



Frenchtown Sun

A Frenchtown-Focused Civic Newsletter

Frenchtown Literary Festival Attracting Prominent Authors

Frenchtown Bookshop's first-ever Frenchtown Literary Festival kicked off with two events in June and continues on July 9.

The bookshop was awarded a \$20,000 grant from American Express Shop Small, initially launched with a \$5 million contribution to support 250 small businesses in honor of America's 250th anniversary.

The festival, which is a series of author talks, presents "An evening with Ian Frazier" on July 9. A *New Yorker* essayist and humorist, he will speak in conversation with bookshop co-owner Barbara de Wilde.

He writes books of travel and history (*Travels in Siberia* and *Great Plains*) and hundreds of *New Yorker* pieces on topics that range from friendship, parenthood, and New York City to nature, human oddities, and the secret life of maraschino cherries. Ian Frazier is "one of the last inheritors of the great tradition of the *New Yorker*," says editor Jonathan Galassi. He has twice won the prestigious Thurber Prize for American Humor. [Continued on page 5]



Photographer: Paul Serra

Worst Tick Season in a Decade is Predicted; Take Essential Precautions

Experts are warning that 2026 is turning out to be the worst tick season in 9 years, and New Jersey is right in the thick of it. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that early-spring emergency room visits for tick bites have reached their highest levels since 2017.

To stay safe this season, Frenchtown residents should be "tick-aware" and follow these essential precautions:

- Wear light-colored clothing so ticks are easier to spot and tuck your pants into your socks.
- Thoroughly check yourself, your children, and your pets upon coming indoors.
- Stay on the path: Keep children and pets

from running into underbrush along walking trails.

- Use repellent: The CDC recommends using repellents registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus (OLE), para-menthane-diol (PMD) or 2-undecanone. For more information, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/prevention/index.html>.

To learn more about ticks and watch a step-by-step video on how to properly remove them, visit <https://extension.rutgers.edu/tick>. Additionally, scientists at the Rutgers NJ Ticks 4 Science program are asking residents to send in ticks they encounter which will be used to create a real-time tick tracking map. To learn how to mail in a tick, visit ticks.rutgers.edu.

About *The Frenchtown Sun*

The Frenchtown Sun is published monthly by the Borough of Frenchtown to provide its residents with local news and community updates.

The content of *The Sun* is guided by the editorial team of Ted Brandston, Randi Eckel, Rick Epstein, John Gattuso, Jeanne Herb, Amelia Rodriguez and Maria Whelan. John Dougherty serves as the Borough Council liaison.

The Sun is delivered monthly free of charge to all Frenchtown Borough residents. An online edition is available at www.frenchtownsun.net.

Borough residents can request postal delivery or contact the editorial team at newsletter@frenchtownboro.com or mail *The Frenchtown Sun*, 29 Second Street, Frenchtown, N.J. 08825.

Updates from Borough Council

At its monthly meeting on June 3 the Frenchtown Borough Council approved the following actions:

- Transmitted the borough's Age-Friendly Action Plan to the state Department of Human Services;
- Renewed liquor licenses for the four venues: FiNNBAR, the National Hotel, the American Legion and Frenchtown Wine & Liquor.
- Approved the Fire Department's Coin Drop Event for several days in late July. Proceeds are used to fund the department's operations;
- Approved an addendum to the borough's Housing Element and Fair Share Plan along with a request for final state approval of the plan as well as the borough's Fourth Round Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

In addition to these approvals, the council discussed several other ongoing initiatives and news, including:

- The borough is reissuing a bid package for a new backup generator for the sewer pump station on Creek Road and the Public Works building on Trenton Avenue. Money for the project come from a \$150,000 state grant;
- At the borough's request, the county purchased and will be installing flashing beacons in the pedestrian crosswalk on Kingwood Avenue near Kathee's General Store. Flashing beacons are designed to remind motorists of the law requiring them to yield to pedestrians wanting to cross the street. Additionally, the borough is in discussions with the county to advance county-led traffic speed studies on Kingwood Avenue and Everittstown Road;
- The borough will be asking the county for a

grant to buy equipment for the Fire Company;

- Borough officials continue to explore the installation of parking meters in the downtown commercial district. Officials recently met with the Frenchtown Business & Professional Association and received positive feedback on the idea.
- The Hunterdon County Sheriff's Office is warning residents about a prevalent phone scam where fraudsters impersonate law enforcement and demand immediate payment for missed federal jury duty. Additionally, fraudulent text messages claiming to be from New Jersey courts are targeting locals with fake traffic fines and malicious links. In recent months, there have been several reported fraud attempts involving Craigslist and Facebook targeting members of our community. Residents are encouraged to notify the Police Department if they receive suspicious calls or text messages at 908-996-4820.

