



Spotswood
Public Schools

 Spotswood Office on Aging
& Senior Resource Center

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Health & Wellness Newsletter



New Year, New Beginnings

A new year is a powerful occasion. It brings new beginnings and new hope. It's a time when we reflect on the past and our hopes for the future. We get the once in a lifetime opportunity to become the author of a chapter, known as 2021, in our own best-selling book that is just waiting to be written. It's a chance to welcome a fresh start to reinvigorate our enthusiasm for chasing goals and capturing dreams. We imagine a future with so many possibilities.

For many of us 2020 couldn't end soon enough. Let's face it, it was a rough year for most of us. But we did it. We persevered through the darkest days, and made it through to the other side, to 2021!

With so much pressure on the moment, it can be hard to come up with just the right words to express our hopeful expectations for 2021. For some of us we keep searching to get back on track and back to "normal." But what if we completely got off that track, just walked away from it, and built a brand new one for ourselves from scratch. A track that has 365 new and exciting possibilities. Here's to new beginnings for all of us in 2021!

**"Trust the
magic of
beginnings."**

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*“Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy;
they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.”*

Marcel Proust

Welcome to the January 2021 edition of the Health & Wellness Newsletter! Our theme this month is January, New Year, New Beginnings! Turning the page on 2020 is something we all are anxious to do.

But before we do that, I wanted to say thanks to Spotswood’s own, Krista Masucci. Krista has been a staple at REC events for ten years now. She is the talented young lady who sings the National Anthem and other songs at various REC events. Perhaps you saw her perform holiday tunes at our recent Virtual Christmas Tree Lighting? If not, here’s a link <https://youtu.be/EfROr5FFdhg>

Krista is a 2014 graduate of Spotswood High School, currently studying for an advanced degree in hospitality management. She is the front office supervisor for a large hotel in Piscataway. An accomplished singer, Krista has training in both voice and musical theater. Krista enjoys performing, telling us, “It’s an exhilarating feeling to be able to sing publicly. I feel so empowered to express myself and my emotions through song and for an audience.” Krista added, “I would love the opportunity to sing pieces from my personal repertoire for Spotswood REC.” Krista, we all look forward to a time when we can gather, in person, and hear you sing again. Here’s Krista at our 2019 Tree Lighting Ceremony.



We are grateful to Krista for sharing her talents with us over this last decade. As we start 2021, on behalf of Spotswood REC, we wish all Spotswood, Helmetta, and Milltown families a safe, healthy and Happy New Year! Let’s be thankful for the charming gardeners in our lives who make us grow and help us find our new beginnings!

Rich O’Brien
Chairperson
Spotswood REC
Reaching Every Citizen

Jan-YOU-ary



Tradition has it that January is the month of new beginnings. However, after all that time buying presents, giving, hosting, and generally focusing on everyone else over the holiday season, we should consider this to be the month of self-care. In short, this month is all about you, as Jan-YOU-ary sets the tone for a year of making time for yourself. Whether it is pampering and indulging yourself, or the little rituals that help look after you mind, body, and soul, you deserve to take care of you!

Jan-YOU-ary is about helping you to create the space to start healthy self-care habits, whether it is meditation, wholesome nutrition, or monthly manicures that give you the feel good factor. Setting the scene for your self-care journey will be the most important relationship you have in 2021.



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Website:

www.spotswoodboro.com/recreation

Virtual REC At Home Center:

www.spotswoodboro.com/virtual-rec-home

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spotswoodrec@spotswoodboro.com



The Year of Healing

By Jennifer Asprocolas
Schoenly School Principal

On behalf of G. Austin Schoenly School, it gives me great pleasure to wish you and your families a very happy and healthy New Year. New Year's is historically a time of hope and new beginnings. Across the globe, it is a universal celebration of time and life, and that celebration brings with it a promise.

Here at Schoenly School, we know a lot about fresh starts and new beginnings. After all, our youngest Spotswoodians begin their educational journey in our four walls. Each September, we celebrate a different kind of new year as we welcome our newest students into the Schoenly family. With each child comes energy, excitement, and a hope for things to come. For us as educators, they renew us, they refresh us, and they inspire us.

