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Letters to the Editor
Concerning Dogs Downtown, Should We Likewise Ban all Children?
 In response to Karen Perialis's letter last week concerning dog in the downtown area, I would like to start by saying that there are no bad dogs - only bad dog owners. As such, I would hate to see those of us who are conscientious dog owners to pay a price for those who are not.
 Should we likewise ban all children from restaurants, churches and other establishments where a child's behavior might possibly disrupt others' peaceful enjoyment of their time? Of course not.
 I fear that Ms. Perialis would readily throw the baby out with the bathwater, (pardon the pun) and punish everyone for the poor behavior of a few misguided dog owners. Rather than promote any legal remedy, why not solicit proprietors to put up "no dogs allowed" signs and let them decide the issue for themselves. To vanquish all dogs from downtown would be too severe a reaction to something that should not be a problem in the first place.
 As far as ways to prevent unwanted advances from dogs, the best defense is always a good offense. Speaking up and letting the dog owners know in advance that they should keep the dog at a distance should work with most dog owners. Passive, then aggressive behavior only leads to confusion.
 Since letting people come close to a child poses as much, if not more, of a health risk to a child, perhaps the same tactic should be used with overzealous cheek pinchers as well.
 Just as there are parents who show no regards for others when it comes to their children's behavior, there will be dog owners that are similarly callous. That's life.
 Kerry Mooney
 Westfield

WF Schools Closed on Account Of Snow? What Snow?

When does a snow day barely qualify as a snow day? When Westfield students get a gift of a day off, as happened on Monday when schools were closed due to a snowstorm that failed to live up to its advance billing.
 The decision to shut down was made on Sunday night, a few hours after the first flakes had begun falling. The snow piled quickly to an inch or so by about 9 p.m., but that seemed to be the peak of the storm's intensity. By 11 p.m., the storm seemed pretty much over; even that night's Academy Awards ceremony lasted longer.
 By daybreak on Monday, most streets were passable, with the major roadways merely wet. The crusty inch or so of snow was easily removed from cars, sidewalks and driveways - unlike the case two weeks ago, when similar precipitation was accompanied by sub-freezing temperatures and howling winds.
 Did Westfield school officials jump the gun this week? Most other area schools delayed their openings on Monday morning. Perhaps Westfield was being over cautious. By being so, many people were confused and a little critical.
 For most of the day on Sunday, the weather forecasts we heard varied greatly - from one or two inches of snow to a wintry mix similar to the Valentine's Day storm to as much as five or six inches of the white stuff.
 When even the weather professionals can't agree on what to expect, perhaps it's best for school officials to wait and see what actually transpires before making a call on whether to close the schools. The Sunday-night school-closing decision meant that parents who work had to scramble to find childcare for the younger students or decide whether they should skip work to stay home with their kids.
 All kids dream of snow days, and we wouldn't want education to exceed 180 days.

If Team Never Wins, WF Wrestling Still Has Value Because It's Open to All

The February 15, 2007, edition of [The Westfield Leader] contained an article by Bruce Johnson on the Westfield wrestling program. While Mr. Johnson did an admirable job recounting the history of the program, he did a tremendous disservice to the children of this community when he contended "Westfield kids of the 21st century aren't quite as willing to make the needed sacrifices like the kids did back when WHS was a high school powerhouse."
 As an initial matter, Mr. Johnson's obsession with matches won, win-loss records and standings is exactly the sort of "all that matters is winning" attitude, which has caused so much damage to children's sports. In addition, he overlooks the tremendous hard work and dedication of the coaches, students and parents who support the program at all levels from kindergarten through high school.
 What is more troubling, however, is by focusing on medals won, he ignores the essential spirit of the program. If the team never wins a match, the wrestling program has value because it's open to all. You can't be a defensive tackle if you weigh 100 lbs, you can't be a star forward if your five foot four, you can't be on the golf team if you can't afford the clubs or the green fees but all you need to wrestle is the desire to do your best. A young man who wrestles may never pin his opponent but he will learn to shake his hand, thank the referee and do his best to get up when he is down. He can't blame his teammates for his mistakes, call a time-out to plan his next move, or throw a spitball or a temper tantrum. Rather than criticize the team, I suggest Mr. Johnson urge them to take a bow, there are no losers in wrestling - the worst you can do is come in second and like the number two rent a car company, which "tried harder," the sport teaches the importance of effort, a lesson Mr. Johnson has chosen to overlook.
 Kate Pindilli
 Westfield

Letters to the Editor

Who Are these Paraprofessionals Serving in the Westfield Schools?

