



# Bits & Pieces

**GFWC Vernon Township Woman's Club**

**April 2026**

**Volume 17 Issue 4**

**Next Meeting: April 23, 2026**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**Fran Gialanella**

I don't know where the time goes but it's another month closer to the end of our 2025-2026 season and my term as your president. Happy Spring to all, even though it doesn't feel much like it. We are working hard on budgeting and a new board for our next year. Hopefully, all of you have paid your dues at this point. We are proud to have increased our membership over the past year and particularly happy that there is some younger blood among our ranks now. We need that to keep the club vibrant.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at our next major fundraiser which is the 'Taste of Vernon' on April 27. I have never been, but I am looking forward to it. I have been told that it really is a fun evening so, if you haven't purchased tickets yet, give it some serious thought. In the meantime, I look forward to seeing everyone at our next monthly meeting on April 23rd.

Fran

## 2026 EVENTS CALENDAR

**\* Contact Maria Dorsey, Federation Secretary, if interested in any of the NJSFWC or District events**

- April 23 VTWC Meeting—Speaker, Lynn Persico, Master Gardener from Rutgers Cooperative Extension. She will enlighten us on assorted topics related to soil and planting.
- April 27 Taste of Vernon, Red Tail Lodge, Mountain Creek, Vernon (Please try to attend—VTWC will receive a portion of the proceeds.)
- May 3-6 \* NJSFWC 132nd Annual Convention, Hard Rock Hotel, Atlantic City, NJ—Theme: “When Friends Gather”
- May 9 Vernon Clean Communities Program (10:00 am)  
Our club participates in road cleanup as a fundraiser!
- May 28 VTWC Meeting—Speaker, Cindy Armstrong, Sussex County OFR Coordinator in Behavioral Health Services
- June 1-4 \* Girls’ Career Institute, Douglass Residential College at Rutgers University
- June 11 \* Highlands District Council Meeting—Hosted by Vernon Township Woman’s Club, 21 Church Street, Vernon, NJ
- June 25 VTWC Meeting—Summer Sendoff

## 2025-2026 VTWC Leadership

### Executive Board

President	Fran Gialanella
First Vice President	MJ Palmer (Programs)
Second Vice President	Fran Janusko (Fundraising)
Treasurer	Judy Phillips (Ways & Means)
Recording Secretary	Donna Maher
Corresponding Secretary	Linda Hibbert
Federation Secretary	Maria Dorsey (traditionally outgoing President)

### Committee Chairs

Communications	Maria Dorsey (Facebook and Media)
Internal Communications	Karen Breese (Newsletter “Bits & Pieces”)
Webmaster	Deborah Fagnan
Membership	Joan Danaher

### Department Chairs

Advocates for Children	Fran Gialanella
Birth Haven	Rosetta Peterson
Dulce Esperanza	Meg Gleason
Ginnie’s House	Donna Maher
Arts Performing & Arts & Culture	Dee Garbarino
Civic Engagement & Outreach	Debra Piccirillo
Veterans & Military Support	Debra Piccirillo
International Affairs	Lisa Mills
Birthday Bags	Lisa Thomas, Judy Phillips
Benny’s Bodega	Lisa Murphy
DASI	Lisa Murphy
Project Self-Sufficiency	Joan Danaher, Dee Garbarino
WAFO (Warwick Area Farmworkers Organization)	Meg Gleason
Education & Libraries	Valerie Seufert
Environment & Conservation	Maria Dorsey
Health & Wellness	Karen Szepietowski
Blankets with Care	Karen Szepietowski
Comfort Pillows	Reba Burrell
Vial of Life	Rosemarie Guidice
Special State Project (The NJ Children’s Alliance)	Fran Gialanella
President’s Scrapbook	Nancy Speruta and Maryann DiCola

**APRIL MEETING**  
**April 23, 2026 6:30 p.m.**  
**MJ Palmer, First Vice-President**  
**Rutgers Cooperative Extension**  
**Master Gardeners**  
**Born to Bloom**



Master Gardener volunteer, Lynn Persico, will speak at our April meeting to enlighten us about assorted topics related to soil and planting. One of our own members, Maureen Blandino, who is also a Master Gardener, will provide support to Lynn. Those of you who have been in the club for many years know we can always count on Maureen to share fun and interesting stories about her work with planting gardens, especially when children assist her.

