

Arts & Entertainment

Westfield Friends Fight Cancer By Hiking Grand Canyon

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD – Two Westfield women have personally declared war on cancer, and the next battle they fight will be in the Grand Canyon. Jill Naughton and Karen Fishman, both of Westfield, will complete a seven-mile hike in the Grand Canyon as part of their participation in Hike for Discovery (HFD), a

ested in the Hike and I said ‘yes,’” Mrs. Fishman said.

The answer was what Mrs. Naughton was hoping she would say. “I told Karen that there was no way I could do it without her,” remembered Mrs. Naughton.

Mrs. Fishman and Mrs. Naughton are part of a group of 30 people from the Northern New Jersey chapter of the LLS who are hiking the Grand

importance of HFD.

“It’s great to see how many people come together for a good cause,” she said, adding that knowing so many people are affected [by blood cancers] makes what she is doing more meaningful.

For motivation and inspiration, each HFD participant trained in honor of someone afflicted with blood cancer.

On the day she hikes the Grand Canyon, Mrs. Naughton will wear ribbons containing the names of more than 60 people, each of whom has either succumbed to or survived blood cancer.

“These names will keep me motivated to continue the hike,” she said.

For information on Hike for Discovery or the LLS mission, visit lls.org or call Melissa Broxmeier at (908) 654-9445.

To make a donation to Mrs. Naughton’s and Mrs. Fishman’s HFD, log on to active.com/donate/hfdnonj/jnaughtongifters or active.com/donate/hfdnonj/KFishman.



TAKE A HIKE...Two Westfield women, from left to right, Jill Naughton and Karen Fishman, will fundraise for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society by completing a seven-mile hike in the Grand Canyon as part of their participation in Hike for Discovery (HFD).

fundraising event sponsored by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS). Their hike will take place on May 19.

To prepare for the hike, the two women each underwent 15 weeks of training and conditioning, including practice hikes in the New York-New Jersey area.

The training was provided by LLS, which has a Northern New Jersey Chapter in Westfield.

Mrs. Naughton and Mrs. Fishman met about two years ago through their sons, who attend the same elementary school and share the same interests.

They learned of HFD almost simultaneously when fliers arrived at their homes in the mail.

They went together to an informational meeting, where they decided to participate on the spot.

“Jill asked me if I would be inter-

Canyon. Hundreds of people from across the country are also participating in HFD.

Part of their commitment to the hike involves raising funds for blood cancer research. To date, the women have raised more than \$10,000.

Many HFD participants share a special bond with Mrs. Naughton – they are blood cancer survivors.

Eighteen years ago, when she was in college, Mrs. Naughton was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma.

She sees in HFD a way to “give back” for her recovered good health. “I am so excited to be doing this,” she said about HFD.

“It is a widespread belief among the cancer research community that a cure for leukemia will be the gateway for curing other forms of cancer,” she added.

Mrs. Fishman is also aware of the

Learn About Cooking With Wild Plants

MOUNTAINSIDE – The Trailside Nature and Science Center will offer a workshop for adults ages 18 and older about cooking with wild edible plants tonight from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Trailside senior park naturalist Joe Filo will teach people to identify local, seasonal plants that are safe and good to eat. Those attending will discover how to collect, prepare and cook familiar backyard plants.

Participants will sample “Cossack asparagus,” wild salad and spice bush tea during the program. The satisfaction of learning will be matched by the pleasure of sampling these delicious wild edible plants.

The fee is \$10 per person for Union County residents and \$20 per person for out-of-county participants. Space is limited and pre-registration is required.

For additional information about the Wild Edibles Workshop or for information on spring programs and special events at Trailside, call (908) 789-3670 or visit ucnj.org/trailside. Trailside is located at 452 New Providence Road in Mountainside.

WHS One-Act Plays Offer ‘Night Of Both Comedy and Tragedy’

By GEORGIA MIERSWA
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD – The Westfield High School (WHS) stage hosted two widely diverse one-act plays last Wednesday at an event described by student director senior Connor Davis as “a night of both comedy and tragedy.”

