

Westfield Honors Veterans At Memorial Day Parade

By DAVID RIGGS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Residents stood along East Broad Street and gathered around the World War I Veterans Memorial Monument to watch the annual Westfield Memorial Day Parade this past Monday.

The festivities began at 9 a.m. at the World War I Veterans Memorial Monument. Peter Hogaboom, commander of Post No. 3 of the American Legion in Westfield, served as the Master of Ceremonies. He opened the day with a speech in which he urged listeners to remember that Memorial Day is a day of remembrance, not of barbecues.

"Today is about respect and reverence for our veterans, but the meaning of the day can be lost in commercialism," he said. "This is a day we

should rededicate to our veterans."

Similar to what he told the audience last Memorial Day, Mr. Hogaboom also made the point that it is important to support all veterans and those currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan no matter where one stands politically. Rather than be torn apart by political differences on this day, he said that it is "a day when all Americans join together."

Mr. Hogaboom took time out of his speech to remember Bill Brown, who directed and organized the parade lineup for many years before passing away last week. At this year's parade, John Cuzo took over this duty.

After an opening prayer and benediction by American Legion chaplain Al Riker and the Westfield High School Marching Band's rendition of the Star Spangled Banner, Mr.

Hogaboom introduced the Grand Marshal, Command Sergeant Major Eloyd Britt. He thanked everyone involved in putting the parade together, the residents for their support while he was in Iraq last year as a member of the 250th Signal Battalion and "most importantly," all of the veterans of America's many wars.

"They served for our liberty," said Mr. Britt. "We will never forget them, for they never forgot us."

Mr. Britt has been a part of several Memorial Day parades, but this is the first time he has ever been named Grand Marshal. It was a duty he was "extremely honored and humbled" to receive.

"Emotionally I am overwhelmed," he later said. "It is truly an honor to represent my soldiers like this. I am indebted to Westfield for this."

Following the Grand Marshal's speech, Mr. Hogaboom introduced his son Thomas who, for his Eagle Scout project, is working to raise money to create a World War II monument next to the Korean War Monument across the street from the World War I Monument. Last year, the Korean War Monument was erected for Kevin Devaney's Eagle Scout project.

Thomas has already raised two-thirds of the money needed for the monument; he needs \$10,000 more. He said he hopes to dedicate the monument by Veterans Day.

Mayor Andrew Skibitsky gave the final speech of the morning. He began by welcoming Mr. Britt home from Iraq and thanking him for his dedicated service to America. He also called upon the citizens of Westfield to take action and help veterans, families of veterans and families of cur-



HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED...Active and retired servicemen and women march in the town's annual Memorial Day parade on Monday morning.

WPD Officer Claims Innocence On Allegations of Sleeping on Job

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — A Westfield police officer faces six days suspension on allegations that he failed to back up another officer on a motor vehicle stop and that he was sleeping in his patrol car at a local cemetery.

Officer Greg Kasko, a 16-year veteran of the town's police force, has said he is innocent of the charges. He said he never received the radio transmission of the backup call and that he was conducting radar at the time and reviewing and making notes on sum-

mons he had written a few days earlier.

During last Thursday's three-hour hearing, Lieutenant Carmen Brocato and Sergeant Earl said they did not attempt to contact Officer Kasko by radio. In rebutting Sergeant Earl's testimony, Officer Kasko said he was conducting radar operations and reviewing summonses he had written from his previous workdays at the time of the incident.

Officer Kasko said he started to respond to a later radio transmission for an ongoing motor vehicle investigation for the same officer although he did not know the location because he had not received the initial transmission.

"I quickly said, what does he have because I never heard a car stop," Officer Kasko said. After starting to respond, Officer Kasko said he heard the officer call for assistance from another patrol unit that, he said, was assigned to a neigh-

Under cross-examination from Officer Kasko's attorney, Julien Neals, both Lieutenant Brocato and Sergeant Earl said they did not attempt to contact Officer Kasko by radio.

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A GRAND RIDE...Westfield's Memorial Day Parade Grand Marshal Eloyd Britt rides through downtown as part of the parade.

Sierra Leonean Court Delays Chemidlin Court Hearing

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — A Sierra Leone, West Africa, court hearing scheduled yesterday for a Scotch Plains missionary and former National Guard staff sergeant charged with espionage has been postponed until this Friday, June 2.

Michael Chemidlin, 58, was released from prison on May 24 after posting the equivalent of \$8,000 bail.

Mr. Chemidlin was originally arrested on April 29 for conspiracy while taking pictures of the United Nations court complex.

A court dismissed all conspiracy charges against Mr. Chemidlin on May 15 and he was released. He was rearrested on espionage charges the next day after going back to the prison to pick up his passport and belongings. He is barred from leaving the country and faces 15 years in prison if convicted of the charges.

He faces espionage charges for allegedly attempting to free former Liberian President Charles Taylor from the court complex. Prosecutors have called taking pictures of the complex a crime of treason.

Taylor is accused of backing Sierra Leonean rebels who hacked off arms, legs, lips and ears of victims during the country's civil war.

Anthony Cinelli of Los Angeles, Mr. Chemidlin's nephew, said his family was waiting to hear more news from the U.S. Embassy in West Africa.

"We are getting a little nervous," he told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*. "Everything was a question over the weekend."

Andrew Chemidlin, 31, the oldest

of Michael Chemidlin's three sons, said during an interview at *The Leader/Times* office last Thursday that he first learned of his father's arrest on May 15 from his aunt, Emmy Salerno of Edison.

"I was concerned after not hearing from him for awhile," he said. His aunt told him, "Your father was arrested."

"You're thinking the worst," Andrew Chemidlin said in recalling his emotions at the time. "We were just upset when we heard the charges. We knew they were untrue."

