



Message from the Mayor

MAYOR JASON F. CILENTO

January 2026

Dunellen Starts 2026 with Annual Reorganization Meeting, Reflecting on a Successful 2025 and Looking Forward to the Year Ahead

The Borough of Dunellen proudly kicked off the New Year by coming together at the annual Reorganization Meeting on Thursday, January 1. This yearly tradition marked a fresh chapter for our community, welcoming newly sworn-in officials, honoring dedicated volunteers, and reflecting on the many achievements throughout the past year that have strengthened our Borough. As we enter 2026, Dunellen is poised to build on its successes with a promising year ahead.

During the meeting, Councilwoman Trina Rios and Councilman D. Cole Sigmon were sworn in following their reelection in November, continuing their service on the Dunellen Borough Council, while Councilwoman Crisol-Iris Lantz was unanimously selected to serve as Council President for 2026.

A special thank you to Assemblywoman Nancy Muñoz for administering the oath of office to Councilwoman Trina Rios, Councilman D. Cole Sigmon, and Council President Crisol-Iris Lantz. The Borough of Dunellen is grateful to Assemblywoman Muñoz for her years of support and service to our Miracle Mile as well as our fellow municipalities in Legislative District 21.



The meeting also included the swearing-in of William Robertson, who will continue to serve as the Borough's Municipal Attorney, as well as the volunteers who will be beginning new terms on Dunellen's boards and commissions in 2026.

...Continued on page 4

Important Winter Weather Information



Don't get a ticket! Remove your vehicle(s) from the street during snow events.

In order to allow snowplows to operate freely and unimpeded, during the period of time commencing one hour after snow has been continuously falling and ending 12 hours after snow ceases to fall, no person shall park, stop, stand, or leave abandoned vehicles on a street within the Borough of Dunellen, according to Borough Code §202-15B. Alternate off-street

...Continued on page 7

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DUNELLEN GOVERNMENT DIRECTORY

www.dunellen-nj.gov

All council meetings are held in the Municipal Council Chambers, on the first and third Monday of the month, located at 355 North Ave, Dunellen. Meetings commence at 7:00pm, unless otherwise noted.

Elected Officials:

Jason F. Cilento, Mayor
732-882-4551, jcilento@dunellen-nj.gov

Crisol-Iris Lantz, Council President
clantz@dunellen-nj.gov

Teresa Albertson, Councilmember
talbertson@dunellen-nj.gov

Daniel Cole Sigmon, Councilmember
dsigmon@dunellen-nj.gov

Trina Rios, Councilmember
trios@dunellen-nj.gov

William Scott, Councilmember
wscott@dunellen-nj.gov

Elizabeth VanDermark, Councilmember
evandermark@dunellen-nj.gov

Business Administrator, Superintendent of Parks & Recreation, Superintendent of Department of Public Works:

Alexander Miller
732-968-3033, amiller@dunellenborough.com

Municipal Clerk:

Lauren Staats, RMC
732-968-3033 (Phone)
732-968-8605 (Fax)
M-F: 9:00am-4:30pm

Public Information Officer:

William George
communications@dunellenborough.com

Registrar:

Lauren Staats, CMR
M-F: 9:00am-3:00pm
Marriage License Applications are by appointment only.

Tax Collector:

Dawn Hutchison
dhutchison@dunellenborough.com
Starlet Sherrod, Assistant to the Tax Collector
ssherrrod@dunellenborough.com
732-968-1226 (Phone)
732-968-3903 (Fax)
M-F: 9:00am-4:30pm

Tax Assessor:

Dawn Guttschall
dguttschall@dunellenborough.com
1st & 3rd Monday of the month
5:00-7:30pm (or by appointment)
732-968-3033 ext. 132 (Phone)
732-968-3903 (Fax)

Construction Office:

Scott Brescher, Construction Official
sbrescher@dunellenborough.com
The Construction Office has Moved to the 2nd Floor of Borough Hall, 355 North Avenue
M-F: 9:00am-4:30pm

Claribel Acevedo, Technical Assistant Inspections

Monday: Building Inspection
3:00pm-6:00pm

Tuesday: Fire, Electrical, & Plumbing Inspections
3:00pm-6:00pm

Thursday: Building, Fire, Electrical & Plumbing Inspections
3:00pm-6:00pm

Wednesday & Friday: No inspections
732-968-3323 (Phone)
732-968-3872 (Fax)

Recreation Director:

Kelly Seader
kseader@dunellenborough.com

Planning Board:

Regular meetings - 4th Monday of each month at 7:00pm
Municipal Building

Director of Community Development:

Derryck White
dwhite@dunellenborough.com

Office of Emergency Management:

732-968-3033
Homer Mosley, OEM Coordinator
hmosley@dunellenborough.com
Joseph Cummins, OEM Deputy Coordinator
jcummins@dunellenborough.com

Code Enforcement:

George Deene
908-672-2593, gdeene@dunellenborough.com
Ken Baudendistel
kbaudendistel@dunellenborough.com

Public Works

M-Sat: 8:00am-2:00pm
235 Hall Street, 732-968-5455
Paint Drop Off: 2nd Saturday each month (8:00am-12:00pm)

Municipal Attorney:

William P. Robertson

MCIA – Division of Recycling

Call MCIA for any questions or concerns regarding bi-weekly Recycling
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Cranbury, NJ 08512
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Mayorcover, 4-6
Important Winter Weather Information cover, 7
Dunellen Government Directory..... 3
Dunellen Outings Community Committee7
Dunellen Kicked Off the Holiday Season With Annual Christmas Tree Lighting..... 8
Dunellen Celebrated Second Annual Menorah Lighting at Washington Memorial Park 8
Annual Holiday House Decorating Contest Lights Up Dunellen 8
Dunellen Parks and Recreation:
Youth Basketball Program 9
Annual Events 9
Open Pickleball at DHS Gym 9
Calling All Coaches 9
Year in Review.....10
Dunellen Celebrates Annual Senior Citizen Holiday Luncheon 11
Kick Off the New Year with the Dunellen Senior Club!..... 11
Borough of Dunellen Announces Monmouth Museum Satellite Location and Actors Studio of New Jersey Residency Through NJEDA A.R.T. Grants12
Grant Awards.....12
Easy Bites for the Big Game.....13
Dunellen Borough Police Department PBA Toy Drive – 2025.....14
Dunellen Hotel's 100th Anniversary.....15
Lifetime Achievement Award.....15
Volunteer of the Year.....15
Deli Cream Ribbon Cutting.....16
Tasty Nutrition Ribbon Cutting16
Volunteer.....16
Happy Birthday Mrs. Ida Hedwig Cihanowyz.....16
Dunellen Shade Tree Commission (DSTC).....17
Dunellen Arts, Inclusion, & Culture Commission ...17
Classifieds18
Shop Local 20

Message from the Mayor

Continued from cover...