Drama 3b class’s production; more likely, he was doubled over laughing with the rest of the audience.

Three narrators, played by juniors Max Lazar, James Seip and Michael Tannenbaum, begin by directly addressing the audience, as though they were guests in their homes, and then

Hamlet...backwards.

The cast works well as an ensemble because there is no weak link. Everyone has a moment in the spotlight: junior Billy Geltzeiler showcases his talent for physical comedy as an overly assertive Romeo; junior Kate Douglas, playing the cooking show star Titus Andronicus, finds a perfect balance between absurdity and creepiness; junior Erin Scialabba’s suicide (by-retractable-blade) as Juliet is the most memorable and overly dramatic death in the show.

Although some jokes were lost when actors rushed their lines or failed to articulate, these were small flubs that were quickly forgotten by the next laugh.

Max, James and Michael are at ease and natural in their narrative roles, sometimes growing so comfortable as to ad lib. At one point when the lights came up after an accidentally lengthy blackout, Max greeted the audience cheerily with “Ahhh, there you are!” adding to the play’s humor and unpredictability.

Wearing a dress, junior Greg Nelson made even his entrances memorable as he skulked on to the stage, embarrassed to play the king’s third daughter. “I just saw this dress backstage one day and thought it would be hilarious,” Greg said.

The cast went on to compete at the Bucks County Playhouse Competition on May 10 and took home two of the top six awards: Billy won Best Actor and Connor won Best Director. Connor said, “It was an amazing experience, and the judges were so impressed with the show.”

The *War at Home* certainly began on a more somber note than *The Complete Works*... Before the lights even came up, a slideshow displayed heart-wrenching images of the World Trade Centers ablaze and the people of New York City watching the destruction. The song “How to Save a Life” by The Fray played in the background.

The play surrounds the days following 9/11 in the lives of 22 students and adults as they respond to the terrorist attacks and explain how the tragedy affected each of their lives differently.

In a majority of the show, all cast members remain on stage, frozen in various poses in front of an enormous American flag and photos of all the victims arranged on two rectangular towers. When the curtain rises, the sight alone is enough to move one to tears.

The lines from each character’s inner monologue jump suddenly from actor to actor across the stage, in a way that suggests hysteria and confusion. This, coupled with the startlingly shrill bell that rings to indicate the change in classes attended by the student characters, creates a tension-filled atmosphere, made only more so by the poignant content.

Certain moments in the production can only be described as genuine, such as the monologue of director and actor Ms. White, who plays a panic-stricken wife, waiting anxiously by the phone for news of her husband, as well as the touching violin solo “Amazing Grace.”

Another genuine moment occurs at the play’s conclusion, when the actors file down the aisles of the auditorium carrying candles that light their faces in a haunting glow, allowing silence to speak volumes of pain and loss. The power of this action carries so much weight because, as the eloquent sophomore Amanda Chang says in her role as a freshman student, “Words can only go so far.”



“WORDS CAN ONLY GO SO FAR...” The Westfield High School staged two student-driven productions last Wednesday. The second, *The War at Home*, takes on a more solemn tone, depicting the lives of 22 students and adults following 9/11. In a majority of the show, all cast members remain frozen on stage, posing in front of an American flag and photos of all the victims arranged on two rectangular towers.

The performances included *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged!*, directed by Connor for his senior project, as well as *The War at Home*, a play dedicated to the topic of the 9/11 attack and directed by WHS drama teacher Darlene White.

From a quick glance at the playbill cover, which boasted an image of a suave Shakespeare rocking a pair of dark shades, it was clear that *The Complete Works*... would playfully poke fun at the famous playwright. However, this doesn’t mean that Shakespeare was turning over in his grave during the

progressing to bantering between each other about how best to present Shakespeare’s many plays.

From that point on, the production becomes a whirlwind of classic Shakespeare characters performing selections of their respective plays not-so-classically: dressed all in black, actors perform in multiple roles with minimal set pieces.

