



Photos Courtesy of Joan Brennan

BACK IN TIME...In the movie, *Walker*, Gabrielle Brennan, left, gets to wear cool clothes from the late 1950s for her role as "Beth." Pictured with Gabrielle are: actors Jason Patric, who plays Beth's father, and Chelsea Lopez, right, who portrays Beth's sister.

Gabrielle Brennan, 8, Stars in Drama, *Walker*

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

WESTFIELD - McKinley Elementary School student Gabrielle Brennan will portray "Beth," the daughter of a small-town father forced to make some tough decisions to save his children, in the dark drama, *Walker*.

Currently filming scenes in Rock Hill, S.C. and surrounding locations, *Walker*, which is based on a true story, also includes Sam Shepard, Bruce Dern, Jason Patric (*Rush, Speed 2*), who plays Beth's father, and Drea de Matteo ("The Sopranos" on HBO and "Joey" on NBC), who portrays the mother.

When Gabrielle went on the auditions for *Walker*, there were a lot of other girls competing for the roles of the two daughters, Beth and Sarah. Gabrielle became fast friends with Chelsea Lopez, who plays Sarah, and many photos shown to *The Leader/Times* feature the two girls posing with the actors, their mothers, and playing a rousing game of "rock soccer." Gabrielle, who has two "doubles," remarked that one of her favorite

parts of being on the set are the miniature chocolate chip cookies at the food table. She also thinks the 1957-period clothes are "really cool." She thinks *Walker's* director, Matt Williams, is "really nice" and his brother, Randy Williams, always makes her laugh.

According to Gabrielle's mother, Joan Brennan, the eight-year-old has been a model since she was six months old and she has starred in 10 commercials, including spots for Macy's, SpaghettiOs, "Blue's Clues," Lexus, Glade and Sears. She did one industrial commercial and portrayed Jennifer as a youngster in Peter Paul Basler's movie, *As Cool As Jennifer*. She has done print work for *Vogue*, *Martha Stewart Kids*, and *Time* magazines, as well as Target, Tommy Hilfiger, and many others. Her portfolio and the professional level of the work inside are simply astounding.

Despite all of her celebrity, Mrs. Brennan told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, her friends have never treated her differently and she is still just a

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Gabrielle Brennan



Benjamin B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION...Members of the Choral Art Society of New Jersey attended a videotaped roundtable discussion with *Westfield Leader/Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* A&E Editor Michelle Helen Le Poidevin, far right. Pictured, left to right, are: Victor Lucariello, Nancy Kevin, Ralph Jones and Miss Le Poidevin.

Choral Art Society Films Discussion at *Leader* Office

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

WESTFIELD - Before the organization enters its historic 43rd season, The Choral Art Society (CAS) of New Jersey sat down for a casual question and answer exchange with *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* on June 9 at the newspapers' office.

Patrick Connor videotaped the forum and Michelle Le Poidevin, Arts & Entertainment Editor, conducted the interview.

CAS Marketing Manager Ralph Jones, a 10-year member; Nancy Kevin, patron and chairperson, a member for 10 to 13 years on and off; Victor Lucariello, a new member and baritone who joined last September; and James Little, CAS Director, fielded the questions.

Ms. Kevin cited Mr. Little's exemplary leadership skills, "sense of humor, knowledge of music,

great ear, musicality, wonderful singing" and wide range when asked about his ability to execute a strong performance.

"He doesn't just tell you what you should do, but shows you," she said.

The organization has also gained up to seven new male members in order to achieve a balance. One shining example of new membership is Mr. Lucariello, who noted that he discovered CAS after searching Yahoo. He was attracted to the group's longevity and superior reputation. He touched on his experiences with the group thus far and how he looks forward to contributing his talents and skills in coming seasons.

Ms. Kevin noted that new membership is always welcome.

The panelists also responded to questions regarding how compositions are selected for each con-

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Arts & Entertainment

Grab the Sunscreen, Picnic Basket And Mierswa's 'Bittersweet Stories'

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

WESTFIELD - The book to bring to the beach this summer is "Bittersweet Stories" by Julia Mierswa, a 10-year Westfield resident.

A collection of 10 short tales packed with suspense, colorful description, and poignancy, readers will be rewarded by the twists and turns nestled into every page written by this mother of two.

