

Westfield Rescue Squad Begins Fund Drive

WESTFIELD — Westfield Mayor Andy Skibitsky last week kicked off the Westfield Rescue Squad 2007 fund drive by proclaiming March "Westfield Volunteer Rescue Squad Month."

Mayor Andy Skibitsky proclaimed that the "Westfield Rescue Squad has unselfishly provided emergency medical care and transportation to the residents and visitors of Westfield, in the event of accident, disaster or sudden illness, for the past 56 years." The mayor's proclamation said "during the year 2006, squad members volunteered over 31,000 hours of EMT duty time to answer 2,500 emergency calls."

Scott Messey, vice president of the Westfield Rescue Squad, thanked the mayor and added, "The Squad is proud to have been able to serve the residents of Westfield for over a half century, and that with continued community support, the squad hopes to provide another half century of volunteer service."

The squad, which is funded entirely from private donations, looks to every citizen who lives and works in Westfield to provide for the squad's day-to-day operating expenses. Every home and business in Westfield will be receiving a fund drive letter within the next few days asking for financial support of the rescue squad.

This year, as well as raising money, the squad also has a need for volunteers to work as emergency medical technicians and dispatchers to replace the normal turnover of members who retire or move away.

The squad is an all-volunteer organization and one of the few squads in the state with members pulling duty from the building, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Tax-deductible contributions can be made to: Westfield Volunteer Rescue Squad, 335 Waterson Street, Westfield, New Jersey 07090. To learn more about volunteering with the Rescue Squad, call (908) 233-2500.



Maria Woehr for The Westfield Leader
MORE TIME WANTED... Chris Aslanian, center, and Rich Werner, right, of the Westfield Lacrosse Club listen to Westfield Recreation Commissioner Bob Smith (not pictured) address their concerns about unequal time on Westfield athletic fields. Listening at left is Commissioner Eric Leuthold.

WF Recreation Commission

Bruce to go back to negotiate schedules."

"It was not brought to my attention. If we had heard about this in January, we may have been able to do more. Hopefully, soccer will cooperate with you," said Commissioner Jim Marvin, who served as commission chairman last year.

The recreation commission also discussed the renovation cost analysis for the proposed Memorial Pool project. If the project costs \$2.7 to \$3 million, the commission would be able to pay for it by taking out a bond for the next 10 years and then paying the principal for the next 15 years. "We will be able to pay the interest down and then pay down the principal. We will also have to increase the revenue from the pool by \$20,000, so we can increase fees or membership," said Commissioner Michael Cash.

The commission also discussed

the possibility of purchasing a new Sand Pro or grader, since the one purchased last year was stolen. The one used by the Department of Public Works (DPW) is old and needs to be revamped, according to Town Councilman Peter Echausse, council liaison to the commission. The new Sand Pro would cost \$18,000, and a new grader would cost \$6,500, according to Mr. Kaufman. Officials said they were not sure how much it would cost to fix the machine used by the DPW. "We would use it now because it is necessary to maintain the fields. We could use the user fee. Right now we have \$74,000 available," Mr. Kaufman said.

The council also has approved four employees from DPW for the recreation department in 2007. The volunteers will report to the recreation director next week, Mr. Echausse said.

Pa. Man Pleads Guilty for Linden Auto Theft Ring

COUNTY — A Pennsylvania man has pleaded guilty for his role in an auto theft ring responsible for thefts of more than \$3 million worth of vehicles.

According to State Insurance Fraud Prosecutor Greta Gooden Brown, Patrick Gutorski, 32, of Lake Ariel, Pa., pleaded guilty before State Superior Court Judge John Triarisi in Union County to a criminal accusation which charged him with second-degree conspiracy to commit racketeering and second-degree racketeering. The ring had a base of operations in Linden, where the stolen cars were sold.

At the guilty plea hearing, Mr. Gutorski admitted he was a member of an organized enterprise that stole cars, re-tagged them using counterfeit and salvaged titles and sold them, frequently on the Internet through eBay, authorities said.

A re-tagged or re-plated vehicle is a vehicle which has had its original vehicle identification number plate removed so that a VIN from another vehicle, usually a vehicle which has been damaged in an accident and which is a salvage vehicle, can be affixed to the stolen vehicle to dis-

guise that it was stolen, according to authorities. On February 8, two other Pennsylvania men pleaded guilty in the case.

