



## Holidays in Secaucus

There are a lot of fun activities and holiday programs lined up for you. Check out holiday decorations and lit trees around town. And wave to Santa as he is escorted around Town by the Fire Department and visits our schools. Also check out the fun events listed in this newsletter and join us in bringing on the holiday spirit! Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all!

## Mayor's Corner

Thank you all for your support and confidence in me and members of the Town Council and for electing us to be your representatives for the next four years. I am honored and deeply touched by the messages and phone calls I received. We will continue to work hard to keep our Town one of the best places to live. We will continue our efforts to improve and secure open spaces, enhance flood control systems, improve infrastructure, provide robust community and recreation programs for residents of all ages, and to implement environmentally friendly and sustainable projects and policies. Most importantly, my office will continue to be accessible to all residents as we welcome and value your input.

In 2021 we completed several major road construction projects including Front Street and Mill Ridge Road. Schmidt's Woods facilities received extensive improvements with grant funds, which include new exercise equipment along a fully refurbished trail, new playground surfaces, paving, and more. The design of a new Senior/Community Center at 101 Centre Avenue is underway as demolition of the old building has

been completed. We offered a well-run COVID vaccination clinic even as CDC guidelines and protocols kept changing. Stay tuned for the latest updates about future projects and programs by visiting our website [www.secaucusnj.gov](http://www.secaucusnj.gov) or the Town of Secaucus Facebook page.



As we approach the holidays, I hope you will join us at the events and programs lined up this month. Our Events Team worked hard to get most of the holiday events back this year and I am sure you and your family will love what we have in store for you. I truly believe that Secaucus is a special place to live because our community celebrates as a family. Check our monthly calendar for a list of the events and plan on joining us.

Wishing you and your family a Merry Christmas and Happy Holiday Season!

## Holiday Lights Contest

### The Mayor & Town Council

Invite all residents to participate in



### HOLIDAY LIGHTS

An exterior illumination contest!

3 Winners in each category

**"Martha Stewart"**

**"Clark Griswold"**

1 Winner

**"Best Block"**

Winners will be announced at the

January Council Meeting

Lawn signs will be posted by Impressive Printing

**Contest runs from December 19-23, 2021**

[www.secaucusnj.gov](http://www.secaucusnj.gov)

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LOCAL POSTAL CUSTOMER  
SECAUCUS, NJ 07094



Secaucus Municipal Government Center  
Paterson Plank Road  
Secaucus, NJ 07094



## Secaucus Achieves Sustainable Jersey Silver-Level Certification

Sustainable Jersey representatives announced that Secaucus has met the rigorous requirements to achieve Sustainable Jersey certification. Secaucus is one of 52 municipalities that have attained certification in 2021 and was honored at the Sustainable Jersey Annual Luncheon on November 16, 2021 in Atlantic City at the New Jersey State League of Municipalities Conference. Sustainable Jersey's participating communities represent over 81 percent of the state's municipalities.

"I am very proud that Secaucus has received Sustainable Jersey's silver level certification. It proves that our programs are working and are being recognized as we continue to move forward in an environmentally responsible manner. I commend the Environmental Department for keeping me and my administration informed about sustainable programs and for working on many of the initiatives that led to this recognition," said Mayor Michael Gonnelli.



*Pictured here are Randall Solomon, Executive Director of Sustainable Jersey, Councilwoman Orietta Tringali, Mayor Michael Gonnelli, Environmental Director Jennifer Schneider, Councilman James Clancy, Councilman John Gerbasio, (bottom) Town Administrator Gary Jeffas, Town Engineer Jennifer Modi and Town Attorney Keri Eglentowicz.*

To become Sustainable Jersey certified at the silver-level, Secaucus submitted documentation to show it had completed a balance of the required sustainability actions, meeting a minimum of 350 action points. Action items that led to the silver certification for Secaucus are: ongoing community education and outreach, installed a municipal on-site solar energy system, purchased alternative fuel vehicles, installed public electric vehicle charging systems, successfully launched and operate Community Garden program with more than 164 raised gardening beds, partnered with a CSA to bring organic, locally grown produce to our residents, continue Open Space plans, tree planting, protection and maintenance programs, implemented several trash disposal, recycling, household hazardous waste and materials re-use programs, started a brand-new food waste composting program, and completed several innovative projects including the pollinator program, the Rain Garden Retrofit Implementation Project and Plastic Bag Ban Ordinance.

