

Educator of the Week

James Moriarty

Guidance Counselor, Westfield High School

By MICHELLE H. Le POIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Hometown: Born in Newark, Mr. Moriarty has been a resident of Plainsboro for 18 years. He has lived in Irvington, Woodbridge Township, Edison and other towns.

Education: Mr. Moriarty received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from St. Mary's University of Maryland, a Master of Arts degree in Education from New York University, a Master of Arts degree in Counseling from Seton Hall University, and his Doctoral Degree in Educational Administration and Supervision from Rutgers University.

Previous Experience: In the New York City public school system, Mr. Moriarty was responsible for teaching Kindergarten through sixth grades, as well as the middle school grades. He coordinated the gifted and talented program, lunch program, and mathematics curriculum. After he moved to New Jersey, he became the principal of St. Pius X Regional High School in Piscataway. He has also served in that capacity, at all grade levels, within the Township of Kingwood and Borough of High Bridge districts, both in Hunterdon County.

"I've had a lot of fun working with teachers to create programs at all levels," Mr. Moriarty reported.

Transitioning into the world of private business, Mr. Moriarty became employed at CoreStates Bank, where he worked his way up to a supervisory position related to the office of the president. When he, and other employees became subject to the bank's downsizing through a merger with First Union bank, he received an outplacement position as a consultant to people who had also been impacted by the downsizing. In this capacity for two years, Mr. Moriarty helped the unemployed individuals rework their résumés, relearn interviewing skills and become accustomed to the value of networking.

"It rekindled my love for counseling," he stated.

For about one year, Mr. Moriarty went to Rider University for graduate work. He has been at Westfield High School (WHS) for five years.

I Knew I Reached My Students When: "Sometimes you know when you have really made a difference.

They (students) come back and drop you a little thank you note or just stop by and ask you questions and talk to you," he said, adding that parents of former students contact him for the same reasons. When students are in the eighth grade, Mr. Moriarty and members of the guidance department meet with them to facilitate the transition to WHS, and help them organize their schedules. By the time the students have graduated from WHS, Mr. Moriarty has known them for four and a half years.

During his five years at the high school, Mr. Moriarty has witnessed the emotional impact of two specific events: the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the tragic death of student Greta Schoenemann, which occurred ex-

actly one year later. After both events, his office was flooded with students. "We (department members) tried to meet as many kids as we could," said Mr. Moriarty regarding Greta's death. "We went to the funeral, and followed through afterwards. The kids still talk about it. There was a different impact for different students, from freshmen to seniors. There are wonderful stories of students who sat with me to help other students, not specifically for the counseling, but just so they could sit and

talk about their feelings. It was a very significant event. Everybody responded in a way that was really supportive and gave many opportunities for the youngsters, teachers and administration to pull together."

What I Love About the School District: "I just love this district," he said. "This is one of the best districts I have ever worked in. The Town of Westfield is unique in that it is a town with its own culture and feeling. The amount of parental involvement and parental support is absolutely phenomenal. That's part of what makes this district so amazing, along with the support of the administrators. The district demands a lot from its educators, but you never mind giving all that you have. They (the district) are sure to hire high-quality educators. There is a vast array of personalities and talents and I'm never bored."

Favorite Topic to Teach: Mr. Moriarty enjoys teaching the juniors how to develop their résumé writing and interviewing skills. He loves learning about and teaching history.

The Future of Education in America: "I think it is absolutely going in the right direction. What I like most about working with young people is that they are the future of America. There is a lot of positive energy. I see some world leaders here," he shared. "Education in America is changing. It could be different five or six years down the road because of the innovations in technology and all of the information kids have to deal with. It could be very exciting, but it could also be a real pressure cooker. There are more responsibilities and pressures than 20 years ago. Also, funding problems need to be overcome."

My Goals as an Educator: "I can really be successful if I can help a youngster learn to be successful in society. As much as possible, I want to help students become their own self-advocates, to think for themselves and to be flexible and adapt. This is a fast-paced, changing world. My goal is to give them the confidence level in themselves and teach them to rely on themselves. Students need to take what they've learned and continue to learn. Yes, they need good math skills and good reading skills, but they also need good thinking skills so that when life changes, they will be ready to make other decisions both voluntarily and when they have to."

Home Life: Mr. Moriarty is married to his wife, Pat.



James Moriarty

Concepts & Thought



HOME ON THE RANGE... Marion Jaskot, a Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School biology teacher and President of the Biology Teachers Association of New Jersey, is pictured, above, heading out with a research party during her summer experience as an Earthwatch Education Fellow, doing hands-on fieldwork in the sagebrush of steppe of Idaho.

SPFHS Biology Teacher Named Education Fellow

SCOTCH PLAINS - This summer, Marion Jaskot, a Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) biology teacher and President of the Biology Teachers Association of New Jersey, participated in activities as an Earthwatch Education Fellow.