During the meeting, Kenneth “Ken” Baudendistel was recognized as Dunellen’s 2025 Volunteer Citizen of the Year for his decades of service to the Borough. From coaching youth sports to serving seven years on the Dunellen Planning Board and eighteen years on the Dunellen Borough Council, Ken has always been active in the community, including founding the Dunellen Shade Tree Commission, which he continues to lead as Chairman.



Dunellen’s 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award was posthumously presented to Councilman Harold “Hal” VanDermark, honoring his decades of devoted service and lasting impact on the community. Hal was deeply involved in supporting local arts and culture, founding Inspire Art Gallery & Studio to uplift area artists, and previously volunteered with the

Dunellen Downtown Management Organization and Arts & Culture Commission. Serving on the Borough Council from 2021 until his passing, he was a dedicated leader whose legacy of service and commitment will be remembered and cherished by all who knew him.



A major highlight of the Reorganization Meeting was Mayor Jason F. Cilento’s State of the Borough address, reflecting on the many achievements of 2025 and outlining priorities for Dunellen in 2026.

The Borough of Dunellen’s 2025 Accomplishments:

- The Dunellen Office of Emergency Management and Community Emergency Response Team updated emergency plans, developed school reunification procedures, conducted active shooter drills with local partners, completed the move to a new Emergency Operations Center, expanded

CERT membership and training, and contributed over 400 hours of training and support during community emergencies, including the July windstorm and flooding.

- The Dunellen Borough Police Department completed over 200 arrests, including 90 DWI arrests, conducted 2,915 motor vehicle stops, and filed 849 police reports. Patrolman Keith Irons was promoted to Sergeant, with new hires Patrolmen Andrew Mortensen and Erik Ortiz joining in March, while Patrolman Brian O’Neill retired after many years of service. Several officers were recognized by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and Sergeant Robbins was honored as a Drug Recognition Expert Instructor.
- The Dunellen Fire Department celebrated the official completion of the George W. Hodulik Firehouse reconstruction with its Certificate of Occupancy and welcomed 14 new volunteers. Firefighters responded to over 480 calls, including a historic high of 134 calls during July’s severe weather events, demonstrating extraordinary commitment.
- The Dunellen Rescue Squad responded to over 400 calls, with about 20 volunteers contributing more than 12,000 man-hours and 2,000 training hours. The Squad secured a Verizon grant, raised funds for operations, and provided medical coverage at community events, including the high school graduation,

...Continued on page 5

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Message from the Mayor

Continued...

- street fair, Haunted Trail, and 5K race.
- The Department of Public Works maintained Borough property, snowplowed, treated roads in winter, inspected and cleaned 304 catch basins, swept over 300 miles of streets, and installed planters in Washington Memorial Park and at Borough entrances. DPW crews removed 650 tons of downed tree brush after the July 3rd storm and cleared an additional 80 tons of debris following the July 14th flood.
- Infrastructure improvements included the completion of Second Street Phase One and the Jackson Avenue Mill & Pave project, featuring new curbs, sidewalks, ADA-compliant ramps, milling, paving, and updated striping. These projects covered approximately half a mile of roadway. NJ American Water projects completed in 2025 will be milled and paved in 2026, bringing total streets paved since 2020 to 13.33 miles, roughly 75% of the Borough's roads.
- The Administration transitioned employee health insurance to the Horizon HIF plan, limiting cost increases to 14% compared to 36.5% if the Borough had stayed in the State Health Benefit Plan.
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, which were funded through redevelopment community benefits at no direct cost to taxpayers, were installed at key North Avenue intersections to improve pedestrian safety and support a more walkable downtown.
- The Borough continued advocating for modernization of the Dunellen Train Station, meeting with NJ TRANSIT and state legislators to establish goals for repairs and upgrades. U.S. Senator Andy Kim toured the station in November to reinforce federal support.
- The Tax Department welcomed Starlet Sherrod as Assistant to the Tax Collector and expanded awareness of the PAS-1 Property Tax Relief program. Residents gained new remote payment options via QR codes, with credit, debit, and mobile payments planned.
- The Clerk's Office processed 68 marriages, issued dog and cat licenses, handled 500 OPRA requests, and facilitated new business licensing.
- The Municipal Court promoted Denise Donato to Court Administrator and welcomed Erica Trojanowski as Deputy Court Administrator to ensure smooth operations.
- Downtown growth continued with six new businesses opening, nearly 275 construction permits issued, and rental inspections increasing from 93 to 250. Construction investment nearly tripled to \$11 million, signaling strong confidence in Dunellen as a place to live, invest, and work.
- The Dunellen Downtown Management Organization welcomed new businesses, celebrated local milestones, including the 100th anniversary of the Dunellen Hotel & Rathskeller, continued beautification efforts with planters and decorative baskets, and hosted community events such as the Car Show on Route 28.
- The Dunellen Parking Authority improved safety and accessibility by installing a new parking machine, hiring a third part-time Parking Enforcement Officer, adopting Ordinance 2025-01 to strengthen parking regulations, and updating parking information on the Borough website.
- Communications efforts expanded with the formal transition to a Public Information Officer, implementation of the TextMyGov emergency notification system, and plans to launch a redesigned Borough website in early 2026. Transparency initiatives included livestreamed Council meetings, Mayoral Town Halls, monthly Walks & Talks, and regular online Messages from the Mayor.
- The Dunellen Shade Tree Commission celebrated Arbor Day by planting a Princeton American Elm with first graders at Faber

- School, planted trees throughout the Borough, maintained the Adopt-A-Station program, pruned trees, decorated for the holidays, and maintained Tree City USA status for the 22nd consecutive year. A memorial tree was planted in Columbia Park in honor of longtime member John Finney.
- The Dunellen Arts, Inclusion, & Culture Commission celebrated the Madison Avenue mural, hosted five Music in the Park concerts, presented three performances of High School Musical through Plays in the Park, recognized Juneteenth and Black History Month, sponsored art and essay contests for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, ran a Summer Art Camp, and organized the annual Holiday Window Decorating program to support local businesses.
- The Recreation Department set participation records, expanded 11 youth programs including new summer camps for baseball and softball, added adult and senior events, and hosted nine community-wide gatherings. Youth sports participation increased, supported by 77 volunteer coaches. The Hometown Heroes Banner Program grew to honor 130 local heroes with 18 new banners added in 2025. The Recreation Program Coordinator role transitioned to Parks and Recreation Director to further enhance programming.

