

# The Westfield Leader

— Established 1890 —  
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# The Scotch Plains - Fanwood TIMES

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## Letters to the Editor

### Westfield Police are 'Trigger Happy' With Parking Tickets Downtown

The joke in town (Westfield) is that you'd better watch out when you park your car in one of the lots with the new-fangled parking meters because a police officer is likely to slap a ticket on your window while you are on your way to pay!

Well it turns out that it's not a joke. In fact, police officers are so earnest and perhaps even zealous in their duty to issue tickets that they become proficient at handing them out well before the time is up for a fully-paid space by law-abiding citizens. With the new "high-tech" system in place and the performance incentives for officers, it is no wonder that the issuance of parking tickets in Westfield is spiraling out of control.

Here are just a few personal anecdotes in the past year or so. About a month ago, I parked my car in the North Avenue lot near the train station. I paid for thirty minutes and returned to my car twenty minutes later to find a ticket on the window, a full ten minutes before my time was up. I drove to the police station immediately and spoke to the Sergeant Rowe, who is in charge of the town's Parking Services Department. While he agreed to dismiss the charge, he also explained that the great new parking system had a "glitch". In fact, he admitted, the system, at times, prematurely notifies the attending officer - via a wireless connection to his lap-top while sitting in his patrol car - that the meter time has expired. Sgt. Rowe couldn't tell me how often this happens, but just that he knew that there is indeed a glitch.

I asked Sgt. Rowe whether the officer is required to use his own mind to verify, via physical observation, that there is in fact a parking violation. Sgt. Rowe's reply was "no" - but he did ensure me that new parking system was "great" because so many other New Jersey towns had decided to install it as well. But that's like saying that Enron and Worldcom were great companies because they had upstanding auditors, or everything's ok because you stayed in a Holiday Inn last night.

About two weeks later, my daughter came home upset that she had received a ticket in Lot 1 behind Brummers where she is employed. She told me that the ticket was issued at 5:02 p.m. but that when she arrived at the car it was 5:00 p.m. according to her Verizon cell phone, which is synchronized with Global Satellite Positioning. Once again, the glitch in the system had penalized a paying, law-abiding resident.

This time Sgt. Rowe refused to over-

turn the parking violation because we didn't make it to his office within the administratively required five-day time period. No "glitch" there. Except, we had made two previous visits to his office but he was "out of the office" or taking personal time off.

But the real issue is not the "glitch" in the system but the big "glitch" in the attitude of the town's parking administration and the police officers charged with executing the town's parking policies. They are "mechanics" who lack judgment, decency and common sense.

Imagine this: It's Mother's Day, I had ordered a sizable planter from the Green Room on Elm Street for my daughters to give to their mother. I pulled up in front of the Green Room late on Sunday afternoon that Mother's Day and parked in front of the charming store, owned and operated by a lovely, hard-working Westfield mom. I opened up the trunk, turned on the flashing lights and told my teenage daughter to wait in the passenger seat. I went into the shop and picked up the heavy planter and then returned to the car within a minute, maybe less, only to find a smirking Officer Piano slapping a ticket on my window. I asked him what in the world he was doing and he replied, with a proud grin, something that sounded like "I got you".

He seemed to feel so good about his catch of the day (his victorious smirk is still very vivid) that I'm sure he shared the story of his heroics with his own mother. Anyway, he set a fine example for my teenaged daughter who was shocked by his actions: zero consideration for the task at hand or the impact on the local shop owner whose contribution to our town helps pay his salary.

I called the police office after this incident and spoke to a Lieutenant who was not only very supportive of Officer Piano's actions, but said proudly that he was "one of our best performing officers" - admitting that the number of parking tickets issued monthly was an important criteria in evaluating officer performance.

The town council should investigate both the system "glitch" and the officer performance incentives that have produced many unwarranted parking tickets in our town. Until Westfield gets its act together and takes corrective action, duly paying residents should be mindful, even vigilant, when parking downtown. If not, they are very likely to be slapped with tickets they have no business receiving.

Glen Macdonald  
Westfield

### Officials Should Read Master Plan and Make Decisions, Not More Studies

When I moved to Westfield in 1989, I was so impressed by the colonial and nostalgic appearance of the town. I have always loved old houses and historical buildings. I also loved all the "Mom & Pop" stores in downtown and shopped in just about every one. Now downtown Westfield is just an open-air mall. All the good stores have left. But that is another story for another day.