Planning Board Considering Tightening Data Center Regulations

Data centers and their impact on communities have been featured prominently in the news across the country. On May 27, Gov. Mikie Sherrill announced a comprehensive statewide plan to address the impact of data centers on local communities.

The Frenchtown Planning Board will be considering the need for any changes to the borough ordinance regarding data centers. The board will study ordinances from other small municipalities, looking into the definitions of data centers (large and small). The board aims to advise council of any need to change the borough land use ordinance later this year.

Meet the Frenchtown Police Department



From left to right: Ptl. Kevin Coletta, Ptl. David Lugo, and Sgt. Erik Eccles

Each of Frenchtown's police officers is devoted to a community-centered style of policing, focusing on being approachable, engaged, and connected with the people he serves. They value the close connections that define small-town policing and take pride in being part of a department whose daily work is guided by compassion for our residents.

SGT. ERIK ECCLES has served as the officer in charge of the Frenchtown Police Department for the past six years and is nearing a decade of dedicated service to the borough and its visitors.

Erik oversees a wide range of operational and administrative responsibilities, ensuring that daily functions run smoothly while supporting long-term organizational goals. He earned his bachelor's degree in National Security Studies from New Jersey City University, graduating summa cum laude.

Off-duty, he enjoys caring for animals and has a genuine passion for their wellbeing. He jokingly refers to himself as a part-time zookeeper, sharing his home with four cats and one dog.

PTL. KEVIN COLETTA has served with the FPD since 2019. Before that, he was a special law enforcement officer with Hackensack and Guttenberg police departments and the Essex County Sheriff's Office.

Kevin's responsibilities include serving as domestic violence liaison, juvenile liaison, Law

Enforcement Against Drugs instructor, Megan's Law designee, Traffic Officers Association representative, Firearms and Background investigator, fleet manager and field training officer. He is also the PBA Local 188 representative and its executive board secretary.

Beyond policing, he has volunteered in the fire service since 2014 and currently serves as assistant chief and president of his local fire department. He is a husband and father of two young children.

PTL. DAVID B. LUGO previously worked in Lambertville, where he developed a strong foundation in community policing and public service. His work there shaped his appreciation for building relationships and supporting the needs of local residents.

Outside of his duties, he enjoys spending time outdoors and has a lifelong love of animals and nature. David is grateful to serve a community he respects and enjoys being part of each day.

Reminder to Sign Up for Constant Contact

Earlier this spring, the borough launched a new community-updates system, powered by Constant Contact, enabling residents to keep up with what's happening in our town. Those who sign up will receive updates on local news, events and important announcements. To sign up, visit: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/zNyK2m8> or visit Borough Hall for a sign-up sheet.

Community Calendar

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1

Borough Council Meeting, 7 p.m., Borough Hall,
29 Second St.

FRIDAY, JULY 3

Weevilpalooza, 5:30 p.m., Frenchtown Preserve
Join the Environmental Commission to release weevils into the Frenchtown Preserve to diminish the Mile-a-Minute vine (read more further on this page).

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

Veterans' Breakfast at the American Legion,
8-10 a.m., 510 Harrison St.

THURSDAY, JULY 9

Shade Tree Commission Meeting, 4:30 p.m.,
Borough Hall, 29 Second St.

SUNDAY, JULY 12

Bastille Day, 11-6 p.m., Sunbeam Park
Includes a vendor market featuring 20+ local artisans and food stalls, a live musical performance by The Jazz Faction, a magic show by Doug Miller, a Downtown Scavenger Hunt and more!

TUESDAY, JULY 14

Environmental Commission Meeting, 7 p.m.,
Borough Hall, 29 Second St.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

- **Veteran's Breakfast at the American Legion, 8-10 a.m.,** 510 Harrison St.
- **Planning/Zoning Board Meeting, 7 p.m.,** Borough Hall, 29 Second St.

SATURDAY, JULY 25

Frenchtown Farmers Market, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.,
Sunbeam Park

SAVE THE DATE:

- **Riverfest, Sunday, Sept. 6, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.**
- **Frenchtown School's Centennial Celebration & Community Day, Saturday, Sept. 26**

Hunterdon to Celebrate America's 250th with Symphony Concert and Fireworks

Hunterdon County will celebrate the nation's 250th birthday on Wednesday, July 8, 7-10:30 p.m. at Deer Path Park in Flemington. The party will include live music from the Hunterdon Symphony, what's billed as the largest display of fireworks Hunterdon has ever seen, food trucks and a dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence by Revolutionary War by a re-enactor portraying Revolutionary War hero Ned Hector.

