



TIMES

OUR 47TH YEAR - ISSUE NO. 52-2006 USPS 485200 Periodical - Postage Paid at Scotch Plains, N.J. Thursday, December 28, 2006 Published Every Thursday Since 1959 www.timesnj.com (908) 232-4407 press@goleader.com SIXTY CENTS



DON'T PITY THE FOOD (September 14)...In between filming scenes for his reality TV show, Mr. T emotes one of his more characteristic growls, as John's Meat Market co-owner Vinnie Losavio looks on in the freezer; ALL SMILES (September 7)...residents enjoy the weather, family fun, rides for the kids and food at the annual Italian Festival held at St. Bartholomew the Apostle Roman Catholic Church in Scotch Plains; FREE AT LAST (September 21)...Fred, left, and Michael Chemidlin attend a Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club luncheon. Michael spoke to Rotarians and guests about his two-month imprisonment in Sierra Leone earlier this year; NO ONE HURT (September 7)...Don Wussler of Coles Avenue in Scotch Plains examines the tree limb that crushed his Ford Explorer. Squalls struck randomly throughout the region as tropical storm Ernesto exited the area.

Library Dir. Ex-Wife Pleads Guilty to Stabbing; Sierra Leone Releases SP Resident; SP-F Names Superintendent; Stender Loses Close Election

JULY Westfield Detective Ron Allen announced his retirement after 25 years of service in Westfield. He worked at Westfield High School for four years as a part of his role in the juvenile detective bureau.



Ron Allen

The Westfield Association of Administrators and Supervisors (WAAS) and BOE ratified a new three-year contract, which includes a 4-percent annual increase plus insurance benefits extended to domestic partners.

Resident Jose Moncaya, 38, pled guilty to stealing \$70,000 from customers of a now-defunct Elizabeth-based Astral Travel and Tours to Go. Authorities said he confessed to taking money from 60 people between June 2003 and September 2004.

The town council approved ordinances to install stop signs and designate two-hour parking zones, regulate the height of fences on residential properties, require six-foot fencing around construction sites, vacate a public right-of-way and set new fees for filming in town, holding a limousine license and operating a sidewalk cafe.

Westfield Police Officer Gregory Kasko was suspended from duty with pay on July 7 for allegedly making "false statements of material facts to superior officers during an administrative hearing while under oath," according to the notice of suspension by the Westfield Police Department.

Rock'n' Joe Coffee House and Bistro announced it would open a Prospect Street location, and High Five Candy Store planned to move into the former Kabloom space on Elm Street.

HSBC (Hong Kong/Shanghai Bank) scheduled its Westfield opening for September, and CitiBank announced it would move onto North Avenue in the old Visage building.

After 18 months of negotiations, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education and the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association (SPFEA) ratified a three-year con-

tract, retroactive to July 1, 2005. The BOE passed a wellness and nutrition policy with amendments to allow parents to bring in cupcakes to celebrate students' birthdays. The BOE had considered banning edible foods for birthday celebrations as a means to be more conscientious of students with dietary concerns such as allergies or diabetes.

Cumberland Farms Inc. filed its lawsuit a month after the board of adjustment's April 6 denial of its application to expand and upgrade its Gulf gasoline station on Route 22. The new application, Cumberland said, addressed the original

concerns raised by neighborhood residents, including an end to vehicular access to the gas station from Mountain Avenue and a smaller canopy covering the six proposed new gas pumps.

Michael Chemidlin, the Scotch Plains resident arrested for conspiracy and detained in Sierra Leone, Africa since April, was released and returned home on July 10. During his more than two-month ordeal, the missionary and former National Guard staff sergeant was first arrested for conspiracy and released. He was then rearrested for espionage and encountered multiple court delays.

Scenes for Watching the Detectives, starring Lucy Liu and Cillian Murphy, filmed in the municipal parking lot between Westfield Avenue and Bartle Avenue and inside Palmer Video. The movie is set for release in 2007.

An administrative law judge upheld the suspension of Officer Suzanne Butler. Ms. Butler was suspended after an off-duty confrontation in November 2002 with a driver attempting to use her driveway to make a k-turn. Ms. Butler served her suspension July 27 through October 24, 2003.

