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# New Jersey Herald

MONDAY, AUGUST 4, 2025 | NJHERALD.COM

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## Back-to-school blitz



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### Shoppers, worried about supply issues, getting early start

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For many parents and students, back-to-school shopping has started in earnest this summer – already. And the National Retail Federation, a trade group, says tariffs are weighing heavily on the minds of many shoppers. Shoppers have responded by moving up their shopping schedules, said Katherine Cullen, the federation’s vice president of industry and consumer insights. It’s similar to what occurred dur-

ing the summer of 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainty over the return of in-person learning, and then again in June 2021 amid supply chain issues and inflation. “They do this because they want to avoid stress,” Cullen told USA TODAY. “They want to make sure they get items in time, particularly if they’re worried about things being in short stock.” Dave Marcotte, an analyst with the market research firm Kantar, told NorthJersey.com that “back-to-school will be the critical season this year that will show how hard the tariffs and trade frictions across retail.

“It is the one season that sells across all categories, and most of them come from Asia,” he continued. Families with K-12 students expect to spend \$858 on school supplies, the National Retail Federation said, and college students and their families are expected to spend \$1,326 this year. Retailers such as Target are offering back-to-school savings events through Aug. 2, with 30% off items like backpacks and 25% off children’s apparel. Best Buy is offering deals on laptops and other tech,

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### Musicians mourn loss of iconic blues club

Greasy, gritty, funky raw. Those are imprecise words, for an imprecise thing – the real-ness that blues fans can detect when the music is authentic. “Real as a heart attack,” as the phrase goes. Blues is about truth. That’s the feeling that music fans also got from Stanhope House – a legendary Jersey blues joint that is closing its doors after 50 years. It was real. I know. I sat in the audience many a time. More, for about 10 years, between about 1991 and 2001, I was a semi-regular on stage. My band the VooDudes – they’re still around, though I’m no longer with them – would squeeze up onto that performance space, laid out like someone’s living room with dark wood paneling and a Persian rug to deaden the sound. And the sound needed deadening. The low-slung ceiling with its tin roof tiles would make it reverberate – out over the dancers and out over the bar. Stanhope House, a fixture of the New Jersey music scene since the mid-1970s, is closing for good, according to a July 30 announcement on Facebook. All tickets purchased through TicketLeap will be refunded, according to the announcement. Changes in club-going habits, and shifts in musical taste, rang the death knell for the Sussex County club – though some fans will point to newer artists like Gary Clark Jr. and Marcus King as proof that blues still has an audience. The oldness of the building, and the need for extensive repairs, were apparently also an issue. Back in the day, Stanhope hosted music legends like Muddy Waters, Charlie Musselwhite, John Lee Hooker, Koko Taylor, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Buddy Guy, and Willie Dixon. It drew patrons, not just from surrounding towns, but surrounding states. But it also booked local bands with their local followings. Ours was one of many. It was, in short, a real juke joint.

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## NJ residents rush to get solar, EV tax credits

### Programs expiring as a result of recent Trump budget bill

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A number of clean energy tax credits are expiring this fall as part of the “Big Beautiful Bill” that President Donald Trump signed on July 4 – and some North Jersey residents are rushing to take advantage before the credits run out. The expiring incentives were meant to cover a portion of the cost to install solar panels as well as to buy an electric

car. These were drastically expanded by the Inflation Reduction Act signed in 2022 under President Joe Biden. The federal government currently offers a \$7,500 tax credit to buy new electric vehicles and up to \$4,000 to buy a used one. These were originally set to expire at the end of 2032, but now expire on Sept. 30 this year. The federal government also offers a tax credit covering up to 30% of the cost to install home solar energy, like rooftop solar panels. That ends on Dec. 31. “We’re seeing like a very large influx of people calling” about solar installation,” said Murphy Panagiotou, who owns home solar installation company Infinity Energy in Mahwah. “People are aware that the 30% in-

come tax credit will be going away,” he continued. “Our demand has shot up through the roof.” For people interested in getting solar, “get in line ASAP,” said Steve Kalland, executive director of the North Carolina Clean Energy Technology Center, based at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. “If you’re not in line by Oct. 1, you’re not going to get it done this year,” he said in an interview. But the interest in electric vehicles ahead of the tax credit expiration hasn’t necessarily been as high, said Rick DeSilva, a partner at the car dealership Liberty Subaru, Liberty Hyundai and Liberty Kia in Mahwah. For electric cars, New Jersey has

chipped away at its own incentives, such as a state-level sales tax exemption that previously saved thousands of dollars on the final car price. The state also recently tacked on registration fees for electric cars, likely depressing demand, DeSilva said. So the people who’ve wanted electric vehicles have already purchased them – and there has not been an additional appetite among other consumers for EVs, he said. Still, car dealerships “will likely see an uptick in the end of September” for electric vehicle sales, said Laura Perrotta, president of the New Jersey Coalition of Automotive Retailers, or NJCAR, See CREDITS, Page 2A