A native of Bethlehem, Pa., she attended the college-preparatory school, Moravian Academy, before obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy at Hamilton College in Clinton, N.Y.

Before moving to Westfield, she lived in New York City for 10 years, where she thrived in the marketing at McMillan Publishing and publishing industry at Cambridge University Press. In 1989, when she and her husband, Charlie welcomed their daughter, Georgia, she stopped working. In 1993, son Philip was born and the family moved to Westfield when he was two months old.

While Mrs. Mierswa was not educated specifically in the field of creative and fiction writing, she is a dynamic wordsmith and compelling storyteller.

When Julia was 8, she wrote her first story, which contains a style very similar to her current technique. She kept journals through high school for English class and maintained a diary since she was 10. And, being surrounded by "book people who read all of the time"

at Cambridge, she realized they were "her kind of people."

When asked about her creative influences, Mrs. Mierswa said she was always attracted to the minimalist style used by Shirley Jackson, best known for her short story, "The Lottery." She is also a fan of horror novelist Stephen King's writing style.

However, her own signature style draws readers in with familiar, everyday scenes, carefully piquing their interest with vivid images, intriguing characters no matter what their age may be, and then allowing the readers to discover their own conclusions.

"Let the emotional burden fall on the reader a little bit," admitted Mrs. Mierswa, "letting them realize that the conclusion is not necessarily one way, but how they picture it."

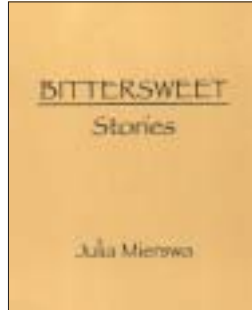
"All of the stories have overriding themes," she told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*. "Often, the characters are distracted by something in the beginning of the story. Everything has something bittersweet in it, but it's not spelled out."

"Bittersweet Stories" was published exclusively by Mrs. Mierswa and printed by Falcon Printing in Westfield, Georgia, 16, who is a sophomore at Westfield High School, designed the illustration of a fairy for her mother's book, which was dedicated to Mrs. Mierswa's parents.

"They have always been very sup-



Julia Mierswa



Julia Mierswa

Penny Harter and Gaby Falco Offered Poetry Reading at Kuran Arts Center

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

FANWOOD - At the Patricia M. Kuran Arts Center in Fanwood on June 9, local residents celebrated the magic of language when the Fanwood Arts Council sponsored a free poetry reading at which the award-winning author Penny Harter and Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School junior Gaby Falco read their work.

The reading marked the publication of 2005's *Exit 13* magazine, Fanwood's own literary journal.

The Patricia M. Kuran Arts Center is located beside the Fanwood Borough Hall. The Arts Center is an 1800's carriage house, standing like a wooden playhouse. The audience thought the locale was conducive to a literary atmosphere. The reading was filmed and will be shown on Channel 34.

Penny Harter, who read her poetry with enthusiasm and modesty, is the author of 16 books. From those 16, she read many of her poems, including, "Living on a County Highway," which is actually about Fanwood, and "Deer Crossing," which happens to be inspired by the Great Swamp area. Ms. Harter was living in Santa Fe, Calif. for some time, but she moved back to New Jersey, the place where much of her inspiration comes from.

Ms. Harter said, "When I went west, I was struck dumb. I couldn't write. It took a while to pull the Western images into my writing." She said she was always surrounded by nature, especially here on the East Coast.

"I truly identified with it," she said. It is not surprising then, that Ms. Harter won the William O. Douglas Nature Writing Award for her work in her 2002 book, titled, "Buried in the Sky." Although the specific locale does have somewhat of an influence, she said she has been writing work that involves not only locations on earth, but also

the cosmos.

"I like poems that integrate the cosmos into our lives, and us into the cosmos." This ethereal sense can be heard in her poetry, for she evokes the ideas of death, life, and nature.

Ms. Harter also noted that her favorite authors include Ruth Stone, Harry Oliver, and James Wright.

Gaby has started her writing career early. She won both the 2004 and 2005 Rutgers High School Poetry Contest and was invited to read at the prestigious Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival in last year. She will also attend Governor's School to study creative writing, which she absolutely adores, and which is obvious through her solid writing skills.

