

# The TAVI Times

Bringing Local Journalism Back to Our Community



*A Community Service of The Allentown Village Initiative*

March 16, 2026 - Volume VI, Issue III



## Spring!

### TAVI Concert Celebrates – March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 3 pm

It's been a long winter – What better way to celebrate spring than with great music? TAVI has joined with Mill Pond Music Academy to do just that on Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> beginning at 3 pm in Allentown Methodist Church, 23 Church Street. Entitled simply “Spring!” this free concert joins eclectic musical styles in a common theme. From the Beatles to Elton John to Kermit the Frog, it's truly a celebration of the end of an especially cold, hard winter on what will be just the second full day of spring.



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. *There's also a special guest performance by the Voices 4 the Season choral ensemble.*

With over 20 years of guitar experience and more than 15 years of teaching, Liam Jaeger brings both passion and expertise to his performances. Scott McAllister has a deep love for music, especially the 20th-century American songbook and the timeless tunes he grew up with, such as the works of Scott Joplin, George Gershwin, and Elton John.

Yvonne Rondinone's beautiful voice has graced many public performances in Allentown ranging from TAVI's July 4th Proclamation of the Declaration of Independence to the 2025 Daffodil Days recital. Mike McCormick is the organist at St. James R.C. Church in Pennington. The popular community choir “Voices 4 the Seasons,” under the direction of Joanne Anderson, will return to offer special selections to celebrate the season and our nation's 250th birthday. The concert is made possible by a grant from Monmouth Arts, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the Monmouth County Board of Commissioners as well as the generous support of First Commerce and Fulton Banks.



*From top: Liam Jaeger, Scott McAllister & Yvonne Rondinone*

# “Quintessentially Allentown”

## Woody's Still the Place Where Everybody Knows Your Name

By Ryan Conway

After nearly 29 years, Woody's Towne Cafe still perfectly encapsulates Allentown. It's not very easy to sustain a restaurant. But for nearly 29 years, Woody's Towne Cafe has been able to do just that.

In 1997, Don Wood first opened up his coffee shop on South Main Street, serving breakfast until 3 p.m. In 2013, Wood sold the restaurant to Rick and Debbie Macaluso. They felt the restaurant was special the second they purchased it.

“I was a restaurant broker, just selling restaurants,” Rick Macaluso said. “Then Woody's came along as one of my listings, and we decided to purchase it.” Both Rick and his wife Debbie busied tables in college, and Rick had numerous restaurants not only in New Jersey, but Charlotte, NC. He was initially going to be done owning restaurants, but Woody's had changed his mind.

Being in a unique town like Allentown, the restaurant has allowed them to have a unique restaurant experience, forming many friendships and relationships with their customers. “The people we've met here are not only customers, but they become our friends,” Debbie Macaluso said. “...I don't imagine this is in every town where you can make these kinds of connections and these relationships, but certainly in Allentown.



**Debbie & Rick Macaluso**

As mentioned, it can be difficult to have a restaurant in such a small village like Allentown, with not a lot of foot traffic. However, they've been able to host many people from across the state and beyond, mainly as a midpoint destination, especially being on the way to Long Beach Island and right off of I-195.

“We have so many people who go to LBI, so a lot of people meet in the middle,” Rick said. “We had somebody who lived in Millburn and somebody in Delaware, and this was kind of the middle point right off of 195. We get Tom's River and Pennsylvania.” Allentown's proximity to the shore has also helped them avoid a restaurant's worst nightmare: The summer. For many restaurants, they see a decline in customers during the summer, as many people opt to go away to places such as the Jersey Shore. However, for Woody's, it has led to an increase in people walking in the door.

“June, July and August are [our] three busiest months,” Rick said. “And if you talk to most restaurants in New Jersey, besides the beach, June, July and August are their three worst months.”

Owning a restaurant can really test one's patience and wellbeing, and both Rick and Debbie understand that. Both are well seasoned in this industry, having owned this restaurant for nearly 13 years, and understand the challenges owning a restaurant brings. While many people love the thought of having their own restaurant, many fail to see the true grind and endurance it takes.

*Continued on next page*

## Quintessential Allentown – (continued)

“We’re not just flipping burgers and making omelets, it’s an actual business” Rick says. “How many times in our lives have people said ‘Oh I want to own a restaurant,’ Debbie said. “It all seems so wonderful, and it is, there are parts of it that are so great. But I always say ‘you can’t just make a good lasagna and open an Italian restaurant’. There’s a lot of work that goes into it.”