Agenda Items for 2026:

- The Borough secured nearly \$1M in grant funding for 2026, bringing total grants since 2020 to over \$8M. These funds will support infrastructure upgrades and beautification projects, with most covered by non-Dunellen tax dollars to ease the tax burden on residents. These funds will support infrastructure upgrades and beautification projects, with most covered by non-Dunellen tax dollars to ease the tax burden on residents.
- Notable grants include \$448,271 from the NJDOT Municipal Aid grant for Second

...Continued on page 6

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HONOR our HEROES

Message from the Mayor

Continued from page 5...

- Street Phase 3 and \$525,000 from the NJDOT Set-Aside Grant for North Avenue Streetscape Improvements Phase 3.
- Beautification efforts funded through redevelopment community benefits, including enhanced benches and additional planters, will begin in 2026, providing visible improvements throughout the year.
- The North Avenue/Bound Brook Road Streetscape project will install new LED decorative lighting from Madison Avenue to the Middlesex/Dunellen border, enhancing safety and downtown aesthetics.
- Significant arts funding of nearly \$883,000 from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's Activation, Revitalization, and Transformation Program will support the establishment of a Monmouth Museum satellite location at 266 North Avenue and a new residency by the Actors Studio of New Jersey at the historic Dunellen Theatre.
- Second Street Phase 2 will address damaged curbs and sidewalks, upgrade parts of the stormwater system, replace trees, mill and pave the street, and add enhanced striping and speed radar signs.
- The South Washington Safe Street project will replace sidewalks from the railroad bridge to the Dunellen border near Walnut

Street, improving pedestrian safety and accessibility.

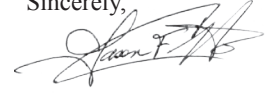
- An assessment through the Safe Streets For All Grant will create a plan to improve pedestrian access safety throughout Dunellen and open doors for additional state and federal funding.
- The Borough will explore partnering with an economic development consultant to create a strategic plan to market, attract, and retain businesses while supporting existing ones.
- Redevelopment efforts in the downtown area will continue, building on over \$175 million in investments to date.
- The Borough will assess and prioritize improvements needed in parks and other community spaces.
- Collaboration with the Parking Authority will continue to conduct a comprehensive parking assessment aimed at improving parking conditions for residents and downtown visitors.
- Planners will be engaged to review the existing Redevelopment Plan with a focus on identifying areas beyond the downtown core for missing middle housing to promote affordable for-sale options and address regional housing needs.
- A 250 Committee will be established, led by Business Administrator Alex Miller, to organize community celebrations in honor of the United States' 250th anniversary.

It is a true privilege to serve as Mayor of

the community that raised me, and where I am now raising a family of my own. I look forward to the opportunities and progress that 2026 will bring to our Miracle Mile, and I am excited to continue our work alongside the Dunellen Borough Council, our volunteers, our business owners, and our residents. I wish everyone a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

To read the full 2026 State of the Borough Address, please visit www.Dunellen-NJ.gov/2026Reorganization.

Sincerely,



Jason F. Cilento, Mayor
Borough of Dunellen



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Important Winter Weather Information

Continued from cover...

parking during snow emergencies is available at:

- American Legion Post 119, 137 New Market Road
- McCoy Park, 246 Fourth Street
- Columbia Park, 200 Orange Street

The Dunellen Police Department will mail tickets to vehicle owners who do not comply with removing their vehicles from streets in the Borough of Dunellen when roads are snow-covered.

Shovel your sidewalk within 24 hours.

The owner or occupant of lands bordering sidewalks are required to remove all snow and ice from sidewalks within 24 hours after snow ceases, according to Borough Code §256-1. The Borough code inspector will mail notices of fines to persons who do not comply.

Clear snow from around fire hydrants.

If a fire hydrant is located adjacent to your property, please clear a 3 foot perimeter of snow around the fire hydrant. This will help the fire department respond to emergencies more quickly.

Dunellen Outings Community Committee

Happy New Year! We wish everyone a fun, peaceful, and healthy 2026.

The DOCC closed out 2025 with two successful events, our annual holiday shopping trip in November and a centerpiece crafting event in December. This year's shopping trip took us to Peddlers Village in Lahaska, Pennsylvania, where participants enjoyed time exploring the shops before gathering for a delicious luncheon at the Cock 'n Bull Restaurant. While the day brought beautiful weather, the evening turned brisk as the sun set, but the stunning holiday light displays throughout the village made braving the cold well worth it.

In December, DOCC members created festive centerpieces using donated materials, which were then gifted to the Recreation Department for use at the Dunellen Seniors Holiday Party in early January. Looking ahead, we will be hosting another event in mid-January, a painting party with Dunellen's DAICC to begin work on the mural panels for the South Washington Avenue train bridge. Please watch our Facebook page and group postings for additional details.

As we begin the new year, the DOCC will take time to reassess how we can most effectively serve our community and strengthen our outreach to residents. We welcome your feedback and ideas for future events and initiatives. Kindly send your responses to dallen5296@verizon.net by the end of the month.

Thank you for your continued participation and support. Be sure to follow our Facebook page, DOCC Dunellen Outings Community Committee, for updates, results, and upcoming events.



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NJ Office of Emergency Management: <https://nj.gov/njoem/>

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Dunellen Kicked Off the Holiday Season With Annual Christmas Tree Lighting



The holiday season officially began in Dunellen with the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, held on a crisp winter evening at Washington Memorial Park. At 6:00 PM, on December 7, families, friends, and neighbors gathered to welcome the season with festive lights, music, and holiday cheer.