Every week I read your newspaper and every week I get more and more angry at the way this town is being run. The elected officials are not governing this town. They are sitting on the fence every time there is a decision to be made. Right now, the hot issues in Westfield are the parking deck, which should have been built years ago. There is one question and one answer concerning the parking deck. Do we need it? Yes. So build it. We cannot please everyone so we have to consider what's best for our town.

The second issue the angers me, and angers me the most, is the overdevelopment of every neighborhood in Westfield. You cannot drive down a street in Westfield without seeing at least one, and probably several, tear-downs, which have been replaced with the huge cookie cutter houses that all look the same.

Our town is being governed by pure

greed of developers and builders. Are the elected officials of Westfield looking out for what's best for our town? Sounds to me like they are afraid to tell a handful of builders to go somewhere else and change the entire atmosphere and appearance of another town.

And now, I read on the front page of the last issue that Mayor Skibitsky wants to appoint yet another committee to study overdevelopment again. I have never in my life seen a community that spends so much time and money studying issues. To me, all this studying indicates that our government cannot make the decisions that we elected them to do.

It is obvious to everyone in Westfield, as well as in most of New Jersey that the overdevelopment needs to and has to stop. If people cannot find a house large enough to suit their needs then move to another town.

So, to our elected officials I have this to say. Go back and read the Master Plan of Westfield, get off the fence and make the decisions that you were elected to make and make sure that Westfield remains the lovely, quaint Colonial town that I moved to 17 years ago.

Dona Monroe  
Westfield

### Stender Prefers Banning Books To Constitutional Right of Free Speech?

Congressional candidate Linda Stender (D) demonstrated a total lack of understanding of the U.S. Constitution, and what it stands for, when in the June 15 edition of *The Westfield Leader* she called for N.J. retailers to ban a book by a political thinker she disagrees with. One of the greatest freedoms we enjoy in the U.S. is the Freedom of the Press.

The U.S. Constitution protects Freedom of the Press, encouraging the publication of diverse opinions, so ideas may be freely considered and debated. While some opinions may be repugnant to the majority of our citizens, the Constitution absolutely protects that free speech. Indeed our Founding Fathers clearly believed that open discussion of ideas would

allow the best ideas to win public opinion. They opposed the alternative in which the government prohibits the publication of repugnant ideas.

Thus, I was astonished that a candidate for U.S. Congress would apparently so misunderstand what the U.S. Constitution stands for, that she would call upon booksellers to ban a book because she strongly disagreed with what the author wrote. Although I, like candidate Stender, disagree with Ann Coulter's comments in her recent book, I will defend Ms. Coulter's right to be heard against reactionaries who call for books to be banned.

Douglas MacNeil  
Westfield

### Outspoken Youth Today Will Change The World Tomorrow

As a student at WHS, and one who writes regularly for *The Westfield Leader*, I was disappointed at a recent letter written to the paper by a teacher's aide in the Westfield school system. The letter referred to my peers and me as "arrogant teenagers with attitudes of omnipotence and disrespect for the boundaries and rules of society." It reprimanded parents for creating these attitudes by being "opinionated and ever so vocal" while serving as "role models" to their children.

My issue was not with the senseless name calling, but rather with the idea that an educator took offense to an outspoken, questioning student body. The purpose of all schooling is not only to instill academic knowledge, but also to mold young adults into people who can function and succeed in civilization.

That being said, an intricate part of living in the "real world," particularly in a democracy such as ours, is being able to think for one's self. History has shown us that blindly following the "boundaries and rules of society," as the letter put it, only hinders growth and progression. For this reason, all decisions made by figures of authority, big or small,

should be questioned. Of course, most should be understood as logical and necessary and then willingly followed. However, there will always be rules and laws that are unjust or flawed. As a result, constant questioning is necessary to weed out such regulations.

The vast majority of teachers understands this concept, and even spread it to their pupils. Because of this, I have very rarely witnessed kids who "speak to school staff as if they were nothing more than servants." When this does occur, it does so because of single-mindedness on both sides. Both teacher and student refuse to see the two sides of an issue, which is also a key part to living in society. Being blinded by one's own opinions is just as bad as being blinded by society's.

For those who say this letter only further proves the opinion stated in the original correspondence, I hope they are right. I hope to be called opinionated and questioning, and I would hope that my peers take pride in such labels. It is the outspoken youth of today who will change the world tomorrow.