"The certified towns exemplify the commitment we need to accelerate the transition to a sustainable world. As New Jersey faces issues such as the climate crisis, a growing equity divide and environmental pollution, it is essential that we support municipalities as they do the hard work to meet these challenges at the local level," said Randall Solomon, executive director of Sustainable Jersey. "These communities are helping New Jersey build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic and it is our honor to work with them as we strive for a better tomorrow!" Certified towns, including Secaucus, excelled in areas such as improving energy efficiency, health and wellness, reducing waste, sustaining local economies, protecting natural resources and advancing the arts.

## Santa Tours Secaucus

Santa will be escorted by the Secaucus Fire Department on a tour around Town. The schedule is as follows:

Engine 3: Thursday December 9th—County Ave to Fifth Street

Engine 1: Sunday December 12th—Roosevelt, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Avenues

Engine 4: Friday December 17th—South End of Town

Tower 2: Saturday December 18th—Sixth Street to Tenth Street

Rescue 1 / Engine 2: Saturday December 18th—All of North End

## Menorah Lighting Ceremony



Mayor Michael Gonnelli and members of the Town Council were joined by several residents in the Annual Menorah Lighting ceremony. The event kicked off a robust line-up of holiday celebrations and events to be held throughout Town this December.

## Marie Eck Retires



Residents who have visited Town Hall for parking permits, marriage licenses or voter registration forms may have been helped by Marie Eck. She has worked at the Town Clerk's office for almost 22 years and officially retired on November 30, 2021. We wish her a happy retired life as she looks forward to spending time with family, especially her grandchildren.

## Secaucus Fire Department Donates to Burn Unit



On November 30th, the Secaucus Fire Department donated \$2321 to the Burn Surgeons of Saint Barnabas Burn Center in Livingston, NJ. Funds for the donation were raised at the Secaucus Fire Department and Secaucus P.B.A. Charity Softball event. A touching, and much appreciated gesture indeed!

## COVID-19 Vaccines Available at Secaucus Vaccination POD



The Secaucus Vaccination POD continues to offer first, second, third and booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. Please note that vaccines are available by appointment only. For more information and to set up an appointment, please visit our website [secaucusnj.gov/vaccine](http://secaucusnj.gov/vaccine). The scheduling site opens as vaccine is made available. If the site is closed, just keep checking back for availability. If you need additional help, please call the Secaucus Health Department at 201-330-2031.

Pictured here are two residents who were the first to receive the vaccine in the 5-11 category.

**Programing is back at the Secaucus Public Library!**

**A spotlight of things to come...**

- CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS
- AUTHOR TALKS
- MOVIES
- LIVE MUSIC
- WORKSHOPS
- CRAFTING
- CULTURAL PROGRAMMING
- THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES
- HISTORICAL PROGRAMS
- EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Reserve your spot on the calendar @ [secaucuslibrary.net](http://secaucuslibrary.net)

**UTILITIES UNITED AGAINST SCAMS**

**It's International Fraud Awareness Week!**

**BE AWARE OF THESE COMMON UTILITY SCAMS**

- Disconnection Deception**  
Scammers call threatening disconnection of your utility service, demanding immediate payment by prepaid cards.
- Power Restoration Charge**  
Scammers call offering to restore power more quickly for a fee in the aftermath of severe storms causing widespread power outages.
- Overpayment Tactic**  
Scammers call claiming you have overpaid your utility bill, and you need to provide personal bank account information or a credit card number to facilitate a refund.
- Identification Attack**  
Rather than directing victims to call a 1-800 number, the scammers direct the caller to press 1 to collect more data in an effort to get personally identifiable information.
- Number Spoofing**  
Scammers will spoof a callback number that closely resembles the utility's number.
- Door Knocking Impostor**  
Door-to-door impostors pose as utility workers to gain entry or access into unsuspecting victims' homes.

