

Swimmers win first sectional title in team history

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House of the Week

Real Estate Resource



171st YEAR NO. 7 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025 \$1.00



David Nahan/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Janis Washington White and Rudy Von Coln, caretaker of Union Bethel Civil War Veterans Cemetery, look at the grave of her ancestor, James S. Washington. Both are part of a documentary to be screened Feb. 15 at the Cape May branch of the Cape May County Library in the old Franklin Street School.

UNION BETHEL CIVIL WAR VETERANS CEMETERY African-American burial ground topic of documentary; screening set Feb. 15

By CRAIG D. SCHENCK
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Tim Millaway recently completed a documentary film about Union Bethel Civil War Veterans Cemetery called “Whispers from the Forgotten in Lower Township, New Jersey.”

The film is scheduled for its Garden State debut at 1 p.m. Feb. 15 at the Cape May branch of the Cape May County Library in the former Franklin Street School.

The event will include a panel discussion with descendants of some of those buried in the cemetery in the spirit of Black History Month.

“This film explores the history of the cemetery, its significance to the local African-American community and the efforts to restore and preserve this important historical site,” said Millaway, a member of the Lower Township Historic Preservation Committee.

The 33-minute documentary focuses on an important African-American burial ground that is home to the graves of 16 war veterans and many others.

The film premiered Jan. 4 on Philadelphia’s Access Channel, PhillyCam, and also will be screened June 24 at a Cherry Hill library.

The cemetery is located off Tabernacle Road in the Erma section of the township.

According to the Black Cemetery Network, the graveyard was founded in 1831 to serve a community of freed African Americans living in a rural wooded area. Most members of the community were farmers, and some had been formerly enslaved.

The earliest burial in the cemetery was in 1834 and the latest in 1947. Over the years, various



David Nahan/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Among those buried in the cemetery is the Rev. Edward C. Turner, who played a role in the Underground Railroad with Harriet Tubman. Sixteen veterans of the Civil War were laid to rest in the graveyard off Tabernacle Road in Erma.

groups have participated in efforts to restore the cemetery and preserve it.

In 2018, the Lower Township Historic Preservation Commission took over the care of the cemetery and is the caretaker today.

The cemetery is notable for the 16 veterans of the Civil War, 15 of whom served in the U.S. Colored Troops and one in the U.S. Navy.

Millaway said the documentary “unveils the forgotten stories of African-American heroes who fought for freedom and equality,” noting it “delves into the history of the sacred ground, shedding light on the lives of those who were marginalized and silenced.”

Millaway said beneath the weathered headstones lies a rich

tapestry of history, often overlooked and forgotten.

“The documentary takes viewers on a journey through time, exploring the lives of African-American soldiers, families and community members who called this cemetery their final resting place,” he said. “Its stories uncover Civil War veterans who fought for the Union, its connection to the Underground Railroad and the challenges faced by African Americans in the 19th century.”

Millaway, 62, who owns a vacation home in Diamond Beach with his wife, Christine, is a film producer dedicated to bringing history to life through Milkyway Films

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Inflation among 2025 challenges for Lower Twp.

Mayor outlines new projects, noting costs continue to rise

By RACHEL SHUBIN
Special to the Star and Wave

VILLAS — After running unopposed and being re-elected for another four years, Lower Township Mayor Frank Sippel is ready to tackle infrastructure projects, recreation upgrades and state mandates.

Sippel delivered his annual State of the Township address Feb. 3, looking back on accomplishments in 2024 and previewing what the community can expect in 2025.

“Each and almost every year, we make infrastructure the number one priority for the township, including renovation of parks and playgrounds, and that’s not going to change for 2025,” Sippel told the Star and Wave.

The township has about 23,000 residents and is home to beaches, restaurants, small businesses and the Cape May County Airport. Township Council prioritizes roadway improvements and making the area a safe place to call home.

Planning for the year ahead is not without its challenges, including balancing the municipal budget and keeping the tax rate down.

“The toughest [issue]

is the cost of doing business,” Sippel said. “With everything we do, [from] receiving bids for paving and infrastructure [like] replacing stormwater drains, and the price of materials, the [costs] are going up a lot.”

Another challenge is the rising cost of state employee health insurance.

“It’s increased by 18 to 20 percent the last couple of years and we’re expecting another increase for 2025,” he said.



SIPPEL

Community projects

Township parks and playgrounds are being renovated this year. The \$4 million David Douglass Sr. Memorial Park project will expand the parking lot and add lights, a bathroom building, decorative footpath along Cape May Canal and an observation deck. The memorial will also be redesigned and relocated.

“We’re anticipating getting at least half the money from the county through the open space project,” Sippel said.

Renovation of the Diamond Beach Park playground was completed in 2024, which Sippel said is a positive accomplishment. Improvements included

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Rally shows solidarity with U.S. immigrants

Dozens protest ‘racist,’ ‘violent’ policies of Trump administration

By CRAIG D. SCHENCK
Cape May Star and Wave

RIO GRANDE — “ICE and the Border Patrol are just tools of violence, criminalizing people simply for existing,” Sandy Bove’ said Feb. 6 following a rally to support immigrant rights the previous day. “We believe in collective liberation, that none are free until all are free and we will continue to organize.”

Community members, advocates and allies gathered Feb. 5 at the intersection of Routes 9 and 47 in Middle Township to show solidarity with immigrants and demand protections for all.

Cape May County In-divisible held “We Stand with Immigrants” aimed at bringing awareness to human rights and called for an end to the raids, deportations and other “racist and violent policies of ICE (Im-

migration and Customs Enforcement) and the Trump administration.”

President Donald Trump signed multiple executive orders Jan. 20, shortly after being sworn in for his second term, targeting immigration. He ordered the military to the border, prohibited migrants from making advance appointments with border officials, suspended parole programs and forced migrants to wait in Mexico while their asylum cases are heard, according to national news outlets.

Border Patrol agents were ordered to deport those who illegally cross the border immediately and conduct “expedited removals” for people found throughout the United States. Deportation flights began Jan. 23 for the more than 6,000 detainees

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