

Local Leaders Remember Former County Mgr. Baran

By GINA LEVINE-LEVY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ELIZABETH — When Ann Baran addressed an audience at Elizabeth's Trinitas Hospital about a month ago, she told them "when you have cancer, you have no control. It's out of your hands and you simply just have to be able to manage it." Mrs. Baran did manage it for 15 years. On January 3, she lost her battle with breast cancer.

In 1990, Mrs. Baran, a Democrat, became the first woman ever appointed as Union County manager. Although she was appointed by a Democratic-controlled freeholder board, the Republicans who followed kept her on.

"When they (Democrats) appointed her, I was very pleased," said former Republican Freeholder Frank Lehr. "She was proficient, effective, intelligent and capable."

"She could bring parties together," said current Freeholder Daniel Sullivan. "She would always stay positive in the face of adversity."

In the 1970's and 80's, Mrs. Baran built her political career within the New Jersey Department of Human Services. In 1985, she was named director of the county's Department of Human Services. In 1988, she became acting deputy county manager until her official appointment as county manager in 1990.

During her seven-year stint as manager, Mrs. Baran created, among many other things, the Union County Alliance. It is an accomplishment that many agree was her trademark.

The alliance "is a wonderful legacy because it brought labor and business and politicians together in an effort to stimulate the economy," said Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi.

Assemblywoman Linda Stender (LD 22, Fanwood), who worked with Mrs. Baran when she was a freeholder, added that her friend "had a tremendous ability to solve problems, make decisions and build consensus."

Following her position as county manager, Mrs. Baran became director of operations at the Gateway Institute at Kean University in Union. Most recently, she was senior vice president of external affairs and hospital services at Trinitas Hospital in Elizabeth.

Gary Horan, the hospital's president and chief executive officer, said, "Her leadership style was marked by her great talent, intelligence and dedication, and her joy was to serve others as a mentor and advisor."

Just two months ago, the United Way of Greater Union County honored Mrs. Baran, who was involved with the organization for nearly 20 years.

"She was a deeply compassionate, caring person for the underdog but

also recognized in order to get something done, you had to bring both sides together," said UW Board President Larry Lockhart. "She was able to bring people together in a spirit that would allow everyone to feel they've accomplished and received something."

Many agree that Mrs. Baran had a leadership style that was unmatched. "She spent a lot of time trying to reinvent government in a way to make it less governmental and more business-like," said Mr. Lehr. "It's a combination of professionalism and an outgoing personality that she brought the county government, as an individual as well as an executive."

Anyone who knew Mrs. Baran agreed that her personality was larger than life. "She had a great sense of humor, a laugh that would fill up the room and would make you feel at ease," recalled Freeholder Sullivan.

Executive Director of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority Michael Lapolla shared the same sentiment. "She had the most contagious laugh you ever heard," he remembered fondly. Mr. Lapolla worked with Mrs. Baran in county politics for many years and succeeded her as county manager. "She was a great role model, especially for young women entering government." He added, "She never let her illness stop her for one day."

Ms. Rajoppi reiterated that Mrs. Baran was a mentor. "She would maybe take a day off and then come to work. She wasn't afraid to take her wig off. She wasn't self-conscious in any way."

Ms. Rajoppi added that Mrs. Baran inspired women to talk about cancer and to become their own healthcare advocates.

"She never once felt sorry for herself. She never bemoaned her illness," said Ms. Rajoppi, adding that Mrs. Baran "savored life."

Ms. Rajoppi said that despite her busy career, Mrs. Baran always put her husband, Francis, and two children, Jessica and Christopher, first.

"She and her husband had a powerful partnership," she said, adding that Mrs. Baran took the time to prepare her children for the inevitable.

Mr. Lapolla shared a similar sentiment. "Despite her health problems, she really believed she had it all. She had a great career and a wonderful family."

Assemblywoman Stender added, "she leaves a legacy of respect and certainly a hole in the community."

She added, "I was very proud to work with her and called her a friend."

Services were held at Saturday, January 7, at St. Mary of Mount Virgin Roman Catholic Church in New Brunswick.



HAPPIER TIMES...Former County Manager Ann Baran is shown in 1997 upon the announcement that Michael Lapolla, left, would succeed her. Mrs. Baran died January 3 after a decade-and-a-half-long battle with breast cancer.

SP Resident Named Director At Trinitas Wound Care Ctr.

SCOTCH PLAINS — Trinitas Hospital has announced that Nancy Rager of Scotch Plains is the new director of its Center for Wound Healing & Hyperbaric Medicine.

Ms. Rager has been a nurse for more than 25 years in Union County, specializing in the field of wound care. While working within the long-term care setting, she ultimately obtained her certification in wound care and also became a certified legal nurse consultant. Ms. Rager recently joined the Trinitas Hospital staff as a wound-care nurse last May.