[www.UtilitiesUnited.org](http://www.UtilitiesUnited.org) | [@UtilitiesUnited](https://www.facebook.com/UtilitiesUnited) | [@U\\_U\\_A\\_S](https://twitter.com/U_U_A_S)



# Secaucus Police Therapy Dog Program Partners With Huber Street School

Zahava Pianko, Huber Street School Psychologist, recognized that the staff and students of the Secaucus Public Schools are faced with many daily challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, often facing anxiety and other emotional disorders. Mrs. Pianko found research to support the idea that dogs create comfort and confidence in children enabling them to develop positive socialization skills.

Mrs. Pianko requested the assistance of the Secaucus Police Department's Therapy Dog "Oakley," who is personally owned by Police Officer Taylor Ensmann, to participate in her innovative program—one of the first of its kind. Two times per month Police Officer Ensmann and "Oakley" will be present at Huber Street School during focused group teaching sessions of approximately five students during the trial period. The program be further expanded as its effectiveness is evaluated. The goal is to relieve stress and anxiety, increase positive mood and self-confidence, improve socialization skills and executive functioning and assist with sensory regulation. Additionally, a local resident Mrs. Stephanie Finelli and her Therapy Dog "Chipper" will also volunteer their time to participate in this program.



Mayor Michael Gonnelli said, "I am pleased that Oakley will be integrated into the school and I am certain the program will be an immense success, as anytime Oakley is around Town Hall he lifts our spirits. This is a great cooperative effort to continue to build a strong relationship between our youngest residents and our Police Department."

"Oakley's mere presence brightens up children's days and the Secaucus Police Department is delighted to participate in this program where the sole beneficiaries are the youth of this Town," Chief Dennis Miller said. "We pride ourselves on community interaction and engagement and Police Officer Ensmann has taken that bar to new levels through the use of Oakley."

Huber Street School Principal Rob Valente said, "I'm thrilled to have Oakley as part of the team and the Secaucus Police Department. This is an amazing opportunity for our school."

Acting Superintendent Daniela Riser said, "I think this is a wonderful program! I know the staff and students are going to love it. This program is starting at a time when we need a little more emotional support any way we can get it. Oakley will definitely bring joy into our lives. I want to thank the Chief Miller, Officer Ensmann, Mayor Gonnelli, and Ms. Pianko for getting this program off the ground!"

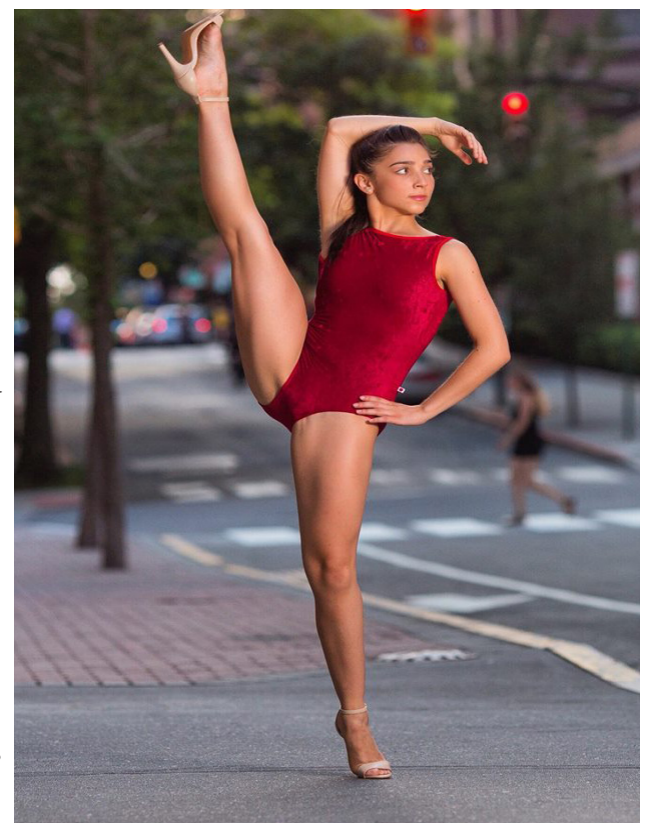
## Spotlight: Secaucus Resident Melody Marti in Spielberg's West Side Story

