



**LITTANY OF NITTANY...** Penn State students visit Westfield last weekend to raise money for THON, benefiting children with cancer and their families. THON is held at Penn State on February 22 to 24. For more information, see THON.org. Pictured, left to right, are: Jana Goldfarb of Westfield, Tiffany Glab of State College, PA, Jessica Hartley of Lindenhurst, NY, Alexandra Caraballo of Miami, FL and Marisa Pollack of Marlboro.

## SPF Board of Ed. Math Leveling

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ongoing process so it does meet each student's needs," she said.

In other business, Margaret Meehan, business administrator for the Washington Township Public Schools in Sewell (Gloucester County), requested in writing the board's support opposing legislation S-560 and A-873, which would mandate 10 weeks of paid family leave for every employee in New Jersey.

"We're not sure what impact [the legislation] would have on school boards," Business Administrator Anthony Del Sordi said. "We'll have to see if it goes through both houses, review it and take action if necessary."

The legislation was reintroduced in the current legislative session and was assigned for review by the senate and assembly labor committees.

Board Vice President Linda Nelson said it would be "really challenging" as well as a financial hardship for the district because they would have to find a replacement for the person taking a leave of absence.

"I would not be in support of it," Ms. Nelson said.

The BOE responded to another letter about the absence of seatbelts on rented coach buses that will be used for an upcoming music trip. By law, coach buses are not required to have seat belts, officials said.

Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes said the district would continue to use the coach buses (noting they meet federal guidelines) because of the trip length, the number of buses required and the additional storage capacity needed for musical instruments. "Coach buses have a very, very good track record in regard to passenger safety," she said.

Ms. Hayes said she would, however, consider leads on coach buses with seatbelts.

The board approved the district's updated harassment, intimidation and

bullying policy to include cyber bullying, or other bullying/harassment that occurs off school grounds.

Also, the board approved a contract with Strauss-Esmay Associates to review, prepare and update the BOE's policy manual in compliance with state and federal mandates.

The finance committee began 2008-2009 budget talks since the last BOE meeting. Mr. Parisi said a notice is posted on the district website asking for ideas from the public about increasing revenues or doing a better job on expenses.

The board later acknowledged gifts and donations from various school PTAs to the district schools. The gifts included, among other things, musical instruments, sports equipment, books, World Book Encyclopedias, gift cards and grants, board member Betty Anne Woerner told *The Times*.

Later, Karen Kulikowski, PTA Council vice president, said the Department of Allied Dental Education is offering free dental care for children up to age 12. The "Give Kids A Smile" event takes place at the School of Health Related Professions, a part of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, on Friday, February 1 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. It includes dental cleaning, fluoride treatments, dental sealants, x-rays, fillings, and extractions. Appointments are encouraged.

The school board named February as "Black History Awareness Month." "I want to applaud our Social Studies supervisor, other teachers and other faculty members for making sure diversity is always integrated into the curriculum," Ms. Slocum said.

The next Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education agenda-setting meeting will be Thursday, February 7. The next budget meeting will be held Thursday, February 21, followed by a regular public meeting on Thursday, February 28.

## Cranford Cell Tower Fight Continues; 484 Sign Petition

BY CHRISTINA M. HINKE

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

**CRANFORD** — The fight over erecting a cell-phone tower at the Cranford Swim Club continued before a packed house at Monday evening's meeting of the Cranford zoning board of adjustment.

So far, 484 Westfield and Cranford residents have signed a petition against the proposal, Cranford resident Audrey Muratore told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*.

Another 90 people have hired attorney John Schmidt to defend their opposition to the monopole.

Gregory Meese, an attorney representing New York SMSA Limited Partnership, clarified the setback variance to the board. He said the setback of the base of the 130-foot-high tower to the nearest residential-property line would be 39 feet. The front-setback requirement is 300 feet or three times the height of the tower, whichever is greater, resulting in a 390-foot front-setback requirement to a residential-property line, Mr. Meese said. The monopole's proposed site is in a residential zone.

Cranford resident Frank Krause asked Glenn Pierson of PierCon Solutions, a radiofrequency design and engineering consultant testifying on behalf of the applicant, if the pole were to move about 300 feet from its current proposed spot, would it change the effects of cell-phone coverage.

"There is no major difference from a radiofrequency perspective," Mr. Pierson replied.



**BIRD OF PREY...** Hawks thrive in the area, as noted by this bird in Westfield.

Mr. Krause suggested that the applicant should consider moving the pole near the pool at the Cranford Swim Club instead of near residential-property lines. He said this change would also meet setback requirements.