Gaby, who cites her influences to be Sharon Olds, Sylvia Plath, and T.S. Eliot, who she even wrote a poem for, said, "I love creative writing. My favorite form is poetry, but I've done a couple short stories."

Her poetry is certainly modern, but her use of language separates her from many other young authors. She is able to create a solid image in her work, while providing insightful thoughts and meanings, much of which belies her age and experience.

Gaby said, "I think reading really helped me the most with my writing. When I was little, I would read all the time. My mom exposed me to books, and because of that, I was given more of an imagination."

She is excited to do writing over the summer at governor's school, but voiced natural concern: "I'm very excited but also really nervous. Writing is very demanding. I don't know how I'll do under pressure."

Judging by the turnout of the audience at Kuran's Art Center, and their applause and interest, Gaby will do just fine.

Gary Szelc, a Fanwood resident and a third-place winner in the Fanny-

N.J. Symphony Will Kick-Off County's Free Summer Concerts

COUNTY - The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders announced that Union County's free Summer Arts Festival concert series will begin Wednesday, June 29, with a performance by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO) starting at 7:30 p.m. in Echo Lake Park, near Springfield Avenue in Mountainside.

The performance, entitled "Salute to Hollywood," celebrates music composed for the stage, and is part of the orchestra's annual outdoor Summer Parks Tour sponsored by Pfizer and Bank of America.

The other free concerts in the Summer Arts Festival series include:

- July 6, "Midnight Dip" - local rock band performs a large repertoire of contemporary jazz, funk and blues;
- July 13, "Verdict" - dance to the "hot, hot, hot" hits of this popular Reggae band.
- July 20, "Total Soul" - disco, Motown, rhythm and blues and soul are all part of this group's repertoire. Sponsored by the Union County Education Association.
- July 27, "Mustang Sally" - an all-

female group performing classic country to southern rock.

• August 3, "Philadelphia Funk Authority" - a group with horns performs high energy funk and popular music. Sponsored by Verizon.

• August 10, "The Nerds" - combines rock and roll with a comedic stage show.

• August 17, "The Fabulous Grease Band" - plays dance music of the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. Sponsored by Wachovia.

• August 24, "The Ed Palermo Big Band with Rob Paparozzi" - 16 studio and Broadway musicians perform a tribute to blues legends Paul Butterfield and Mike Bloomfield. Sponsored by the Schering-Plough Corporation.

• August 31, "The Party Dolls" - a trio of women and their band bring to life the sights and sounds of the "Girl Groups" from the '60s through today. Sponsored by the ConocoPhillips-Bayway Refinery.

In case of rain, the NJSO concert will be cancelled. For up-to-date concert and rain information call the Summer Arts Festival 24-hour hotline at (908) 352-8410 after 3 p.m. on the day of the concert.



Get Outta The House

By CAROL F. DAVIS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

If you've been thinking about learning to dance, don't miss the opportunity to do so at the *Trailside Nature and Science Center* on Saturday, June 18, from 8 to 10 p.m. at the Skytop Picnic Pavilion. Bring a friend or come alone; partners are not necessary. Jim Reiter, director of Swing Dance Plus in Madison, will make sure you have fun. The floor is concrete, so don't wear dance shoes. Your \$15 fee will include refreshments. Pre-register by calling (908) 789-3670.

On Saturday, June 18, at 7:30 p.m., the Coffee With Conscience Concert Series of Westfield will present the *Dreamsicles* at the First United Methodist Church. This duo will amuse and entertain with whimsical tunes via two voices and one guitar. Tickets are \$14, and you are urged to reserve your seats by calling the Concert Hotline at (908) 522-1501. For more about the performers, visit www.thedreamsicles.com.

Spend the day on Saturday, June 18, at the *Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Flea Market & Collectible Show* between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. It will be held outdoors, with over 50 vendors, a garage and sale, and refreshments. The school is located at 667 Westfield Avenue in Scotch Plains. Admission is free.

Stevens Institute of Technology will host the *150th Anniversary Vintage Baseball Festival* (it all began in Hoboken, you know) on Saturday, June 18, from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. Events include all-day baseball at the stadium, a parade, plays, performances, special appearances, and vendors of baseball memorabilia. For more information, call the Office of Cultural Affairs at (201) 420-2207.