Authorities believe that more than 150 stolen vehicles with a total value in excess of \$3 million were stolen, re-tagged and sold by this auto theft ring, authorities said.

Authorities said one of the men falsely portrayed himself as a locksmith licensed in New York to obtain 130 automobile key codes from a Florida company.

Mr. Gutorski is scheduled to be sentenced on Thursday, April 5. He faces up to 10 years in state prison, a fine up to \$150,000 and may face civil insurance-fraud fines, authorities said.

The Office of the Insurance Fraud Prosecutor participated in the multi-jurisdictional investigation with the New Jersey State Police, the Pennsylvania State Police and the New York Attorney General's Office.

People who are concerned about insurance cheating and have information about a fraud can report it anonymously by calling the toll-free hotline 1-877-55-FRAUD or visiting njinsurancefraud.org.



Wayne Baker for The Westfield Leader
NEW EATERY... Cosi Restaurant opened on Monday at 102-108 East Broad Street in Westfield. Pictured at last Thursday's ribbon cutting are, from left to right: Jason Vespoli, Celenia Vespoli, Councilman Mark Ciarocca, Mayor Andy Skibitsky, operating partner Wayne Brown, franchisee Dominic Vespoli, franchisee Nathan Blau, Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Naomi McElynn, Downtown Westfield Corporation Executive Director Sherry Cronin and Annette Cuevas. Cosi features sandwiches, salads, pizza and a variety of other foods in a cafe environment.



Michael J. Pollack for The Westfield Leader
THANKS-A-LOT... Last week, Mayor Andy Skibitsky honored the local girl scouts, part of the Westfield's Washington Rock Council, as they celebrated their 50th anniversary. The honor coincides with the upcoming Girl Scout Week, to be held from March 11 to 17.

WF Council Discusses Traffic Intersection Renovations

an additional eight to 10 across the street.

The Finance Policy Committee met following the meeting to "hopefully wrap up the budget," according to Committee Chairman Peter Echausse. He said the committee hoped to revisit and finalize a half-dozen items, and would "hopefully, if a consensus is reached, give a recommendation after next week's public meeting."

He said, "Right now, it's very encouraging compared to where we were to start the process. We will use no sale-of-assets to balance the budget, use the same fund balance (surplus) as last year and have no unfunded debt after this year. I won't give it away, but the proposed tax rate for this year will be much, much better than last year...even with all the challenges we have."

During public comment, Allen Solomon of Orenda Circle addressed the council about a "well-known developer to Westfield (Ralph Rapuano) who is planning to do a development in Mountainside and come through Westfield."

Mr. Solomon said Mr. Rapuano owns 336 Orenda Circle and plans to tear that down and put in a private road to access land he owns in Mountainside. "It will create additional traffic and, after a while, a private road is used as a shortcut," he added.

He said there is a Mountainside Planning Board meeting tonight, Thursday, and "it behooves a representative from the town to attend."

Second Ward Councilwoman Jo Ann Neylan asked if Mr. Rapuano would have to go before Westfield's Planning Board.

Mr. Marsh replied, "It's not a planning-board matter because there's no subdivision in Westfield...We do have authority to deny curb cut. That I believe is our only authority in this case."

Mr. Marsh said he would talk to Mountainside Borough Engineer Mike Disko about what would occur at the concept meeting tonight.

Administrator Jim Gildea said, "There's not a lot we can do. We have limited options. Ken will reach out to confirm what our obligations are."

Also in public comment, Westfield

Lacrosse Club co-president/boys director Rich Werner of Scotch Plains Avenue addressed "allocation equity" at Houlihan/Sid Fay fields, which he brought up at Monday night's recreation commission meeting. (See story on page 1).

According to Mr. Werner, the Westfield lacrosse program is "allocated approximately 28 percent of the available 53 hours of the multi-sport complex, which is the same as last year. We requested additional time this year — an additional six hours a week."

He said the lacrosse program asked the commission to reconsider the distribution. Despite acknowledging the "inequity," the recreation commission decided it was "too late to make a change now," Mr. Werner said.

He said, "If it's recognized that there's an inequity, a sincere attempt should be made now, instead of working on it early next year. I'm trying to enlist some additional support if you would convene."

