no special skills, minimal time, and little to no financial investment. By incorporating these simple kindness ideas into your daily routine, you create positive changes not only in your own life but in your broader community as well.

Research shows that people who regularly perform small acts of kindness report greater happiness and less stress than those who don't. The key is consistency rather than grand gestures. Kindness creates connection between people, strengthening community bonds. Consider starting a kindness chain in your neighborhood or workplace. This might look like a "pay it forward" board where people can post needs and offers to help.

You can also join existing community kindness initiatives through local volunteer groups. Many organizations coordinate simple activities like writing cards for nursing home residents or collecting socks for homeless shelters. These group efforts amplify individual actions into meaningful community impact.

Justin Kahn is a Licensed Professional Counselor, the owner of Main Street Counseling and an Upper Freehold resident. For more information visit <https://mainstreetcounselingnj.com/>.



The Great American Cleanup

Be Part of the Greatest Cleanup Event in History



We need YOU to take the pledge for the Greatest American Cleanup and make your community cleaner, greener, and more beautiful for America's 250th celebration. This national effort is being spearheaded by Keep America Beautiful, a national nonprofit on a mission to spark action and pride in the places we call home. Founded in 1953, Keep America Beautiful counts millions of volunteers, nearly 700 local affiliates, and a coast-to-coast network of civic leaders, companies and local governments in its network. To date, Keep America Beautiful's annual clean-ups have counted over 20,000 participating communities.

The goal is to remove 25 billion pieces of litter from parks, waterways, and public spaces by July 4, 2026. It's ambitious but achievable. As snows (hopefully) melt and spring nears, look around your neighborhood for areas in need. TAVI can help with supplies, trash and debris pick-up as well as coordination with

County officials who can provide support. Let us know you're ready to pitch in. Contact TAVI by email at mccormicknj@aol.com. For more information on the Great American Clean-Up visit <https://kab.org/>.

The Interesting Winter Garden

How to give nature a helping hand —

The World Wildlife Fund's 2024 Living Planet Report found that there has been a 73% global decrease in wildlife populations since 1970.

How you can help:

- ✿ Plant native species for your region
- ✿ Remove invasive species
- ✿ Encourage biodiversity in your yard
- ✿ Leave the leaves
- ✿ Minimize "garden cleanup", especially before low temperatures in your area reach 50 degrees F in spring
- ✿ Avoid insecticides, embrace the bugs
- ✿ Spread awareness
- ✿ Leave seed heads intact through winter



Rosalind Doremus

Rosalind Doremus of My Backyard at Nectars will speak at the March 12, 2026 meeting of the Allentown Garden Club. Her topic is "Winter interest in the garden." All are welcome to attend the free program at the Allentown United Methodist Church, 23 Church Street. The program begins at 7 p.m. and is followed by refreshments and a brief business meeting.

Save the Date — **Spring!**

**Sunday,
March 22, 2026,
3 pm in**

Allentown Methodist Church

Mark your calendar – you're invited to celebrate spring! TAVI is proud to partner with Mill Pond Music Academy to present a program of music for voice, acoustic guitar, piano and even organ that celebrates the end of a long cold winter!

Be sure to join us for a relaxing afternoon of soothing sounds. Mill Pond faculty members

Liam Jaeger on guitar and Scott McAllister at the piano will be joined by well-known Allentown soprano Yvonne Rondinone, with TAVI member Mike McCormick chiming in at times on the organ. The concert is free, thanks to your generous support and a grant from Monmouth Arts, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the Monmouth County Board of Commissioners. Allentown Methodist Church is located at 23 Church Street, Allentown, NJ.



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.

Artist Yvonne Rondinone focuses on sustainability at her vintage gift shop

By Tasnim Oyshi



Opened in summer of 2022, Sea Ginger Mercantile and Refillery is located on 42 S Main St. The retro-inspired gift shop reflects owner Yvonne Rondinone's passion for nature, art, and sustainability. With a degree in human ecology, Rondinone was interested in how people interact with each other and how they are affected by their environment. "It kind of propelled me to look into more of the eco-conscious side of things," she said.

Rondinone keeps her store eco-friendly by sourcing from local businesses or non-local companies that use environmental practices. "It really reduces the carbon footprint if I can speak to a neighbor that can make facial scrubs for me with natural materials," she said. "I don't have to order it from Amazon or, you know, somewhere across the United States and then have all of the shipping and the pollution involved in the transport."

What makes Rondinone's gift shop unique from others is that it is also a "refillery," which is typically not easy to find in the area. Customers can fill their own bottles or ones they got from the store with products like body lotion, body wash, and household cleaners and pay per ounce.

"It reduces the plastic in the environment when they're using the same bottle and bringing it back," she explained. "And then the bottles that we have in the store—there's like a 'close the loop' sort of situation, where we could send those back and they get reused again by the company."