Regarding the February 15 edition of The Westfield Leader and The Times on special ed costs and paraprofessionals, we thank Mr. Kozlik and Mr. Foley for acknowledging the vital role played by paraprofessionals.
 Although our numbers are growing, we remain for many people an unknown quantity. There are those who might ask what duties, exactly, do paraprofessionals perform? What real impact does such a person have upon the educational future of our special students? Is a paraprofessional of real value to our children, or merely a luxury we can do without?
 May we introduce ourselves?
 Whether assisting in the classroom or monitoring the WHS campus, we care and are meticulously careful with your sons and daughters. We are the eyes and the ears for both teachers, and you, the parents. We are experienced, educated individuals who love working with children of all shapes, sizes and learning abilities. We have compassion, and we have a wellspring of patience.
 These qualities are prerequisites for the work we do. We marvel at your child's breakthroughs, big and small. We witness the improbable, and yes, the miracles, everyday, and we are overjoyed. Our experience guides us through un-charted waters. We confront disabilities and behaviors such as autism, PDD, depression, ADD, ADHD, anxiety, and anger management. We work with teachers to implement goals and instructional strategies, conduct behavioral interventions, and assist with the development of material for these strategies. We record data and facilitate transitions. We are very dedicated and we are very, very, busy.
 There is a place for each of us in this complicated world of ours, but some of us need help reading the map that can lead us to where we belong. That's what we paraprofessionals do - provide that extra push, that unique zone of comfort and impetus, that a special child may need to be catapulted to the stars.
 We are not faceless numbers in a budget. We are a valuable asset to the community, your community, my community.
 Gretchen Dzedic, Pat Doyle, Nina Savignano
 Westfield Paraprofessionals

Watchdog Association is Not Affiliated With Any Political Party

A recent news article caught my eye and should be brought to the attention of all county residents. It described how Union County freeholders are refusing to allow a blogger to video record budget hearings. This so-called "blogger" is a member of the Union County Watchdog Association, and is requesting legitimate access to budget information for citizens, especially those who pay county taxes.
 Remarks by freeholders and their supporters infer that the Union County Watchdog Association is an arm of the Republican Party. Nothing could be further from the truth. My husband and I are registered Democrats (ashamed of the waste and abuse within the local Democratic party). Because of our Peace and Justice work, we have very strong feelings against any party that is pro-war or not committed to a just system for all. There you have it, both major parties have their demons that citizens must monitor.
 Arlene Murphy
 Roselle

Westfield Optimists Seek BASH Help

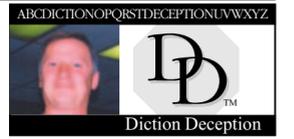
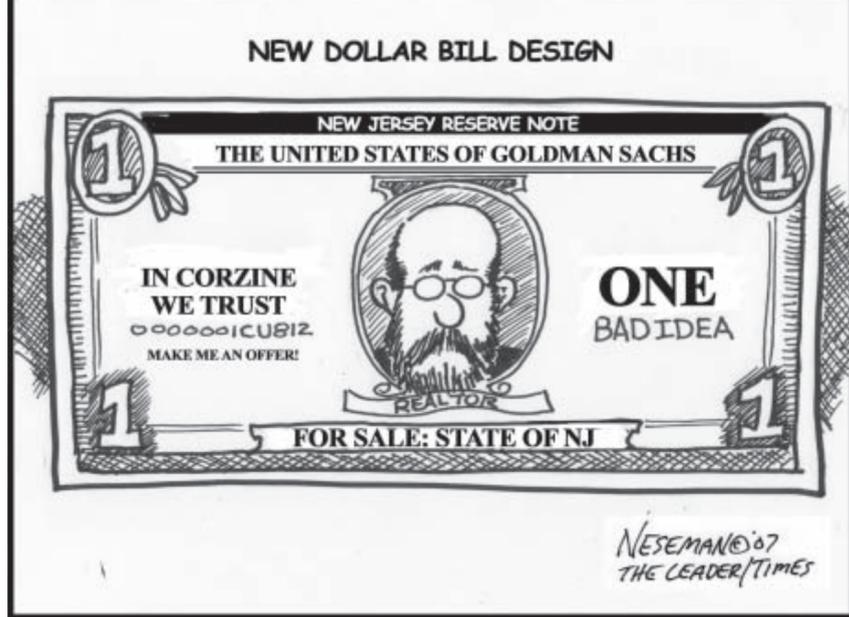
Now that the holidays have passed and college applications have been launched, thoughts turn to the balance of the school year and its culmination - graduation. Plans are well underway for an exciting, all-night graduation party for the senior class on graduation day, June 20.
 This year will be the 19th anniversary of the Westfield Optimist Club "Project Graduation" BASH, a high school tradition for Westfield seniors. The purpose of the event is to provide a fun, drug and alcohol-free atmosphere for the Class of 2007 to celebrate graduation. To help us better plan for the event, high school seniors will be asked to complete a Project Graduation interest survey in February during regular school hours.
 The all-night substance-free celebration is sponsored and financed by the Westfield Optimist Club and parent contributions are an important part of the funding. Approximately 85 percent of the graduating class has attended the BASH in the past; and over the years, student enrollment and operating expenses have significantly increased. The overall budget for BASH 2007 is \$25,000, and we count on parents to help by supporting a portion of the party expense with a suggested donation of \$50 per senior.
 All parents and businesses who contribute \$100 or more will be listed as sponsors of the event in the BASH 2007 program book distributed at graduation. Many senior parents have inquired about how they could volunteer to help with BASH 2007, when parent donations will be requested and whether their business could contribute funds or door prizes.
 Thank you in advance for your support. The Westfield High School Class of 2007 is counting on you. Please see westfieldnj12.org for details or e-mail Cindy Gallagher at cindygallagher@comcast.net.
 The Optimist Club of Westfield