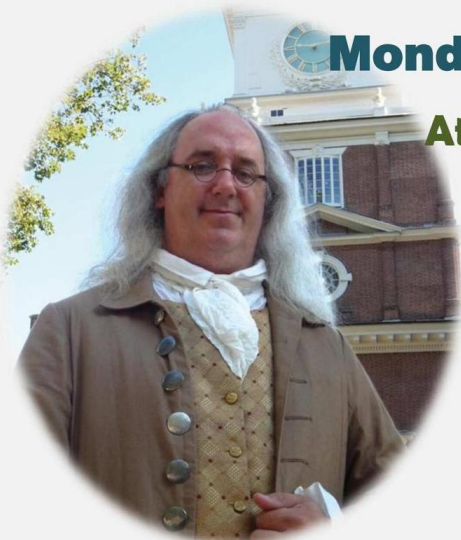
There are various challenges when running a restaurant, such as the long hours, the accounting and business facet of it and doing food inventories. It can also be fairly risky, as business could flip on a dime. The worst-case scenario for a restaurant hit six years ago: Global pandemic.

When the world shut down due to COVID-19, many small businesses could not survive it. Woody’s was certainly one of many restaurants that it affected, and could have easily folded and shut down during the pandemic. However, the Allentown community helped Woody’s stand up, and keep the business going.

*The Allentown Village Initiative (TAVI) Proudly Presents*

# Bantering with Benjamin

*A colonial dining experience with Benjamin Franklin*



**Monday, April 27, 2026**

**At Woody’s Towne Café  
27 South Main St.,  
Allentown, NJ**

*Visit with one of our nation’s  
greatest patriots and statesmen  
(as portrayed by Robert De’Nittis)  
while enjoying a complete  
colonial-style dinner, including:*

Pot roast w/ gravy  
Mashed potatoes & salad  
Apple Cobbler

**\$30/person (byob)**  
(includes \$5 donation to TAVI)



**TAVI250**

*A celebration of America’s  
250<sup>th</sup> Birthday*

**Seatings at 5 & 6:30 pm**

**Reservations required,**

Visit [www.allentownvinj.org](http://www.allentownvinj.org)

**Take out available**



“There’s three other restaurants in town, and they were like ‘we’re gonna go to La Piazza one night, we’re gonna go to Stonebridge one night, and we’re gonna come to Woody’s one night’ and everyone just kind of rotated,” Rick said.

“They told us ‘we’re not gonna let you close,’” Debbie said. “And we’ll never forget. It was so generous, it really was a beautiful thing.” The COVID-19 pandemic changed the business, led to outdoor dining and – just like everybody else – forced the Macaluso to spend more time together. They welcomed it, and have embraced it even in COVID’s aftermath. “Every Sunday, we always get together, because this business will take a lot out of you,” Debbie said.

Woody’s is popular because it embraces Allentown and its culture – a unique community with a comforting feel.

# The Bill of Rights



**TAVI250**

*A celebration of America's  
250<sup>th</sup> Birthday*

**Editor's Note:** Following is the third installment in TAVI's 12-part series ("civics refresher") outlining our form of government and discussing duties that are critical to supporting it. One of the principal reasons it took so long to approve the Constitution was that the convention delegates and others were concerned that the power historically entrusted to the states would be significantly diminished and that the rights of individual citizens were not specified. Following approval of the Constitution, those "flaws" (according to the anti-Federalists) needed to be addressed. Others argued that a so-called Bill of Rights wasn't necessary because all rights not reserved for the federal government were by default reserved for the states or individual citizens. But, eventually, even many Federalists were convinced that codifying such rights was not only appropriate, but would lend support to the Constitution itself.



Initially, 17 amendments were proposed by James Madison. Of those, 12 made it through the Senate. On October 2, 1789, President George Washington sent a copy of these amendments to each state for review. Roughly 2 years later, three-fourths of the states had ratified 10 of the 12 amendments, the amendments we know as the Bill of Rights.