Santa Claus made his grand entrance, delighting children and spreading joy throughout the crowd. Stilt-walker holiday characters towered above the crowd, entertaining guests and bringing an extra layer of magic to the celebration.

The atmosphere was filled with music and warmth as the 5th Grade Choir, under the direction of Mr. Geiger, performed a selection of holiday favorites. The Imperial Brass Band followed with a performance, filling the park with lively and heartwarming tunes that lifted everyone's spirits.

This cherished community tradition was made possible through the dedication and support of the Dunellen Recreation Department. Special thanks go to the Dunellen-Green Brook Rotary Club for providing delicious hot chocolate to keep everyone warm. Gratitude is also extended to the Dunellen Fire Department, Rescue Squad, Police Department, and Office of Emergency Management (OEM), whose teamwork helped ensure a safe and memorable evening for all. A heartfelt thank-you also goes to the Dunellen Recreation Commission for their continued support and assistance in making the event a success.

The Christmas tree was lit, shining as a symbol of hope, joy, and community spirit. The celebration stood as a heartfelt reminder of the togetherness and warmth that make Dunellen so special during the holiday season.

Dunellen Celebrated Second Annual Menorah Lighting at Washington Memorial Park



Dunellen welcomed the Festival of Lights with its 2nd Annual Menorah Lighting Ceremony on Tuesday, December 16, at 6:00 PM in Washington Memorial Park. The intimate gathering brought together residents, local leaders, and members of the Jewish community for a warm and meaningful celebration of Hanukkah.

Mayor Cilento opened the ceremony with a few words, expressing gratitude for the community's growing participation in holiday traditions and emphasizing the importance of unity during the season.

The borough was honored to be joined by Rabbi Mendi, who spoke about the meaning of Hanukkah, reflecting on themes of hope, resilience, and the triumph of light over darkness. Attendees joined together to sing traditional Hanukkah songs, filling the park with a sense of joy and togetherness.

As the menorah was lit, its candles shining brightly against the winter evening, guests enjoyed chocolate gelt and the spirit of celebration that defines the holiday.

Annual Holiday House Decorating Contest Lights Up Dunellen

Dunellen residents once again embraced the holiday spirit in the town's annual Holiday House Decorating Contest! Participants decked out their homes, yards, and apartments with festive flair.

The lucky winner received a \$100 gift card and a very special visit from Santa, who made his first stop on Christmas Eve morning at the winning home with the Dunellen Fire Department.

The contest brought neighbors together and added extra sparkle to the season, continuing a beloved Dunellen tradition.



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DUNELLEN PARKS AND RECREATION

Youth Basketball Program Tipped Off January 3

Dunellen's Youth Basketball Program is just underway for another exciting season. Children in grades K-6 will participate in an 8-week, energetic program that emphasizes learning the game, staying active, and having fun.

Participants meet every Saturday and receive age-appropriate instruction focused on building confidence, improving skills, and developing a love for basketball. Whether a child is brand new to the sport or already loves to play, the program offers something for everyone.

For our older athletes, students in grades 5 and 6 will also take part in Monday evening game sessions. These added matchups give players more time on the court to practice teamwork, apply what they've learned, and continue to grow throughout the season.



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Registration is ongoing:

www.DunellenParksandRecreation.com

The program relies on the support of volunteer parent coaches. Anyone interested in helping out is encouraged to reach out to Recreation Director Kelly Seader at kseader@dunellenborough.com.

Dunellen Recreation Department Announces Annual Events

The Dunellen Recreation Department is bringing the community together with a full year of exciting events for all ages. Join your neighbors, make memories, and celebrate the spirit of Dunellen!

- **Senior Citizen Holiday Luncheon** – Kick off the season with good food, friends, and festive cheer.
- **Easter Egg Hunt** – Hunt for colorful eggs and treats in this beloved spring tradition.
- **Opening Day Parade** – March into the recreation season with fun and community pride.
- **Volunteer Picnic** – A heartfelt thank-you to the volunteers who make it all possible.
- **Memorial Day Parade** – Honor our heroes with a memorable parade.
- **Senior Citizen Picnic** – An afternoon of games, food, and fellowship for seniors.
- **Halloween Parade** – Costumes, candy, and lots of spooky fun for everyone!
- **Founders Day** – Celebrate Dunellen's history with family-friendly activities.
- **Christmas Tree Lighting** – Ring in the holidays with lights, music, and festive cheer.

For dates, times, and registration info, visit our website:
www.Dunellenparksandrecreation.com

Get in the Game: Dunellen Offers Open Pickleball at DHS Gym

Whether you're new to pickleball or a seasoned player, Dunellen residents are invited to join in open play at the Dunellen High School (DHS) gym this winter. Participants can come solo or bring a friend, or two, for an evening of fun, exercise, and friendly competition.

The gym will be open for pickleball from 7:30 to 9:30 PM on Tuesdays and Wednesdays between November 12 and March 11. Play will be conducted on a first-come, first-served basis, so players are encouraged to arrive early. Participants should bring their own paddle and ball. The gym is accessible via the exterior stairway at the rear of the high school, which can be reached from Dunellen Avenue.

Pre-registration is required. Registration is free for Dunellen residents, while non-residents may register for \$15 per session. Space is limited, and registration fees are non-refundable if a session is cancelled due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

Don't miss this opportunity to get active, meet new people, and enjoy one of the fastest-growing sports in the country right here in Dunellen!



Calling All Coaches: Make a Difference in Dunellen!

Have a passion for sports? Love working with kids? The Dunellen Recreation Department is always on the lookout for enthusiastic volunteer coaches to lead our youth sports programs!

No experience? No problem! You don't need to be an expert—just a willingness to guide, encourage, and inspire. All volunteers are required to complete a Borough background check and the Rutgers SAFETY Course, both fully reimbursable.

Join our team and help create memorable experiences for Dunellen's young athletes while being part of a fun, rewarding community effort.

Inspire kids, have fun, and be part of our community! Interested? Reach out today! Email Recreation Director Kelly Seader at kseader@dunellenborough.com to get started.



