

Free Public Library of Monroe Township

Out and About
A Community Newsletter

February 2024

Your guide to
what's going on in
Williamstown and
the surrounding
area!

Great February Events at Autumn Lake Winery

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Williamstown's own Autumn Lake Winery on Malaga Road has a slew of great events for wine lovers this February!

On Feb. 1st at 6 PM, there's a Cabernet and Cheese Workshop, designed to teach you how to create a charcuterie board and pair it with the right wine. The cost is \$65 and includes all materials.

On Feb. 8th at 6 PM, the winery will host a Wine & Wicks workshop that teaches you how to make your own 16-ounce scented candle. The cost is \$55. (Both workshops include a free glass of wine with the price.)

If you'd like a special dinner with your special someone, Autumn Lake will have its Corks & Cupid's Cuisine dinner on Valentine's Day at 6 PM. For \$78, you'll get a four-course dinner with a choice of entrees and desserts, each course paired with the appropriate wine.

Finally, on Saturday the 17th at 7 PM, Cricket Comedy returns to Autumn Lake with three of the area's best comedians. Tickets are \$19.

For event tickets (while they last), visit autumnlakewinery.com...and take advantage of all one of our best venues has to offer!



Special Points of Interest:

- 13th Child Brewery's Chili Cook-Off
- Camden County College offers Wine & Jazz Night
- Fiddler On The Roof comes to Oaklyn's Ritz Theatre
- Marvel's Madame Web on the big screen
- Great new novels in honor of Black History Month

Candy Bar Bingo at the Pfeiffer Center

It's Valentine's season, a great time for sweet treats...and if you're not minding your waistline too much, Candy Bar Bingo at the Pfeiffer Community Center on Feb. 8th is the perfect activity!

The event runs from 6:30 PM to 8 PM at the center. It's free for Monroe Township Residents. All you need to do is show up, pick a table, and play some games of Bingo that will win you candy bars and other goodies.

For more information, call the Pfeiffer Center at 856-728-9840.



Wine & Jazz at Camden County College

If you're up for a classy night of jazz music, South Jersey's best wine, and other surprises, Camden County College in Blackwood has just the event for you...the Wine & Jazz Night on Friday, February 9th, at 7 PM.

The event takes place in the college's Little Theatre...they've got tables and chairs set up. The evening will feature a performance of jazz standards by Michael Billingsley, one of CCC's associate music professors, and his ensemble of talented students. There will also be light bites (hors d'oeuvres, cheeses, pastries, chocolates, fruit and the like) and two glasses of wine, all of which are included in the ticket price. (Additional beverages can be purchased at the bar.) The evening will also feature drawings for prize baskets, each one with a separate theme.



Tickets are \$45 and will benefit the Camden County Foundation, which funds grants, lectures, scholarships, and other opportunities for students. To order, visit <https://www.camdencc.edu/about-1/giving/foundation-mission/foundation-events/>.

Enjoy a great evening of music, food, wine and fun!

Sip & Play Fridays at Blue Cork Winery

Looking for some new activities on a Friday? Blue Cork Winery, on Blue Bell Road, has something special every Friday night until the end of February...Sip & Play Fridays!



From 12 PM to 9 PM on Fridays, Blue Cork has board games available for anyone who'd like to stop by and play them...and purchase a glass or two of Blue Cork's best wine to enjoy while doing it. (Needless to say, this event is for ages 21 and up.) You're also welcome to bring your own game if you want. So show up alone or with some friends, and get acquainted with some other gaming enthusiasts!

Seating is first-come, first-served and can accommodate groups of up to 8. Blue Cork Winery is located at 1093 Blue Bell Road. For more info, call 856-885-2545. Or visit bluecorkwine.com to find out about other great events.

Mullica Hill Chocolate Walk

A beloved Valentine's Day tradition returns—Mullica Hill's annual Chocolate Walk, taking place this year on Saturday, Feb. 10th, courtesy of the Mullica Hill Business Association.

The event takes place from 4 PM to 8 PM. Everyone who buys a ticket will get a passport listing the stops on the walk. Visit each one of these spots and you'll get to sample a treat...sweet or savory. Once you've filled out every stop on the ticket, you'll be eligible to enter it into a prize drawing for a gift basket made up by the Business Association.

Tickets are \$12.50 in advance, \$18 (cash only) the day of the event. You can choose between a 4 PM, 5 PM, and 6 PM start time.

