

Online Program for Updating Clubs and Organizations Info

One of the most complex things to do seems simple – that is to develop and maintain a comprehensive and current list with contact information for clubs and organizations in the region. It’s difficult for the public to know where this list exists when they seek it. Also, organizations often change leadership and contact information each year; thus there is a need for them to have an easy way to update their information.

In 1999, Westfield developed such a list, W.O.R.D., Westfield Organizational Resource Directory. The Westfield United Fund, through funding from the Westfield Foundation and the Town of Westfield, produced this resource guide. It was printed then and is published still on the Internet at www.goleader.com/99word/ and at www.westfieldnj.com.

Unfortunately, this excellent work is now out of date. It also was limited to just organizations connected to Westfield. *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* at goleader.com is expanding the concept and updating it to include organizations of towns throughout the region. The newspaper believes computer methods online are an effective way to expand, maintain and publish this list – creating a workable method through mimicking the concept developed by Wikipedia. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

The achievements of Wikipedia are fascinating and impressive. Begun in 2001, Wikipedia has grown into the largest reference website on the Internet. In the English version, currently 995,448 articles exist. The content is free, written collaboratively by

people from all around the world. Anyone with computer access to the Internet can edit, correct, or improve information throughout the encyclopedia by clicking the ‘edit this page’ link.

Editors monitor the entry and editing process of the public, but they don’t control the information. From studies seen, the Wikipedia content is as accurate and comprehensive as that of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Computers are set up to do most of the presentation and updating work entered by the public.

The concept employs “collaborative writing and peer collaboration, which refers to projects where written works are created by multiple people together (*collaboratively*) rather than individually. Some projects are overseen by an editor or editorial team, but many grow without any top-down oversight.”

Wikipedia says that it “is an ongoing work to which in principle anybody can contribute, it differs from a paper-based reference source in some very important ways. In particular, older articles tend to be more comprehensive and balanced, while newer articles may still contain significant misinformation, unencyclopedic content, or vandalism. Users need to be aware of this in order to obtain valid information and avoid misinformation which has been recently added and not yet removed.”

At goleader.com/organizations, the first step of programming has been developed. With public collaboration and self-maintenance, an up-to-date organization contact list for the region has been established as



HITTING THE BOOKS...Programmers at goleader.com, Vicki McCabe and Michael Bartiromo review reference books in planning strategies for developing automation techniques to enable public collaboration and editing online of clubs and organizations’ contact information. They also perform graphic design, journalism and editing functions at the newspaper.

printed on the previous pages of this publication. In just a few weeks, dozens of organizations have entered their current information to the database. We envision it growing to several hundred.

Developers on *The Leader/Times* staff are testing various programming ways for automatic access of this database to the public on the Internet with search capabilities, along with methods for public editing and expanding of the entries. This is being done in ways to minimize the potential for spammers to spoil the brew.

You are invited to enter the data of your

club and organization. It is open to all in the region and intends to be inclusive of the many things going on in our society – arts, sports, charity, service – without bounds. Please provide your comments and recommendations as progress is made.


In next year’s *This Is Westfield*, we expect to be able to publish several additional pages of contact information for the region’s organizations because of this online effort. The synergism with the printed word and the Internet continues to expand.

goleader.com/organizations

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Sales Associate

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RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE


209 WESTFIELD AVENUE
WESTFIELD NJ, 07090
908-233-5555 x 132 OFFICE
908-337-5971 CELL
908-301-2051 DIRECT LINE
www.elizabethkroncke.net

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Betty Lynch

Broker • Sales Associate
NJAR Distinguished Sales Club
NJAR Circle of Excellence Gold
Level 1998-2002, 2004, 2005

Immediate Reply
Cell: 908-419-5141
E-mail: bettlync@att.net



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Westfield Office
209 Central Avenue
908-233-5555 ext. 191

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