## ***The 10 amendments comprising the Bill of Rights are:***

**I)** Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

**II)** A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

**III)** No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

**IV)** The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and

seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

**V)** No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life and limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

**VI)** In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted

*Continued on next page*

# Bill of Rights

(continued)

with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

**VII)** In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

**VIII)** Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

**IX)** The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

**X)** The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

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

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>



## LOCAL ORIGINS OF MOLLY PITCHER: REVISITED



PRESENTED BY:  
**JOHN  
FABIANO,**

*Public Historian*

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18  
AT 2:30 PM**

Explore the true identity of Molly Pitcher and the heroic women of Allentown, NJ who are fabled to have inspired her legend.



Registration requested.

**Monmouth County Library - Allentown Branch**  
16 S. Main Street, Allentown, NJ 08501 • 609-259-7565  
MonmouthCountyLib.org • @MonCoLibrary

## Plant a Tree and Help Save the Planet –

# TAVI's "25 for 250" Tree Giveaway



As part of our nation's Semiquincentennial celebration, TAVI is giving away 25 trees to Upper Freehold and Allentown residents to mark the occasion. The trees, which are between 3 and 4 feet tall (the ideal size for quickly establishing their root systems), come with complete planting instructions, and are native species to our area. The trees are an assortment of red maple, beech, tulip poplar, and sweet gum. Mature height ranges from 40 to over 100 feet, depending on species and planting location. While trees have been described as the "lungs of the planet," their roles in air quality, carbon sequestration, water transpiration, and erosion control are all critical.

If you would like the opportunity to take home and plant one of these free trees, go to TAVI's website ([www.allentownvinj.org](http://www.allentownvinj.org)) and register today. Winners will be selected by random drawing at the end of September.

# COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA)

Fresh, certified organic food – grown locally, shared weekly



Ramblin' Sol Farm is a small, family-owned, certified organic farm growing real food the old-fashioned way – with healthy soil, hard work, and care for our community.

Our CSA brings the harvest straight from the field to our neighbors in Monmouth and Ocean County.

## OUR CSA PROGRAM

Late Spring through Fall

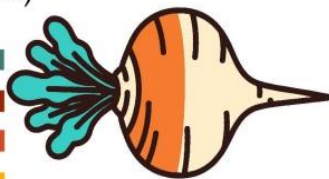
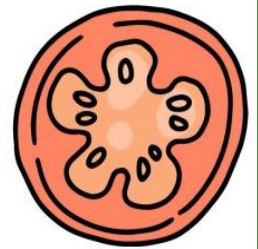
**Build your own box online each week**

What's ripe. What's ready. What's good.

### What you'll enjoy :

- Garden-fresh greens
- Heirloom tomatoes, Potatoes, Garlic
- Sweet Potatoes, Carrots, beets & radishes
- Cucumbers, squash & summer staples
- Fresh herbs + a few surprises

(The seasons decide the menu – and that's part of the fun.)



### Pick Up Your Custom Box:

- at the **Farm** OR
- at our **4 Ocean County** Pick Up Locations! OR
- **GET IT DELIVERED** with



**Register  
Now**

**Limited Shares  
Available**



**ramblinsolfarm.com**

**We Accept:**



# PONKS fills need for Parents of Neurodivergent Kids

By Tasnim Oyshi

Having a child on the spectrum, Allentown resident Shire Ketterer realizes that the experiences other parents have raising their kids are not relatable to her own story. Unable to relate to many of her friends and even parents at ADHD and Autism Speaks meetings, she found there was a gap in support for parents like her in the community. Ketterer now leads her own peer-to-peer support group titled PONKS -- Parents of Neurodivergent Kids.