Steven Spielberg's new movie West Side Story is in theatres this month and is a very special release for one Secaucus resident. Melody Marti, a B.A. graduate in Dance and Education from Montclair University and substitute teacher in the Secaucus School District, plays the role of Pili the Shark. The movie debut for the aspiring star was no easy ride. "There were six rounds of very difficult auditions and Spielberg was at the final audition when I had to perform for the whole team. Broadway artists who were my idols were all auditioning with me. It was nerve-wracking and exciting at the same time," she said of the experience. Hers was a classic example of "persistence pays off." She did not make it through as a Shark in the auditions in New York and gave it a second shot when her sister called about sessions in Miami, where she bagged the role she dreamed of—a West Side Story shark.

What was it like working with the legendary Spielberg? "Not intimidating at all because he made you feel very comfortable. He knew everyone by their name, and he treated us like each one of us has so much potential. They worked us hard, pushed us to do our best and I learned a lot. I am so thankful for that experience," said Melody.

Born in North Bergen and a current resident of Secaucus, Melody started formal dance lessons when she was six years old at Oneida Quevedo Dance Studio learning a variety of dance forms. She loved representing her Cuban heritage at various stage shows in NJ/NY area. Her stage performances include West Side Story and 42nd Street. She even took time off from University to work as a Character Performer at Walt Disney World. Currently Melody teaches at her former dance school, Oneida, and as a substitute teacher in our school district. Her dream is to work on Broadway, television and film and hopes to inspire others to train, perform and dream big.

We wish Melody much success!



## Michael Gehm Named 2021 Hudson County Veteran of the Year



Every Secaucus High School student in the last 20 years probably knows Mr. Michael Gehm, and his story of service, tragedy and triumph. Earlier in November, Mr. Gehm was honored as the 2021 Hudson County Veteran of the Year for his service to the nation as Fire Controlman in the U.S. Navy from 1978 to 1990. At the Town Council meeting on November 9th, Mayor Michael Gonnelli and the Town Council presented the award from the County and a Proclamation detailing his service in the Navy and in Town.

Mr. Gehm served in the U.S. Navy as Fire Controlman from 1978 to 1990 and is a plank owner of USS Normandy, which means "is a member of the crew when the ship was first commissioned, and if anything were to happen to the ship, I get a part of it," explained Mr. Gehm in his loud voice and southern drawl. His tour of duty included Norfolk,

Virginia; Bath, Maine; Chicago, Illinois; and San Diego, California. He suffered a major accident on February 14, 1990, when his harness snapped and he fell 35 feet on the ship's deck—an event that made him wheel-chair dependent and changed the course of his life. He often tells his students that the easy thing for him to do at that time would be to give up. However, with the support of his family, and his will to make a difference, he decided to study Computer Administration at Stevens Institute of Technology. His foray into teaching came when he took a History class in college and the professor told him he would be a great teacher. This led him to earn a teacher's degree from St. Peter's University. He was hired by the Secaucus School system, first to set up an IT network and later as a history teacher. The rest is history! Mr. Gehm started the Secaucus chapter of JSA and through it inspired countless students to be civic minded, and most importantly to be involved, engaged citizens. Mr. Gehm is truly loved by all.

We congratulate Mr. Gehm on being named the Hudson County Veteran of the Year. We applaud him for his bravery and inspiration to countless students, for his contributions to the Secaucus school district, and especially for the positive energy he brings with him everywhere he goes.





