

The Lowdown On Top Towns

HOW DO YOU MEASURE THE APPEAL of a community? That was the essential question for our editorial team in planning this year's Top Towns issue. We wanted our rankings to be as objective as possible; after all, characteristics such as ambience, eye appeal and community spirit, while important, are purely subjective and impossible to measure.

With that in mind, we turned to hard numbers, creating an array of lists based on the best available data on taxes, home sales, education, crime and other factors (methodology explained on page 53).

The residents of the leafy Bergen County borough of Ho-Ho-Kus will surely be pleased with the results. Their historic community finished at the top of the list this year. How did your town fare? Turn to page 48 and find out.

AMONG THE MANY ANNUAL PROJECTS we undertake at *New Jersey Monthly*, none is quite as satisfying as the Seeds of Hope Awards. The program, now in its eighth year, honors the achievements of the state's most dedicated volunteers. This time around we salute seven extraordinary individuals whose varied contributions remind us of the many opportunities each of us has to serve our community. We'll be celebrating this year's honorees at a luncheon on September 14 at Crystal Plaza in Livingston; you can meet them in this issue, starting on page 66. (The program is co-sponsored by PNC Wealth Management and Crystal Plaza.)

WE ARE PLEASED ONCE AGAIN TO BE A media sponsor for the third annual Summit Wine and Food Festival, September 9 through 11, at the Grand Summit Hotel (see page 94). The event attracts foodies and wine lovers from all over the state who get a chance to mingle with and learn from top culinary personalities and savvy sommeliers. My favorite part of this too-tempting weekend is always Saturday night's lavish six-course meal. So yummy. These chefs can cook for me anytime!

Kate S. Tomlinson