This year, our New Year feels like less of a celebration and more of a lifeline. Rather than celebrating, we are reflecting on the struggle that we individually and collectively endured in 2020. Our hopes for the new year have changed from extravagant vacations and winning the lottery to wishes of good health and simply being able to be with our loved ones again. Most of all, we hope to put this pandemic behind us and begin the healing process.

Which brings me to my theme of 2021: let this be the year of healing. We are tired, our hearts are aching, and we are uneasy about what the future will hold. Whether two or 92, we all need to heal from these past several months and create our own "fresh start" in 2021.

Here are some ways to heal both as an individual and as a family in the new year (and beyond):

Forgive Yourself: Didn't get a chance to finish the laundry today? Too tired for your two mile walk? Stayed in your pajamas all day? In the words of Elsa, "Let it Go!" Stop being so hard on yourself! We have all been under immense stress these past several months. Just "showing up" some days is a victory enough. When you're feeling down, please remember these three important words: "I am enough." Ingrain this philosophy in yourself and your family. Self love is one of the most important and greatest gifts you can give your child (and yourself).



Have an Outlet: We all need an escape from the world in the form of something that fully captivates our attention and takes us away from the world around us. Our society often forgets the meaning of the word “hobby,” but the therapeutic benefits of having a hobby are tenfold. My escape? Reading. For me, there’s nothing quite like escaping in the pages of a great book.



Set Boundaries: All too often our obligations and responsibilities weigh us down. And sometimes, this weight can simply be too much to bear. Remember, it is O.K. to just say, “No.” Recognize your limits this new year. Only do what you are comfortable and happy with. For many families, invitations, play dates, and sports schedules can quickly consume all of your downtime. By setting your own boundaries, you will see your own mental health and well-being soar to new horizons.



Connect: Did you know that studies show that human connections can, in fact, do make you live longer? It also has proven to improve not only your mood but your immune function as well. In these cold, winter months it’s easy to feel isolated even within your own home. Spend time connecting with those around you. PRO TIP: explore a new hobby with your family for a great two-for-one deal.



Live for Today: Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, “What lies behind us, and what lies before us are but tiny matters compared to what lies within us.” There’s a reason why we call today the “present.” It is a gift of opportunity. So let your kids have the extra cookie for dessert. Watch another episode of your favorite show. Book another day on your vacation. Stay up late and make memories. We cannot change the past and we cannot predict the future. But we can live in the moment - this moment - and celebrate who we are and what we have both individually and collectively as a Spotswood community.

The Spirit of Spotswood



By Debbie Generelli
Schoenly School
Kindergarten Teacher

Most years as I turn the page on my calendar from one year to the next I am anticipating what the new year will bring. This year, however, I find myself reflecting on years past, as I will be retiring from teaching kindergarten in June. That will close the Spotswood chapter of my life.

For 33 years I lived in Spotswood, and only a few years ago sold my home here. My husband and I raised three children here, all graduates of SHS. I will tell anyone who asks that I can't think of a better place to raise a family. This small-town, tight knit community kept my kids safe and helped to shape them into the adults they are today.

First living in Spotswood, as a part time stay at home mom, I wanted to meet people and make connections for myself and my children. I remember meeting a group of young moms at the Spotswood Library. We began to meet regularly and volunteered to hold a weekly craft and story hour for kids which grew to the point of a waiting list. The reward of doing something meaningful and seeing the kids so happy led to further volunteer involvements. I joined the Spotswood Recreation Board, The PTA Executive Board, and found myself leading both girl and boy scout troops. The friendships I made from being a part of this will not be forgotten, some still exist today.

I found the biggest reward, however, was having the opportunity to teach kindergarten in Schoenly School, only blocks from where I lived. There I have been able to give children the gift of learning. Now when I see young moms coming into the school to volunteer, some with babies in infant carriers, some holding the hands of a little ones, I see my younger self.