This Month in  
Secaucus  
Upcoming Events  
Community Highlights  
Reminders

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE SECAUCUS PUBLIC LIBRARY




**Jersey Jubilation Handbell Choir**  
Sunday, December 19th @ 1:00 pm  
(Main Library)

What better way to get into the holiday spirit than music! Let's ring in the holidays with a performance from the Jersey Jubilation Handbell Choir. Seating is limited please register on the calendar at [secaucuslibrary.org](http://secaucuslibrary.org) to secure your spot.

Mayor and the Town Council  
present

**Skating with Santa**



Sunday December 19, 2021  
Secaucus Ice Rink  
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM  
Refreshments will be served

*For more information please call*  
(551) 257-7207 OR (201) 330-3299  
Michael Pero - Recreation Superintendent  
John Schwartz-Facility Director

**The Town of Secaucus**



**Holiday TOY DRIVE**

**NOW through December 10<sup>th</sup>**

New, Unwrapped Toys needed for less-fortunate children between the ages of  
**1 to 14 years old**

Bring all donations to:

Community Center—145 Front St  
Recreation Center—1200 Koelle Blvd  
Town Hall—1203 Paterson Plank Road  
Secaucus Library 1379 Paterson Plk Rd  
For more information call 201-330-2014

**NOTICE TO RESIDENTS**

Alternate side of the street parking will be suspended from:  
December 13, 2021 through March 14, 2022

**NOTICE TO HOLIDAY SHOPPERS**

Town of Secaucus metered parking will be suspended for the month of December

**Secaucus Honey**

The perfect gift this holiday season straight from Secaucus' very own hives.

All honey sales support the Hudson River Apiary Society

**1/2 LB. JAR = \$10**  
**1 LB. JAR = \$20**

**LARGE QUANTITY DISCOUNT** **12 LB. CASE FOR \$175**

To place an order, please contact  
Environmental@Secaucus.net or  
201-330-2000 (ext 3222)

Secaucus Public Library

**Family Holiday Craft**

DECEMBER 8TH, 3:00 PM  
PANASONIC ROOM



Fun for the whole family! A holiday craft is waiting for adults and children ages 4 and up at the Secaucus Public Library. Supplies are limited. Sign up now on the calendar at [secaucuslibrary.org](http://secaucuslibrary.org) to secure your spot.

Happy Holidays  
FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT

**GRG HUDSON REGIONAL HOSPITAL**

Home of the  
Institute for Robotic Surgery

PLEASE JOIN US FOR CAROLING, HOT COCOA AND TREATS, AND (OF COURSE) PICTURES WITH SANTA!

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>  
FROM 6-8 P.M.

55 MEADOWLANDS PARKWAY,  
SECAUCUS

SEE YOU THERE!

Secaucus public library

**FREE CITIZENSHIP CLASSES**

Every Saturday at 11:00 am

Improve your English Language Knowledge.  
Get ready to take the Civics test.  
Prepare for the interview

To register use the library's calendar at:  
[www.secaucuslibrary.org](http://www.secaucuslibrary.org) or email Gladys at  
Gladys.tous@secaucus.bccls.org

**KID'S NIGHT IN**  
"PARENTS NIGHT OUT"

JOIN US FOR A MOVIE AND SNACKS  
SPACE JAM: NEW LEGACY

DECEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup> AT 6:00-9:00PM,  
LOCATED AT THE KOELLE REC CENTER

**\$5.00 PER CHILD**  
AGES 5-12



REGISTER THROUGH OUR RECDISK WEBSITE.  
<https://secaucus.recdisk.com/Community/Home>

**Hiring Event – Tues. 12/7/21**



**Location: 145 Front St.**  
**Time: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm**

**\*\*All types of positions/shifts available!\*\***

**For further information:**  
Call: Tara Acquaviva  
201-863-2532  
[tacquaviva@secaucus.net](mailto:tacquaviva@secaucus.net)