Marjorie Meise of Cranford also queried Mr. Pierson. She asked if a satellite would be a suitable source of service for cell phones.

"[A] satellite signal doesn't get into a building. It is for outdoor or remote locations," Mr. Pierson said.

Mr. Pierson also testified about cell-phone-connectivity lapses. "It's not something you can do with digital or analog. It's the radio-wave limitations," he said.

Mr. Pierson presented the board with a graph showing data points of cellular traffic on traditional 800-MHz frequencies from 2006 to 2010. He said, beginning in 2010, a significant amount of blockage would occur on peak days, such as July 4 and during snowstorms or constructions, when cell phones are used more frequently.

Data services, such as text messages, would also block voice coverage, Mr. Pierson said.

"We need to build out frequencies," he said. "Come 2010, 800 mhz will be blocked."

He said 1,900-MHz frequency is being used today as a backup when 800 MHz is busy.

Mr. Pierson said the higher the frequency, the shorter the usable range. So, a 1,900-MHz frequency would cover less of an area than one of 800 MHz, resulting in the need for more towers. He also said that of the four cell-phone-carrier providers that would have cell coverage on the monopole, two operate on 800 MHz.

Mr. Pierson also said, in his opinion, that if this tower application were approved, the applicant would require a second tower in Cranford to gain seamless coverage.

However, so far, the coverage maps supplied by the cell carriers shown in the subsequent meetings do not depict coverage of 800-MHz frequencies, as confirmed by Mr. Pierson.

The hearing will continue on Monday, March 10. Mr. Meese is expected to present one or two of his witnesses. Mr. Schmidt will have his chance to present witnesses at a later date.

## BOE, PTA Brainstorm to Promote Parent Involvement

By JESSICA E. JASKULA

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

**SCOTCH PLAINS** — Parental involvement in education was a key topic during an informal Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education (BOE)-Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) roundtable event held Monday night at Park Middle School, which also included discussions of corporate sponsorship, legal residency and the budget.

The event, attended by approximately 35 people, was intended to foster communication between the BOE and PTA, as well as the community. Each district school seemed to be represented during the program, whether through a PTA member, PTA president or parents.

"This evening has become a very good give-and-take," BOE Vice President Linda Nelson said.

The BOE posed a question to PTA members regarding parental obstacles that lessen their involvement with schools. Participants noted possible reasons, based on parent feedback, such as time management, child-care issues and the sense of feeling unwelcome, especially if a parent had not attended meetings in the past and felt awkward starting in the middle of a school year.

"We want people to know that they are welcome anytime, not just in September," Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes said.

One audience member suggested that the abundance of technology available enables people to access valuable information at their own convenience through e-mail newsletters and televised BOE meetings, and that this convenience may move a parent's decision to stay home, instead of physically attending district events.

Audience members favored a suggestion made by Sharon Rosengarten, a class mother. She said having class mothers call parents to encourage and welcome them to attend events would likely help them feel that their presence is valuable.

"I don't think you can underestimate the power of a phone call to make a person feel welcome," Superintendent Hayes said.

"It's that personal touch that makes a difference," Ms. Nelson concurred. Reaching out to new parents is a way to make people feel more welcome, PTA Council District Legislative Team Chairman Jodi Heinz said, adding that one phone call from a friend encouraging her to attend a meeting made a big difference.

Ms. Heinz agreed that removing terms such as "executive council meeting" and replacing them with a

less-threatening and simpler "PTA meeting," as suggested by PTA Council President Deborah Brody, also would make people feel less intimidated about getting involved.

Others said events for new parents, such as a parents' social and holiday party, which the schools have already implemented in the past, have been successful and could be used again in the future.

Ms. Brody asked the board if it had a stance on involvement regarding legal residency and legal guardianship.

Thomas Beese, director of special services, said his department investigates when it is believed that a child is not legally a district resident or if the legal guardianship presented to the school is inaccurate.

During a discussion of corporate sponsorship, BOE member Warren McFall, chairman of the BOE's policy committee, said the district wants to look into athletic sponsorship, but that any advertisements would have to be consistent with other policies.

"The sponsorship would in no way be inside the classrooms," board member Jane Costello said.

Regarding the budget, Business Administrator Anthony Del Sordi said his office works on the budget throughout the year and asks for input from principals and other administrators.

If a cut has to be made in the budget, Superintendent Hayes said, officials first consider all things furthest from the classroom.

When the PTA-BOE dialogue came to an end, attendees were given the opportunity to ask both groups questions. One audience participant asked the board to look into improving the lighting at the entrance to Terrill Middle School.

Parents also suggested future district programming for world language education and a theater production at the middle school level.

