

**Union County News**

**Safety and Law Enforcement Is Not Everyday Thought**

By Bette Jane Kowalski  
Union County Freeholder

I've been a freeholder for eight months, and every day I learn more about the broad range of services that Union County offers its residents. Most people don't have time to keep up with county news, so let me fill you in on a few things.

On Friday and Saturday, May 20 to 21, Union County's Department of Parks and Recreation is joining with environmental groups to conduct a Bio-Blitz of Lenape Park. The goal is to count all the living species dwelling in the park, both plant and animal, whether daytime or nocturnal.

It's the first time such a project is being done in our region, and we are looking forward to the results. Meanwhile, there's still time for volunteers to register by calling (908) 527-4032.

Unfortunately, there are a number of people who write letters making various charges against Union County officials and employees. I know that not every newspaper has the resources to check the facts in letters to the editor. But I hope that most readers have the good sense to read critically and look at the evidence.

The Union County employees whom I know work hard to do a good job and provide services to residents. Most of the work they do is unsung and under-appreciated. For critics to point to the salaries of administrators is misleading. Besides, the administrators and officials whom I see every day are always looking for ways to be more effective and keep expenses down. And like most other freeholders, I drive my own car, not a county car.

In towns like Westfield and

Cranford, we do not think every day about the work done by our county public safety and law enforcement staff. But if we were to cut the budget for the prosecutor's office, we might soon see what happens when gangs and drug dealers extend their activities to the quiet suburban towns. What would happen if county police and sheriff's officers were to cut back on the work they do in coordinating with local authorities to guard the public?

Without the vigilance and expertise of our county officers, we would have much more reason to be concerned about organized crime and terrorism.

Under the leadership of Freeholder Chairman Rick Proctor, Union County recently participated in a national exercise called Topoff 3, which was designed to strengthen our ability to prevent and, if necessary, respond to a biological threat. Hundreds of volunteers throughout the county came together to test the mettle of our law enforcement and medical response teams.

Data from that exercise is now being compiled and analyzed so that we can be better prepared for emergencies.

I invite anyone who needs information on Union County to visit the web site: [www.ucnj.org](http://www.ucnj.org). You may write to me at the UC Administration Building, Elizabeth, NJ 07207. Or you can call the Freeholders' office at: (908) 527-4100.

Thank you for your attention. And best wishes for the Memorial Day holiday.



**WESTFIELDERS ARE GENEROUS...** Thanks to residents and businesses of the town, Westfield United Way achieves their record setting goal of \$700,000 in fund raising. Pictured are Campaign Chairman Tom Cusimano and Executive Director Linda Maggio holding their sign of thanks.

**Westfielders Contribute at Record Levels for Neighbors**

WESTFIELD - The Westfield United Way announced that Westfielders opened their wallets and their hearts to help raise a record-breaking \$700,000.

Tom Cusimano, Chairman of the 2004 campaign noted, "The depth of caring and financial support truly reflects the Westfield spirit of outreach and giving to others. Our small town has demonstrated a big town 'love of neighbor' level of support."

On behalf of the 19 agencies which

**Codey Submits State Nominations to Senate**

TRENTON - Acting Governor Richard Codey last week submitted several dozen nominations to the State Senate for advice and consent of the Senate. Included on the list are several individuals from Union County.

For the 9-1-1 Commission, Union County Sheriff Ralph Froehlich and Gareth Williams of Cranford were nominated for appointment.

For the Catastrophic Illness In Children Relief Fund Commission, Jane Schreadley Lorber, R.N. of Scotch Plains was nominated for reappointment.

For the New Jersey Historic Trust, Dr. Thomas H. Brown of Plainfield was nominated for reappointment.

For the State Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, Maureen Kehoe Rothfelder, Esq. of Westfield was nominated for appointment.

For the State Board Of Professional Planners, Victor Vinegra, of Garwood was nominated for appointment.

For the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority, George Castro, II of Elizabeth was nominated for reappointment.

receive the funds, Mr. Cusimano added, "I want to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all the residents of Westfield whose contributions to the Westfield United Way show the magnitude of caring that makes this town such a special place to live. I am proud to say I am a Westfielder. Westfield truly cares!"

"In its 48 year history, the Westfield United Way has distributed almost \$18 million for the programs and services for Westfielders," added Linda Maggio, Executive Director of the Westfield United Way. "This is a true reflection of how much we all care!"



