

# Year in Review 2007: Part 2 - July to December



**SCORING DONATIONS (October 25)**...Westfield neighbors gather to box up soccer equipment to donate to a community in Zambia, Africa. The efforts of local residents - including Billy Sickles and his family, Rebecca Sarkos and her family and the Westfield Soccer Association - inspired donations of hundreds of soccer cleats, shirts, shorts and balls. The Regenstreich family - whose son, Andrew, is in Africa working at a refugee camp - started the drive after Andrew sent a letter requesting some equipment.



**MAYOR SPONGE BOB (October 11)**...Mountainside Board of Education representative Gene Nagel, left, and Mayor Robert Vigilante do their best to ward off attacks from wet sponges thrown by schoolchildren at the borough PTA's annual fair at Deerfield Elementary School. Other "good sports" included PTA President Carolyn Williams and Chief School Administrator Richard O'Malley.

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Mayor Martin Marks confirmed he would run for the seat of the Seventh Congressional District in 2008 and began interviewing various campaign professionals to assist him in what could be a crowded Republican primary field next June. Previously occupying this spot was Mike Ferguson, who announced he would forego seeking a fifth term in the seat.

In addition, the council hired an architect at a cost of \$5,000 for preliminary plans for the renovations to the fire department's two buildings.

**Fanwood** Former Fanwood Police Chief Anthony Parenti was the top vote-getter with 1,026 votes, not including absentee ballots, in a close borough council race on Election Day; the Republican challenger took one of the two seats up for grabs on the currently all-Democratic governing body.

Incumbent Democrat Katherine Mitchell, with 978 votes, was victorious in her bid for a fourth council term. Council terms run three years. Republican challenger Joel Stroz, with 956 votes, and incumbent Demo-

crat William Populus, with 939 votes, finished third and fourth, respectively, in the race. Democrats will have a 5-1 majority on the council next year.

Mayor Colleen Mahr, a Democrat, ran unopposed and was re-elected to a second four-year term. This was the first time in Fanwood's history that a mayor has run without opposition.

Additionally, Mayor Mahr and the borough council approved, on second reading, a bond ordinance giving the borough the authority to potentially buy the Livingston-Wilbor property for \$2 million. Located at 238 South Avenue, the light-industrial property was the site of a construction accident earlier this year. A firewall under construction at the Station Mews redevelopment project next door collapsed onto the Livingston-Wilbor building.

**County** Democrats swept the freeholder and sheriff positions for Union County. Incumbent freeholders Bette Jane Kowalski of Cranford, with 32,502 votes, and Dan Sullivan of Elizabeth, with 32,121, along with Plainfield Councilman Rayland Van Blake, with 30,604, emerged victorious. Ralph Froehlich, with 36,278, returned to the sheriff post he has held for 30 years. Democrats have held a 9-0

freeholder majority since 1998 and have not lost a county race in 13 years.

**Area** Republican State Senator Tom Kean, Jr. of Westfield, Republican Assemblymen Jon Bramnick of Westfield and Eric Munoz of Summit won their re-election bids for their District-21 seats. Incomplete results showed Mr. Kean receiving 28,077 votes, winning a second term and defeating Democrat Gina Genovese, a former Long Hill township mayor, who received 18,759 votes.

Mr. Bramnick won his third term with 25,714 votes, while Mr. Munoz won a fourth term with 25,831 votes. They defeated Democrats Bruce Bergen of Springfield, who received 16,751 votes, and Norman Albert of Cranford, who garnered 16,491 tallies.

**Incumbent** Democratic State Senator Nicholas Scutari of Linden and his District 22 running mates, Assemblywoman Linda Stender of Fanwood and Assemblyman Jerry Green of Plainfield easily won re-election over Republicans Rose McConnell of North Plainfield, the Senate candidate, and Assembly hopefuls Bryan DesRochers of Rahway and Robert Gatto of North Plainfield.

Ms. Stender was elected to her fourth two-year term in the New Jersey General Assembly. With all 176 districts reporting results, Ms. Stender received 13,638 votes, while Mr. Green captured 13,884. Their Republican challengers, Mr. Gatto and Mr. DesRochers, garnered 8,238 and 8,229 votes, respectively.

In other news, Union County Improvement Authority (UCIA) executive director Charlotte DeFilippo, chairwoman of the Union County Democratic Committee, was served with five subpoenas by the state Attorney General's Office, demanding documents and other information about her public and private business dealings.

Additionally, Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-7, New Providence) announced that he would not seek a fifth term in the House of Representatives. Mr. Ferguson cited family obligations for his decision.

In response to an ongoing conflict, the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority board voted to rescind a resolution approving a request for proposal for professional services related to examining privatization.

**DECEMBER** **Westfield** The recreation commission approved the spring 2008 field schedule at a meeting attended by representatives from the Westfield Soccer Association (WSA) to discuss cuts that had been made to their field usage.

"We had asked for two nights and now we have only received one. This loss of a night during the week will severely affect our program," said Bob Clancy, WSA vice president.