Watchdog Assoc. President Says Freeholder Misquoted Her

In her closing comments during the last freeholder meeting, Freeholder Chairwoman Bette Jane Kowalski remarked that she took notes of a comment I made during a meeting in the past and accused me of having said "I'm going to bring you down." She then went on to accuse me of practicing partisan politics.
 Freeholder Kowalski misquoted me. Given the county's recent public relations push to discredit the work of the Union County Watchdog Association by labeling our work as being political and carried out by just myself, and since the public isn't allowed to defend themselves from closing comments made by a freeholder, I am compelled to write the local newspapers to clarify what I said.
 Here were my comments as were reported in The Westfield Leader on November 15, 2006.
 "During the public part of the meeting, Cranford resident Tina Renna, president of the Union County Watchdog Association, commented on the recent Union County freeholder campaign, which was won by incumbents Mr. Mirabella, Deborah Scanlon and Chester Holmes.
 "For the past four years I have been paying attention, you [have been] elected by the same margins. This isn't because the majority of Union County residents are voting for you, it is because the majority of Union County residents aren't voting," Mrs. Renna said in a prepared statement.
 "She referenced the Democratic freeholders' longstanding practice of spending upwards of \$250,000 [from taxes] on supporting incumbent freeholders right before the election. This comes in the form of mailers and commercials."
 "She said that money could have been better spent helping an organization like the Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless."
 "I have made it my mission to make sure that your regime goes down in history with the likes of (former 30-year Jersey City mayor) Frank Hague," Mrs. Renna said, drawing laughter from a number of freeholders.....
 I hope Freeholder Kowalski took better notes of my comments that evening. Particularly the part about the freeholders using tax dollars to promote their campaigns.
 Freeholder Kowalski is up for re-election this year. She can stop this abuse of the public trust. She can "Bring it down."
 Tina Renna, Cranford
 Union County Watchdog Assoc.

Scotch Hills' Financial Numbers Important as Part of Budget Process

If I knew that asking for such basic accounting information, (a monthly analysis on revenues and expenses) relating to Scotch Hills Country Club and the mini-golf course would have caused such an uproar from Mayor Marks, Deputy Mayor Coronato and Councilwoman Malool, I still would have asked for it. I did it for the following reasons, first, as citizens you should know how your tax dollars are being spent, and secondly, the reports Councilman Jeff Strauss and I are requesting would be a valuable management tool to those overseeing these operations on our behalf.
 As a councilman, the mayor and I along with my fellow council members have the duty to review and enact the proposed 2007 township budget that was prepared by Township Manager Tom Atkins. In order to fulfill my duties, I asked Mr. Atkins for financial information relating to these two significant township activities, the new mini-golf course and Scotch Hills Country Club. Specifically, I wanted to review their operating budgets, revenues and expenses, which should include as it relates to the mini-golf course, the amortized construction cost of the facility, interest on the bond, personnel related costs, utility costs, insurance premiums, security, ongoing maintenance, etc. Similarly, I was asking to see the revenue side vs. the operating expenses for the golf course. Recognizing that we have a professional CFO in our employ and that all expenses for these operations passes through our accounting systems, I expected that this management report would not be burdensome to produce; in fact, I would have expected one to exist.
 Instead of providing the information, Mr. Atkins asked the mayor and council to decide if he should. I was amazed that Mayor Marks, Deputy Mayor Coronato and Councilwoman Malool all raised objections.
 We have repeatedly heard from them that the mini-golf course would generate and contribute \$100,000 annually and was a "creative" way to ease the tax burden on our citizens. I am skeptical of this amount because when I asked if this amount included operating cost I was told, to my astonishment, that it did not. By anyone's accounting rules this would qualify as "fuzzy math." Wouldn't we all like to run a business that only showed revenues? Furthermore, Mr. Atkins has now informed me that the revenue to be included in the budget for the mini-golf course would be substantially below the original projection.
 Many of you shared with me during the last campaign that we needed to bring the kind of financial disciplines that are expected of you at work, and of course, disciplines that you put to use at home as well. As councilman, I plan to make that happen.
 I ask you, my fellow citizens, how can we expect to do our jobs well, manage our township's resources efficiently in an effort to stabilize taxes, if we are prevented from seeing basic financial information. The bottom line is monthly financial operating reports for these areas should be made available. Or to put it another way, in the words of Jerry Maguire, "Show me the money!"
 Kevin Glover
 Councilman Scotch Plains