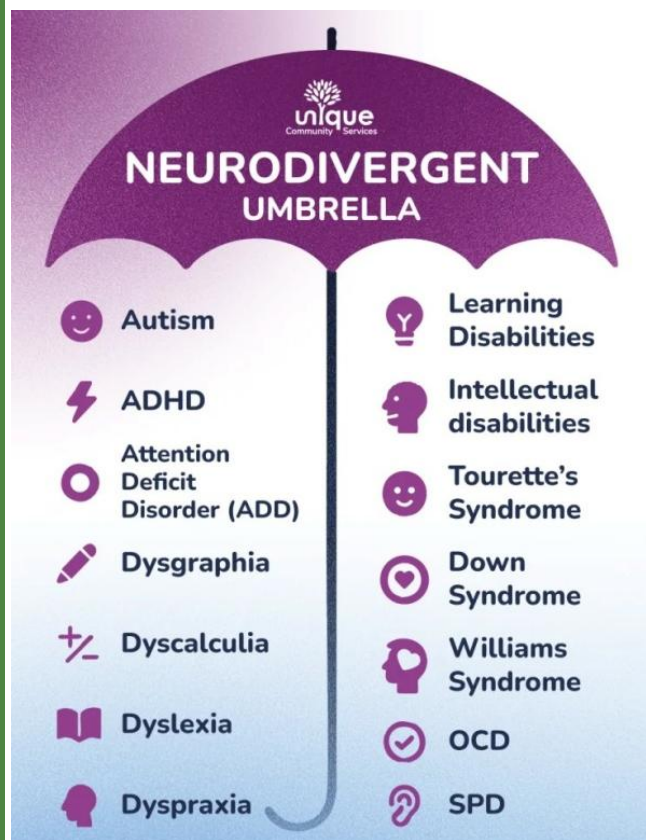
Shire Ketterer

During 90-minute meetings, Ketterer aims to educate fellow PONKs, with occasional help from a guest speaker. "I try to have a topic and a guest that's some kind of professional in a specific area," She says. "I've had a mental health therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapists. Last month, I had an ADHD coach."

At the February 2026 meeting, Maya Yatom from NeuroZesty Coaching answered questions about ADHD, bedtime, communication and more. One of the helpful tips Yatom gave was to play certain games to assist children with sleeping. "Something that a lot of people could relate to at the meeting was sleep struggles with the overactive brain," she says.

Ketterer emphasizes that she is not a therapist and, while she facilitates the discussions, each meeting is more of a conversation than a lecture. Talking to other parents has taught Ketterer that all parents need support and everyone can benefit from this group, from those who are struggling to those who want to learn more.

"Honestly, I think the biggest thing I've learned is people don't know what the word neurodiversity means," she says. "It is such a new word and I really like and appreciate the word. Why I created this group is because there is already a group for ADHD. There's already a group for Autism. There's already a group for dyslexia. But what about the kids who are on the cusp?"



Ketterer feels that having access to new information is important for everyone and her support group can provide that for parents. "The more you know, the better off you're going to be because then you can make a better informed decision," she says. "It's just going to make you a better, more well rounded human."

She hopes that attending her meetings can aid parents in two ways. "I hope they walk away with one new piece of information from the meeting that they can either apply to their life, or they know somebody that they could share that with, whether it's a tip or a trick or a new science fact about the way the brain works," Ketterer says. "And the other is, I hope that they can come to the meeting and feel that they were heard."

The next PONKS meeting will take place on March 26 at 6:30 P.M. To attend, please RSVP at <https://www.ponksfnj.com/>. (See the next page for recent and upcoming meeting topics and dates.)

# UPCOMING

PONKS // PARENTS OF NEURODIVERGENT KIDDOS SUPPORT  
MEETINGS HELD AT ALLENTOWN LIBRARY  
FOR MORE INFO AND RSVP VISIT  
WWW.PONKSOFNJ.COM

## Meetings



Thursday Feb 26 6:30pm-8pm

### *ADHD Coach Guest*

Join us with the special guest, Maya, from Neurozesty Coaching. Her ADHD coaching can help guide parents and their children to accomplish their goals!

Feb

26

2026



Thursday March 26 6:30pm -8pm

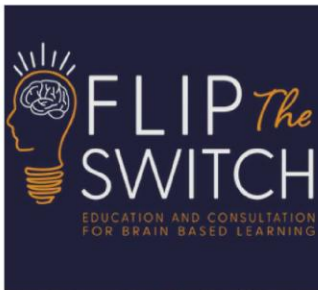
### *The Parenting Pause*

Reflecting on Expectations, Reality, and Self-care with Melanie Lowe Hoffman, LCSW, MSW, MPA.

March

26

2026



Thursday April 30 6:30pm-8pm

### *Flip the Switch OT*

Mary Pat, from Flip the Switch OT, is back to share how occupational therapy can be so beneficial for our neurodivergent kiddos!

April

30

2026



Thursday May 28 6:30pm-8pm

### *All things Dyslexia*

Join us with Liz Barnes, from Decoding Dyslexia. Our discussion will range from what dyslexia is to what kind of support you can look for at home and in schools.