Just for the fun of it, plan to wear flowery clothes and/or hats. Let's make it a Garden Party!!

**UPCOMING MAY MEETING**  
**May 28, 2026 6:30 p.m.**  
**MJ Palmer, First Vice-President**  
**County of Sussex**  
**Department of Health & Human Services**  
**May is Mental Health Awareness Month**



May is recognized as Mental Health Awareness Month in the United States, an annual observance since 1949. The focus aims to reduce stigma, educate the public, provide support resources and highlight the importance of mental well-being for everyone.

**Key Goals and Focus Areas:**

- Reducing Stigma:** Open conversations to normalize seeking help.
- Education & Resources:** Sharing information on mental health conditions.
- Support & Community:** Highlighting tools like 988 and community support.
- Mental Well-Being:** Encouraging self care, exercise and social connection.

Cindy Armstrong, Sussex County OFR Coordinator in Behavioral Health Services, will be our guest speaker. She will inform us about access to care and help us learn to promote understanding of mental health as an essential part of overall health.

**TASTE OF VERNON**  
**Fran Janusko**  
**Second Vice-President**

Tickets are available for the Taste of Vernon to be held on Monday, April 27, 2026.

Price for an individual ticket is \$55 or two for \$100. Tickets are available from me as well as Maria Dorsey.

This event is not only an epicurean delight but also has silent auction items that are magnificent.

Our club benefits from the proceeds of this event so I am asking as many members as possible to attend.

Feel free to contact either Maria ([mariapls@aol.com](mailto:mariapls@aol.com)) or myself ([FJanusko@warwick.net](mailto:FJanusko@warwick.net)) for tickets in the event you were unable to attend our March meeting or will not be able to attend our April meeting.

Thank you,  
Fran



**TREASURER'S NOTES**

**Judy Phillips**

**MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE!**

At the April meeting, I will be collecting dues for the 2026-2027 year. Please bring your checks made payable to the Vernon Township Woman's Club (VTWC) for \$50. I need to send in the registration to the NJSFWC the next day as our club must pay its dues to the State by May 1, 2026.

I know that Joan Danaher has been in contact with those who still need to pay their dues. Many of you have reached out to her or to me to drop off checks or to let us know that you will bring your payment to the April meeting.

Thank you!  
Judy

**CORRESPONDING SECRETARY**

**Linda Hibbert**

We received a thank you note from DASI for our donation of gingerbread houses, blankets, sheets, pantry items and baby blankets. They thank us for our support and assistance!

Also, just a reminder to all our members to let me know of anyone in the club or their family members, who are sick or had surgery, so I can send a get well card. Also, if anyone donates to the club, a thank you card!

Thank you,  
Linda Hibbert  
Corresponding Secretary

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Maria Dorsey

The Nominating Committee, consisting of Donna Maher, Karen Szepietowski and myself, is in the process of contacting members in order to present a slate of officers at the April meeting for the 2026-2028 term. Elections will take place at the May meeting and installation at the June meeting. **THIS IS YOUR CLUB! PLEASE THINK ABOUT TAKING ON A POSITION.**

The following positions are open to nominations and need to be filled:

- President—presides at all meetings
- First Vice-President—(Programs)
- Second Vice-President—(Ways and Means or Fundraising)
- Treasurer—shall receive and deposit all Club funds and make disbursements on approval of the Executive Board and/or General Membership
- Recording Secretary—shall keep minutes of the Club
- Corresponding Secretary—shall prepare correspondence as directed by the President; retrieve Club's mail from post office.

