



Boy Scout Beautifies Hidden Pond For More To Enjoy

By Cheryl Conway

There is a hidden gem in Mt. Olive that was recently transformed into a beautiful area for fishing and even picnicking thanks to the volunteers of a local Boy Scout Troop.

Seventeen-year-old Frank Anthony Rocco of Hackettstown, along with members of his Boy Scout Troop- Troop 236 Patriots Path Council Black River District- cleaned up the Maiers Pond area and built and installed a picnic table along with

three benches. Almost a year to complete, Rocco chose Maiers Pond Fishing Hole as his Eagle Scout Project.

While the pond dates to the 1950's and has been used for fishing, the area has been transformed into a beautiful area to relax, unwind and escape without having to leave the Mt. Olive border.

"I am still shocked at how nice it came out," says Rocco, a junior at Mt. Olive High School. "It turned out absolutely awesome. I love it. I wouldn't change anything about it. I accomplished my goal.

"I'm excited that people will utilize it," he says. "It's more inviting now." People can stop and sit on a bench "to take in the view," compared to "just looking at nothing there."

Rocco came up with his project idea back in January. He met with Mt. Olive Twp. Mayor Rob Greenbaum on Jan. 22 to discuss the project.

"I interviewed the mayor for the badge requirement; he brought up Maiers Pond," explains Rocco, adding that the mayor "loves to fish."

Rocco worked with his sponsor, Mt. Olive Twp. Business Administrator Andrew Tatarenko, regarding approvals.

"He was my boss," says Rocco. Tatarenko had to sign off on any improvements and then bring the concept to the Mt. Olive Twp. Council for the "final signature," he says.

After all permits were met and the project was approved, Rocco took the project lead as foreman directing his volunteers on the work involved.

He calculated 150 hours of time spent on the entire project, of which 83 hours was spent on the actual labor.

Works Begins At Maiers Pond Fishing Hole

Rocco tracked three days of manual work to complete his project.

For the first day, on Sept. 30, Rocco along with six other Boy Scouts and three adults assembled the hardware to build a picnic table and three benches.

On the second day, Oct. 9, Rocco was joined by five Scouts and five townspeople to transport the table and benches to the Maiers Pond property. A skitzeer was used to install the table and an auger to drill holes. The handmade furniture was

lowered and secured in the property, Rocco describes, the picnic table chained and locked into the ground.

On the third day, Oct. 14, Rocco and “my soccer buddies” spent four hours cleaning up the area.

With mulch and gravel, “We mulched and lined the area with rock,” says Rocco. Rocco and his team used pressure treated wood for the picnic table and benches. The Home Depot in Mansfield donated the wood for the project, he says.

For the hardware, Rocco went to Lowes and spent \$9 given to him at cost.

New to constructing outdoor furniture, Rocco researched online.

“How was I supposed to assemble this thing?” he questions.

For “the bench, I went online and found blueprints for hardware and what kind of cuts. We banged it out the first day,” he says. “I was the foreman. As a team we worked it out.

“My job as acting Eagle Scout was foreman,” he explains. “I taught everybody what to do. I kept my hands clean. My role was leadership and I exemplified.”

The “project is done,” says Rocco during a telephone interview with *Mt. Olive Online* last week. “I need to write final report and have meeting with council before my 18th birthday. They will have my Eagle Scout Report of Review.”

Before his project, Rocco describes what the area looked like.

“There a nice trail on the back of the soccer fields,” he describes. To get to Maiers Pond, “go on the dirt road all the way down, then make a right.” He estimates an eighth of a mile-long walk.

The pond exists around a walkway and has been utilized for fishing but “there’s no where to sit or do anything,” he says. “There was nothing there,” but a trail that leads to the high school that the track team uses.

Existed before his cleanup were fallen tree twigs, decaying branches and trees.

“I threw all that out, cut all dead trees with backhoe,” says Rocco. “It was all overgrown.”

One man, who he ran into down at the pond, “Was all excited,” say Rocco. He said “it was awesome.”