May

28

2026

PONKS is a local parent support group that meets in person in Allentown, NJ, with a virtual option available. This group offers a welcoming space for caregivers of neurodivergent children—from toddlers through teens—to share challenges, wins, and practical support with other parents who get it. Neurodivergent means a child's brain works differently and can include things like autism (ASD), ADHD, anxiety, dyslexia, and other learning or processing differences.

# FFA is Farming Today

## Allentown students are the future of U.F. agriculture

Ride around Upper Freehold Township's 42 square miles and you'll find many family farms still tilling the soil. It's a rare sight indeed in the nation's most densely populated state, and one which Allentown High School's Future Farmers of America chapter works to preserve for generations to come.



### ANNUAL GIFT AUCTION & DINNER

- Come out and support the Allentown FFA Parents, Alumni, & Friends (PAF) and the New Jersey FFA Alumni & Supporters at the



### Annual Gift Auction & Spaghetti Dinner

At Hope Firehouse, Allentown NJ

**Saturday, March 21, 2026**

**Doors open at 5:30pm**

**Dinner served at 6:00pm**

Door Fee is \$15.00 Per Person (Kids 5-12- \$10.00 and 4-under-FREE!)

Dinner includes:

*Spaghetti and Meatballs, Rolls, Salad  
Iced Tea or Lemonade, Coffee, and Dessert*

Through agricultural education, students are provided with opportunities for leadership development, personal growth and career success. Agricultural education instruction is delivered through three major components: (1) classroom/laboratory instruction (contextual learning), (2) supervised agricultural experience program (work-based learning) and (3) student leadership organizations.

For more information on Allentown's FFA, visit <https://ffa.ufrsd.net/about-us>

***"Future for Agriculture is  
Future for All."***

ALLENTOWN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# EASTER EGG HUNT!

All Ages Welcome!  
Get Ready to Hunt!  
Find The Golden Egg!

Rain or Shine

**Saturday,  
MARCH 28th,  
2026**

**10:00 AM to 11:00 AM**  
23 CHURCH ST,  
ALLENTOWN, NJ

CRAFTS | STORYTIME | SNACKS

For more information, Call 609-259-7392 or [deniseerb50@gmail.com](mailto:deniseerb50@gmail.com)

## ALLENTOWN LIONS EASTER EGG HUNT

Sponsored By:  
Pleasant Run  
Nursery

Saturday, March 28th

At Heritage Park

By the Municipal Parking entrance next to Methodist Church / Mia Salon just off of Church Street.

Children will be grouped by age (0-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12) . The hunt will start at 9AM sharp!

Scan QR Code to find out more details of this event



# AFRICAN AMERICANS IN QUAKER RICHARD WALN'S WORLD



*Historian Sue Kozel, with her husband, Chris Berzinski*

On a warm February 28, 2026, thirty people from throughout New Jersey traveled to the Historic Walnford Monmouth County Park to learn about local African American History.

Led by Scholar and Historian Sue Kozel, the gathering learned about the African Americans who worked with Quaker Richard Waln at Historic Walnford. Additionally, Kozel, an Upper Freehold resident, shared stories about how Waln, a former slave owner, helped at least three African Americans secure their freedom in Writ of Habeas Corpus proceedings, also known as Freedom Suits before the New Jersey Supreme Court. The stories were those of Gilbert Wooby, the only African American who worked for Waln and signed his name in a ledger (Gilbert Wbe), Peter Waln, a formerly enslaved African American Man who received his freedom and adopted the Waln surname, and Silas, an African American child of a free Black woman who Waln help free from enslavement.

Kozel's research was supported by New Jersey Historical Commission grants and her own additional investigations. A co-editor of *Quakers and their Allies in the Abolitionist*

*Cause, 1754-1808*, Kozel shared about Waln's abolitionist advocacy and transformation into an abolitionist in Paris, France, and Kingston, England, and throughout the United States and our region.

Thank you to Monmouth County Parks, in particular Director Andrew J. Spears and Julie Fenlon, and The Allentown Village Initiative (TAVI) for their sponsorship. Additionally, Historian John Fabiano joined local residents from Upper Freehold and Allentown in attendance as well as Quakers from throughout Burlington County. Thanks also to Carleton Crispin, with the South Jersey Quakers, who filmed the video, which should be on South Jersey Quakers YouTube in the coming weeks.

## **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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