If you are willing to be nominated to any of these positions, please contact one of us and let us know.

Thank you!  
Maria Dorsey  
Donna Maher  
Karen Szepietowski

## DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE AWARENESS & PREVENTION

### PINWHEELS FOR PREVENTION Maria Dorsey

Special thanks to the following members who joined me on Wednesday, April 1st in our annual tradition of 'pinwheel planting' in support of Child Abuse Awareness during the month of April:

Maureen Blandino, Karen Breese, Joan Danaher, Linda Hibbert, Donna Maher, Barbara Pfeifer, Suzanne Shack, Linda Stengel, Karen Szepietowski and Kathy VanDerSluys.

We were able to plant gardens at Vernon Town Hall, Vernon PAL and Maple Grange Park. Afterwards, we enjoyed a relaxing lunch in the sunshine on the patio at Birdie's Café and learned we were also supporting a fundraiser for Matthew Cadenas, a recent graduate of High Point Regional High School, who passed away on March 25th due to a heart attack.



## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

### BIRTHDAY BAGS

**Lisa Thomas and Judy Phillips**

We have 2 birthdays in April and 4 in May for the Homestead Nursing Home residents in Newton. We delivered the birthday bags earlier this week.

**We are in need of crocheted lap blankets to put in the birthday bags.**

As always, thank you for the contributions in making the bags very special for the recipients.

Lisa and Judy

### WEEKEND BAG PROGRAM

**Anne Whitty and MJ Palmer**

From Anne:

I am overwhelmed with the donations we collected for the Weekend Bag Program. Our club collected 978 food and hygiene items valued at approximately \$750. Also, members donated \$325 in monetary donations. This is incredible.

From MJ:

THANK YOU, Anne, for stepping up to organize and track all the donations. Maggie told me our donations were the most she has ever received at a speaking event. Thank you, Val, for recommending this project/program to me.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

**Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault  
Intervention Services (DASI)**

**Lisa Murphy**

Maureen Blandino and I got together and made 11 Easter baskets for 8 women, 1 man and 2 children residing at the Safe House in Newton, New Jersey. When dropping off the Easter baskets, I also dropped off towels and groceries donated by the Club.

Unfortunately, the Safe House had a water leak and lost a lot of items due to water damage. **An immediate need is for 8 bed pillows.** If you can bring a bed pillow to the April meeting, it is greatly appreciated. A list will be provided in next month's newsletter, once cleanup and inventory are completed, setting forth additional items that were lost and will need to be replaced.

As always, thank you so much for your donations. DASI and I truly appreciate it!

Thank you,

Lisa

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

WAFO  
Warwick Area Farmworker Organization  
Meg Gleason

### HOMEWORK CLUB

The Homework Club is underway! This program takes place on Tuesday afternoons at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 70 Little York Avenue, Warwick, New York from 4:30—5:30. Tutors work one-on-one with students to complete homework, read together and then wrap up the hour with a board game or puzzle. If you are interested in volunteering your time to this program, please contact Kathy Brieger at [kbrieger@sunriver.org](mailto:kbrieger@sunriver.org) or JoBeth Leon at [jleon@sunriver.org](mailto:jleon@sunriver.org). You can also reach out to me for more information. You can email me at [mmgleason98@yahoo.com](mailto:mmgleason98@yahoo.com) or call/text me at 201-906-9814.



## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH**

**WAFO**  
**Warwick Area Farmworker Organization**  
**Meg Gleason**

### **UPDATES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- The WAFO food pantry is in need of donations. Items needed include chicken, Masa Harina, canned jalapeno peppers, canned cactus, corn tortillas and small bottles of vegetable oil.
- Volunteers are needed for community health worker practice sessions Monday evenings from 6-8 pm. The CHWs need to practice giving small programs on diabetes. This will be mostly in English or some in Spanish. The person will need to listen and complete papers as if they are a student and will be asked to complete evaluations. These sessions are located at the Alamo and will continue through April.
- Help is needed with giving kids a healthy mini-meal on Wednesdays and Thursdays while school is in session. They are looking for help with getting foods that are healthy. Donations of meat lasagna from Shop Rite are appreciated. There is an oven downstairs that can be used to heat the food up, Groups begin at 5 pm and run to 7 pm usually. If someone is able to provide this food, it would be much appreciated. Generally, about 10 students join the girls' sessions on Wednesday and 10 on Thursday. If school is not in session, no food is needed. This takes place at the Alamo.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

WAFO  
Warwick Area Farmworker Organization  
Meg Gleason

### UPDATES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Transportation is needed for outreach programs. This is a paid position and it would be ideal for a college student or someone who has children and cannot work during the day. Please contact Kathy Brieger at [kbrieger@sunriver.org](mailto:kbrieger@sunriver.org) directly for more information.
- The women's group needs assistance Tuesday evenings from 6-8. They are looking for someone who can do any of the following: Tai Chi, Yoga, Zumba. They are also looking for someone who knows how to connect with the school systems on Google. The mothers want to know how to use the system that most schools use. They are also looking for small prizes to use at the women's group such as towel sets, perfume, etc. Help is also needed with this group on Sundays for their ESL group—setting up coffee and hot water, serving a meal at 12 and cleaning up. They are also looking for anyone who would be interested in teaching crochet, knitting or any kind of arts/crafts during these meetings.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

### BAGS FOR BUDDIES

Thank you to Anne Whitty for providing this information to the Club. The following is a clip from Good Morning America featuring Jack Edward Schmick. He is the young man we collected backpacks for last year (thank you to Becky Saggau for getting the backpacks to Jack). Jack has also received a scholarship from us. This is a wonderful story!

[https://youtube.com/shorts/QJTO\\_ttjYWY?si=rv5ftr2HqJrp8sPp](https://youtube.com/shorts/QJTO_ttjYWY?si=rv5ftr2HqJrp8sPp)

### Reprinted from the VTWC October 2025 Newsletter:

Pictured here is Edward Schmick with backpacks our Club collected for his project “Bags for Buddies” (described in his words below):

“ ‘Bags for Buddies’ is an initiative I founded to support children in the foster care system by providing personalized duffel bags filled with comfort items and some essentials. The goal is to replace trash bags often used during transitions and remind every child that they are valued, seen and cared for.”

Each backpack carries hope, a chance and a reminder of what shaped me.

Surrounded by them, I can’t help but smile at how far we’ve come and what we’re building. Thank you to the Vernon Woman’s Club for pouring love into Bags for Buddies.





## ARTS & CULTURE

### BICENTENNIAL+50 YEARS ART CONTEST

Dee Garbarino

Hi All:

You may recall, a while back, I requested volunteers to assist with a project I initiated consisting of an Art Contest on July 4, 2026 for the children of Vernon. This will be based on the 250th anniversary of our country.

Well, the date is fast approaching! I will be reaching out to those members who previously volunteered. If any other members would like to volunteer, please let me know. My email address is [garbarino.dee@gmail.com](mailto:garbarino.dee@gmail.com).

I will provide the latest information at our next meeting (April 23). I look forward to updating you at that time.

Thank you,  
Dee



# ENVIRONMENT

## EARTH DAY

Maria Dorsey



### Celebrate Earth Day—April 22, 2026

The official theme for Earth Day 2026 is “Our Power, Our Planet”. This theme focuses on mobilizing collective, people powered action to fight climate change, advocating for clean

energy, demanding corporate accountability and ensuring environmental justice through grassroots community action.