A sight to see, “the sun strikes it first thing in the morning,” Rocco describes, and the moon “shines there at night. It’s a deep hole, just another place to fish.”

The property features “a big area exposing the pond; good fishing spot,” says Rocco. “Three benches are installed right on the edge of the pond. You can sit and fish.”

Ironic how the project exemplifies the sport of fishing, with the excitement of not knowing what the result will be.

Admits Rocco, “I’ve never been to that pond beforehand,” but he liked the idea as “I wanted to make something I’d be able to enjoy.”

He too likes fishing, “Ever since I was little,” he says, he would go with his dad. While he says “I’m not an avid fisher,” he says he enjoys “the thrill that you get after waiting patiently. The game of reeling one in and surprised of what you get; to outsmart the fish and being successful. It’s peaceful; it’s relaxing.”

Life-Long Scout

“I’ve been a Scout all my life,” says Rocco.

He joined the Cub Scouts in the first grade and continued through fifth grade, when he became a Boy Scout with Troop 236.

Before their 18th birthday, Scouts complete a project of their choice to earn their Eagle Scout badge. Rocco was looking for something different for his project.

“I wanted to do something on the outskirts,” he says. His project required “a lot of permits.”

Looking at all of his years as a Boy Scout, Rocco says “the program has taught me so much, so many important skills that will be helpful in my life, such as leadership.”

Rocco is pleased “to know I’m making a difference, being a role model, teaching others, to have that influence to move someone into a goal.

“To take leadership skills and apply them,” says Rocco, “to pass those skills onto other scouts.” To “build future leaders of America.”

Thankful For Support

Rocco says “I’m thankful for the town and adult leaders to complying; all the scouts that came out.”

He is also “excited for people to utilize them [the benches and table] and have a good time.”

His project provides “another asset to the town. It’s so buried deep, people don’t know” that it is located behind Turkey Brook Park. “It’s a little bit of a walk but it’s so worth it. It’s a little rewarding, a little area.

“It’s not smack” in everybody’s face; you got to dig for it,” he says.

One can get there by walking past the soccer grass fields that are adjacent to the basketball courts and behind the dog park in the back of Turkey Brook Park, follow down for about an eighth of a mile. Another way is through Wyndham Point’s Farmstead Court where there is a trail that takes walkers to the 9-acre pond.

History of Maiers Pond

What a “perfect place for the Eagle Scout project,” comments Kathy Murphy, vice chair of the Mt. Olive Open Space Committee and member of the Mt. Olive Historical Society.

Maiers Pond was owned by the Maier family who lives in Washington Twp., according to Murphy. The Maier family had bought the land to use for farming. They used to grow vegetables, such as corn, spinach and fruits, and sell them to Horn & Hardart Cafeterias, a food services company in the United States noted for operating the first food service automats in Philadelphia and New York City. An automat is a fast food restaurant that offers simple foods and drinks via vending machines.

The property was originally owned by the Seward family until about 1939, says Murphy. Will Seward worked in the insurance business but eventually the Depression hit and the family started to die off, she says.

Some elderly aunts of the Seward family remained living in the Seward Mansion which still sits at the entrance of the Turkey Brook property, until they died, she adds.

Murphy says she learned a lot of the history of this property from Bob Behler, a former Mt. Olive DPW employee who lived across from the Seward House and worked part time as a caretaker of the property.

When the Maier family purchased the property, they created Maiers Pond, says Murphy. “It was created; you have the brook down there.

“They impounded the stream in 1952,” says Murphy. “They would pump up the water up hill to the upper fields for irrigation.”

When Mt. Olive Twp. bought the land in 1996 and created Turkey Brook Park, “they removed the irrigation pipe,” says Murphy.

The brook there starts behind the tennis center, marshy and wet, runs past the high school, down and back under the power lines and through the park, continues through Wyndham Point, down Drakestown Rd. and Stephens Mill Rd, down by River Rd. where it branches to the South Branch Raritan River, she explains.