The planning/zoning board denied a development application for a branch of the Town Bank and Goddard Day Care Center to be located at 314 South Avenue. Multiple board members said they were in favor of the application but had to vote against it due to a demand by the borough's fire department to move the Goddard building to within 15 feet of the curb.

The borough's proposed \$7.7-million budget, introduced in March, continued facing delays as officials waited for word from the state on the borough's application for extraordinary municipal aid.

Construction on LaGrande Park

field was scheduled to begin August 7 and conclude October 15, recreation officials announced. Plans called for re-grating the field to correct drainage problems.

Mountainside At an agenda-setting meeting, Mayor Robert Vigilanti and the borough council supported a bill by Assemblyman Eric Munoz whereby municipal library boards would be permitted to reduce the library tax rate when a municipality acquires new ratables.

Beechwood School Assistant Principal and Curriculum Coordinator Michael Craver announced his resignation to accept a principal position in Morris County's Mendham Township.

Regional Governor Jon Corzine ordered a shutdown of state government fol-

AUGUST Westfield A state administrative law judge ruled in favor of the Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC) in its case against the Westfield BOE, giving Hillcrest Academy, an alternative high school that the UCESC operates, the option to remain at Westfield's Lincoln School facility until June 30, 2007.

The BOE unanimously voted in favor of the motion for an early-childhood center at Lincoln School, but tabled the motion for a Roosevelt renovation. The plan for Roosevelt included increasing the cafeteria to 5,500 square feet from its current size of 3,160 square feet. Edison Intermediate School's cafeteria measures 3,850 square feet.



SPIN ME' ROUND (September 7)...Local residents get an upside-down thrill at a festival at St. Bartholomew the Apostle Roman Catholic Church in Scotch Plains.

lowing a budget impasse with the legislature. Assembly Democrats were opposed to the governor's proposal to raise the state sales tax from 6 to 7 percent to plug a budget deficit. The governor's proposed budget increased state spending by 11 percent to \$31 billion, the highest in state history. The state closure included the State Lottery, Atlantic City casinos and Motor Vehicle Services.

The Union County freeholders approved a \$424,700 contract to Dumor Contracting of Elizabeth for improvements to baseball and soccer fields at the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools in Scotch Plains and the Little League field off Union Avenue and Route 22 in Scotch Plains.

The freeholders approved an \$822,271 contract with Dumor in February to turf the fields. The Scotch Plains Township Council passed a \$257,200 bond ordinance for its portion of the project. The bond ordinance pays for irrigation improvements at the Vo-Tech fields as well as the installation of a new clay infield and lighting — making the fields the first in Scotch Plains to be lit.

A 5-5 tie vote by Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA) commissioners put a halt to plans to proceed with a request for qualification (RFQ) for privatization of the authority's wastewater treatment facility in Rahway.

Thomas Graziano of Berkeley Heights was named director of public works for the county, replacing Frank Dann, also a township resident, who resigned after 32 years with the county.

The Westfield firefighters' contract entered binding arbitration, the town Policemen's Benevolent Association (PBA) filed for arbitration and the Teamsters union, representing public works and a division of engineering employees, filed for mediation.

The town council named Judith Thornton Westfield's first town planner. She will provide staff support to the planning board and board of adjustment, examine the master plan and revisions to land-use ordinances and supervise the zoning official with involvement in reviewing applications, variance requests an enforcement activities. She held similar position in Cedar Grove.

Krystle Dixon, a member of the Westfield High School Class of 2001, was killed on August 6 after her car left Route 22, hitting a pole in the Hillsdale Shop Rite parking lot.

"Everyone in the school district mourns the loss," said Westfield School/Community Relations Coordinator Lorre Korecky. "She was very athletic, very bright and a charming young woman."

Krystle graduated from the University of Rochester with a degree in English before attending Montclair State University, where she studied biology.

A film crew shot scenes downtown for Perfect Christmas, a family-friendly romantic comedy that is now expected to be released for next year's holiday season. The film stars Queen Latifah, Gabrielle Union and Morris Chestnut.