This event is free and open to the public. Organizers recommend arriving early to secure the best spots, bringing a blanket and/or lawn chairs, and wearing red, white and blue. If you have questions, contact 300info@co.hunterdon.nj.us.

Environmental Commission Hosts "Weevilpalooza" for all ages on July 3

The Frenchtown Environmental Commission will host Weevilpalooza on Friday, July 3 at 5:30 p.m. in the Frenchtown Preserve.

This is a family-friendly opportunity to learn about biological control of invasive species. Join commission members to release 1,000 weevils (*Rhinoncomimus latipes*) directly onto patches of the Mile-A-Minute vine (*Persicaria perfoliata*), an aggressive invasive plant that smothers native vegetation by blocking sunlight.

A biological control agent, these weevils have been thoroughly researched and have successfully managed the Mile-A-Minute vine since 2004. The weevil only feeds on the vine, weakening the plants and reducing their ability to produce seed and spread. Decreasing the seed production is the key to controlling it. Weevils were purchased from the state by a grant secured by the Environmental Commission.

People of all ages are invited to use hand lenses to observe the tiny weevils up close, participate in an invasive species scavenger hunt and take home a "Bug Scout" card explaining what to look for when they return to the Preserve to check on the weevils.

Participants should wear tick-protective clothing and gather for the event at the Frenchtown Preserve parking lot on Horseshoe Bend Road. Snacks will be provided and together, participants will walk to the release site. Due to limited parking in the lot, please consider carpooling.

For more information, please visit:

<https://frenchtownsun.net/redirects/weevils-info>

Celebrate Summer with Art and Education at the Hunterdon County Senior Center

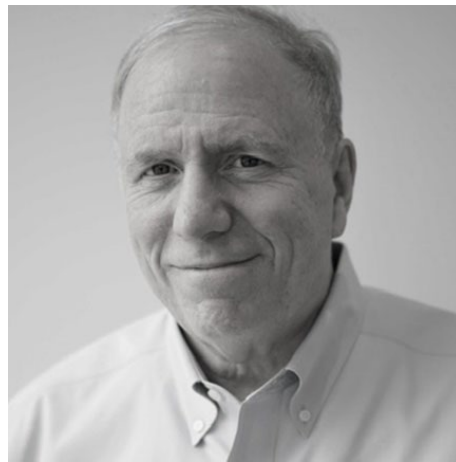
The Hunterdon County Senior Center has announced its lineup of summer events, historic celebrations and essential wellness talks. Highlights include:

- **Art Show:** A Senior Art Show that takes place June 24-Aug. 21 at the Historic Hunterdon County Courthouse (71 Main Street, Flemington). Viewing hours are Wednesday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. The show will feature professional and nonprofessional pieces, and watercolor, oil and acrylic paintings along with photography. Admission is free.
 - **Virtual classes:** The Senior Center offers a variety of classes online. Most classes are 20 minutes long and topics range from healthy living, financial management and self-care. To find a class, go to: <https://nj-hunterdoncounty.civicplus.com/2841/Get-Set-Up-Virtual-Classes>.
 - **Moon Talk:** Hunterdon County chief parks naturalist Tom Sheppard will give a presentation on the moon at the Senior Center (4 Gauntt Place, Flemington) on Thursday, July 30 at 1:30 p.m. The presentation will explore the phases of the moon, how the moon influences ocean tides and the science behind solar and lunar eclipses. Registration by July 24 is required. For more information, visit: <https://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/DocumentCenter/View/19894/Moon-Walk-730>.
 - **America 250 Summer Picnic:** The Senior Center Summer Picnic will take place on Friday, July 24 from 1-4 p.m. with food and music. Registration by July 7 is required. For more information, visit: <https://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/DocumentCenter/View/19901/Summer-Picnic-72426>.
 - **Red, White and Blueberries:** A class and demonstration focused on the health benefits of blueberries on Tuesday, July 14, 2-4 p.m. Registration by July 1 is required. For more information, visit: <https://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/DocumentCenter/View/19897/Red-White-and-Blueberries-7726>.
- Information about these and other programs at the Senior Center can be found on its website at: <https://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/495/Senior-Center> or by calling the center at 908-788-1359.