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BOROUGH OF DUNELLEN



Year **2025**
IN REVIEW
#MiracleMileMeansCommunity

- Flashing Beacons Installed Along North Avenue
- Flashing Beacon at Second & Sanford
- New LED Lights Installed Along North Avenue
- Jackson Avenue Enhanced Striping
- Second Street Enhanced Striping
- Speed Radars Installed Throughout the Borough

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

- Basketball, Flag Football, Baseball, Softball, Spring, Summer, & Fall Tennis, Doubles Tennis, Spring & Fall Soccer, Rec Summer Camp, Adult Yoga, Winter Pickleball

13 RECREATION PROGRAMS

- Real Estate New Jersey, cover & feature in January 2025 edition
- New Jersey Business Magazine, *The Nell: A Boon to Dunellen*
- New Jersey 101.5, *This is the Latest NJ Downtown Area to be Reborn by Development*
- MyCentralJersey.com, *Dunellen gaining recognition for efforts to revitalize its 'Miracle Mile'*

4 Awards & Recognitions

- Jackson Avenue (entire length)
- Second Street (from Madison Avenue to the Middlesex Border)

.5 MILES OF NEWLY PAVED STREETS



"BRIGHT DAY, EVERY DAY" MURAL INSTALLATION AT THE MADISON AVENUE UNDERPASS

- NJDOT Municipal Aid Program | Second Street Phase 3
- NJDOT Set-Aside Grant | North Avenue Streetscape Improvements Phase 2

\$973,271 GRANT AWARDS



US SENATOR ANDY KIM VISITS DUNELLEN



\$1,591,827 IN PILOT REVENUE

- Walks & Talks with the Mayor
- Mayoral Town Halls: Volunteering, Emergency Services & Preparedness, & Redevelopment in Dunellen

11 MAYORAL EVENTS

737

Registrants in Rec Programs

192

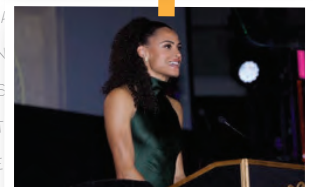
Volunteers for Rec programs and Borough commissions, committees, boards, etc.

community involvement

- Total Wireless
- Deli Cream
- Tasty Nutrition
- The Wick Studio
- Uncle Louie G (New Owners)
- Movement Laboratory Dance Studio

6 NEW BUSINESSES

\$9,600,000
IN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS FROM NEW JERSEY AMERICAN WATER IN 2025
\$18,600,000
TOTAL SINCE 2020



SYDNEY MCLAUGHLIN-LEVRONE IS INDUCTED INTO THE NEW JERSEY HALL OF FAME

- Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, *Inducted into New Jersey Hall of Fame, Named Female World Athlete of the Year & Female Track Athlete of the Year by World Athletics*
- Mis Amigos, *NJ.com's article "The 19 best burritos in New Jersey, ranked for 2025. A new burrito cracks the top 5!"*
- Cave Kitchen, *NJ.com's article "New Jersey's 21 best Black-owned restaurants to try in 2025"*
- Avellino's Pizzeria & Sports Bar, *MyCentralJersey.com's article "Score this Super Bowl Sunday at these 8 NJ sports bars"*
- Andy Turaj, *Polish Musician Releases New Album "Dunellen"*
- Madison Avenue Mural Installed, *"Bright Day, Every Day" by Olga Tapia*
- Senator Andy Kim, *Visits Dunellen to Participate in a Small Business Walk, Tours Dunellen Train Station, and Joins Commuters for a Ride & Talk on the Raritan Valley Line*
- Vinnie DiMura, *Honored at November 3 Council Meeting for Helping Prevent a Serious Fire Incident*
- Ida Cihanowyz, *Celebrated her 107th Birthday on November 10*

IN THE NEWS



NEW LED LIGHTING ALONG NORTH AVENUE

Incorporated 1887 | 8,411 population
2,725 housing units | Median age: 41.7
Median income \$84,789 | 1,371 School children: 640 in elementary, 331 in middle & 400 in high school
13% of population is senior citizens
63% of housing is owner-occupied
37% of housing is renter-occupied
3.36 average family size

SNAPSHOT IN TIME*

*American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2023 and NJ School Performance Report, 2023-2024

Borough of Dunellen, 355 North Ave, Dunellen, NJ 08812
732-968-3033 | www.dunellen-nj.gov | FB: Borough of Dunellen, NJ

Dunellen Celebrates Annual Senior Citizen Holiday Luncheon

The borough's annual Senior Citizen Holiday Luncheon brought residents together for a festive afternoon of food, fun, and friendship on Sunday, January 4, at the Dunellen Fire House. It was a great way to kick off the new year!

Seniors enjoyed a delicious catered meal from the Dunellen Hotel, featuring Chicken Marsala, potatoes, green beans, and a comforting Cream of Turkey Soup. The dining experience was enhanced by live holiday music, with Karl Geiger delighting attendees on the piano, filling the room with classic Christmas melodies.

Guests spent the afternoon socializing, playing games, and celebrating the season in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The luncheon offered an opportunity for seniors to connect with friends and neighbors, creating memories that truly captured the spirit of the holidays.

The Recreation Department thanks all who attended and looks forward to hosting the community again for next year's celebration. The Recreation Department would also like to thank the Recreation Commission for their help and support, and Mayor Cileto and the Borough Council.



Kick Off the New Year with the Dunellen Senior Club!

Looking for a fun way to start the new year? The Dunellen Senior Club invites all local seniors to join their weekly gatherings at the Senior Center!

Meet new friends, enjoy lively activities, and take part in exciting events every Friday morning. The club features special guest music entertainment, pizza parties, and much more. There's always something to look forward to!

Whether you're new to the area or just looking for a welcoming community to spend your Fridays, the Senior Club is the perfect place to connect, laugh, and have a great time.

For more information, please email Senior Club President Terri Albertson at dvcmom@msn.com. Start the year off right, join the fun, and make new memories with the Dunellen Senior Club!



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Borough of Dunellen Announces Monmouth Museum Satellite Location and Actors Studio of New Jersey Residency Through NJEDA A.R.T. Grants

Dunellen, NJ - The Borough of Dunellen is excited to announce the establishment of a Monmouth Museum satellite location in Dunellen and an Actors Studio of New Jersey residency at the Dunellen Theatre, made possible through a combined \$882,896.88 awarded under Phase II of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's (NJEDA) Activation, Revitalization, and Transformation (A.R.T.) Program. These initiatives will strengthen the Borough's downtown while expanding access to the arts.