Mr. Echausse, council liaison to the recreation commission, said, "Bruce (Kaufman) approached the allocation (by) incorporating time at Kehler Stadium. I am very sympathetic. My son plays...I think we need to do a little more fact-finding...Ultimately, it's their (the recreation commission's) decision."

Mr. Werner replied that Lacrosse is not getting any more time at Kehler, mainly because "there are so many competing (entities) at Kehler. Even if you think you have it, you might not really have it."

Noting that the Westfield High School track team, Y Flyers, Children's Specialized Hospital, Holy Trinity and St. Helen's schools' track teams share the Kehler facility's use, he said, "we're trying to work around all the other users with the board of education," he added. "What seems like a lot of space shrinks to a little space."

Mr. Werner said a "sincere attempt should be made," noting that he was "disappointed" in the recreation commission's decision.

Mr. Echausse said, "You have my word that I will try to get that resolved. Just because the schedules are out doesn't cut it with me."



Michael J. Pollack for The Westfield Leader
TRAFFIC JAM... Town Engineer Ken Marsh shows a map to the Westfield Town Council of the "state-of-the-art" traffic improvements planned at Crossway Place, Edgewood and North Avenues. However, as discussed at Tuesday evening's council conference session, the improvements may eliminate all on-street parking for the Department of Public Works (DPW). Mr. Marsh suggested "bumping" the curb in eight feet, creating parallel parking.

WF Board of Education

their children have established and "the only answer is to do a mandatory redistricting program."

Based upon his projection, phasing will begin in the "Gardens Area" located on north side of town. The main "wild card," he said, is determining how many people may move into town from now until September. The superintendent said the board is reluctant to do any redistricting immediately, after they said that they would not, but they hope to have redistricting completed by fall 2008.

When pressed about a specific period to begin implementing the proposed changes, Mr. Foley joked, "I was thinking after I retire." Mr. Foley last week announced his retirement, effective August 31, after 11 years as

superintendent.

In other business, the board will hold an open forum on Wednesday, March 14, in the Edison cafeteria to hear feedback from the community to quantify their interests in characteristics of a superintendent to replace Mr. Foley.

Board member Gary McCready has set up a survey online that the public can access from the board of education's website, westfieldnj12.org.

A public hearing with Mr. Foley and board members is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 22, at Westfield High School's Student Center to discuss the school district budget, enrollment projections and other "issues of concern."

POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield
 Friday, February 23, Jeffrey N. Littman, 18, of Westfield was arrested on the 700 block of Central Avenue, for alleged unlawful possession of alcohol by an underage person. He later was released with a summons.

Saturday, February 24, James A. Caldora, 62, of Westfield posted \$120 at Westfield police headquarters on a traffic warrant issued by the Union Municipal Court.

Monday, February 26, Sharly Azard, 22, of Scotch Plains was arrested during a motor vehicle stop on the 600 block of West South Avenue on an outstanding Westfield traffic warrant for \$150. Azard was released after posting bail.

Wednesday, February 28, Brianna Nieves, 20, of North Plainfield was arrested during a motor vehicle stop at Raritan Road and Lake Avenue in Scotch Plains and charged with hindering apprehension. Nieves allegedly twice gave police a false name and date of birth. She was released with a summons.

Thursday, March 1, Jorge Mena-Pilco, 22, of Plainfield was arrested for contempt of court on a traffic warrant for \$283 issued by the Perth Amboy Municipal Court. The arrest occurred during a motor vehicle stop in the 200 block of South Avenue, East. Mena-Pilco was released after posting bail.

Thursday, March 1, an incident of credit card fraud was reported in the 200 block of East Broad Street. The victim reported that improper charges were made to her ATM card in the amount of \$2,829.93.

Friday, March 2, Francesca Albano, 19, of Scotch Plains was arrested on an outstanding Scotch Plains traffic warrant following a motor vehicle stop at East Broad Street and West North Avenue. Albano was released after posting \$145 bail.

Friday, March 2, a resident of the 200 block of Walnut Street reported the gas hatch and cap on her motor vehicle were damaged through an act of criminal mischief while the vehicle was parked outside of her home.

Friday, March 2, a Mountain Avenue resident reported that a storm window on his home was damaged through criminal mischief and that a porcelain and gold metal address plate was taken from the front of his house.

Friday, March 2, a Kimball Avenue resident reported the theft of the driver's side mirror from his motor vehicle while the vehicle was parked in the roadway in front of his house.