The Maier family continued to own the land for several decades until the late 1960’s, says Murphy. They sold it “to another speculator who was going to do real estate,” but that fell through. There was talk that it would be an industrial area. “that didn’t work out.”

Then in 1980, a developmental proposal came up for 237 houses, says Murphy, but that proposal fell through when the housing market took a downturn. That was when Mt. Olive applied to Green Acres to purchase the property.

“We are fortunate to get it,” says Murphy, adding that the name of the pond remains.

“Maiers Pond sort of stuck,” she says.

Although most likely icy after this week’s storm, the pond, tucked away in its location and history, will thaw come spring and be a treasure once found as a relaxing place to visit, picnic and fish for years to come.

Photo Gallery

Welcome readers to the 35th issue of Mt. Olive Online. Get MO news online today! Advertise with us

MOHS Principal Promoted To Director, New AD Hired

By Cheryl Conway

The Mt. Olive High School principal has joined the shuffle of positions with his latest move to a director within the district; also a new athletic director has been hired.

Longtime MOHS Principal Kevin Stansberry is the new Director of Secondary Education. The Mt. Olive Board of Education affirmed the superintendent's recommendation at its board meeting Monday night.

Stansberry started his position immediately the next day, right before Thanksgiving break, replacing Dr. Gretel Perez who worked as a director in the district board office for the past three years, according to Dr. Robert Zywicki, superintendent of schools.

"Kevin will do both jobs until a new principal is hired," says Zywicki. "It's a position he wants. He's still going to be intimately involved" with the high school. As director of secondary education, "He's in charge of both the middle school and high school principals."

The school board will be posting the open position for high school principal, hoping that the spot can be filled by Feb. 1, 2020, says Zywicki.

In other district news, the board of education also approved the hiring of a new athletic director to fill the spot of Dave Falleni who was recently promoted this past month to vice principal at the high school. Falleni was hired to replace former Vice Principal James Kramer who moved over to the Mt. Olive Middle School as principal.

Out of 40 applications for athletic director, the board approved the superintendent's recommendation to hire Mark Grilo of the Morris Hills Regional High School District. Grilo has worked as a coach, most recently as a lacrosse coach at Morris Knolls High School in Rockway, a business/finance teacher and has a master's in leadership, says Zywicki.

Zywicki was impressed by Grilo's "amazing communication skills. We're super excited to have him."

Grilo will jump in as the new athletic director "as soon as he can be released from his district," says Zywicki, adding that he hopes that will be by Jan. 1, 2020. In the meantime, Falleni is juggling both roles as is Stansberry.

Photo Gallery

Turkey Brook Park To Grow 17 Acres

Turkey Brook Park in Budd Lake will be expanding to its fullest potential after the county approved an open space grant for 17.24 acres this week.

The Morris County Board of Freeholders has unanimously approved county preservation grants totaling \$1.96 million for six 2019 open space projects,

totaling 164 acres located in six Morris County towns. The Turkey Brook Park site is included as one of those sites with a grant totaling \$275K.

Other projects are in Chester Twp., Denville, Jefferson, Morris Twp., and Roxbury, all of which were recommended for grants by the county's Open Space Trust Fund Committee.

Funding for the projects will come from the voter approved county preservation trust fund, generated by a special county tax. The recommended awards range from \$28,000 to \$684,900.

"As we celebrate 25 years of the county's Open Space Trust Fund, this Freeholder Board and boards who have preceded us recognize that the deliberate and thoughtful preservation of open space throughout the County is part of what makes Morris County a great place to live, work, play and raise a family," said Freeholder Stephen Shaw.

The Open Space grant program has helped preserve 12,542 acres in 36 of the county's 39 towns since the awarding of grants started in 1994. Morris County voters approved the program in November 1992.

For details on each project visit

<https://planning.morriscountynj.gov/divisions/prestrust/openspace/>

Former Mt. Olive Dad Starts Meetup Group To Socialize Son

By Cheryl Conway

A new social group has been created to provide an outlet for middle school-aged kids and older to connect and establish new friendships.

