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**Paul Peyton**  
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR  
**Suzette F. Stalker**  
COMMUNITY  
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See more Letters on pages 5 & 20

## Letters to the Editor

### Congratulations Coach Tranchina On A Job Well Done at WHS

Coach Tranchina, I have been a Westfield resident for over 10 years, always following Westfield football. I just wanted to congratulate you on a wonderful career—your players as well as coaches always showed class and respect for the game—regardless of the outcome, and most of that credit should be passed on to you.

I am sure your replacement will bring the same character to the program as you did, but being a former New Yorker and being familiar with coach Joe Avena and his long successful career as a head coach—I wouldn't mind seeing him as the next head football coach at Westfield. Once again coach—congratulations on a job well done.

Peter Giallusi  
Westfield

### Scotch Plains Resident Questions School System Budget Reality

Being a lifelong Scotch Plains resident, it was very ironic to see in your newspaper the board of education asking for its annual budget increase, while in *The Star Ledger* there was a fairly lengthy article about the teachers' strike and how they are underpaid along with poor benefits.

Then, also in the *Ledger*, was the school's report card. If this report is any indicator of our return on investments for us as taxpayers, neither increase should be granted. If this was the corporate world, Dr. Choye would be asked to step down as the CEO, and the teachers would be realigned to make the grade. If the stock prices of a company do not have a gain, how can you ask the shareholders to invest more money in the same stock? This is reality.

Bill Lyman  
Scotch Plains

### Resident Believes SP-F Teacher-District Negotiation Process is Broken

*Editor's Note: This letter was sent to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carol Choye, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education and the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Teachers Association.*

Twenty-three years ago, we were attracted by the reputation of the SP-F schools because we heard it praised by a Bergen County school superintendent. We have observed good outcomes from district education manifested in our two children. But the district has a chronic defect. Sadly broken is the teacher-district negotiation process.

The result may be that next-generation parents feel the district in less esteem and settle elsewhere as statewide news coverage singles out our district.

In all our years, no contract has been settled within the contract period. This is not the norm. What are important are the deferred pay raises for teachers and the marginal tax savings for citizens. The important message is that the board does not prioritize esteem for teachers, and that teachers and administrators seem unable to bring comity to the bargaining table.

Over the years, we know of good SP-F teachers who left the district in frustration. Recently we heard a conversation among master teachers discussing their careers. This group in a nearby district singled out districts where teachers are known to be, not necessarily paid more,

but treated well. These were districts that settle contracts without extended discord, and SP-F was not named.

While our children were in the district, outlays per pupil well exceeded our property tax payments. Our children enjoyed the benefits of tax collections from all in the district, both with and without youngsters in the schools. This community spirit was a factor in the real estate investment we made. As long as we live here, we pledge ourselves to vote for school budgets.

The administration and the union should do what is necessary to set aside enmity and hardened stances. The reputation of the schools concerns everyone. How many years of tax savings are erased when you sell your house for \$20,000 less than it might have commanded in a well-regarded district?

And as you suffer that, how will you savor the offloading of health care insurance costs onto the shoulders of your grandchildren's teachers who make an average of \$52,000 per year?

Support our children, and support their teachers. Encourage teachers not to harden positions, and demand that the SP-F Board of Education settle equitably as the two groups approach the state mediator on March 1, 2006.

Suzanne and Blanchard Hiatt  
Scotch Plains

### WF School Superintendent Discusses Edison Intermediate School Report

With the recent release of the School Report Card by the NJ Department of Education, it is evident that student performance in the Westfield Public Schools is high. In addition to School Report Card data, *The Star Ledger's* article on February 2 included information that the paper had reported in August. In August, *The Star Ledger* incorrectly reported Edison Intermediate School as not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress for 2004-2005. Unfortunately, the same error was repeated.