Neil FitzPatrick  
Westfield



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. Dasyrometer - An instrument used in testing the density of gases
2. Quindim - A fivefenth
3. Metopomancy - Fortunetelling by human features
4. Plebicolist - One who caters to vulgarity or seeks the favor of the common people

#### LAPIDARIST

1. A connoisseur of gems or precious stones
2. An expert in cutting precious stones
3. A stamp collector
4. One who prepares rabbit fur as an imitation for more valuable skins

#### LITTORAL

1. Pertaining to an orchard or garden
2. The outer or visible part
3. The region on the shore of the sea or large lake
4. A marsh or swamp

#### PLUMOSITY

1. The quality of being feathered
2. Boldness; boastfulness
3. Rotund; state of being round
4. Very heavy, as with lead

#### GUARIBA

1. A person of rude or clownish manners
2. A howling monkey
3. The fermented juice of pears
4. A lizard-like animal with a forked tongue

## Letters to the Editor

### FW Candidate Blasts Stender

It is unbelievable that with all the moral, political and intellectual rot that permeates every sector of American society these days, Assemblywoman Linda Stender (LD-22), Democratic municipal chairwoman in Fanwood and candidate for Congress in the 7th Congressional District stated recently that Ann Coulter's book "Godless" should be banned.

While some may disagree with Ms. Coulter's polemical style, it is no cause for a public figure, who aspires to higher office, to make statements that call for a disavowal of the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Ms. Stender, whose record as a Freeholder and Assembly member is less than outstanding, as she almost never votes against her party line, is safer in her statements when she avoids constitutional issues. Furthermore, she is a career politician earning almost \$50,000 in the Assembly plus \$72,000 in a no-show patronage job at Rummell's Hospital - courtesy of the Democrat machine-dominated Union County Freeholders. Her pension after 22 years in local Fanwood, county and state government will be approximately \$50,000 yearly. "Double-Dipping" like this by Ms. Stender, and many others in New Jersey government such as her husband, another political beneficiary of the nepotism of the Union County Democratic machine, Mayor Sharpe James of Newark and others, is a major reason for the state pension crisis which reflects itself in the exorbitant taxes we in New Jersey pay.

The good news is that the 7th District has outstanding representation in Mike Ferguson. Mike has done a terrific job and will continue to do so. Go for it Mike!

Andrew MacDonald

Fanwood, GOP Council Candidate  
P.S.: I have served on the Fanwood Borough Council for 12 years and I am running for council again this year.

### Westfielder Questions Memorial Pool Response

I'm fairly new to Westfield, so perhaps someone can explain the Memorial Pool situation to me. I was a member of the pool for the past two years, but this year I sent in my renewal two days too late. I completely agreed the consequences of sending in the renewal late and being placed on a wait list, of which, I was told by the Rec. Dept. that I was number 300. The thing that baffles me is that when I questioned why other towns (residents) are allowed to join the pool or renew their memberships before it is filled with Westfield residents, I was told by a staff member of the Rec. Dept. that it's not my tax dollars that pays for it, it's Green Acres property. That response just doesn't seem right to me.

Part of the benefit of living in this wonderful town is the pool. If the capacity of the pool is a certain number, why don't we do what other surrounding towns do and allow the residents to fill it first, then open it up to the surrounding towns. It's bad enough that you have to get on line between 4 and 5 a.m. just to get into the pool.

Is it revenue that drives this since out-of-towners fees are higher than resident fees? Perhaps it's time to change the policy if Westfield residents can't join their own pool. Well we ended up doing what I was instructed to do by the Rec. Dept. staff member, who told me to find another pool, so we joined the Cranford pool.

Maria Mancho  
Westfield

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## Live Long and Prosper, Class of 2006; Don't Forget Your Roots

We at *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* congratulate the class of 2006, which is graduating today from Westfield and Scotch Plains-Fanwood High Schools. They may not know of First Officer Spock, but they will make their way in the world and the stars beyond - and have their own heroes.

As WHS graduates cross the stage this evening to receive their diplomas, they may be wearing a wooden apple nametag around their necks. Although this token may be as secret to others as the vow of the Masons, it represents the fact that they have been attending Westfield schools for 13 years.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood graduates will have other thoughts, perhaps remembering their beloved mascot, the Raider Indian Chief, now a thing of the past.