Created less than two weeks ago, Meetup Mount Olive Kids has been formed to provide a forum for parents to socialize their middle school-age kids, aged 10-14, with other kids in the Mt. Olive area. So far 15 have joined and the first social outing is planned.

More and more groups are popping up on social media, particularly Facebook

more and more groups are popping up on social media, particularly Facebook, but not too many for kids to socialize. This new group aims at connecting youth in the area so they can make new friends and participate in activities outside of their phones, tablets and computers.

"There's a world outside," says Rich Frantz of Lake Hopatcong, founder of the group. "If I left my kids upstairs alone, he'd be watching Netflix on the computer." Frantz, a former Mt. Olive resident who plans to relocate back into town in 2020, started the group as a means to help his son meet new friends before the move. "I am a single dad living in nearby Lake Hopatcong and anticipate a move back to Mt. Olive in the coming year," Frantz explains on the Meetup site. "Due to shared/split custody arrangements, my 12-year-old son has not made friends in the area. I would like for him to build relationships with kids in the Mt. Olive area and school system."

Frantz realized that perhaps there are other kids out there who are also struggling with finding friends.

"Perhaps your son or daughter has not made friends at school or in the neighborhood for any number of reasons (video gaming?), or maybe they just need to get out more?" Frantz writes on the group site.

"There are a lot of kids like this who stay home and don't do a whole lot," explains Frantz during a telephone interview with "Mt. Olive Online."

"My challenge is my 12-year-old son who doesn't have any friends where I live currently," explains Frantz. "He's very involved with video games." Frantz calls it "lost in the virtual world."

As a father of three, Frantz learned the importance of "finding their passion" with his kids. He says his son did not know how to ride a bike, so he bought his son a bicycle and taught him. He did not like baseball, but "when I bought him a glove he started playing catch. He never liked fishing," either, but when he took him, "now he asks when are we going fishing?"

Activities Planned

"Activities are open to suggestion, but we'll start with hiking and biking, and then expand from there; some sort of indoor activity as the weather gets colder," he suggests on his site. "I envision parents participating with their kids to start, then allowing them to branch out on their own as they make friends."

The group range is 10 to 14 but Frantz says that age group can be expanded if desired. Attendees under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult. The first event is planned for Dec. 7, at 10 a.m.- Kids Hike Hacklebarney. "Grab your kids and let's hike Hacklebarney State Park. This is a relatively small group, so we can do introductions before we hike. This is our first event, so it will be "light-weight."

Frantz envisions that a "bunch of parents show up with their kids; then we hike Hacklebarney," he describes. "Some of those kids may form their own cliques," he says. He's "hoping to ignite a fire. Maybe kids will want to hang out on their downtime."

Why Mt. Olive

Frantz had lived in Flanders for 10 years, in the Cloverhill section, before leaving in 2012 after his divorce. His stepson went through the Mt. Olive School system and his oldest daughter had attended Mt. View Elementary School.

"My two oldest consider Mt. Olive to be home," says Frantz. Because of their great experience, he is confident that his youngest son could follow suit.

"I thought the teachers there are great," he says. "I had good experiences with the school system in general."

His 12-year-old son currently attends seventh grade at Gottesman RTW Academy, a private Hebrew school in Randolph. The plan is to let him graduate the academy and then hopefully start his high school experience at Mt. Olive High School.

"In high school, you make your best friends," says Frantz. "I want him to have kids to go out and play with on a Saturday or Sunday," or to grab his bicycle and ride with kids in the neighborhood.

Frantz who works in financial advising also plans to relocate his business in Mt. Olive.

"I knew I wanted to go back to Mt. Olive," says Frantz, who remains involved with plans to volunteer as Santa at the Kiwanis House at Turkey Brook Park this winter. "I want to get him into this great school system," he says, adding that he "also wants to build up his business in Mt. Olive."

Working in the same town where he lives and is raising his son would allow him

to be in his life more.