Edison Intermediate School in Westfield met all No Child Left Behind requirements for the 2004-05 school year. The school met all standards for every sub-group and for the entire school. To meet Adequate Yearly Progress, a school has to meet proficiency in all 40 sub-groups, including students who are classified in special education programs, those students with English as a second language, etc.

Because special education students did not meet the Adequate Yearly Progress standard in 2003-2004, but did meet it in 2004-05, the entire school is in "Hold Status." It is incorrect to say that Edison did not meet all requirements in 2004-05.

For more information on standardized test scores of both Edison and Roosevelt Intermediate Schools, you may refer to the Superintendent's Message on the Westfield Public Schools website at www.westfieldnj12.org.

William Foley, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of the Westfield Public Schools

### Reader Suggests Lobbying for Aid To Support Special Ed Spending

I am writing with regard to two related cover stories that appeared in the February 2, 2006 issue of *The Westfield Leader* discussing the board of education budget, specifically as it relates to special education.

I had the pleasure of attending the board of education meeting on Tuesday, January 31, where the special education budget was discussed. I thank Drs. Kozlik and Foley, as well as Mr. Berman for their presentation and commend the board for its thoughtful questions and careful consideration of the recommendations from both the school administration and the public.

The headline about this meeting in *The Leader* reads "Special Edu. Accounts for 21 Percent of Budget." I would like to put this number in perspective. According to documents provided at the meeting, 20.7 percent of the proposed 2006-2007 operating budget is for special education. Although the article pointed out that the special education expenditure would increase by 2.86 percent, it neglected to mention that the overall percentage of the operating budget for special education should decrease from 21.1 percent to 20.7 percent. Part of the \$16.9 million total expenditure for special education is expected to be offset with \$1.2 million in federal aid and \$4.6 million in state aid—reducing the amount needed from the local tax coffers.

Let us also bear in mind that special education student enrollment in 2005-2006 stood at 16.6 percent of district enrollment. Considering that part of the expense of providing a free and appropriate education to these children is offset by the state and federal governments, it does not seem that these children are receiving an unfair portion of the budget.

The related cover article discussing the public information session on the school budget mentioned a public question asking what the penalty would be if the district did not provide special education services to pupils. Dr. Foley pointed out that it is unlawful, but I would also argue that it would ultimately cost taxpayers more money.

Let us consider all education, not just the money we spend for special needs students, to be an investment in the future. If we can provide early and appropriate education, we can give these special needs students the best chance of reaching their full potential. For many of them it means transitioning to mainstream (less costly) classrooms and ultimately to meaningful, tax-paying careers.

Judi Salvato  
Westfield

### Vandalism Is Not a Harmless Prank; It Affects Lives of Town Residents

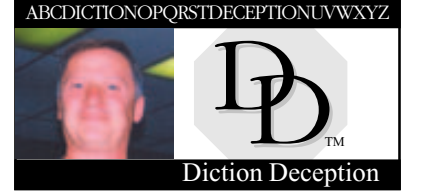
I feel the need to add to the recent letters regarding vandalism in what I always consider our rather "small" community.

I live in close proximity to Marie Sadowski and have enjoyed her Christmas decorations for many years with both of my children. I was saddened by the vandalism which she (and another resident) reported, and now have experienced, first-hand, a similarly unfortunate experience.

For years, I—like many of my friends and neighbors, have left items on my front porch/driveway/yard; never fearing that they would be taken. Today, that sense of complacency was shattered when I discovered that my four-year-old, used daily, and very, very much relied upon jogging stroller had been taken from my porch. I am praying that the culprit is someone in need of and desperate for the item. Realistically, however, I imagine (as did the police officer who took my report) that it was taken either as a prank or dare by unknown persons.

The stroller was returned last week (I was thrilled and overjoyed!). It was left in my driveway before we awoke.

I hope that all Westfielders who read this and who have read the other letters



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions—only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly—good guess. If you get two—well-read individual. If you get three—word expert. If you get all four—You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game **Diction Deception**.

Answers to last week's arcane words.