**22nd District News State Should Use \$1 Bil. In Revenue to Lower Debt**

Senator Nicholas Scutari, Linden

State Senator Nicholas Scutari (District 22, Linden) stated last week that a projected \$1 billion in additional tax revenue should be used to put New Jersey's financial house back in order.

"Now is the time to pay down the debt," said he said. "We're already slated to be \$2 billion behind on the budget for FY2007. We should apply this money to outstanding liabilities instead of creating new ones."

Sen. Scutari also argued against new tax measures, such as a 2 percent gross receipts tax on cable, and an expansion of the realty transfer fee to include homes priced between \$150,000 and \$350,000.

"The reason we have this additional billion dollars is because New Jersey leads the region in economic growth. These proposed taxes are counterproductive, taking money out of out of peoples' pockets and out of the local economy," Sen. Scutari said.

Sen. Scutari singled out the realty transfer fee increase: "Today, \$150,000 homes in New Jersey are about as common a sight as a dinosaur on the turnpike. The market is already putting a tremendous squeeze on buyers for affordable housing; why are we going to penalize them further?"

The senator also wants to stop selling off state land, explaining that, "we have real estate holdings that will only continue to appreciate in value. To sell them off now if we don't absolutely have to is to short-change ourselves down the road. It's a little like getting rid of the family silver."

The most important thing, said Sen. Scutari, is to be fiscally responsible: "Governor Codey put the budget together with a scalpel and a microscope, and I urge my colleagues to stay the course. To abandon a frugal approach now would be self-defeating and gratuitous. This is an opportunity, not a reprieve."

**FSO Event to Address Parental Control Issues**

WESTFIELD - On May 24, the Family Support Organization (FSO) of Union County will present "Controlling Parents and Out-of-Control Kids" from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at their office at 137 Elmer Street in Westfield.

Led by Steve Becker, a licensed clinical social worker, the discussion will focus on how over-controlling parenting can cause youngsters to become estranged from the parents as well as themselves.

FSO is a system partner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Child Behavioral Health Services. For more information, please call (908) 789-7625 and ask for Gail, Kathy or Vickie.

**Police to Enforce 'Zero Tolerance' Seatbelt Law**

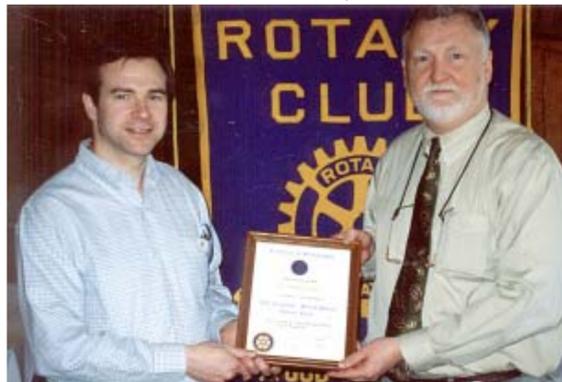
WESTFIELD - The Westfield Police Department will be conducting a Click It or Ticket campaign from May 23 to June 5 that incorporates "zero-tolerance enforcement" of automobile safety belt laws. As part of a national effort, the program seeks to increase safety belt use in cars and reduce serious injury or death in traffic crashes.

According to the police department, Click It or Ticket is a high-publicity law enforcement effort that gives people more of a reason to buckle up - the increased threat of a traffic ticket. Most people buckle up for safety. But for some people, it is the threat of the ticket that spurs them to put on a safety belt."

The department notes, Click it or Ticket campaigns and similar efforts have increased safety belt use and as a result of the enforcement and public information efforts, New Jersey's seat belt usage rate has risen to an all-time high of 82 percent."



David B. Corbin for *The Westfield Leader and The Times* SPECIAL K'S...George Kapper, left, and Gary Kehler pose and discuss their record setting number of victories while at Westfield High School. See letter on page 4.



**NEW ROTARY CLUB MEMBER...** Dwight Leeper, President of the Fanwood Scotch-Plains Rotary Club (FWSPR), left, recently presented a certificate to Thomas Loop. Mr. Loop has been a resident of Scotch Plains for 14 years with his wife and four children. He is a member of All Saints Church and is Assistant Scoutmaster with Troop 33 of The Fanwood Presbyterian Church. Mr. Loop provides customized software systems to the financial industry. The FWSPR meets every Wednesday at noon at Pantagis Restaurant. For further information contact Dr. Richard Dobyns at (908) 322-5986.

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