

Great Fishing Derby Can Only Get Better With Park Cleanup

I admit it. I had a blast April 22 at the Westfield Policemen's Benevolent Association (PBA) Fishing Derby. A beautiful day only completed the tableau for the true purpose of the event: strengthen relations between the Westfield police and the community they protect.

However, I couldn't help but feel that yet another opportunity to teach an important and local message about the environment was missed.

You would never know from the hundreds of children and parents that lined the unfenced banks of Mindowaskin Pond that it was Earth Day. And what better way to celebrate the clean water and beautiful surroundings of this town treasure than to help clean it up when we were done? How hard is it to say, "Please leave the park cleaner than you found it. Take some extra trash and throw it out."

I'm no raging environmentalist. I just think all of us should be responsible for leaving our homes, our parks, our own world better than we find it.

While my daughter, Caroline, and I did not catch any fish, we learned how to bait a hook, realized we had the wrong fishing tackle and spent two glorious hours with some of the finest people we've ever known — our neighbors.

We picked up our trash and a few extra cans as well, and vowed to come back next year with new tackle.

Kudos to the Westfield PBA. You sponsored a wonderful event. Maybe next year you can improve it by asking everyone to pitch in.

Michael Snizek
Westfield

Crewel Embroidery To be Demonstrated At Cannonball House

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Historical Society of Scotch Plains and Fanwood has announced that the Osborn Cannonball House, located at 1840 Front Street in Scotch Plains, will be open on Sunday, May 6, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Laurie Mills and her daughter, Amy, will demonstrate and discuss the traditional art of crewel embroidery. Docents will give tours of the museum, built circa 1760. There is no admission charge.



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times
READY TO SWEEP...The Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) will sponsor the "Clean Sweep" project this Saturday, May 5, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Pictured at last Sunday's Spring Fling festival in Westfield, left to right, are: Sherry Cronin, Executive Director of the DWC; Bernadette Houston of the DWC Board; Mayor Gregory S. McDermott and Chamber Executive Director Debbie Schmidt.

Operation Clean Sweep Slated For Saturday In Westfield

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Westfield Corporation will sponsor the "Clean Sweep" project in downtown Westfield on Saturday, May 5, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Westfield Girl Scout troops and the Westfield Department of Public Works will be working with the volunteers as everyone pitches in to help clean up the downtown. The "Blue Machine," the sidewalk sweeper, will be out cleaning the main sidewalk areas. Volunteers will be given gloves and garbage bags, and will be assigned to areas that need some sprucing up.

Susan Brand, of Brand Travel, located at 107 Quimby Street, is spearheading the "Clean Sweep" effort this year. Participants will come to Brand Travel on May 5 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. to receive their clean-up area assignment. Scout troops, Westfield or-

ganizations, school groups, and church and temple groups are all invited to be a part of the "Clean Sweep."

Landlords are invited to join the effort by cleaning up the parking areas and alleyways behind their buildings.

The "Clean Sweep" program creates "Pride In Downtown," a continuing theme for the DWC and the Chamber. The program will add to the beautification efforts already being made by the Town of Westfield and the Downtown Westfield Corporation. The "Clean Sweep" program increases public awareness of the importance of cleanliness in the overall appearance of the downtown.

"It's important for everyone in Westfield to be a part of the 'Pride In Downtown' effort to make our downtown look its best," said "Clean Sweep" Chairwoman Susan Brand. Groups who would like to participate can register by calling the Chamber office at (908) 233-3021 or the DWC at (908) 789-9444.

County Freeholders Unveil Budget With First Tax Levy Hike Since '95

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Leader and The Times

ELIZABETH — For the first time in six years, Union County's tax levy is going up.

Last Thursday night, the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders introduced a \$315.2 million budget. A total of \$159.9 million, or 51 percent, of the spending plan will be raised through property taxes — a hike of 4.8 percent over last year.

Freeholder Patricia Scanlon, Fiscal Affairs Committee Chairwoman, said the budget tax levy hike this year was due, in part, to several factors: the pull-out last summer of state prisoners from the Union County Jail, costing the county a combined \$12.5 million for 2000 and 2001 in anticipated revenue; a \$1 million hike in costs to house county residents in state mental institutions, and a \$2.1 million increase in the cost of health insurance for county employees.

Mrs. Scanlon noted that this year's freeholder initiatives include creating new jobs, expanding the county's Office of Veterans Affairs and formation of a new volunteer services office.

"I'm real proud of this budget," she said. "We worked a lot of hours going over the budget."

While the Fiscal Affairs Committee looked for areas to cut in the budget, Freeholder Scanlon explained, "This year's budget was so finely prepared when we received it from the Union County Manager's Office, there was almost nothing to cut."

County Manager Michael J. Lapolla said the creation of the budget is a "long and arduous process."

Freeholder Vice Chairman Lewis Mingo noted that Mr. Lapolla had told department heads that the county wanted a budget that was "lean and mean."

"He put out the word that this was not the kind of year we would splurge on anything," said Mr. Mingo. "And to our surprise it came back much better than what we expected. I'm sort of disappointed because we couldn't cut

it."

Locally, Westfield's county tax levy this year will be \$16,076,021, the second highest in the county and representing a hike of \$1,057,175 over last year. Westfield property owners will pay an average of \$1,553 to support county services in 2001, an increase of \$97 over 2000. An average home in Westfield is assessed at \$175,000.

Scotch Plains will pay a county tax bill of \$9,442,380, or \$626,224 over last year. The owner of a home assessed at \$118,000 will pay \$1,170 in county taxes this year, or \$60 more than last year.

Fanwood residents will pay a tax levy of \$2,530,776, representing a \$4,417,401, an increase of \$244,641. Fanwoodians will pay an average of \$571, or \$38, over 2000. The average home in the borough is assessed at \$82,809.

Mountainside's tax levy will be \$4,417,401, an increase of \$244,641. The owner of a home assessed at \$156,598 will pay \$1,456, representing a hike of \$78 over last year.

County taxes are going up in all of

Union County's 21 municipalities except Hillside and Kenilworth, which will both see slight decreases. Summit residents, who will pay on average \$2,159 in county purpose tax this year, will see an increase of \$136 over 2000. Berkeley Heights homeowners will pay \$1,658 in county taxes this year, \$104 more than in 2000.

In addition to property taxes on the revenue side of the budget, the county pumped in \$20.5 million of its \$27 million surplus, \$44.97 million in state and federal aid and \$89.8 million in other county revenues. The latter includes \$1.9 million in revenues generated by the County Clerk's office, \$355,600 from the Surrogate's Office, \$700,000 through the Sheriff's Office and \$4.9 million in interest on investments and deposits.

On the appropriations side of the budget, health and welfare represents 26.40 percent of the spending plan, followed by 18.69 percent in general government, 7.89 percent for state and federal programs and 5.61 percent in costs to maintain county roadways and bridges.

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The Multiple Sclerosis Walk-a-thon was Sunday, April 22 in Cranford. The "ExperTeese" team captain Gail Teese recruited 20 walkers. The walkers pictured left to right are: Lesley Greco, Christine Sheehan, Isabel Lynch, Gail Teese, Alan DeRose, Jeff Jennings, Ray Lewis. Second row left to right Debbie Jennings, Kaitlyn Jennings, Fran DeRose, Pamela Lewis. Third row left to right Connor Sheehan, Connor Jennings, Ryan Jennings, Matthew Teese, Geena DeRose, Michael Greco and front center are Molly Jennings and Sarah Lewis.

Taking a brief rest from the 6-mile walk in Cranford pictured left to right are Ryan Jennings, Matthew Teese and Connor Jennings.

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