1. Thanatopsis - A view of or meditation on death
2. Ridgel - The half castrated male of any beast
3. Peenge - To complain in Scottish
4. Intratelluric - Located or occurring deep inside the earth

**TETRIC**

1. Balanced; stable
2. Out of use
3. Distressing; perplexing
4. Perverse; harsh

**HAJE**

1. The Egyptian cobra
2. A Moslem who has completed his holy trip to Mecca
3. A nocturnal Australian marsupial. Kangaroo rat
4. A street vender; a seller of fruits and vegetables

**SCATOPHAGOUS**

1. Tendency to eat clay or dirt
2. Flesh eating
3. Substituting on clay
4. Having a dumpy, floating light

**QUEAN**

1. Strong beer or ale
2. A structure that projects over the side of a ship or boat
3. A boat hoist used for raising and lowering smaller boats
4. A bold, immoral woman; a slut

### Support Troops Project Deemed Big Success

The Support Our Troops Project of Temple Emanu-El was a huge success. Sixty-five well-stocked packages were sent to our troops in Iraq. Each box contained an international phone card, a disposable camera, coffee, books, playing cards, DVDs, CDs, cookies, candy, popcorn, toiletries and handwritten notes.

We wish to thank the Westfield community for its continued generosity to the troops. A special thank you goes to: Barons' Drug Store, Falcon Printing, the Junior League, Kings of Garwood, the Leader Store, Redeemer Lutheran Church, the Salvation Army, Shop Rite of Garwood, Tiffany Drugs, Trader Joe's, the Westfield Armory, the Westfield Cooperative Nursery School, the Westfield Library and the Brownies.

Dianne Gorbaty  
Support Our Troops Project  
Temple Emanu-El, Westfield

### Accident Victim Family Expresses Thanks

Our family wishes to thank the Westfield and Scotch Plains police departments, the Westfield Fire Department and rescue squad for their response to the car accident involving our daughter which occurred on Lambert's Mill Road on January 15. Your prompt professional care was exemplary and facilitated our daughter's rescue and treatment.

The reassurance we received about her condition helped us in our time of distress. Our community is truly very fortunate to have such competent and compassionate emergency responders.

With all our gratitude,  
Dr. and Mrs. Constandis and Family  
Westfield

### Crop Walk Supporters Thanked for Efforts

The Cranford Clergy Council's 31st Annual Crop Walk held on Sunday, October 23, 2005 received donations totaling \$16,000. There were 200 walkers from houses of worship from Cranford, Garwood, Clark and Westfield. Twenty-five percent of all funds raised are split evenly between the food pantries of Cranford Family Care, Osceola Presbyterian Church in Clark and First Congregational Church in Westfield, with the balance supporting the work of Church World Service.

The Church World Service is a ministry of the National Council of Churches U.S.A. that works to supply disaster relief in the United States and address hunger and issues of justice throughout the world.

Thank you to the many individuals who gave so freely of their time and financial resources to make this such a successful walk.

Robin Marko  
Garwood

Jo Wayner  
Westfield

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Ad Reservation - Friday 4pm  
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www.goleader.com/help

## 'Try Nice First' Has Been the Way In Our Communities - Is It Still?

Westfield has a way of seeing many firsts, but unannounced towing of parked cars from the PNC Bank lot on North Avenue is not one that we think fits the *modus operandi* of the community. Generally, when there is a protocol change required, it is announced with warnings and the public is given time to adjust. More often than not, the public adjusts and matters are resolved. "Try nice first" has been the way in Westfield and adjacent towns. We hope that way is not disappearing.

The developer and now property owner, Irwin Ackerman, principal of A & R Westfield Lincoln Plaza, LLC, regarding the condominium complex underway above the PNC Bank building on North Avenue, did not employ this style of problem solving. Perhaps it's understandably in that Mr. Ackerman is from Millburn and accustomed to developing in New York City, thus not familiar with the more genteel ways around here.