As 2020 comes to a close we should look at 2021 as a new beginning. We have seen the darkness but brighter days are ahead. Maybe you have been feeling isolated and disconnected, or maybe you are new to Spotswood, as I once was. What a better way to begin a new year then by giving some of yourself to your community. There are many organizations in this town in need of help. You will see, like I did, that the benefits far outweigh the risks.

As for me, I am looking forward to my new beginning. Spotswood will always remain close to my heart, but I am beyond excited to see the possibilities that lie ahead.



School News



By Heather DeLollis
Spotswood School District Director of Special Services

*"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step."
Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Welcome 2021!

2020 presented many challenges for students, teachers, families, and the community as a whole. Starting off 2021 on a positive note can seem like an overwhelming task, but there are many resources out there to take the first step in making 2021 a new beginning.

For those struggling with mental health, we have counselors from Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care working in each of our school buildings. If you feel that your child could use the assistance of one of these counselors, please reach out to the principal or school counselor in the building your child attends.

For families who may be struggling with remote learning and in need of assistance at home, Perform Care of NJ offers home-based services to qualifying families. The NJ Children's System of Care offers services related to behavioral health, intellectual/developmental disabilities, and substance abuse. More information about these services and the application for assistance appear on this website <https://www.performcarenj.org/>

If you find your family is struggling financially during this time, Middlesex County Board of Social Services assists residents in many areas. They offer programs that can provide help for families with medical, housing, child care, and food needs.

Please use this link to find out more information regarding services provided <http://middlesexsocialservices.com/programs/#medical>

No matter what your circumstance, please know that there is assistance out there. Inquire about these resources to help in making 2021 a positive year.

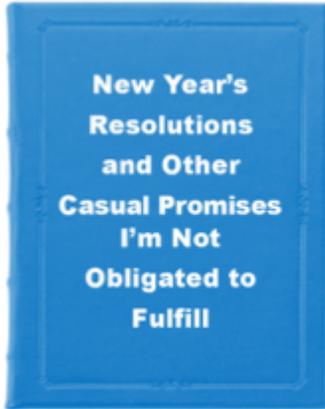


Senior Strength



Spotswood Office on Aging
& Senior Resource Center

By Donna Faulkenberry



For good or for bad, our society has created an expectation to start the New Year with a resolve to be better than we were the year prior. And while new beginnings and self-improvement are worthy goals, the eventual guilt that comes if we fail to meet these generic goals is an unintended and unnecessary consequence.

So rather than setting ourselves up for disappointment, let's take some of the more common New Year's resolutions and approach them in a different, more user-friendly, and ultimately more rewarding way.

Instead of "Eat Healthier", try 

Share Favorite Recipes - Food is not something to be viewed as forbidden or a punishment. Recipe exchanges are a great way to get new ideas and be more creative in the way we eat. It also passes on family traditions to those who have enjoyed your cooking over the years.

Instead of "Keep Your Brain Active", try 

Start a Journal - The handwritten note or diary is a way to not only increase brain activity but also a way to express yourself in a healthy and positive manner. Bonus - include stories about your past and it becomes an historical document for your family.

Instead of "Exercise More", try 

Stretch Every Day - The simple act of stretching - whether seated or standing - increases blood flow, releases tension, and reduces pain. It also gives you more energy which may lead to more activity down the road. Do it as often as possible, especially if you're frail and other types of activity are difficult for you.

Instead of "Reduce Stress", try 

Laugh! - Laughing is one of the best things you can do for your mental and physical health. It relaxes your body and boosts your immune system. It also triggers the release of endorphins which give an overall sense of well-being and can even minimize pain. Remember the friends, movies, comedians, TV shows, and books that make you laugh and find them again!

Instead of "Read More", try 

Purchase a Magazine Subscription - Reading should be pleasurable and if you don't consider yourself a "reader", think beyond books to a different medium - magazines. Pick a favorite topic - maybe it's home furnishings or cars or food - and look for reputable magazines that explore that topic.



Whatever you do, don't wait for January to implement positive changes. Every day is another chance to enjoy life and be happier in it. Happy New Year everyone!