“I just want to be home for my kids,” says Frantz, “my youngest, I want to be there for him.”

As a financial adviser for Edward Jones, Frantz currently works out of an office in Long Valley but plans to build a branch office in Mt. Olive.

“We help people make smart decisions about money,” he says, such as IRAs, retirement, college savings, insurance needs.

“Professionally, I’m serving the Mt. Olive community,” he says. “I can live, work and play in the same community. From a holistic perspective, it makes sense.” New to establishing his own group, Frantz says “I was looking for groups to join not to put together,” but “when I couldn’t find them, that’s when I decided to put matters in my own hands.”

Go to [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) and search for Mount Olive Kids to sign up. As the sole host, Frantz welcomes any help as far as suggesting activity ideas for the group, especially with winter on the move.

Local and county news

Retailer Opens Market To Disabled Veterans, Certain Caregivers

[The Exchange, a retail and services provider for the military family,](#) will welcome home-disabled Veterans, Purple Heart recipients and certain caregivers with in-store shopping privileges beginning Jan. 1, 2020.

Army & Air Force Exchange Service shopping privileges will expand to all Veterans with service-connected disabilities, Veterans who are Purple Heart recipients, Veterans who are former prisoners of war and primary family caregivers for Veterans who are enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. In all, 4.1 million

Americans will be eligible for the new benefit.

This new privilege was specified in the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018, included in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2019. The Department of Defense officially announced the expansion Nov. 13.

"It is an honor to welcome our nation's heroes back to their Exchange," said Exchange Director/CEO Tom Shull, a Vietnam-era Army Veteran. "They fought for us. They sacrificed for us. They deserve this."

The new patron group will also have access to commissaries and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities located on U.S. military installations. The Department of Defense advised it is still working through details of the expansion with the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security. More information regarding installation access and the authentication process will be available soon.

Before the expansion, only Veterans with 100 percent service-connected disabilities could shop in person. Active-duty service members, their dependents and military retirees also have in-store and online privileges.

All honorably discharged Veterans can shop the military exchanges online now, through a benefit that was secured in 2017. Since then, Veterans have saved more than \$6 million in sales tax. Veterans can determine their eligibility to shop online at [ShopMyExchange.com/vets](https://shopmyexchange.com/vets).

According to its website, since 1895, the Army & Air Force Exchange Service has been serving a critical role in strengthening military readiness, recruiting and retention. The Exchange continues to go where warfighters and their families go to provide tax-free shopping and military-exclusive pricing at installations worldwide and at ShopMyExchange.com. As the 61st largest retailer in the U.S., Exchange earnings provide dividends to military Quality-of-Life programs. The Department of Defense's largest retailer, the Exchange is governed by a Board of Directors responsible to the Secretaries of the Army and Air Force.

The Exchange serves an eligible customer base of 31 million active-duty military; retirees; National Guardsmen; Reservists; 100 percent disabled honorably discharged Veterans; all other honorably discharged Veterans; authorized Public

Health Service associates; authorized National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration associates; Coast Guard members and family members. Veterans who need additional information about the in-store patronage expansion can visit the Veterans section on the Exchange's Community Hub (<https://publicaffairs-sme.com/Community/veterans>)
Visit the online store: www.shopmyexchange.com.

Former Mayor Appointed To National College Board Organization

Former Mt. Olive Twp. Mayor Paul Licitra of Flanders, who serves as member of the Board of Trustees at County College of Morris (CCM) in Randolph, has been appointed to serve on a committee for the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) to assist with supporting the governing boards of community colleges.

ACCT supports community college boards in their efforts to govern and develop policies that focus on meeting community needs. The ACCT Board of Directors is informed by five committees: the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, Finance and Audit Committee, Governance and Bylaws Committee, Member Communications and Education Committee, and Public Policy and Advocacy Committee. The ACCT chair appoints committee members.

CCM Trustee Treasure Licitra, immediate past chair of the CCM Board of Trustees, has been appointed to serve on the ACCT Public Policy and Advocacy Committee. That committee is charged with reviewing public policy issues and recommending positions.