Center events and classes can be found on the center's calendar at: <https://nj-hunterdoncounty.civicplus.com/1286/Senior-Center-Calendar>. A printable calendar for July events and classes can be found at: <https://nj-hunterdoncounty.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/19893/July-2026-Social-Rec-Calendar>.

Membership to the Senior Center is free; you must be a resident of Hunterdon County and 60 years of age. Anyone can sign up for email updates from the Senior Center at: <https://nj-hunterdoncounty.civicplus.com/1467/Email-Broadcast-News-Updates>.

Ian Frazier to Speak at Book Festival



Author Ian Frazier

[Continued from page 1] A film adaptation of his article "Coyote vs. Acme" will be released this summer.

Tickets for his talk are \$22.

This event, as well as the rest of events

will be held in the Frenchtown School auditorium at 6:30 p.m., and the price of admission includes a signed copy of the featured book.

For more information, visit: <https://www.frenchtownbookshop.com/literary-festival> or call the Bookshop at 908-628-9297.

On Tuesday, Sept. 29, *Eat, Pray, Love* author Elizabeth Gilbert, will be launching the paperback edition of *All the Way to the River: Love, Loss and Liberation*, a harrowing and redemptive story of incandescent love, unspeakable tragedy and gradual return to health. Elizabeth calls Frenchtown "'a wonderful, special community that has a Brigadoon-like feeling. It just doesn't move at the pace of the outside world. It's a special place.'"

On Thursday, Oct. 1, Pádraig Ó Tuama, host of the podcast *Poetry Unbound*, will discuss his latest book of poems, *Love Between Men*.

Frenchtown and Kingwood Methodist Churches to Merge and Become Open Door

Frenchtown and Kingwood United Methodist Churches will soon become the Open Door United Methodist Church, meeting at the Frenchtown church at 16 Third Street. Services will be on Sundays at 9 a.m. starting July 5 and will include a monthly dinner church service each month on third Sundays at 5 p.m.

Kingwood UMC is the oldest Methodist church in Hunterdon, and its site on Route 519 in southern Kingwood has hosted a church since the 1780s. At one time, the Kingwood church held several roast beef dinners a year that funded organizations such as rescue and fire squads, the Flemington Food Pantry, an animal rescue organization and more. In addition, Kingwood UMC has awarded over \$50,000 in scholarships to Del Val High School students since 2019. Kingwood's philanthropic spirit will be united with Frenchtown's.

"I think of it as God at work creating something new," said the Rev. Peter Mantell, pastor of the two churches, plus the Sergeantsville UMC, for the past 12 years.

The new church's name was inspired by the Frenchtown church's Open Door Food Pantry. "The pantry has become the focus of this church's ministry and how the church has become identified," Peter said, "so why not lean into that?"

The pantry started with a "blessing box" in the parking lot of the church the week of the Covid shutdown in March 2020. By that November, space was carved out of a corner of the church's garage, making room for a refrigerator, freezer and shelves kept stocked with food.

It's accessible around-the-clock. A cooking club of church members and volunteers was organized by Peter's late wife, Anna, and the group continues to create and put out about 200 meals a week. Volunteers are always welcome Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9:30 a.m. and noon. Cooking skills are not required.

Donations of shelf-stable food are always welcome. Perennial pantry needs include shelf-stable milk, tomato products, peanut butter, jelly, cereals, no-sugar-added juices, soups, mac & cheese, canned tuna, canned chicken, canned vegetables and canned fruits.

Closing the Kingwood church was a difficult decision that has caused some sadness, but Peter

said people are also hopeful for the future., looking to build relationships within the community, putting faith in action and making a difference in people's lives. Meanwhile, plans are being made to remember and honor the long histories of the two churches.