Enjoy a night of special treats, great shopping...and supporting one of our best town's small businesses!



Chili Cook-Off at 13th Child Brewery

Last year's first Chili Cook-Off at Williamstown's 13th Child Brewery was so successful that it's back and better than ever!

The event actually unfolds over several weeks, with each round restricted to 20 contestants. The first round takes place on February 3rd, where the first ten entries are up for the People's Choice or Best Of prizes from the judges.

The same thing happens with the second ten entries on Feb. 17th. For the final round on March 2nd, the two People's Choice and two Best Of winners from the previous two rounds will face off.

For each round of the event, the doors open at 1 PM and the judging will take place at 5 PM.

If you're not competing, you're still welcome to stop by, sample the chili, and vote for People's Choice. (be sure to wear warm clothes as the event is outdoors). Each guest receives a ticket to vote with. Every beer you buy from the brewery gives you another ticket and another vote.

For more information or to register to compete, visit 13thchildbrewery.com/newsletter and click on the event's link. 13th Child Brewery is located at 345 S. Main Street.



Galentine's Day Sip, Shop, and Brunch at Scotland Run

Whether or not you're part of a couple, it's fun for women to celebrate "Galentine's"...just you and your galpals without guys around. Scotland Run Golf Club is offering the opportunity to do just that...they're hosting a Galentine's Day Sip, Shop & Brunch afternoon on Saturday, Feb. 10th, from 12 PM to 3 PM.

Tickets are \$25 per person. For that price, you and your friends will get one free mimosa (other drinks for purchase) and a light-bites brunch.

Then you'll get to browse booths offering wares by local vendors such as The Dressing Rooms, Forever Link'd (a Wenonah-based business that designs permanent jewelry), and more! There's also a complimentary photobooth, music courtesy of a DJ, and free giveaways. (If you'd like a tarot card reading from Ash Yezuita, that's \$25 extra.)

To order tickets, visit Eventbrite.com and look up the event name. It's a perfect way to bond with your pals and enjoy a fun February afternoon out!



Pizza & Paint Party at AR Workshop

With all the Valentine season events going on for adults, it's nice to find one for kids. AR Workshop in Turnersville is hosting a Kids Night Pizza & Paint Party on Friday, Feb. 9th, at 6 PM.



The event costs \$40. For that fee, your child can paint three Valentine blocks...and enjoy some great pizza into the bargain! It's a great way for kids to make some new friends and develop their creative abilities.

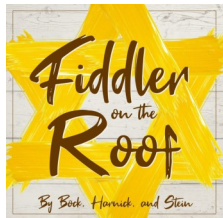
To order tickets (while they last!) visit arworkshop.com/event.

AR Workshop is located at 5501 Route 42. For more information, call 856-401-0376.



All The World's A Stage...

“Without our traditions, our lives would be as shaky as...a *Fiddler on the Roof*!” The classic musical is onstage at the Ritz Theatre in Oaklyn from Feb. 16th to March 3rd!



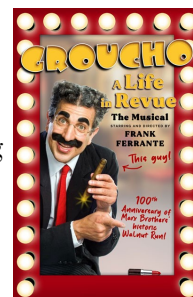
Based on Sholem Aleichem’s “Tevye the Dairyman” stories, the show introduces us to the Jewish village of Anatevka, in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Ukraine. Tevye, a poor milkman, is doing his best to provide for his wife and five daughters. He takes strength from his devotion to God (Whom he often has one-sided conversations with) and the traditions that have upheld his people for centuries. But the world is changing, inside and outside Anatevka. Tevye finds himself thrown for a loop when his three older daughters buck the usual arranged-marriage traditions and choose husbands for themselves without his input...one marries the village tailor, another marries a young radical who is exiled, and the third breaks Tevye’s heart by marrying a Gentile. And all the while, the country’s anti-Semitic leadership is making ominous moves against the Jewish population...bringing about consequences that will change the lives of the villagers forever.

With hit songs like “If I Were A Rich Man” and “Sunrise, Sunset”, this classic show will move your spirit. To order tickets, visit ritztheatreco.org.

“Hello, I must be going...” Julius Henry Marx (aka Groucho) was the head of one of the greatest comedy teams of stage and screen...the Marx Brothers. Now, actor Frank Ferrante brings the legend to life in *Groucho: A Life In Revue*, onstage at Philadelphia’s Walnut Street Theatre from February 13th to March 10th.