"Arts and culture are a core part of Dunellen's identity, and we are excited to welcome the Monmouth Museum to our downtown and see the Actors Studio of New

Jersey establish a formal residency with the Dunellen Theatre," said Mayor Jason F. Cilento. "We look forward to working with both organizations to create new learning opportunities, enrich the quality of life through the arts, and support economic development by helping make downtown Dunellen a destination for visitors, an amenity for our residents, and a place where our children can learn, explore, and be inspired."

The Monmouth Museum has received a \$500,000 grant through the NJEDA A.R.T. Program to establish a satellite location in downtown Dunellen, in partnership with the Borough of Dunellen. The new space, located at 266 North Avenue, will feature exhibitions,

hands-on educational programming, and community-focused cultural experiences, providing arts and STEAM-based learning opportunities for residents of all ages.

"We are thrilled to bring the Monmouth Museum's mission and creativity to downtown Dunellen. This additional location gives us the chance to connect with families, schools, and community members in a meaningful way and to make arts and culture more accessible than ever. I'm grateful to Mayor Cilento for believing in this vision and excited for all that we will build together," said Erika Schaefer, Executive Director of the Monmouth Museum.

In addition, The Actors Studio of New Jersey has received a \$382,896.88 grant through the NJEDA A.R.T. Program to establish a residency at the historic Dunellen Theatre. The funding will support the development and presentation of theatrical productions based in Dunellen, utilizing the Theatre for rehearsals, performances, and related programming. The residency will bring high-quality productions to the Theatre and strengthen Dunellen's status as a destination for high-quality performing arts in New Jersey.

"As Artistic Director of The Actors Studio of New Jersey, it brings me great joy—along with our incredible creative team and board of directors—to begin this new chapter in partnership with the Dunellen Theatre," said Michael Restaino, Artistic Director of the Actors Studio of New Jersey. "Together, we look forward to enriching the community with fresh, innovative, and inspiring theatrical experiences right here in Dunellen. At The Actors Studio of New Jersey, our mission is to cultivate artistic excellence, celebrate diverse voices, and create transformative theater that connects, challenges, and inspires our audiences. As we look ahead to our 2026 season, we are deeply committed to carrying this mission forward—expanding our creative reach, engaging new audiences, and building an exciting new era of live performance at the Dunellen Theatre."

"After being a part of Dunellen for 57 years and operating the Dunellen Theatre since 1987, I am thrilled and grateful to partner with Michael Restaino and The Actors Studio of New Jersey as we recognize the Theatre's 103-year history," said Pam Zupko, owner of Zupko's Tavern & the Dunellen Theatre. "The Theatre has evolved over the years, hosting everything from first-run movies to national tribute bands to live performances, and this collaboration will help bring live performing arts back to Dunellen. I want to thank Mayor Cilento for introducing me to Michael and for his continued support of the arts in our community."

Additional information regarding the Monmouth Museum's satellite location and The Actors Studio of New Jersey will be available soon.

STAY IN THE LOOP ON WHAT'S HAPPENING IN DUNELLEN:

- **Borough website:** www.dunellen-nj.gov
- **Borough Facebook page:** [Borough of Dunellen, NJ](#)
- **Emergency Notifications:** www.dunellen-nj.gov/enotify
- **Community Events & Programs eblasts:**
Create an account at www.dunellenparksandrecreation.com
- **Downtown Dunellen monthly e-newsletter:**
Email: dunellenmanagement@dunellenborough.com

Grant Awards

The Borough of Dunellen is pleased to announce that it has secured nearly \$1 million in grant funding to support upcoming improvement projects throughout the community. This latest funding brings the Borough's total grant awards to \$8.2 million since 2020. These grant funds enable the Borough to advance critical infrastructure and beautification initiatives while reducing the financial burden on local taxpayers and continuing its long-term commitment to community investment and infrastructure modernization.


NJDOT Municipal Aid Program | Second Street Phase 3: The Borough of Dunellen is excited to announce that we have been awarded \$448,271 through the New Jersey Department of Transportation's (NJDOT) Fiscal Year 2026 Municipal Aid Program. These funds will be used for Second Street Phase 3, spanning Second Street from Washington Avenue to Jefferson Avenue. The scope of work for this project will include the removal and replacement of severely damaged curbs and sidewalks, the removal and replacement of trees, stormwater system restoration, and the milling and paving of the road, along with enhanced striping.

NJDOT Set-Aside Grant | North Avenue Streetscape Improvements Phase 2: The Borough of Dunellen has been awarded a \$525,000 Set-Aside Grant from the NJDOT, which will be used for North Avenue Streetscape Improvements Phase 2. This project spans North Avenue / Bound Brook Road from Madison

Avenue to Jackson Avenue and includes the installation of trees with expanded planters, benches, bike racks, and public garbage cans.

While the grants for these projects have been awarded for the 2026 Fiscal Year, it is important to note that their completion follows a two-year cycle due to the timelines and financial obligations of projects that are currently underway.

These grants total \$973,271.


Recently Awarded Grants
 NJDOT Municipal Aid Program
 Second Street Phase 3
 \$448,271
 NJTPA Set-Aside Grant
 North Avenue Streetscape Phase 2
 \$525,000
 Visit www.Dunellen-NJ.gov for more information
\$973,271 Total

Easy Bites for the Big Game

(Family Features) Whether you're tailgating with friends or hosting a watch party at home, every football fan needs a game plan to crunch, dip and cheer their way through opening kickoff, halftime and right down to the final play of the game.

Some of the best game day grub is hearty and savory but adding layers of flavor and texture can take recipes to the next level. For example, these Burger Bowls feature all the classic ingredients of a great burger, just without the bun. A tasty option for gluten-free guests or those who are cutting carbs, the bowls are made with Dandy Iceberg

BURGER BOWLS

Recipe courtesy of Casa de Crews

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 10 minutes

Servings: 4

Burger Bowls:

- 2 cups French fries, homemade or frozen
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 pound ground beef or ground turkey
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- Dandy Iceberg Lettuce, shredded
- 2-3 Roma tomatoes, diced
- pickle chips or spears, chopped
- cheddar cheese, shredded



Burger Sauce:

- 1/3 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard or yellow mustard
- 1 tablespoon pickle juice
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika

To Make Burger Bowls:

Cook French fries according to package directions.