#### Key Focus Areas for 2026:

- ◆ **“Our Power, Our Planet”** emphasizes that everyday actions—**community cleanups**, voter registration and protests—can drive community systemic change.
- ◆ **End Plastic Pollution:** Continued emphasis on reducing plastic production and supporting policies for a cleaner environment.
- ◆ **Climate Resilience & Restoration:** Focus on reforestation, ocean health and ecosystem restoration.
- ◆ **Actionable Participation:** Promoting “The 25% Revolution” where significant community commitment drives policy change.

For 2026, the focus is on moving from pledges to direct, impactful participation, encouraging communities to hold polluters accountable and protect natural resources.

# ENVIRONMENT

## ARBOR DAY

Maria Dorsey



### Celebrate Arbor Day—April 24, 2026

It is a designated day to plant, nurture and celebrate trees, typically observed on the last Friday in April

The trees we plant benefit the whole world.

They soon reach toward the sun giving shelter, shade, comfort, joy, beauty and relief from the concrete jungle.

They trap dust, diminish smog and reduce traffic noise.

They produce oxygen and moderate the temperature. They provide a home for wildlife.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

### BLANKETS WITH CARE Karen Szepietowski

Below are the measurements for the blankets we donate to local organizations:

Chemo & Dialysis	28 wide by 45 long	(maximum 30 wide by 50 long)
DASI	36 wide by 60 long	(for beds)
Lap Robes	26 wide by 26 long	
Baby Blankets	29 wide by 29 long	
Rectangles	7 inches by 9 inches	

\*\*\*\*\*

Hi All:

Just a brief reminder, I continue to collect blankets made by our members. The sizes of the blankets are set forth above. I am happy to collect the blankets from you at the club's monthly meetings. If you cannot attend the meetings, please contact me at [karen\\_szep@yahoo.com](mailto:karen_szep@yahoo.com) to make arrangements for pick-up or drop off.

Thank you,  
Karen Szepietowski  
Health & Wellness Chair

**Margaret Conti**

Margaret is our special friend and likes to receive cards and small “gifts” from us. Any time you would like, send her a card to say “HI”.

Margaret Conti  
PafaCom, Inc.  
543 East Garden Road  
Vineland, NJ 08360

\*\*Reminder: The cost for Margaret’s cards, gifts, etc. each month is the responsibility of the “friend” member. Our budget does not have any monies allocated to reimburse for postage, etc.



**Friendly Reminder**

*If you haven’t already done so, please be sure to review the NJSFWC Website at your leisure (information below). The Vernon Township Woman’s Club Website is now available. Please review at your leisure.*

**NJSFWC Website**

**The New Jersey State Federation of Woman’s Clubs’ website is packed full of information.**

**[www.njsfwc.org](http://www.njsfwc.org)**

**No log in is necessary.**

**VTWC Website**

**The Vernon Township Woman’s Club website is here for you.**

**[www.vtwc.org](http://www.vtwc.org)**

**No log in is necessary.**

**PLEASE KEEP SAVING**

**Ongoing Collections**

**POP TABS**—*found on soda cans, pet food, soup cans, etc.*

**CHILDREN'S DVDs FOR DASI**

**GREETING CARDS**—*Valerie Seufert volunteers for the Senior Earth Angels in Sussex County. Each December, Valerie and her team put together packages of assorted greeting cards (except Christmas), puzzle books, calendars and note pads for each homebound senior for them to use throughout the year. We often get cards and note pads in the mail from organizations—these are great.*

**JUST FOR YOU BAGS**—*Items are needed for clients who come into one of the DASI programs and for clients who transition out of the programs. Some items requested are bath towel; body lotion; body wash; brush; ChapStick; comb; shampoo/conditioner; deodorant; face cloth; hand/kitchen towel; oven mitt; pillow case; pillows; potholder; sheet set (twin); soap; socks; sponge; toothbrush/toothpaste.*

***Donations are collected through the year. These projects are ongoing.***

***Thank you all for your donations to these ongoing collections.***