The recreation commission has been working since July to give equal time with field constraints to lacrosse, soccer, softball and baseball this spring, said William Palatucci, commission chairman.

In other events, the town council marked a "very special night," according to Mayor Andy Skibitsky, as members of the council and town residents bid farewell to current financial-committee chairman and First Ward Councilman Peter Echausse at his last official council meeting after seven years on the governing body.

On a more somber note, Gary Kehler, the legendary Westfield High School (WHS) football, wrestling and golf coach, died on December 9 at the age of 76 at Overlook Hospital in Summit after four years of fighting stomach cancer. Mr. Kehler was "an inspiration to us all," WHS Athletic Director Edward Tranchina said, and, above all, "a legend" in both athletics and persona, a unanimous statement among coaches and past players. "There's an empty feeling without him," said one of Mr. Kehler's former athletes, Owen Brand, who graduated from WHS in 1977.

**Scotch Plains** About a year after renovations to the township's municipal building got underway, and more than five months after the initial expected completion date, Township Manager Thomas Atkins said he hoped the \$3.9-million project would be fully complete within weeks and that the police department, which has been housed in a trailer since early this year, could move its operations back inside the

building in early 2008.

Additionally, Mr. Atkins announced that he will retire in 2008 after 28 years of running the day-to-day operations of the municipal government. "I just feel it's time," he told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* prior to informing the township council of his plans.

A fire broke out underneath the football-field bleachers at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) on the afternoon of Saturday, December 2, melting a hole through the aluminum stands and damaging an athletic-equipment storage container and its contents.

The heat from the fire also destroyed the majority of the contents of the container. "I would say that a conservative estimate is \$40,000 worth of equipment. That's not including damage to the bleachers," said SPFHS track coach Jeff Koegel, estimating the cost of the damages from the fire.

**Fanwood** Prior to their monthly agenda meeting, Mayor Colleen Mahr and the borough council held a one-item special meeting, initially reviewing a measure that would amend code regulations in the downtown redevelopment district to offer fine-arts instruction, such as arts and crafts.

"(The) current code excludes schools and any sort of instruction (in this district)," Borough Clerk Engineer Pryor said. "I think [fine arts instruction] is a use that goes well with that zone and with that building."

**Cranford** During the November 6 general election, about 65 percent of Cranford voters agreed to a non-binding question on the ballot to have the township committee undertake a study to consider changing the form of government to a direct popular election of mayor and making recommendations based on the findings.

Currently, the township has five committee members; the group each year chooses one to be mayor. Additionally, opponents of a proposed 130-foot-high cell tower hired an attorney to fight the proposal, which would be situated at the Cranford Swim Club. Testimony on the application, which the Union County freeholder board also opposes, continued Monday night at a special meeting of the Cranford Zoning Board of Adjustment.

**Area** Two inmates escaped from the Union County jail in Elizabeth on Saturday December 14 by removing two cinder blocks in a jail wall and then jumping 25 feet from a rooftop over a barbed wired fence, according to Union County Prosecutor Ted Romankow.

According to the prosecutor's office, Jose Espinosa, 20, of Elizabeth and Otis Blunt, 32, of Toms River "apparently jumped from a third floor roof."

In other news, Governor Jon Corzine unveiled a new school-aid formula, under which Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district would see a jump in state education aid in 2008-2009 of \$451,000, or 10 percent, while Westfield would see the minimum hike of 2 percent, or \$100,000. Mountainside school district would receive an increase of \$148,000; Garwood's aid would jump up \$112,000. Neighboring Cranford would see an increase of \$604,000 in aid. Mountainside, Garwood and Cranford's increases would all be 20 percent.

Beth Budnick, Paul Peyton and Victoria McCabe compiled this report.



**CHRISTMAS IN SEPTEMBER (September 19)**...A Christmas-season commercial is shot at the Cosenza family's Woodbrook Circle home in Westfield. The home was lit with lights and a large arrow of light mounted over the garage. A slight dusting of snow dotted the roof. Stephanie Haberman - production manager for @radical.media, the company shooting the spot - said a BMW car would be filmed at another location. The crew also used a chimney at the Kushner family's home across the street for the spot.

## POLICE BLOTTER

**Westfield** Tuesday, December 18, Bradford Dickerson, 22, and Kevin Malazdra, 22, both of North Plainfield, were arrested on North Avenue near 4th Avenue and charged with possession of under 50 grams of suspected marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia. Both were issued summonses and released.

Wednesday, December 19, Jonathan Debevoise, 23, of Westfield was arrested in Garwood on two outstanding traffic warrants, one from Clark with \$89 bail and the other from Garwood with \$145 bail. He was released after posting bail on both warrants.

Thursday, December 20, Luis A. Acevedo, 20, of South Plainfield was arrested on South Avenue, East, and charged with possession of under 50 grams of suspected marijuana and possession of controlled-dangerous-substance paraphernalia. The arrest occurred during an investigation following a motor-vehicle stop.