In medium skillet over medium-high heat, heat olive oil. Add onion and saute until translucent, 5-7 minutes. Add ground beef to skillet, breaking up meat with spatula. Add Worcestershire sauce, garlic powder, paprika, salt and pepper; brown until cooked through. Drain and discard excess liquid and grease.

To make burger sauce: In jar, mix mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, pickle juice, Worcestershire sauce, onion powder, garlic powder and paprika well to combine.

Assemble bowls with layer of shredded lettuce, 3-4 ounces ground beef, diced tomatoes, pickles, cheddar cheese and 1/2 cup fries.

Drizzle with burger sauce and mix well.

Tip:

Burger sauce can be made in advance and stored in refrigerator in jar with airtight lid.

Lettuce from Duda Farm Fresh Foods, which boasts a legacy of quality, innovation and consistency in fresh produce cultivation since 1926.

Pulled pork, another tailgating treasure, gets an instant upgrade with the crunch of a fresh coleslaw topper and zesty pickled celery and jalapenos on the side. The winning play is to use crisp, fresh celery for the best flavors and a satisfying crunch with every bite. Since celery is 95% water and high in fiber, it leaves fans feeling comfortably full and ready to root for their favorite team.

PULLED PORK SANDWICHES WITH PICKLED CELERY AND JALAPENOS

Recipe courtesy of The Adventure Bite

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 10 hours

Servings: 9-10

- 4 1/2 pounds pork shoulder or Boston butt
- 26 ounces sweet and spicy barbecue sauce
- 1/2 tablespoon garlic
- 1/2 tablespoon fresh cracked black pepper
- fresh sandwich buns
- Dandy Celery, cut and pickled
- jalapenos
- coleslaw (optional)
- potato salad (optional)
- baked beans (optional)



Place pork in slow cooker.

Mix barbecue sauce, garlic and pepper. Pour over pork shoulder. Cook on low 8 1/2-10 hours or high 6-7 hours.

Shred meat and serve on buns with pickled celery and jalapenos.

Top with coleslaw, if desired. Serve with potato salad or baked beans, if desired.



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Dunellen Borough Police Department PBA Toy Drive – 2025

The Dunellen PBA #146 and the Piscataway PBA #93 once again partnered together with Zupko's Tavern/Dunellen Theatre for the 2025 Patricia Forbe's Memorial PBA Toy Drive Movie Nights.

Each year, the New Jersey State PBA conducts a toy drive to benefit Embrella (formerly the Foster and Adoptive Family Services of New Jersey), a group which provides support and resources to New Jersey youth who are currently living in foster or group home situations. Dunellen PBA has been hosting a "Toy Drive Movie Night" to help collect toys for that effort since 2017.

On Friday, December 5th and on Saturday, December 6th residents from all over came out for showings of National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation, Elf, and The Polar Express, featuring visits from a very special guest, Santa! The cost of admission? Just one unwrapped toy to donate. As usual, the PBA trailer was generously stocked with gifts, helping ensure that every child can enjoy the true spirit of Christmas.



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- Check belts & shoes
- Top off all fluids

- Most Cars • With This Coupon
- Cannot Be Combined • Expires 02/28/26

Dunellen Hotel's 100th Anniversary

On Tuesday, December 30, Mayor Cilento joined members of the Dunellen Borough Council and Dunellen Downtown Management Organization to celebrate the Dunellen Hotel and Rathskeller's incredible 100th anniversary, along with owners Rich Hendricks and Jim Daley. Rich and Jim were presented with an official proclamation, recognizing the Hotel's longstanding history and its importance as a beloved gathering place for residents and visitors alike. Congratulations on this amazing milestone, and here's to many more years of community, history, and good times!



Lifetime Achievement Award In Honor of Councilman Harold "Hal" VanDermark

The Borough of Dunellen proudly and respectfully presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to Councilman Harold "Hal" VanDermark, honoring a lifetime defined by service, leadership, creativity, and an enduring commitment to the community he so deeply loved.

This award recognizes individuals whose impact spans decades and whose dedication has helped shape the character, strength, and future of our Borough. Hal VanDermark exemplified these ideals throughout his life. From the moment he and his family made Dunellen their home in 1987, Hal embraced the Borough not simply as a place to live, but as a community to serve.

A proud Navy veteran, Hal carried with him a lifelong sense of duty that extended far beyond his military service. Over nearly forty years, he consistently gave back to Dunellen through volunteerism, mentorship, and civic leadership. He coached Dunellen Recreation Baseball and Softball, helping guide young residents during formative years, and volunteered with the Dunellen Downtown Management Organization and the Arts & Culture Commission, always seeking ways to strengthen community connections.

Hal's belief in creativity as a force for community building led him to open Inspire Art Gallery & Studio in 2018. Through this space, he championed local artists, encouraged artistic expression, and helped enrich Dunellen's cultural landscape. His support of the arts remains a lasting contribution to the vitality of our downtown.

In 2021, Hal's lifelong commitment to service culminated in his unanimous appointment to the Dunellen Borough Council. During his four years on Council, he served on the Finance Committee, acted as liaison to the Office of Emergency Management and CERT, supported public safety through his work with the Police Committee, and collaborated closely with the Recreation Commission to enhance programs for children, adults, and seniors. His approach to public service was thoughtful, inclusive, and guided by a genuine desire to see Dunellen thrive.

What makes Hal especially deserving of this Lifetime Achievement Award is not only the breadth of his service, but the heart with which he served. Even while facing immense personal challenges, Hal continued to show up for the people of Dunellen, offering his time, his insight, and his compassion for as long as he was able. His resilience, humility, and devotion stand as a powerful example of what true public service means.

This Lifetime Achievement Award honors a life spent giving, listening, and leading with integrity. Hal VanDermark's legacy lives on in the programs he strengthened, the young people he mentored, the artists he uplifted, and the community he helped shape.

Hal, you will always be remembered, deeply missed, and forever appreciated. Your lifetime of service has left an indelible mark on Dunellen, and your legacy will endure for generations to come.

Volunteer of the Year

Over the years, Dunellen has been fortunate to benefit from the remarkable spirit of volunteerism that defines the Miracle Mile. For a community of its size, Dunellen consistently demonstrates an exceptional level of civic engagement. Each year, the Borough recognizes one individual whose service exemplifies this commitment with the Volunteer of the Year Award. For 2025, Dunellen proudly honors Ken Baudendistel.