A small crowd was in awe last Friday night as a flat bed tow truck from Citywide Towing of Hawthorne, Passaic County uploaded a few cars. Off they went. We understand a few more were whist away on Saturday during the day. Unfortunate car owners learned the next day that their vehicles were at Seville's in Westfield and that \$385 in cash was the only option to effect release of the impoundment.

This newspaper does not condone illegal parking or rebuff rights of landlords. But, we do think that developers should understand the habits and culture of communities, and then attempt to work amicably within this protocol. For years, when the PNC Bank was closed at night, people parked in the lot and this was condoned. Properly, we think, as the bank has been a good neighbor.

Now that the bank sold the property for develop-

ment, a little effort should be employed to announce changes of the common practice—that which has been acceptable for several years.

If one were to get tough with the letter-of-the-law, then one might get what they wish for. As example, the developer has been constructing well into the night for several months. At times as late as 1 a.m., trash has been loudly clanking down the chute into the trash bins on Prospect Street. Dust billowing into the streets from the activity has been regularly observed. How would the letter-of-the-law deal with this?

One might also remember that the bank was granted approval to build the original Lincoln Center complex only with the agreement then to add parking in the lot directly across Broad Street. They did this and it was an acceptable arrangement to all concerned.

However, when the bank sold off the property in 2004 to the developer, the development plan presented to the Westfield Planning Board, and which was approved, included converting the Broad Street parking lot into another condominium. What happened to the original agreement requiring the parking lot?

So now the bank is still there with two condominiums added. Warning, don't park there unless you're dashing into the bank! The construction dumpsters have been taking up parking spaces in the street. Park there when the noise and dust subsides.

We're trying to find out if there is a law in the state that controls rates that towing companies can charge. Can they charge any fee they wish, such as the \$385 charged last week? Suppose they charged \$600, what would be the recourse? If they damaged your vehicle, what would be the recourse?

Avoid all this in our communities—"Try nice first."

## Hiring of New Webmaster Will Help Westfield Start Over and Advance

The Town of Westfield has procured a new website with the name westfieldnj.gov. Mayor Andy Skibitsky wants to upgrade the site and making it user-friendly. The mayor said his goal was "to start leveraging this great tool to improve communication and interaction" with residents.

There are a number of things a town website could do. It could be a working tool for residents and employees. It should show a sense of community. It should be regularly updated with town business and provide archives for reference. It should portray Westfield as a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Westfield has several useful websites that should be cross-linked. There's no reason to duplicate each other's work. If you go to one site, access to others should be seamless. These include the library, the school system, the Downtown Westfield Corporation and the newspaper. Links to neighbors, county and state should be included.

With all the Internet's capabilities, residents should be able to use the new site for everything from paying property taxes and parking tickets to licensing pets to registering for recreation programs. Building department permits should be available on-line and include information such as when and why zoning or planning-board approval is necessary. Also, all ordinances and resolutions should be made available for

easy downloading.

A staff page of employees would be a great way of putting a face with a name for residents—officials could provide an email address and phone number under their picture for easy contact.

Mayor Skibitsky has said he would like to have residents voluntarily provide e-mail addresses to receive Westfield news updates. This is a great way to remind residents of recycling schedules, road closures, special or important meetings and emergency procedures.

The mayor and town council hired Mike Bielen as the town's new webmaster last week. We believe Mr. Bielen has the skills to make westfieldnj.gov a dynamic site based on his other work. He offered a low, fixed price and seems intent on creating a great site. We're looking forward to seeing his work. In the long term though, town employees must be trained to update material on the website.

The current westfieldnj.gov site is merely a pre-purchased shell until content and tools can be installed that residents can use. When it is developed, the website should be unique to Westfield, not just a duplicate of those of other communities utilizing the pre-purchased .govoffice.com software.

There are a myriad of possibilities. After 10 years with the Internet, Westfield is starting over and we're looking forward to see what happens.