My Little Chickadee, W. C. Fields' 1939 classic film, will beat the Cranford Community Center on Tuesday, June 21, at 7:30 p.m. Cool off with some friends, including Mae West. *It's a Gift*, another W. C. Fields classic, will be shown on Friday, June 17, at 2 p.m. The Center is located at 220 Walnut Avenue, and is wheelchair accessible.

Wood Day Poetry Contest said, "Gaby's work was fabulous. She shows great insight, observations about life, and a marvelous use of words."

The Fanny-Wood Poetry Contest is

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Queen of Arts

Craft Projects, Books, and Patterns
For All the Year 'Round

Pressing Blossoms, Stamping, Salsa, Cooking With a Stick, and Framing

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

By now, your gardens are bursting with color, filled with gorgeous flowers. While the beauty can't last forever, the blossoms can be frozen in time using "The Art of Pressed Flowers" by Mary Lawrence (Running Press, 2002, \$30).

A flower press, full-color instruction book, various acid-free mounting papers and a 65-page book by Lawrence make the 35 exquisite projects like carnation coasters, decorative doorplates, lampshades and crystal miniatures possible and fun to create.

When and where should you pick your blossoms? How do you make your flower press and mount and frame your treasure? Not only does the author of this compilation answer all of these questions, but she encourages you as well.

Is it getting hotter in hear or is it just me? You must be cooking some of the steamy salsas or the Hot Cheese, Mushroom and Chorizo Dip featured in "Chips, Dips & Salsas" by Judy Walker and Kim MacEachern (Northland Publishing, 1999, \$9.95).

"Dips came to popularity in the 50s and continue to be staples at every entertaining occasion," writes Walker and MacEachern. Remember that when you are searching for the perfect poolside snack to serve your guests this summer.

The sassy Goat Cheese, Salsa, and Shrimp Nachos, cool Peach and Fresh Ginger Salsa, the clever Cowboy Caviar, and tangy Mediterranean Olive Salsa with creamy feta top the best recipes in this festive volume.

Perhaps you will be dining in more woody atmosphere. If so, "Cooking on a Stick: Campfire Recipes for Kids" by Linda White (Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1996, \$8.95) is your best buy this season.

Take the young ones to a campground or your own backyard to cook up Moose Kabobs (veggies, dressing and beef steak), Wh-o-o's Chili, goey Hibernating Bananas (dessert with candy bars and miniature marshmallows) and a savory Bird's Nest Breakfast.

Don't forget to read and heed the

helpful safety tips recommended by White, as well as hints on building a campfire. It is important to have help from parents, especially when using sharp tools to prepare the meals.

One final product for scrapbookers and stampers that will fill your products with sparkles and sophistication. Jacquard Products manufactures Pearl Ex stamp pads that are water-soluble, acid

free, archival, lightfast and washfast. Choose from 12 colors in Two-Tone, Metallic, Interference, and Essential categories. The ink will adhere to almost everything including wood, shrink plastic, paper, clay, leather, glass and fabric. Stamp away!

While your munching on your salsa and dips in the backyard and pressing those flowers, think about adding some pizzazz to your backyard planters, tables, kitchen decanters, gazing balls, and serving trays.

"Backyard Mosaics" by Connie Sheerin (Sterling Publishing, 2005, \$14.95) recommends ceramic tiles, stained glass, mirror, seashells, buttons, china shards,

flat-backed marbles and tons of other goodies to create the Glass Flowers Gazing Ball, spectacular Glisten and Trickle Tabletop Fountain, and elegant chimnea with earthen tones and pottery or china.

You've been framed? Not until you have read "Country Living Framing Frames at Home" (Sterling Publishing, Hearst Imprint, 1999, \$12.95). Follow the key framing terms, such as "washline," "rabbet" and "bolektion" to craft 30 challenging projects like Ribbon-Wrapped Glass Frames and Paper-Covered Envelope Frame. Where should you look first - the frame itself or what's inside the frame?

Let's finish things off with the volume guaranteed to're your mouth water - "The Ultimate Southern Living Cookbook" compiled and edited by Julie Fisher Gunter (Oxmoor House, 1999, \$34.95).

A glossary of staples needed for every kitchen, an herb dictionary, kitchen equipment guide and hints of gorgeous garnishes precede delectable recipes like

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