Graduates have experienced years of pizza days, awkward school pictures, field trips to Ellis Island, fire drills and morning announcements. They have endured Iowa tests, bike registration week, the turbulent and embarrassing middle school years, the Project Adventure wall and PSATs.

As they sit through graduation so excited for the future, they don't even mind the fact that they're about to be locked in a building with their entire grade tonight at the BASH. We ask graduates to take a moment to reflect upon the times they've had because they really were golden years.

When else will their only concern for a Saturday night be corralling in a group of people to start a game of manhunt? Will they ever look forward to going to school as much as they did the day the chicks hatched in the incubator? College will be the choice for most and it will be great. Still, we're sure that the graduates will not forget where they came from.

The community has always been supportive of its students, as exemplified by the numerous scholarships awarded to graduating seniors every year. This year is no different - hundreds of students have been recognized for their accomplishments.

As they embark on the life's next journey, the class of 2006 should remember that their work ethic could be attributed to helpful teachers, parents and the community. Their competitive streak might be associated with the Northside/Southside rivalries in Westfield and Scotch Plains. This year's graduates' social personality can be traced back to kindergarten friends who will be walking alongside them at tonight's ceremonies.

Graduates will change and mature more in the next few years than they could ever imagine, but as they're frantically Facebook-ing their entire college, it's important not to forget the people they spent the past decade with.

While some of graduates might be itching to leave these people behind with the thought that they will never see them again, the reality is they will. They may even end up working at the same place as their kindergarten cubby-buddy. The girl they weren't exactly friendly to in middle school might be the hostess at their favorite restaurant. Some of the people they crossed off their list of ever seeing again could show up at their college's Spring Weekend.

So wherever the next few years may take our graduates - and they will take them to some strange and interesting places - we remind them to be sure to always remember their roots. To the class of 2006 we say: Good luck on all your future endeavors.

"Live Long and Prosper."

## Letters to the Editor

### Parent Says BOE Patronized CSA at Mountainside Meeting

I am a Mountainside resident who has recently begun attending board of education (BOE) meetings. The reason I have started attending meetings is because of the rumored tensions between Dr. O'Malley and the teachers in the Mountainside school district.

At this week's meeting, the many parents and teachers in attendance were there specifically to hear the BOE and Dr. O'Malley directly address the rumors and what was being done to alleviate the morale problem, particularly at Beechwood School. The response to every question was vague, patronizing and clearly on the side of Dr. O'Malley.

In fact, those members of the BOE who responded to parents questions claimed that it was not their job to "micro-manage" the chief school administrator (CSA). Rather, any issues within the school community were to be worked out between the CSA and the teachers.

As in Ms. Greenspan's account of her experience at the Westfield BOE meeting, it was clear that the members of the Mountainside BOE, while willing to listen to the parents overwhelming concern

about how the morale problem will affect their children, had no intention of working to rectify the situation.

As a taxpayer and a parent of young children, I expect that the elected members of the board of education have the best interests of every child in Mountainside in mind as they make decisions and address various issues at their meetings. While there is clearly positive change happening in the Mountainside schools under the direction of Dr. O'Malley, he is clearly not interested in changing the manner in which he reportedly deals with the teaching staff. Ultimately, an unhappy teaching staff is bad for our children and undermines any progress being made to improve our school district.

The board of education members should, while working in partnership with the school administration to enable change, also be strong enough to hold the administration accountable on issues that are of public concern. Clearly, the latter is not happening in Mountainside.

Amy Radick  
Mountainside

### Astonished Re: Stender Book-Banning Call

It was with astonishment that I read, in the June 15th issue of *The Westfield Leader*, that Assemblywoman Linda Stender was calling on retailers to ban a book authored by Ann Coulter. Is Ms. Stender, an elected State Representative, unfamiliar with our Constitution's First Amendment right to free speech, an essential element of our democracy?

Ms. Stender's reaction to ban a book with which she disagrees politically is extreme and totalitarian at best, regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with the controversial book. Ms. Stender is seeking to be elected to the United States Congress. If she were to win the seat, would her book-banning efforts extend to selectively censor or stifle other opinions that she (or some advocacy group) finds politically disagreeable: magazines; newspapers; radio or television commentary; Internet blogs; letters to the editor?

For someone in a political position to call for book banning based upon an author's opinion raises a dangerous scenario. Anyone who respects freedom of expression should be alarmed by Ms. Stender's proposal.

Richard Elbert  
Westfield