Ken and his wife, Hana, moved to Dunellen 39 years ago, where they raised their three daughters and became deeply rooted in the community. Ken's involvement began with coaching in the Borough's youth programs and volunteering in downtown clean-up efforts. His dedication to public service soon led him to the Planning Board, where he served for seven years. In 2001, Ken was elected to the Dunellen Borough Council, serving an impressive eighteen years and holding the role of Council President for the final five. During his tenure, he acted as liaison to several key departments, including Recreation, Finance, and Public Works.

Following severe storm activity in 2000 and 2001 that resulted in the loss of many trees throughout town, Ken recognized the vital role that a healthy tree canopy plays in a community. He spearheaded efforts to restore Dunellen's landscape by establishing the Borough's first Shade Tree Commission. Under Ken's leadership for the past 23 years, the Commission has overseen the planting of more than 900 trees and shrubs across Dunellen. He was also instrumental in the design and installation of landscape improvements at McCoy Park and Columbia Park.

Ken reflects that his years of service have been deeply rewarding, particularly through the friendships and connections he has built along the way. The opportunity to contribute to the well-being of the community and to strengthen bonds with neighbors has been especially meaningful to him.

The Borough of Dunellen extends its sincere appreciation to Ken Baudendistel for his decades of dedication and service, and proudly recognizes him as the 2025 Volunteer of the Year.





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Deli Cream Ribbon Cutting

On Saturday, November 8, Mayor Cilento was joined by members of the Dunellen Borough Council and the Dunellen Downtown Management Organization to welcome Deli Cream to Dunellen with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony!

Deli Cream is located at 387 North Avenue and proudly offers coffee, cappuccino, fruit bowls, shakes, and more. They are also available to host birthday parties and events. Welcome to our Miracle Mile!



Tasty Nutrition Ribbon Cutting

Tasty Nutrition, located at 375 North Avenue, was also welcomed to our growing downtown community on Saturday, November 8. Owned by Maria Mateo, this new spot offers a fresh and flavorful twist on healthy eating, serving up energizing smoothies, protein shakes, wraps, bowls, and salads, all made to fuel your day with nutritious, feel-good ingredients. We're so happy to have them here in Dunellen and look forward to seeing this great new addition thrive.



DUNELLEN, NJ

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Borough of
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Happy Birthday Mrs. Ida Hedwig Cihanowyz

On Monday, November 10, Mrs. Ida Hedwig Cihanowyz celebrated her incredible 107th birthday. Ida was born on November 10, 1918, and has spent 79 years as a cherished resident of our Miracle Mile.

Ida's life is a shining example of dedication and service. She previously served as President of the Dunellen Senior Club for 16 years, President of the Rosary Society for three terms, and as a devoted member of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas. She also played an active role in shaping our youth as a leader in Cub Scout Pack 127 and the Brownies, and contributed to local culture and community engagement through her work with the Polish National Home.

Her remarkable longevity, her commitment to faith, family, and community, and the warmth she continues to share with those around her are truly inspiring.



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Dunellen Shade Tree Commission (DSTC)

Arbor Day

Our 23rd Arbor Day celebration was with the first graders at Faber School where the children were taught how trees improve our health and community, understand the parts of a tree, learn how they are planted and the history of how Arbor Day began using a slide presentation and hands on activities. We concluded the event by planting a Princeton American Elm on school property.

Work in the Community

This year we planted 3 memorial trees in Columbia Park and 9 other trees throughout the community. In addition, we continued to participate in the Adopt -A- Station program run by NJ Transit where the 2 railroad embankments on S Washington Ave were cleaned several times during the year and upgraded.

The commission also pruned low-hanging branches growing from the base of town trees and for the holidays we decorated the blue spruce on the corner of New Market and S Washington Ave.

Community Education

Through the efforts of members of the commission we created educational posters that were displayed at the public library, Dunellen Hotel restaurant and Dunellen HS. The DSTC also created a catalog of the most common street trees in Dunellen and published tree care and planting guides in the Dunellen Report for community education. Additionally, a member of the DSTC participated in the Mayoral Town Hall event on volunteerism.

Several Commission members met with the Highland Park Shade Tree Commission and exchanged ideas and learned from each other's experiences. Two of the commission members created a leaf and bark identification document

specific to the most common Dunellen Trees to be used both as an educational tool and for tree inventory.

Maintaining Shade Tree Commission Status

To maintain our Shade Tree Commission status the team completed a tree inventory of Columbia, McCoy and Washington Parks as well as updated the tree inventory of all our streets through the community. Two members attended the NJ Shade Tree convention where CEU's were earned by participating in educational classes on various aspects of running the commission, maintaining and properly planting trees. In addition, a member attended the NJSTF session on utilities and trees. The commission filed its annual report with the state of NJ State Forestry division and was awarded Tree City USA for the 22nd year

Unfortunately, this year a very dedicated member of our DSTC, John Finney, who served the community and the commission for several years, passed away. In his memory a Princeton American Elm was planted in Columbia Park.

Contact or Volunteer with the Shade Tree Commission

Any resident interested in having a tree planted along the street in front of their home can submit a request to shadetree@dunellenborough.com and you will be added to the list for when funds become available.

Anyone interested in joining or helping the DSTC should submit a volunteer application through the Dunellen website, www.Dunellen-NJ.gov/Volunteering.

Dunellen Shade Tree Commission celebrating 23 years serving the community and beautifying the Miricale Mile of Dunellen

Dunellen Arts, Inclusion, & Culture Commission DAICC Brings Holiday Cheer to Downtown Dunellen with Annual Window Paintings

Dunellen's downtown was transformed this holiday season as the Dunellen Arts, Inclusion & Culture Commission (DAICC) completed its annual holiday window painting tradition. Beginning November 29, DAICC volunteers painted winter scenes on the storefronts of local businesses, bringing festive cheer to North Avenue.

This year's designs featured classic winter imagery, including white silhouettes of snowmen, evergreens, deer, and delicate snowflake accents where space allowed. The uniform style created a cohesive and charming seasonal display, highlighting the Borough's commitment to arts, culture, and community spirit.

The decorated windows drew the attention of residents and visitors alike throughout December, and January, offering a festive backdrop for holiday shopping and community gatherings and showcasing the creativity and dedication of DAICC volunteers.



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