In addition to self-care products, Rondinone's store also sells vintage items that serve a practical purpose. She compares her store to retail companies like Michael's that make replicas of retro products and decor, whereas Sea Ginger contains actual pieces from previous decades.

As an artist herself, Rondinone also appreciates the historical meaning of the items she sells. Her own art is also for sale at Sea Ginger, with her inspirations stemming from the farmlands surrounding Allentown. "I was really drawn to an area where I could, as an artist and as someone who appreciates nature, be surrounded by the changing fields," she said.



Artwork by Yvonne Rondinone

While Rondinone's store is full of creativity and the beauty of nature, she faces challenges from large companies like Amazon that tend to have a larger quantity of items. However, she finds that offering unique pieces that cannot be found online to those who visit Sea Ginger helps her overcome that.

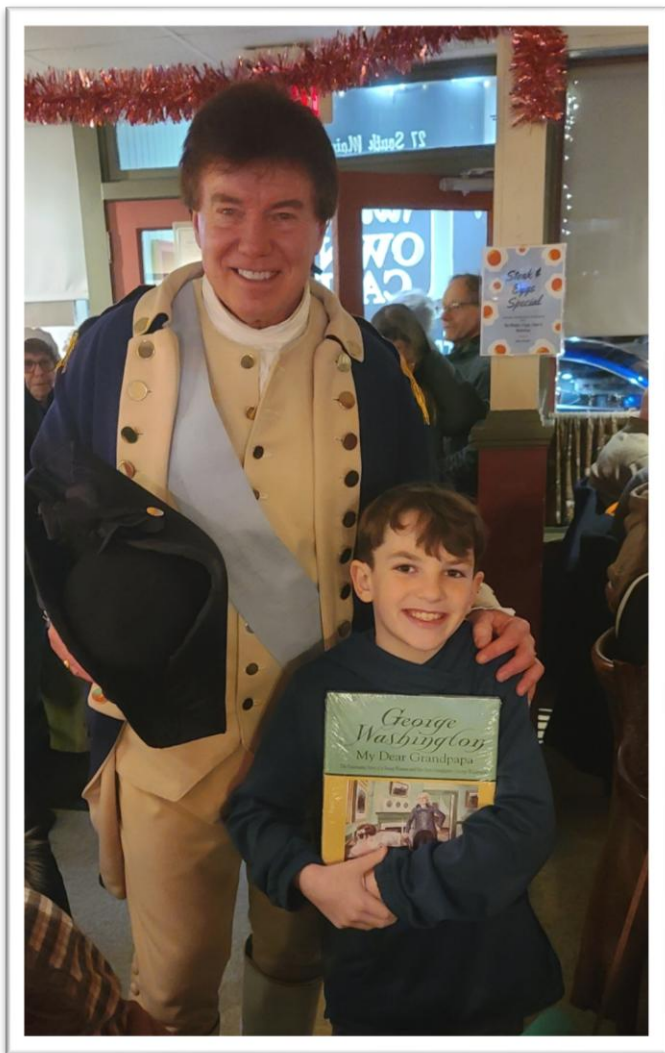
The sense of community she wants to bring to her customers has also been a great motivator. In the future, she wants Sea Ginger to include more opportunities for people to learn about respecting the environment through different arts-and-crafts programs.

"I'm recognizing that there's a need there, and I would love to maybe offer programs for different populations in the community," she said. "So I think I'm looking forward to really making it more community based." Sea Ginger is open Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Visit online at <https://yvonnerondinone.com/>



Yvonne Rondinone

George Washington Ate Here



Jackson Pepler asked George Washington the best question during TAVI's Dinner with the General event on January 19th

Over 120 people joined TAVI – and George Washington – for dinner at Woody's Town Café on Monday, January 19, 2026. Washington, portrayed by Sam Davis, spoke about his experiences during the Revolution and answered questions ranging from the color of his hair during the War, to the condition of his teeth and the name of his favorite dog. Washington also spoke about slavery, war tactics and the love of his life, his wife Martha.

Davis' encyclopedic knowledge of all things Washington was tested by questioners. The "Question of the Night" was posed by Jackson Pepler who asked, "If you died in 1799, how come you're here now?" General Washington replied with grace and aplomb about the circumstances of his passing and deftly sidestepped the inquiry!

Paired with Woody's special colonial menu, the event was a great kick-off to TAVI250, a year-long celebration of our nation's 250th birthday. Visit www.allentownvinj.org for the full calendar of events.



TAVI250

*A celebration of America's
250th Birthday*

The Allentown Village Initiative (TAVI)

President – Martha Ploshay

Vice President – Mike McCormick

Treasurer – Alan DeFalco

Secretary – Jacqueline Bossart

Trustees – Jeff Ploshay, Debbi McCormick, David Bossart, Kevin Jean-Louis, Denise Erb

Trustee Emeritus – Alice Wikoff

Donations are always gratefully accepted at

<https://www.allentownvinj.org/donate.html>

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