Diction Deception
 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. Tiddler - A species of sandpiper
 2. Pistareen - Concerned with petty affairs
 3. Lallation - Imperfect pronunciation of the letter "R" making it sound like "L"
 4. Miniatie - To paint with red lead

SAGENE
 1. Wise; intelligent
 2. A fish net
 3. Refined; reserved
 4. Of or like an arrow or arrowhead

ASTRAGALUS
 1. Faulty secretion by the sebaceous glands
 2. The anklebone
 3. The act of binding fast, or confining
 4. Relating to the genesis or evolution of the stars

DEXIOTROPIC
 1. Having whorls that rise to the apex in counterclockwise spirals
 2. Readiness of mind in managing operations; mental adroitness
 3. Turning or turned to the right
 4. Pertaining to the east coast of a country, continent or large island

PERKIN
 1. A kind of weak cider
 2. A closely woven cotton cloth, used for sheets
 3. The common European partridge
 4. An expert; specifically, a skilled theologian used as a consultant

See More Letters on Pages 5, 20

Letters to the Editor

Man's Best Friends Pawing Downtown

I felt it was appropriate to respond to Karen Perialis's letter to the editor last week after reading how distraught she was with dogs in town. I would first like to let her know that I currently do not own a dog myself, had two dogs while growing up, and had eight stitches in my face from a childhood dog bite. I also have three young children with my twins still utilizing a stroller as well.
 Dogs are man's best friends. Why, because they provide companionship, security, specialized capabilities and so much more to humanity. I wonder if you, Ms. Perialis, have ever spent any time living in any city, especially New York City, as a local example. The concentration of dogs on the street occurs much more frequently than in downtown Westfield. Do you feel you have the right to levy societal change now to the downtown's public sidewalks and streets just out of personal need and distaste because you now have a young child yourself?
 Your so-called "doggy etiquette" really only need of kindly reminding people to keep their dog on a tight leash and properly cleaning up and disposing of their dog's fecal matter. Whether you walk your 18-month-old daughter here or in New York City, one of the world's greatest cities, it won't make a difference. And if this is your attitude, do not bother teaching your daughter about how dogs have been one of the greatest weapons against sniffing out terrorist bombs, drugs and finding people in avalanches and all sorts of wreckage.
 Don't worry though, Westfielders usually forgive overly cautious, possibly first-time parents and hope they learn our Westfield etiquette for trying to share our town in harmony while simultaneously treading through the sanity of protective parenthood.
 However, don't fret. I will agree with you, Ms. Perialis, that shop owners do need to step up to the plate and be proactive in their shop's proprietorship. Legally, the only dogs that are allowed access to all shops and restaurants are certified service dogs. For Ms. Perialis's edification, certified service dogs go way beyond seeing eye dogs to include service and alerting dogs for people who are deaf, handicapped, have seizures, or diabetes to name a few. Restaurants are violating their health codes if a dog is inside and may be if on the outside. Shops, especially clothing stores, should have the common decency to reject dogs from entering given that any clothing or displays the dog rubs up against may cause an allergic reaction for some unassuming patron afterwards. Some chain stores may even have corporate policies against dogs in their stores and are just not being enforced locally.
 This is each person's bone to pick should they decide to act out of medical concern, frustration, or fear; not future local town ordinances in the making. Muzzle It.
 Aaron Turnoff
 Westfield

Thank You for Helping For 'Caring' Program

On behalf of the local assistance board and myself, a sincere "thank you" is expressed to all who participated in our holiday "Caring and Sharing" program. Because of your generosity, approximately 1,140 Westfield men, women and children were assisted. Thanks to you, their holidays were made brighter and filled their hearts with hope for the new year ahead.
 Also, the generous donations received by the Caring Neighbor Fund will enable us to continue this caring and sharing initiative throughout this year. Again, thank you all.
 Lillian Corsi
 Westfield

Creative Writing Contest

See the Bernard Heeny Creative Writing Contest details at:
 www.goleader.com/tiw/contest
 The deadline is this week.