She partnered with a volunteer businesswoman from Chicago, and worked with Dr. Steven Seefeldt, a government researcher at the United States Sheep Experiment Station (USSES) in Dubois, which is situated on 28,000 acres of Idaho sagebrush.

Ms. Jaskot was responsible for clipping, bagging, drying and weighing plants as a measure of biomass in randomly determined areas around the site identified using the Global Positioning System via satellite.

She also assisted with seedling experiments to determine if ground covers could be spectrally analyzed using satellite photography and a portable computer system, thus requiring minimal vegetation collection in future experiments.

Ms. Jaskot's work was part of many simultaneous experiments being done by USSES scientists to determine the consequences of sheep grazing and many other factors on the sagebrush steppe ecosystem.

Research efforts at the Experiment Station are designed to help sheep producers reduce production costs and maintain profitable operations by increasing their understanding of the nutrition, health, and reproductive needs of sheep and by helping to control the variety of noxious weeds that are infesting both public and private rangelands in the West.

Ms. Jaskot is currently back in her SPFHS classroom, where she is sharing her field experiences with her biology students, helping science "come alive" for them.

In addition, she will apply her experiences to her work on the Executive Board of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey and with the Partnership for New Jersey Plant Conservation.

Ninety-Four Percent of WHS Graduates Continue Education

WESTFIELD - A total of 94 percent of the Westfield High School (WHS) Class of 2003 are pursuing higher education this fall.

According to a statistical report released by Dr. Cas Jakubik, Director of Guidance, 84 percent are entering four-year colleges and universities, while 10 percent are attending two-year colleges, and less than 1 percent have entered vocational, business and other post high school institutions.

The remainder have accepted employment or had future plans that were undecided at the time of graduation.

Although the colleges selected are from coast-to-coast, most of the colleges and universities chosen by the Class of 2003 are located in the eastern U.S. Two students were accepted to universities in Canada.

Some of the more popular out-of-state colleges and universities selected by this year's graduates include: Loyola College (seven students), Pennsylvania State University (six students), University of New Hampshire (five students), Lehigh University (five students), and University of Maryland (five students).

A total of 62 WHS graduates are continuing their education in New Jersey, with 30 attending four-year colleges and universities, 31 entering two-year colleges, and one graduate accepted to a specialized technical school.

The most widely attended New Jersey school is Rutgers, with 12 WHS graduates attending various colleges within the university. Kean University is next in enrollment, with six students from WHS and Monmouth University has five Westfield graduates.

Princeton University is also on the list of New Jersey schools attended by a WHS Class of 2003 graduate.

Other Ivy League schools accepting WHS graduates this year include Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard and University of Pennsylvania. Looking at two-year institutions, Union County College welcomed 25 WHS graduates this fall.

A complete list of colleges and universities attended by the WHS 2003 graduating class is available on www.westfieldnj.com/whs.

A total of 316 students (or 98 percent) received WHS diplomas this year, including 12 students who attended Special Education schools.

Pasta Night Organized By SP-F Music Boosters

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Music Boosters will host a Pasta Night on Wednesday, October 29, at the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School cafeteria from 5 to 8 p.m.

Tickets, which should be purchased in advance, are \$5 in advance and \$8 at the door for adults, \$3 in advance and \$5 at the door for senior citizens, and children under three years of age are admitted free. The deadline for ticket sales is Friday, October 24.

Ticket prices include pasta, salad and bread, while desserts and beverages are provided at an extra cost.

To purchase tickets, please call Jo Gassler at (908) 789-9773, Dina Smith at (908) 889-8036, Anita Wells at (908) 654-5923, or Linda Zebleckas at (908) 232-8151.

THE STUDENT VIEW

The weekly column written by local high school students

Electives: Too Much Work, Or Tool for Self-Discovery?

By LISA M. BASILE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

There seems to be an increasing amount of non-academic courses being offered in today's high schools.

Aside from English, science, history, mathematics, and language, which comprise the mandatory pallet of classes, there is a wide range of electives available.

For example, a student may choose drama, debate, or business law as a class if their schedule permits. But is this all too much for the student to handle?

No. I believe that electives are necessary elements in the path toward educational success.

Electives provide a certain freedom to the student, where mandatory classes do not. Depending on what high school year one is in, they must take a certain class. For example, biology and geometry are required for graduation. However, electives represent the nurturing side of a high school life.

Students can choose outside classes that suit their personality, giving them a bit more educational control. Electives aid students by promoting self-identity.

An English teacher stated, "Electives are wonderful because they give the opportunity for kids to see just what is out in the work world." It is necessary to have these courses because some students still don't know what fields of work or personal interest they want to pursue.