The family has said that Michael Chemidlin was an amateur photographer who was taking pictures while



A FAMILY'S ANGUISH...Andrew Chemidlin, the oldest son of Scotch Plains resident Michael Chemidlin, is interviewed by *Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* assignment editor Paul Peyton last Thursday about conspiracy charges his father has been charged with in Sierra Leone.

Westfield Police Department Charges Ex-Red Cross Worker With Theft of Services

By CASSIE LO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — A Scotch Plains woman and former employee of the Tri-County Chapter of the American Red Cross, based in Plainfield, was arrested May 24 and charged with theft of services for allegedly pretending to be a disaster survivor to obtain a room at the Best Western Westfield Inn on North Avenue in Westfield. Police said her bill for her stay was \$11,493.

Alan Karmin, in charge of marketing and development for the Red Cross, said that Gina Lewis, 43, began as a volunteer at the Red Cross but then became an employee with disaster services under the direction of Norm Jenkins at the Red Cross Elizabeth office from November un-

til her arrest in May. Lewis allegedly forged the signature of Mr. Jenkins to obtain a room at the Westfield Inn for several months, according to Trish Mulligan, executive director of the Tri-County Red Cross.

"We never put people up [in hotels] for more than three to five days," Ms. Mulligan said.

Ms. Mulligan also alleged that Lewis was living in the hotel with her daughter and husband, despite the family having a Scotch Plains mailing address. She told *The Times* that the Red Cross does not intend to press charges because the bill was in Lewis' name, but the hotel would press charges for non-payment.

Lewis was arrested and processed after she went to Westfield police headquarters to give a statement on May 24.

According to Westfield Police Sergeant Scott Roger, the Tri-County Red Cross "never authorized her stay at the Red Cross' expense." The initial complaint was brought to the Westfield Police Department by Mr. Jenkins and Andrea Tamkutusis of the Best Western Westfield Inn. Eventually, Ms. Lewis was charged with theft of services, but "she is not, as of yet, charged with forgery," Sergeant Roger said.

Ms. Tamkutusis was not available

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Chamber of Commerce Hosts Parking Forum

By DAVID RIGGS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) co-hosted a parking forum last week at which town business professionals and residents voiced their concerns and offered new ideas and alternative options to solving the parking problem.

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Naomi McElynn moderated the forum of approximately a dozen people. Of these people, most said they work in downtown Westfield, while a others said they live in town. The goal of the forum, Ms. McElynn said, was to develop a list of problems and potential solutions that could then be taken to the mayor and town council for further review.

"We want to put things down on paper again and bring the issue to the town council," she said. "It is an issue that affects everybody."

Although DWC Executive Direc-

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Following a budgetary discussion on lowering the town's legal expenses, Town Administrator Jim Gildea spoke to *The Westfield Leader* about the statistics Fourth Ward Councilman Tom Bigosinski presented in his analysis on Westfield's legal payouts.

Councilman Bigosinski said at the council meeting that the town could save upwards of \$47,000 on its estimated \$230,000 legal budget by amending the hourly rates of attorneys working under Township Attorney Bob Cockren and Labor Attorney Rick Danser.

According to Mr. Gildea, "The hourly rate doesn't tell the whole picture. You have to look at the bottom line expenditure. In 2006, the legal expenses are \$230,000, not including salaries (which add another \$100,000, according to Mr. Gildea). We're always looking to be as cost-effective as possible. At the end of the day, the legal budget re-

mained flat, and saw no increase."

First Ward Councilman Pete Echausse said during the 2004 operating budget cycle, former Fourth Ward Councilman Larry Goldman said the rate the Westfield town attorney was compensated, \$100, was low in comparison to what an attorney would typically earn. The discussions led to the eventual raising of the rate, which hadn't increased since the early 1990s.

Councilman Echausse said there are reasons for the spike in the approved legal budget from \$168,000 in 2004 to \$230,000 in 2005 and 2006. He told

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Primary Election

Election Polls will be open for primary elections this Tuesday, June 6, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

In the race for U.S. Senate, State Senator Tom Kean, Jr. of Westfield, endorsed by all but the Bergen County Republican Organization, is being challenged by Bergen County GOP Committeeman and Ridgewood resident John Ginty, who is running under the slogan "Republicans for Conservative Leadership."

Democrat U.S. Senator Robert Menendez is being challenged by Chester resident James Kelly, Jr., who is listed under the slogan "End Corruption in The Government."

Rep. Michael Ferguson of New Providence and Assemblywoman Linda Stender of Fanwood are unopposed in GOP and Democrats primaries, respectively, for the Seventh District Congressional race.

Incumbent Democrat Freeholders Alexander Mirabella, Deborah Scanlon and Chester Holmes are being challenged in the Democratic Primary by Stanley Moskal, Joseph Aviles and Michael Romano, running under the slogan "Union County Democrats for America."

Republican voters will also select members to serve on the Union County Republican Committee.

Fanwood PD Seeks Info. On Shooting

FANWOOD — The Fanwood Police Department is looking for information on a report of shots fired on South Avenue in Fanwood on Monday, May 29, at approximately 3:45 p.m.

According to police, witnesses said two vehicles were racing eastbound on South Avenue when shots were fired from one of the vehicles at the other.

The vehicles involved are believed to be a blue mini van of unknown make and model and a blue four-door sedan, also of unknown make and model, police said.

Anyone with any information is asked to call Lieutenant Richard Trigo at (908) 322-5000 extension 117 or Detective Eugene Chin at (908) 322-5000, extension 119.



BRINGING CHARGES...Westfield police have a charged a former Tri-County Red Cross employee with theft of services for allegedly pretending to be a disaster survivor to obtain a room at the Best Western Westfield Inn on North Avenue in Westfield. Police said her total bill was \$11,493.

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