Thursday, December 20, a resident of the 700 block of East Broad Street reported that the motor vehicle she was operating was damaged while parked on the 800 block of Kimball Avenue. The glass mirror portion of the driver's side rearview mirror was damaged.

Friday, December 21, three people were arrested during a motor-vehicle stop at Rahway Avenue and Watterson Street.

Driver Paul Brown, 35, of Linden was arrested on a Jersey City criminal warrant with \$2,500 bail and a Roselle Park traffic warrant with \$750 bail. Brown was released on his own recognizance per Roselle Park and was turned over to the Jersey City Police Department.

Tanyis Irby, 32, of Elizabeth was arrested as a New Jersey Wanted Person (fugitive) and turned over to the Union County Sheriff's Department. Khalifah Turner, 25, of Newark was arrested on a Newark traffic warrant with \$200 bail. She was released on her own recognizance per Newark police.

Saturday, December 22, Beatrice Bellamy, 39, of Newark was arrested on the 100 block of Windsor Avenue on a Newark traffic warrant with \$163 bail and a Millburn criminal warrant, with \$500 bail, and for possession of drug paraphernalia. She received a summons for the Westfield charge and was committed to the Union County jail on default of bail on the warrants.

Saturday, December 22, two 15-year-old male juveniles from Cranford were arrested and charged with criminal mischief for allegedly spray-painting graffiti on the walls of several buildings in Westfield's central business district. They also allegedly damaged a fence. The pair were arrested near the north-side Westfield train station and released to their parents.

Saturday, December 22, three men were arrested in the Memorial Pool parking lot on Scotch Plains Avenue. Erik Jacobsen, 19, Gregory Ducore, 20, and Benjamin Holt, 20, all of Westfield, were charged with possession of under 50 grams of suspected marijuana and possession of controlled dangerous substance paraphernalia. All three were issued summonses and released.

**Garwood** Thursday, December 13, Patricia

Vanderveer, 22, of Iselin was arrested and charged with driving under the influence (DUI) following an accident in which she struck a number of parked cars. Vanderveer also was charged with reckless driving and leaving the scene of an accident.

Authorities responded to a report of an accident at South Avenue and Oak Street but said the vehicle had left the scene. Police followed a trail of antifreeze and other vehicle fluids several blocks before finding the unoccupied vehicle six blocks away at Rankin and Preston Avenues on the Cranford line.

Upon further investigation police said they determined Vanderveer had struck five parked cars and several street signs. Police called the Garwood Rescue Squad due to what they described as Vanderveer's "highly intoxicated condition." She was taken to Rahway Hospital and is scheduled to appear in Garwood Municipal Court.

Monday, December 24, Kenneth Druckenmiller, 20, of Westfield, David Markham, 21, and Scott Markham, 19, both of Garwood, were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct for allegedly breaking and knocking over holiday decorations on the 400 block of Fourth Avenue. All were released pending charges in municipal court, police said. A homeowner reported the incident to police, who stopped the suspects' car on the 33rd block of Second Avenue.

**Mountainside** Tuesday, December 18, a Woodland Avenue resident reported finding scratch marks on the windshield and rear glass of her 1990 Mercedes Benz which was parked in the street in front of her house. The amount of the damage was not known at this time.

**Scotch Plains** Saturday, December 22, a resident of Cooper Road reported that she had been receiving harassing phone calls at all hours of the night.

Sunday, December 23, Brian McGroary, 19, and Nicholas Giannaci, 19, both of Scotch Plains, were arrested and charged with possession of marijuana.

An officer responded to a suspicious vehicle parked on Greenbriar Lane. After speaking with the occupants of the car, police said the officer discovered marijuana. McGroary and Giannaci were transported to police headquarters, where they were processed and released, police said.

Sunday, December 23, a resident of North Gate Drive reported that someone broke the window of his vehicle, which was parked in front of his house.

Sunday, December 23, residents of Country Club Boulevard reported that an unknown vehicle was parked in front of their house. After police investigated the vehicle, they discovered it had been stolen from Edison. The vehicle was towed to police headquarters and the owner notified.

Sunday, December 23, Javier Mariscal-Sanchez, 28, of North Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding warrant after being stopped for a motor-vehicle violation. He was transported to police headquarters, where he was processed and released after posting bail.

Sunday, December 23, Tonia Williams, 28, of Halifax, N.C. was arrested on an outstanding warrant. Police said an officer responded to a disturbance call on Country Club Boulevard and confronted Williams, at which time the warrant was discovered. Williams was transported to police headquarters, where she was processed and released after posting bail, police said.

Monday, December 24, Joseph Vastola, 20, of Perth Amboy was arrested for allegedly driving while intoxicated (DWI). Vastola was stopped for a motor-vehicle violation when an officer smelled the odor of alcohol, police said. Vastola was transported to police headquarters, where he was processed and released on a summons.

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**AND THE WINNER IS (October 4)**...Sagar Pate, 9, of Fanwood won the first round of the first annual ice-cream eating contest sponsored by the Double Dipper Cafe in Fanwood. Sagar celebrates his victory with the Fanny Wood Day crowd.