During my early high school experience, I was very interested in psychology. After I took the course, I was relieved to realize it's not something I want to dive into further. However, when I took journalism, I realized, with much introspection, that it is the area in which I want to major in.

Not only do electives aid by eliminating and confirming interests, they are also great for the student who wants to take a cool-off class, to develop and bring out inner talents.

Many high schools offer a crafts or cooking course. While these classes may be less demanding, they help make students into individuals. Some electives even polish a talent, bringing out a student's inner desire to create or to fine-tune an artistic style.

For example, creative writing is a typical course for writers who want to expand their artistic horizons, while photography, art, and design courses can do the same.

Without electives, many agree that school would feel like a daily routine without excitement or change.

Michael Beil, a junior at Westfield High School, remarked, "Electives are really beneficial to the student body because they give us choices, and that's similar to college."

The college setting is more liberal and less monotonous than a high school routine, which can make students feel bored.

However, is there a downside to the freedom and exploration of electives?

A student, who chose to remain anonymous, responded, "I think, generally speaking, Westfield High School has a tendency to download college level courses which has a significant impact on the student, lessening their opportunity for free time and to simply enjoy their youth... Kids will get these courses in a University. Why do they have to be brought down to the High School level?"

I responded by saying that in Westfield High School, one could take

comparative religion or anthropology, which could prepare the student for their future college careers. Some teenagers have the desire to learn now, so they are not completely bogged in college. Yes, the High School years are a time when teenagers are learning adult responsibility, but electives pose no more of a threat to youthful activity than a math or language course. In addition, electives are not mandatory, and a student who wishes to take up a course outside their academic class will do so willfully. Most students will not tackle an elective if their obligatory courses are overwhelming. One senior stated, "I take pottery because it gives me time to just rest during school. It's a nice break."

We live in a society where education is of the utmost importance. I believe education runs hand in hand with individualism, and because of this it is important to let the student see all their possibilities. A High School Midi course may just pave the way for a future course engineer, while a culinary arts course may lead to a future restaurant owner. Wherever a student's interest lies, having the chance to experience it can have a huge impact on future decisions. In retrospect, had I not been able to join the journalism program in Westfield High School, I am not entirely sure I would be writing this column right now. Life should be lived with the rights to learn and experience, and allowing students to make the decision to actively take part in their interests encourages a fulfilled lifetime of knowledge and individuality.

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Pingry School Schedules Fall Open House Events

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP - The Pingry School will open its doors this fall to families who are interested in the co-educational, K-12 independent country day school with open house events for its Lower School and Middle and Upper Schools.

The Lower School campus in Short Hills, which welcomes students in Kindergarten through sixth grade, will host its open house on Wednesdays, October 15 and November 19, and Tuesday, December 9, each beginning at 8:30 a.m.

Each day's program will feature a tour of the building, a question-and-answer session, and the opportunity for parents to observe classes. Attendees will be given information about the Lower School's curriculum, foreign

language instruction, computer technology, small class sizes, and available before and after-school care.

For directions and information, please call Short Hills campus Director of Admission Sheila Ramirez at (973) 379-4550.

The Upper and Middle School Open House will be held on Sunday, October 19, with emphasis on the Middle School, and Sunday, November 16, with emphasis on the Upper School. Both sessions will commence with tours at 2 p.m., followed at 2:45 p.m. by welcoming comments and panel discussions about academics, extracurricular activities, athletics and student life.

For directions and more information, please call Director of Admission Sara Boisvert at (908) 647-6419.

Marist College Honors Nicole Manzano of SP

SCOTCH PLAINS - Marist College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. named Scotch Plains resident Nicole Manzano to the spring 2003 semester Dean's List.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Manzano, Nicole is a member of the Class of 2004. She is majoring in psychology/elementary education.

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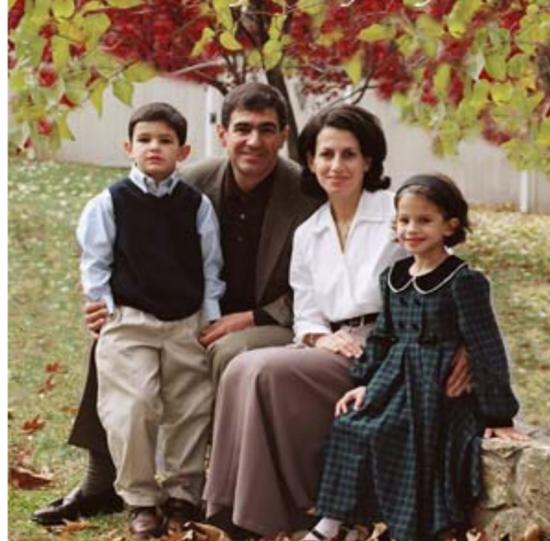
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