



PROCLAMATION

Office of the Mayor
Camp Happiness Day
July 10, 2024



- WHEREAS:** The New Jersey Blind Men’s Club was created in 1910 by four courageous blind men in the Newark area with the intent to provide support, education, and socialization activities for the blind and visually impaired, allowing them to lead happy and productive lives while promoting acceptance to the public; and
- WHEREAS:** In 1929, these forward-thinking men created an innovative camp-like experience in Leonardo which became known as Camp Happiness. They named the camp this since it was the first time these individuals were not defined by their blindness and were able to venture out on their own in a safe environment, learn independent living skills, and participate in social activities such as swimming, boating, and fishing; and
- WHEREAS:** In 1930, Middletown Township celebrated this creative program with a parade, fanfare, and a proclamation recognizing July 10, 1930 as “Camp Happiness Day”; and
- WHEREAS:** In 1987, the organization officially changed its name to the New Jersey Blind Citizens Association, Inc. (NJBCA) as it began accepting women and promoting inclusivity; and
- WHEREAS:** Now in its 114th year of providing free services, the NJBCA still serves as a statewide resource and referral center for the blind and visually impaired, as well as their families and caregivers. On its 95th anniversary, Camp Happiness continues in the spirit of its founders by offering free educational forums and creative programming in the arts, music, sculpting, painting, health and wellness, day trips to parks, restaurants, concerts, and other places of interest, as well as peer support groups; and
- WHEREAS:** The program also provides members the opportunity to contribute to their community by sharing their life experiences, which has resulted in greater inclusivity and the breaking down of barriers and bias associated with blindness. Among other programs, members are currently participating in the Beach Accessibility Study with Monmouth University and are working with the Colts Neck Lions Club on the development of the Braille Trails that are being created by the Monmouth County Parks System. Now,
- THEREFORE:** I, Mayor Tony Perry and the Middletown Township Committee, do hereby proclaim July 10, 2024 as **Camp Happiness Day** in the Township of Middletown and encourage the community to support the NJBCA. We are truly honored to have such an inspiring, impactful organization based in Middletown.

*Given, under my hand and the Great Seal of the Township of Middletown,
this 22nd day of July in the year two thousand twenty-four*

Mayor Tony Perry