Licitra currently is office administrator for Senator Steven Oroho, Assemblyman Parker Space and Assemblyman Hal Wirths, and the Sergeant of Arms for the New Jersey Senate. He also possesses extensive experience in insurance spanning more than 45 years and covering all aspects of risk management for large domestic and international clients. In the public sector, he was mayor of Mt. Olive from 2000-2004, after serving eight years on the Mt. Olive Twp. Council. He

earned his bachelor's degree from St. John's University, where he also taught as an adjunct professor in the Tobin College of Business.

Library Warms Patrons With Music, Movies & More

"Baby, it's Cold Outside".....Come warm up at Mt. Olive Public Library on Wednesday, Dec. 4, at 7 p.m. in the Gathering Room. Get into the holiday spirit and be entertained by the Florian Schantz Jazz Combo with Holiday Music with mixed Christmas, Hanukkah and winter-themed songs. Registration requested.

"Be Calm and Create a Masterpiece"....."Painting with Dorothy" is set for Saturday, Dec. 7, from 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Come join in for a fun day of creativity and learning. Make great art and paint like the masters!! Registration is required; limited to 12 adults.

"Movies at the Library"..... Join in on Tuesday, Dec. 10 at either 1 p.m.-3:15 p.m. or 6 p.m.-8:15 p.m. for the movie "Where'd You Go, Bernadette?", based upon the novel of the same name by Maria Semple. When Bernadette suddenly disappears without a trace, her concerned family sets off on an exciting adventure to solve the mystery of where she might have gone. Registration requested.

Live Your Best Life with Essential Oils..... a workshop titled, "Essential Oils 101 (Make & Take Diffuser Bracelet)" is set for Saturday, Dec. 14, from 9:30 a.m.-11

a.m. Come join Perri O'Flynn for this fun essential oils project; the bracelet can be used as a diffuser on the go, to take oils anywhere and use them for any situation. Also, learn the benefits of using essential oils in daily life. Registration is required; limited to 10 adults.

For all programs, call 973-691-8686 Ext. 106 or go to www.mopl.org to register.

College news

CCM Sets Stage For Shows This Holiday Season

After months of rehearsing, County College of Morris (CCM) students from the Music, Performing Arts and Music Technologies Department will be presenting various shows in December highlighting their skills and talents from dancing and singing, to music and acting.

The Winter Music Concert on Friday, Dec. 6, at 7:30 p.m. is a musical delight. The CCM Concert Choir and Wind Ensemble bring the sounds of the season to life. Conductors include Chamber Choir Director Professor Marielaine Mammon and Wind Ensemble Directors Professors Bill Briggs and Rich Barrieres. The concert is free and open to the public and will be held at the Dragonetti Auditorium in the Student Community Center at CCM in Randolph..

The dramatic play based on the classic and treasured movie "Miracle on 34th Street," runs from Dec. 12 through Dec. 14, at 7:30 p.m. with a Saturday matinee at 2 p.m. Directed by Professor Marielaine Mammon, the beloved tale gives children young and old a chance to experience the joy and magic of believing. Performances take place in the Dragonetti Auditorium with general admission seating. Tickets are \$15 and \$10 for CCM students, alumni, children under 12 and seniors 62 and older. To purchase tickets visit <http://bit.ly/CCM34street>.

New and exciting works created by faculty, students and guest artists in the Dance Program is set to be featured in the “Dance Theatre First Look” workshop on Monday, Dec. 16, and Tuesday, Dec. 17, at 7:30 p.m. The concert will feature a wide variety of contemporary dance styles including a percussive reimagining of Nutcracker choreography, solo and group works and musical theatre dance. Choreographers include Professors Terrance Duncan, Kristin Flynn, Trayer Run-Kowzun, Colleen McArdle, along with Guest Repertory Experience Choreographer David Parker and CCM Dance majors. Admission is free and the performances take place in the Music Technology Center Performance Lab.

Attendees can park in Lots 6 and 7.

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