A native of Brooklyn and graduate of Staten Island Community College, she obtained her registered nurse certification and began her nursing career in the emergency department of Victory Memorial Hospital in Brooklyn.

The Center for Wound Healing & Hyperbaric Medicine specializes in non-healing wounds — those that have resisted healing after months and even years of traditional treatment. The vast majority of patients suffering from pressure ulcers, venous ulcers and trauma wounds are completely healed in an average of just 50 days due to such technologies as Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, Graftskin living skin device and wound-closure technologies such as the Vacuum Assisted Closure.

In 2005, the Center was named "Center of the Year" by Praxis Clini-

cal Services, which provides management services for the development, implementation and operation of wound-healing centers, such as the one at Trinitas, throughout the nation, according to a hospital spokesperson.

Dog Licenses Due By Jan. 31 In Garwood

GARWOOD — Dog Licenses are due during the month of January in the Borough of Garwood. To obtain or renew a license, residents should visit the municipal clerk's office at 403 South Avenue in Garwood, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Proof of rabies shot covering the entire licensing year is necessary. Fees for 2006 are \$8.20 for spayed/neutered dogs and \$11.20 for non-spayed and/or non-neutered dogs. Dogs must be licensed by Tuesday, January 31 and all unlicensed dogs are subject to fines issued by the police department. For information, call (908) 789-0710.

Enhanced Communication Tops List of Initiatives

PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ELIZABETH — Among the initiatives of this year's Union County Freeholder chairman, Alexander Mirabella of Fanwood, are better communications with municipal governments and the public, the placement of defibrillators at senior citizens' centers throughout the county and the turfing of county athletic fields.

Prior to the annual chairman's address during the board's reorganization meeting at the Union County Courthouse in Elizabeth on Sunday, County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi and Freeholders Angel Estrada of Elizabeth, Rick Proctor of Rahway and Nancy Ward of Linden took an oath of office to begin their new terms. Freeholder Bette Jane Kowalski of Cranford was sworn in as the board's vice chairman.

During his 30-minute address, Freeholder Mirabella said that the county would pursue the purchase of the 150-year-old Clark Reservoir.

"After much examination and study, it has been determined that the county is the best entity to take over the property, which has long been neglected due to the size and resources required to maintain it," he said. "The reservoir will be restored to reflect its natural beauty, and public access should be developed so that county residents may utilize this area for passive recreation."

The county will also work with Berkeley Heights Mayor David Cohen to entice the New York Jets to relocate their training camp from Hofstra University to the township. A walking path with benches, fishing and observation piers and a research dock are a few of the improvements being considered for the reservoir.

Freeholder Mirabella said the county would also look to use synthetic turf on county fields to create a safer playing surface for children. The fields will be lighted "to ensure maximum playing time."

He said the county would continue its effort to gain historic designation for Warinanco Park in Roselle. Warinanco is an example of the Olmsted design "that was interrupted during the time of the great depression." The sons of Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) were the creators of the county parks system. The

senior Olmsted created a number of parks nationally, including Central Park.

The county will provide 40 defibrillators to senior-citizen and community centers and housing facilities for seniors throughout the county. The devices are utilized to save the lives of people who are experiencing heart problems including cardiac arrest.

In terms of enhancing communications, Freeholder Mirabella said he will re-introduce mobile meetings for the freeholders, something he originally introduced in 2001. The meetings will be held at venues in several western-central locations in the county. Also, the county public-information trailer, commonly seen at summer concerts, will be sent to post offices and other public places "to increase community connections and increase participation in our programs."

The county will also create a new county website that will be "more exciting and interactive." A county virtual online library will be created and linked to the county webpage. Libraries will share resources and catalog information, he said. The county will also invest in subscription-only databases accessible from the website to anyone with a library card.

Freeholder Mirabella announced the creation of a new standing freeholder committee for intergovernmental relations. He named Freeholder Dan Sullivan to chair the panel, whose goal will be to develop a "closer connection" to municipalities in the county.

The new chairman also announced the launching of "The Job Connection," which will feature updated listings of job offerings from municipal agencies in the Union County One Stop system. Also, the county will create a county-wide animal shelter at the Houdaille Quarry in Springfield.

During her comments, Freeholder Ward said, "Government can be a permanent positive change if it is led by people who care, people who understand their role in our democracy and people who truly believe in their responsibilities in voters who elected them."

Freeholder Estrada said, "We have to remember we are not in this world by ourselves. We rely on each other. The decisions that other officials make have an impact on our lives for the better or for the worse."



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They will present the String Quintet in G minor, the extraordinary Divertimento in E flat for string trio, and a Duo for violin and viola.

Other concerts this season will be held on FEBRUARY 12, MARCH 12, APRIL 30, and MAY 14. Special guest artists will be Edgar Meyer, Christopher O'Riley, Cynthia Phelps, Carmit Zori, Ida Kavafian and many others.

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