Saturday, March 3, Constance Licato, 68, of Maplewood was arrested on an outstanding traffic warrant issued by the Union Township Municipal Court with a bail amount of \$400 following a motor vehicle stop at West North Avenue and Clark Street. Licato was transported and turned over to the Union Police Department.

Saturday, March 3, following a motor-vehicle accident investigation on the 700 block of Rahway Avenue, Walter T. Allen, 45, of Westfield was arrested for allegedly driving while intoxicated (DWI). No injuries were reported. Allen was released to a responsible individual.

Sunday, March 4, Rodney Watson, 51, of Westfield was arrested for alleged DWI following a motor vehicle

stop at Central Avenue and Grove Street. He was released to a responsible individual.

Fanwood
 Monday, February 26, a business located in the 300 block of North Avenue reported that it was issued bad checks from a Westfield resident.

Tuesday, February 27, a gas station in the 100 block of South Avenue and another located in the 300 block of South Avenue both reported that a customer paid for gas with a counterfeit \$20 and a counterfeit \$50 bill.

Friday, March 2, in the early morning hours, residents on Laurel Place, Byron Lane and South Avenue reported that their basements were flooded due to the heavy volume of rain.

Saturday, March 3, James H. Gordon, 38, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with DWI following a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue. According to police, a subsequent investigation revealed outstanding warrants out of Irvington and Maplewood, as well as a not-bail warrant issued by the Union County Sheriff's Department. He was processed and released to the Union County Sheriff's Department.

Monday, March 5, an abandoned stolen vehicle was recovered in the 50 block of Cray Terrace. The vehicle was stripped before being abandoned, police said.

Lieutenant Richard Trigo warned residents of a recent trend in car thefts in which suspects strip the vehicle in one location and then tow it using either rope or chain to a dumping location. Anyone who witnesses an incident of a car being towed by anything other than a tow truck is asked to contact police immediately.

Scotch Plains
 Wednesday, February 28, Tyler Smith, 21, of Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop for an outstanding Scotch Plains warrant.

Saturday, March 3, a resident of Forest Road reported that someone scratched the side door of his vehicle while it was parked in the driveway.

Sunday, March 4, a Piscataway resident visiting a resident on O'Donnell Avenue reported that someone removed several gift cards from her bag. The cards were valued at \$450, police said.

Sunday, March 4, a resident of Westfield Avenue reported that someone broke the side window of his vehicle with a rock.

Sunday, March 4, a Country Club Lane resident reported that someone removed several CDs from her unlocked vehicle. The value of the CDs was \$40, police said.

Sunday, March 4, Christian Cook, 39, of Watchung was arrested following a motor vehicle stop for an outstanding warrant out of Somerset County. He was processed and turned over to the Somerset County Police.

Feb. 2007 Westfield Rescue Squad Report

WESTFIELD — During the month of February, the Westfield Rescue Squad serviced calls relating to the following:

- Motor Vehicle Accident: 4
- Unconscious: 5
- Respiratory Distress: 17
- Cardiac Related: 14
- Cardiac Arrest: 0
- Allergic Reaction: 0
- Stroke/CVA: 5
- General Illness: 16
- Gastro-Intestinal Distress: 6
- Diabetic Related: 6
- Seizure: 2
- Behavioral Disorder: 6
- Substance Abuse: 4
- Poisoning: 0
- Choking: 1
- Pre-Arranged Transport: 1
- Abdominal Injury: 1
- Head/Neck Injury: 5
- Spinal Injury: 4
- Chest Injury: 0
- Shock/Trauma: 0
- Suspected Fracture: 5
- Heat / Cold Related: 0
- Bleeding / Hemorrhage: 10
- Burns: 0
- Syncope: 5
- OB / GYN: 1
- Amputation: 0
- Obvious Death: 1
- Lift-Assist: 10
- Injury-Other: 6
- Cancelled before arrival: 1
- Other: 34
- Total Calls in February: 170



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader
ANCHORMAN... MSG Network host and Mountainside resident John Giannone, center, speaks with Westfield Leader reporter Linda Condrillo, left, and Arts & Entertainment editor Mike Pollack about covering the New York Rangers and getting involved in Mountainside sports. Watch Mr. Giannone's interview at the Leader office last Friday at goleader.com/video.

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