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

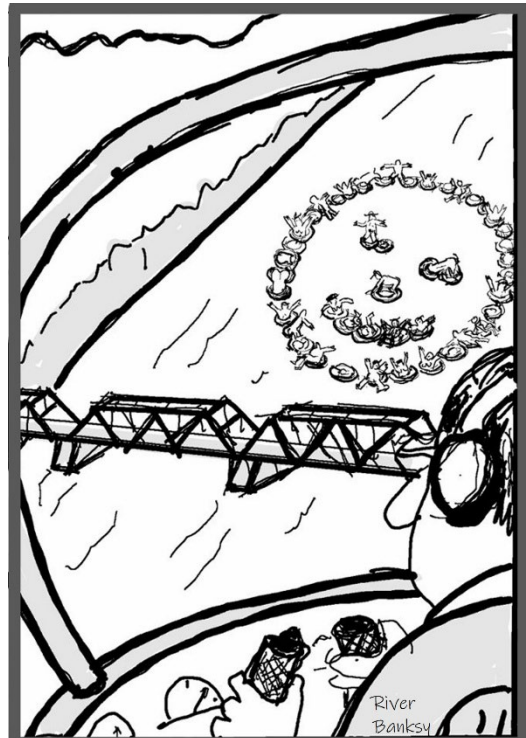
at Frenchtown



"I'm very community-minded and try to bring that out in my preaching and teaching," Peter said, "being inclusive, welcoming of all people, and helping the marginalized."

The Open Door UMC will hold its opening service on Sunday, July 5, at 9 a.m. A local piano teacher, Kristen Todd, has been hired to help revitalize the music program, which will feature traditional hymns.

For more information, visit the website www.kingwood-frenchtownumchurches.com, call the Frenchtown church at 908-996-3117, or email Peter at pastorpmantell@gmail.com.



Early Freeze Harms Local Orchards, Including Nagy's Peaches

It seems like a long time ago, but back on April 21 of this year, Frenchtown experienced a record-breaking hard freeze (as low as 23°F) that has had some long-term consequences for farms, trees and wildlife in our area.

Many plants, including mature hardwood trees, had already leafed out and the new leaves simply froze in place. Oak trees, hackberries, and others had all or most of their young leaves completely frozen and killed. Even young acorns, hackberry "berries," maple seeds, and many other tree and shrub fruits (critical for wildlife) were frozen and killed. Countless flowering trees, from apple, peach and cherry trees at local farms, to flowering dogwoods and redbuds in yards and woodlands, had their flowers or young fruits frozen and killed. Even blueberries and strawberry crops were hard hit.

Farmers across the state have said that they have never seen anything like it. Due to the devastating effects of the freeze, Gov. Sherrill applied for statewide disaster designation, which was approved by the USDA for all 21 counties in the

state on June 10. This makes N.J. farmers eligible for low interest federal loans to help them recover.

Few fruit and specialty farms in our area escaped damage: Nagy's Orchard, just south of town, has announced that they lost their entire peach and apple crops for the year. In the entire region, local peaches and apples, among other fruits, will be hard to come by this year.

What does this mean for the homeowner who doesn't have a farm? Acorns and many other important sources of wildlife food will be in short supply this coming fall and winter, but for the most part, plants have recovered by now. Oaks and many other trees re-leafed out late this spring using their secondary buds.

However, that this has put a lot of stress on trees that have already been under stress for the past few years due to our persistent drought status. If dry weather continues, remember that trees and shrubs need water, too, particularly as they recover from the April freeze. —Randi Eckel



The photo on the left shows the Northern Red Oak (Quercus rubra) leaves the day after the freeze on April 22. On the right, the Northern Red Oak (Quercus rubra) one month after the freeze.



July Story-time at Frenchtown Library

On Tuesday mornings in July, Miss Kelly and her favorite canine Marley will host children aged 2-5 years for story-time at the library. Readings will be from 11-11:30 a.m.

On Thursday mornings, the library will host Melissa Nemitz from Hunterdon County Library for story-time at 11:30 am. These readings are appropriate for all ages.

Frenchtown Fun Fact

THE BLUE MULE: The life-sized, blue fiberglass mule that brightens the corner of Bridge and Harrison Streets was painted by New Zealand native Barry Sharplin (1952-2023). It was one of 176 white, unadorned mule statues distributed in 2003 in a public art project called Miles of Mules. Drawing attention to the old canal-boating days in Pennsylvania, it was a fundraiser for the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and other organizations.

Frenchtown then & now

The Barn Theatre was built in 1939 between upper Eleventh and Twelfth Streets. It had 477 comfortable seats and a knotty-pine foyer. Its first show was *Stagecoach*, starring John Wayne. The photo on the left was taken in 1941. Nelverna Bellis, manager from the 1940s into the 1970s, was very strict. No feet on the upholstery, and young lovers

found a chilly climate that had nothing to do with the air conditioning. It is said that Nelverna would slap the hands of hand-holders, although that's hard to believe. In 1989 it showed its last film, *When Harry Met Sally*, starring Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal. Proprietor Richard Nathan, said that the Barn had been losing money ever since the 1982 opening of Cinema Plaza, a multi-screen theater near Flemington. —Rick Epstein



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