A town signed a 99-year lease with the Westfield Historical Society for the historic Reeve House on Mountain Avenue. The house and property is on

the National Historical Registry. Forty new staff members prepared to greet 6,000 students from kindergarten to high-school seniors entering the 2006-2007 school year. Westfield High School Interim Principal Dennis Fyffe and Guidance Director Stephen Maczynski were among the district's new hires.

Jim DeSarno took over as varsity football head coach of the WHS Blue Devils, replacing Ed Tranchina. An 82-year-old Westfield woman died on August 29 after being struck by a car as she attempted to cross East North Avenue between Central Avenue and Elmer Street. No charges were filed against the driver.

Scotch Plains Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Margaret Hayes was named the district's new superintendent of schools. Additional hires included 52 "highly qualified teachers and administrators" who greeted 5,300 students.

The BOE hired a contractor to aerate the School One and Terrill Middle School fields, and to apply field seed, fertilizer and seed mulch to the Terrill fields. Projected completion of the School One field renovation is in spring 2007.

The township council approved a \$380,000 bond ordinance to finance the purchase of the home at 2377 Richmond Avenue that will be razed and turned into additional parkland at Jerseyland Park.

A public advisory panel looking into the best use for the Ponderosa Farm property recommended to the county freeholders the construction of soccer fields, picnic area, gardens and a playground on the 23-acre property.

Terrill and Park Middle Schools were placed on early warning, according to the New Jersey 2005-2006 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) preliminary report. The report, released by the state's department of education, said Terrill missed the mathematics proficiency target, while Park was placed in the "safe harbor" category.

Fanwood After receiving \$350,000 from New Jersey's \$25-million Extraordinary Municipal Aid Program (EMAP), the

borough council approved the \$7.7-million 2006 municipal budget. The borough's recreation commission unanimously elected resident Bob Budiansky as the new recreation director.

Garwood New hires for the coming school year included: Fran Florio, second-grade teacher; Anita Livesey, registered nurse; Jean DeLuca, teacher aide, and Linda Edmundo, fifth-grade teacher.

Mountainside The BOE appointed a new Beechwood School assistant principal and curriculum coordinator to replace Michael Craver.

Chief School Administrator Richard O'Malley outlined multiple improvements and changes for the 2006-2007 school year, including 11 new staff members, a new assistant principal and curriculum coordinator (Thomas Conroy) and supervisor of technology (Michelle Savvides).

Regional The State Legislature passed bills to dedicate half of the state's 7-percent sales tax to property tax relief. Four joint committees were created to look at reforming public school funding, public employee benefits, government consolidation and shared services and a citizens' property tax constitutional convention. Sen. Nick Scutari (LD-22, Linden) was named chairman of the employee benefits reform panel.

NJ Transit officials presented \$7.2-billion plan to create a Trans-Hudson Express Tunnel that would enable trains on the Raritan Valley Line to bypass Newark and proceed directly to New York City.

Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-7th) helped procure \$300,000 in federal funding to renovate the long-term care unit at Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside.

New Jersey Attorney General Zulima Farber resigned after a special prosecutor's report determined that she violated state ethics rules by going to the scene of a motor vehicle stop of her boyfriend, Hamlet Goore, on May 26.

In a related matter, the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission launched



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS (August 31)...Three luxury automobiles worth more than \$100,000 were housed in Westfield after being confiscated by the sheriff's department then auctioned and sold for a minimum bid of \$300 to Sheriff Officer Christopher Coon as the only qualifying bidder. Mr. Coon is the stepson of Union County Sheriff Ralph Froehlich. The parties appeared in court on Sept. 8.



Victoria McCabe for The Times BAH HUMBUG...Terence Howard prepares for his cameo as the antagonist to Queen Latifah's narrator in Perfect Christmas.



MEET AND GREET (September 21)...Assemblywoman Linda Stender (LD-22) greets Fanwood residents at Fanny Wood Day. Mrs. Stender sought to become the 7th Congressional District's Representative to the U.S. Congress.

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