These humble beginnings spawn a nonsensical riot that includes an all-white *Othello* rap group, a football game of homicidal Shakespeare characters and a production of

Author Visits Tamaques School to Inspire Students

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD – Children’s author Ray Negron recently paid a visit to Tamaques Elementary School in Westfield, sporting a Yankees cap on his head and a message of hope in his heart.

Mr. Negron is the author of “Boy of Steel: A Baseball Dream Come True,” a fictional story loosely based on the true story of a young boy named Michael Steele, who battled brain cancer.

Mr. Negron uses Michael’s favorite team, the Yankees, as well as a parade of notable Yankee players, to convey to children and adults alike his inspiring message: never give in, never give up.

In the story, young Michael longs to trade his hospital bed for a seat at a Yankees game. When Yankee second baseman Robinson Cano (who visits hospitalized children in real life), visits Michael in the hospital, he takes him on an adventure of a lifetime, giving the young boy an opportunity to become a batboy for a day.

At Yankees Stadium, Michael is introduced to Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle – all of whom died from cancer.

These baseball greats become Michael’s personal cheering squad, and encourage him to draw on his inner strength to fight his personal odds.

Mr. Negron’s own experience with the Yankees lends credence to the story.

Born in Manhattan and raised in the Bronx, Mr. Negron was caught spraying graffiti on the walls of Yankee Stadium when he was a teenager. “I’ve been learning life’s lessons ever since,” he said.

Williams Nursery Hosts May 22 Book Premiere

WESTFIELD – On May 22, Williams Nursery at 524 Springfield Avenue in Westfield will host the East Coast premiere of the new book “Absolutely Beautiful Containers” by Sue Amatangelo.

“Absolutely Beautiful Containers” focuses on a progression of 200 container gardens, from simple one-item pots all the way to large containers featuring a wide variety of plants. Ms. Amatangelo features container recipes that appeal to the novice and master gardener alike.

There will be a book signing by Ms. Amatangelo from 6 to 7 p.m., followed by a separate container planting workshop at 7 p.m.

There will be a fee to attend the workshop to cover cost of materials, and each person will bring home their own container garden. RSVP at (908) 232-4076 is required to attend the workshop.

Put to work as a batboy by Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, Mr. Negron eventually rose in the Yankee organization to become special adviser to Mr. Steinbrenner.

The father of four now uses his own love of children to create books that inspire them to learn from real life.

“My goal is to write 50 books before I leave this Earth. All will focus on a lesson of life,” he continued.

The author came to Tamaques School at the invitation of Kim Palumbo, whose 11-year-old son, Daniel, a student at the school, recently underwent surgery and radiation for brain cancer.

Mr. Negron spoke at two assemblies and signed approximately 120 books while at Tamaques School.

“His main focus was to encourage children to follow their dreams,” said Mrs. Palumbo.

“I care about kids,” said Mr. Negron. Writing children’s books is but one in a long list of careers embraced by the author over the years.

He has worked as a team counselor for the Cleveland Indians and the Texas Rangers, and he serves as director of Community Relations for Spalding. He has also starred in commercials and in the motion picture *The Cotton Club*.

“The Boy of Steel” can be purchased wherever books are sold. All proceeds from the book go to the New York Yankee Foundation, which funds cancer research and education.

More information about Ray Negron is available at theboyofsteel.com



FIELD OF DREAMS...Author Ray Negron, back left, visited Tamaques Elementary School in Westfield, and spoke about “Boy of Steel: A Baseball Dream Come True,” a fictional story about a young boy named Michael Steele, who battled brain cancer. Here, Mr. Negron poses with the Palumbo Family. From left to right, beginning at top left, are Mr. Negron and Lenny, Kim, Drew, Daniel and Emily Palumbo. Drew, a sixth grader, attends Edison Intermediate School. Daniel is a Tamaques fifth grader, and his sister is a first grader.

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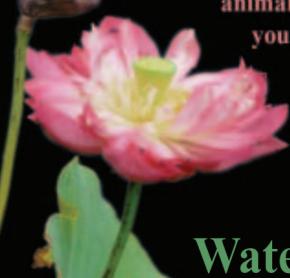
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