Superintendent Hayes said some type of world language programming could be possible through a distance-learning network.

One audience participant with a theater background asked if it was possible for a parent to volunteer to direct and run a show with the middle schools. Superintendent Hayes said a totally parent-run production would "probably not happen" due to liability, responsibility and liability issues, but suggested getting in touch with faculty and the individual middle-school principals.

"We can look into it," Superintendent Hayes said. "I think the theater arts are important for the kids to be exposed to."

## Biunno Gets Probation For Stealing from Church

**MOUNTAINSIDE** — William Biunno of Mountainside was sentenced last week to three years probation by State Superior Court Judge Douglas Fasciale for stealing over \$20,000 from his church during an 11-year period.

The 75-year-old former bank president pled guilty in October to third-degree theft by unlawful taking.

As part of his probationary sentence, Mr. Biunno is required to pay back the church. According to the Union County Prosecutor's Office, Mr. Biunno turned over a check for \$16,000 to the judge and is obligated to provide another \$6,000 within 60 days.

All proceeds will go to the Archdiocese of Newark, which oversees Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church in Mountainside where the theft occurred — and where Mr. Biunno was an active trustee, an usher and a member of the choir, according to Union County Assistant Prosecutor William Kolano.

Mr. Biunno was arrested on July 25,

2007, after a lengthy investigation headed up by Sergeant Vincent Gagliardi of the Union County Prosecutor's Office and Detective Michael Jackson of the Mountainside Police Department.

The thefts, many of which were recorded on the church's security cameras, primarily occurred when Mr. Biunno was supposed to place the congregation's donations into a receptacle during Sunday Mass.

"On the security tapes, Biunno could be seen examining the money and choosing a portion of the proceeds for himself," Mr. Gagliardi said.

The security camera was installed after the church became suspicious about a decrease in donations, authorities said.

Mr. Biunno will perform 100 hours of community service for his probationary sentence.

"Ironically," Mr. Kolano said, "he has been assigned to perform his service in a church."

## GOP Endorse Candidates For 7th Congr. District

**AREA** — State officials from Legislative District 21 released their endorsements Wednesday for candidates in the GOP Primary Election, held June 3, to replace Rep. Mike Ferguson, who is not seeking reelection.

State Senator Tom Kean, Jr. (LD-21, Westfield), the Senate minority leader, supported Senator Leonard Lance (LD-23, Flemington) for Congress. Mr. Lance previously served as Senate minority leader.

LD-21 Assemblymen Eric Munoz of Summit and Jon Bramnick of Westfield announced their support Wednesday of former Summit Council President Kelly Hatfield in her bid for



**ENDORSEMENT...** State Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean Jr. (LD-21, Westfield), left, announced his endorsement of State Senator Leonard Lance (LD-23, Flemington) yesterday at the Westfield Train Station.



**ALL ABOARD...** Downtown Westfield Corporation Board (DWC) of Directors Chairman David Martone and Westfield Town Councilman Frank Arena welcome Andy Wasserman as a new member of the DWC board Monday night. Pictured, left to right, are Mr. Martone, Mr. Wasserman and Mr. Arena.

## POLICE BLOTTER

**Westfield**  
Saturday, January 19, Gregory Giresi, 25, of Westfield was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated (DWI) after a motor-vehicle stop at Kimball and Lawrence Avenues. He was released on his own recognizance to a responsible individual.

Saturday, January 19, Stephanie Gabriel, 42, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding Westfield warrant after a motor-vehicle stop at East Broad Street and Park Drive. He was released after posting \$750 bail.

Saturday, January 19, Joseph Gachko, 50, of Westfield was arrested on an outstanding Westfield warrant after a motor-vehicle stop at East Broad Street and Park Drive. He was released after posting \$225 bail.

Sunday, January 20, Frank Macaluso, 18, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with DWI and possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana after a motor-vehicle stop at Dudley Avenue and Clark Street. He was released on his own recognizance to a responsible individual after he was issued summonses.

Sunday, January 20, Miriam Romero, 23, of Plainfield was arrested on South Avenue and Crossway Place on an immigration violation detainer. She was turned over to Immigration Customs Enforcement.

Friday, January 25, Diego Navarrete, 21, of Elizabeth was arrested at South Avenue, East, and Cacciola Place on an outstanding warrant from Scotch Plains. He was released after posting \$89 bail.

Friday, January 25, Hector Olivo, 23, of Plainfield was arrested at South Avenue and Boulevard on an outstanding Plainfield warrant. He was released after posting \$150 bail.