Presented as a comedy revue, the show takes us through Groucho’s life and career, from his early days with his brothers (especially Chico, with whom he had a tumultuous but loving relationship) on the vaudeville stage, to the Marx Brothers’ star turn in Hollywood, to his own checkered marital history, to his later years when he faced his own mortality and that of his beloved brothers. All the while, Groucho gives us re-creations of the Marx Brothers’ best routines and songs, contrasting them with their real lives offstage. It all adds up to a hilarious, poignant portrait of one of comedy’s all-time greatest talents.

Tickets are \$25-\$175. To order, visit walnutstreettheatre.org, and treat yourself to a wonderful evening reliving the life of one of the world’s greatest funny men, from cradle to grave. After all, as Groucho himself said... “Getting older is no problem. You just have to live long enough.”



When it’s not doing plays and musicals, the Broadway Theatre of Pitman has plenty of great one-shot concerts, comedy nights, and tribute shows. They’ve got a great example of the latter coming up...*Elton John and Billy Joel Face 2 Face: The Tribute Concert*, from February 14th-16th.



Pop music’s two greatest “piano men” actually did tour in the 1990s to great acclaim. Now, David Clark and Ronnie Smith play Billy Joel and Sir Elton, respectively. The two musicians have their portrayals down to a science...costumes, mannerisms, style of playing. Together, these talented performers, separately and together, give us the two icons’ greatest hits, such as “Crocodile Rock,” “I’m Still Standing,” “Piano Man”, and much, much more!

Tickets are \$50. To order them and to find out show times, visit thebroadwaytheatre.org.

If you didn’t have the good luck to see the real Elton John and Billy Joel during one of their concerts (and especially now that Sir Elton’s retiring from touring), treat yourself to the next-best thing...this wonderful tribute to two legends of popular music!

What's New Onscreen!

Sony's Marvel movies (though only loosely connected to the MCU, through the "multiverse") have brought us some great adventures in their own right. On Feb. 14th, they'll be introducing us to *Madame Web*, a character connected with the Spider-Verse.

Cassandra Webb (Dakota Johnson) is a New York City paramedic who, after a near-fatal accident during a first response, finds herself with an ability to see the future, in frighteningly realistic visions. Soon, she makes the acquaintance of three other young women: Julia Carpenter (Sydney Sweeney), Mattie Franklin (Celeste O'Connor) and Anya Corazon (Isabela Merced). All have some sort of connection to Cass...and all three are being targeted by Ezekiel Simms (Tahar Rahim), who was a colleague of Cass' late entomologist mother. He seems to have Cass' clairvoyant abilities...and to know that the three women will develop unusual powers and threaten him in the future. Now, it's up to Cass and her three friends to use Cass' connection to the web of time and thwart their would-be killer...and in the process, make three new heroes possible...



This promises to be a fascinating introduction to a deep-dive Marvel character, and a treat for fans of the Spider-Verse...whichever form it takes.

Bob Marley was both a pioneer in reggae music, and a fierce advocate for political change and human rights. *Bob Marley: One Love*, a biopic that premieres Feb. 14th, shows us both sides of the man.



Robert Nesta Marley (Kingsley Ben-Adir) grows up in Jamaica with a passion for reggae music...and a natural talent for it. He forms a band, the Wailers, which brings him into contact with his future wife Rita (Lashana Lynch), a backing vocalist. But even as the Wailers start to conquer the reggae world, Bob finds himself confronting the social and racial injustices he sees in Jamaica and elsewhere. He speaks up (and sings out) for peace and unity, a position that proves controversial for some...and leads to an attempted assassination in his own home. But Bob will not be silenced, in his speech or in his music...and continues to be a voice for peace in his own unconventional way, a path that will establish him as one of the most revolutionary musicians of all time.

If you're a fan of music biopics, you're sure to enjoy this portrait of a unique voice in music and political justice. So let's get together...and feel all right!

Laurence Yep's *The Tiger's Apprentice* was the start of a terrific young adult fantasy trilogy, steeped in Chinese mythology. Now, Paramount Plus brings us an animated adaptation which debuts on the streaming service Feb. 2nd.