Saturday, January 26, three men were arrested after a motor-vehicle stop at South and Central Avenues and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana and with underage possession of alcohol.

The men, all 19 years old, were identified as Nicholas Mitsingas of Linden, Christopher Gallego of Westfield and Jason Jeney of Clark. They were released on their own recognizance with summonses.

Saturday, January 26, Amanda Bracuto, 20, of Kenilworth was arrested on an outstanding Westfield warrant on the 500 block of South Avenue, East. She was processed and released after posting \$500 bail.

Saturday, January 26, after being stopped for motor-vehicle violations, Jennifer Flynn, 22, of Westfield was arrested at Central and Roger Avenues on outstanding warrants from Westfield and East Brunswick. The warrants carried bail amounts of \$233 and \$550, respectively.

According to police, a search subsequent to the arrest showed Flynn was in possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana, for which she was released on her own recognizance. She also posted total bail on the warrants.

Monday, January 28, Christine Malczanek, 21, of Scotch Plains was arrested after a motor-vehicle stop at North Avenue and Elmer Street and charged with unlawful possession of a hypodermic needle and possession of ketamine, a tranquilizer used by veterinarians.

According to police, Malczanek was stopped for running a red light, after which the hypodermic needle and ketamine were discovered in her possession. She was released pending a review by the Union County Prosecutor's Office of the allegations.



**RAZOR WIRE...**The Union County Prosecutor's office released this photograph of the razor wire covered fence at the Union County jail, which was scaled in December by prisoners Otis Blunt and Jose Espinosa during their escape. The escapees have since been captured.

**Scotch Plains**  
Tuesday, January 22, a resident of Country Club Lane reported that someone obtained his bankcard information and withdrew \$600 from his account.

Friday, January 25, Justin Brown, 28, of Dunellen was arrested for an outstanding warrant after a motor-vehicle stop.

Friday, January 25, a resident of Hunter Avenue reported that someone called his house numerous times at odd hours in the night.

Saturday, January 26, Christopher Kramer, 23, of Piscataway was arrested for an outstanding warrant after a motor-vehicle stop.

Saturday, January 26, Kyle Lefaver, 28, of Garwood was arrested for an outstanding warrant after a motor-vehicle stop.

Sunday, January 27, Kenroy Campbell, 26, of Newark was arrested for an outstanding warrant after a motor-vehicle stop.

Sunday, January 27, Linda Lance-Hudanich, 58, of Avenel was arrested and charged with DWI after a motor-vehicle stop for a moving violation. According to police, a strong odor of alcohol was detected at the time of the stop. Lance-Hudanich was transported to headquarters where she was released with a summons, police said.

**Mountainside**  
Wednesday, January 23, Rafael Perez, Jr., 30, of Secaucus was arrested following a motor-vehicle stop on Route 22 for driving with a suspended license.

Wednesday, January 23, a patron of a Route 22 theater reported that someone smashed the rear window of her vehicle while it was parked in the lot. According to police, the victim's insurance card, registration and a brown, medium-size purse containing a cell phone were removed from the vehicle.

Police responded to a second incident at the theater involving another vehicle that was broken into, where access was gained by smashing the rear window. According to police, a purse containing personal items was removed.

Wednesday, January 23, a patron of a Route 22 restaurant reported that someone smashed the driver's side window of his vehicle. According to police, a laptop, a Palm Pilot and other miscellaneous items valued at \$2,390 were removed from the vehicle.

The manager of the restaurant stated that he has a surveillance video that recorded the incident, police said. The video revealed two male suspects, appearing to be Hispanic, who exited a mini-van, after which one male smashed the window of the victim's vehicle and removed the items, police said. The incident is under investigation, authorities said.

Saturday, January 26, a Route 22 liquor store reported that someone placed a clothing collection receptacle in the parking lot without permission.

## SID Meeting

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ing towns have told him that they would relocate to Scotch Plains if the downtown were improved.

Mayor Marks said the initial reaction from business and property owners in nearly every town in New Jersey where a SID is established — more than 60 in the past 20 years — was one of opposition. He said no SID, once established, has dissolved itself.

Both the mayor and Mrs. Malool spoke of the changed tone of this week's meeting compared to the meetings in 2003 and 2004.

"I'm hearing less negativity than four years ago," the mayor told the group.

He later told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* he was "quite pleased with the turnout and the overall tone and enthusiasm" at the meeting. "It is evident that more and more individuals are recognizing the potential benefits of the SID."

As for the matter becoming a political issue, the mayor said that, "on this particular issue, we cannot just wet our fingers, stick them in the air, and then cast a vote. That was the mistake we made in 2004."

Vote Tuesday