Tom Lee (voice of Brandon Soo Hu) lives with his grandmother in San Francisco. She is the Guardian of a mystical coral rose, which she is teaching Tom to protect. But when an attack by monsters leaves Mrs. Lee dead, Tom is taken in by the tiger Mr. Hu (voice of Henry Golding), who reveals that the rose is actually the egg of a phoenix—a magical bird with the power to change evil to good. Now, Tom and his new mentor must contend with a Chinatown that is full of magical, mystical beings both friendly and hostile as they try to protect this most valuable of artifacts. In the process, Tom comes into his own powers and knowledge, facing these dangers with the courage and integrity required of a Guardian.



This was supposed to be a theatrical release, but COVID delayed it and shifted it to streaming. Nevertheless, it promises to be a visually striking and emotionally moving adaptation of an exciting and unique fantasy novel.

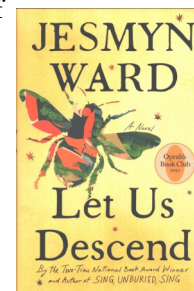


The Biblio-Files

In honor of Black History Month, here are some recent historical novels with some fascinating Black protagonists.

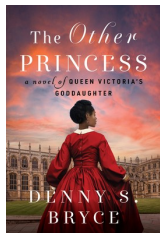
In Jesmyn Ward's acclaimed new novel *Let Us Descend*, an enslaved girl on a forced march connects with the spirits of her ancestors and the world beyond.

Annis is the granddaughter of an African warrior queen sold into slavery, and the child (by force) of her mother's enslaver. Her biological father sells off her mother, then Annis, who must walk hundreds of miles to Louisiana, tied to a line of sold slaves. As she struggles in her grim march toward her new place of enslavement, she begins to connect with the spirit world...with what might be the spirit of her grandmother, whose combat skills Annis' mother has tried to pass on to her, and then with others. Not all of them are benevolent or easy to deal with—especially the one that takes her grandmother's form—but all of them have something to teach her about how to deal with her oppression. As she descends further into the hell that is slavery (not unlike Dante's *Inferno*, which she overheard her white half-sisters being taught), Annis begins to draw power from her interactions with the spirits that guide her...and discovers her own spirit as well.



Chosen for Oprah's Book Club and highly acclaimed, this evocative, sometimes harrowing novel from one of Black fiction's greatest voices is told in "language...saturated with terror and enchantment." (*Kirkus*)

Victorian England had a Black "princess"—Sarah Forbes Bonetta, born to Yoruban royalty and later Queen Victoria's protégé. Now, Denny S. Bryce, in *The Other Princess*, tells her little-known story.



At her birth, Aina is prophesied to have a difficult life (hence her name, which means "difficult"). Despite this, she thrives as a child—until her family is slaughtered and she is captured. Poised on the brink of either slavery or human sacrifice, Aina is rescued by Captain Frederick Forbes, who renames her Sarah Forbes Bonetta after his name and his ship's. Presented to Queen Victoria as a "gift", Sarah becomes a favorite of Her Majesty, and takes to her new education and life, even if she struggles with two identities. When Victoria arranges her marriage to a Yoruban-descended English gentleman, she must use the opportunity to return to her homeland, face her past, and figure out for herself, once and for all, who she is.

This engrossing novel from an up-and-coming voice in historical fiction (her novel about the friendship between Ella Fitzgerald and Marilyn Monroe is due out next month) shines a new light on a remarkably intelligent and determined woman, who is finally getting the recognition due to her.

One of the most remarkable (but little-known) true stories in American history is the fact that a "kingdom" arose in the American South in the immediate aftermath of slavery—a kingdom where the formerly enslaved could have a voice. Vanessa Miller's *The American Queen* dramatizes the creation of that kingdom...and the lives of the two who founded it.

Louella has spent most of her life enslaved on a Mississippi plantation, and has little in her heart but hate for her oppressors...she can barely bring herself to love the gentle preacher William, a fellow slave, whom she marries. After the Civil War ends and emancipation takes hold, William is content to work for pay on the old plantation...but Louella persuades him to lead their fellow formerly enslaved people to a new utopia. The couple and their companions find their way to the North/South Carolina border, where they are able to purchase some land to establish this "kingdom" (more like a modern-day commune), with themselves as king and queen. As the two face the challenges inherent in building and maintaining a new society, Louella begins to forsake hatred in favor of hope...a hope that the people they protect, and millions like them, can reap all of the benefits of freedom.



This overlooked chapter in history (the Kingdom of the Happy Land lasted years beyond the death of its rulers) comes to fascinating life in the hands of a talented writer.