

## Robert Sherr Retiring After Thirty Years as Health Director

By LARISSA CURLIK  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD — Robert Sherr retires from the Westfield Regional Health Department this week after serving for almost 30 years as the director of health. The department, under Mr. Sherr's direction, has evolved as a model of regional planning and shared services for eight New Jersey communities.

The regional health department provides public health and environ-

mental services by enforcing state codes, laws and regulations established by the New Jersey Department of Health and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The department consists of a core staff of environmental inspectors that oversee environmental regulations, conduct restaurant inspections and assist in the department's clinics.

In addition to having a public health nursing supervisor, one full-time nurse in Summit, and a part-time nurse

in New Providence, the department employs a staff of per-diem nurses that assist with clinics and screenings throughout the year. The deputy registrar and registrar in Westfield also oversee the registrar of vital statistics in each town.

As director, Mr. Sherr was responsible for securing funding for the department, the oversight of all activities and ensuring the implementation of state-required programs.

"Through [Mr. Sherr's] guidance and drive we grew from a very small board of health serving 29,000, to eight communities serving 129,000 residents," said William Corbet, president of the Westfield Board of Health. When Mr. Sherr initially took office as a health inspector in 1978, the department served Fanwood, Garwood, Mountainside and Westfield. Today, the department has expanded to include New Providence, Roselle Park, Springfield and Summit.

By growing in size, the department has expanded services despite the challenge of limited resources, Mr. Sherr said.

"Public health has changed and evolved from 1978, to what it is today. Initially, we primarily did things like environmental inspections and environmental complaints and nuisance complaints. We also held chronic illness screenings. That part has not changed," Mr. Sherr said. What has changed in the last 10 years is the increased role the department plays in developing plans to respond to bio-terrorism, such as anthrax or pandemic flus.

The state mandates that each town must have a health officer, but limited resources have made contractual arrangements between towns an economically favorable alternative to hiring more full-time employees.

"Everyone in the system saves money," Mr. Sherr said. In addition to getting better prices by bidding services out to more people, Mr. Sherr said sharing services "allows us to better use the limited resources that we have."

Now, the department is able to provide services, such as pest control, to municipal-owned properties throughout the region. The department has also expanded its chronic illness programming to address issues such as cancer, diabetes and heart conditions, in addition to its health fairs and flu shot clinics.

Mr. Sherr "was 20 years ahead of where we are at right now relative to where we're trying to go with municipal economies," Mr. Corbet said. He earned his reputation as "the most

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## Board of Adj. Denies Plan For 121 Cacciola Place

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Board of Adjustment, on Monday, denied the re-opened application by Joseph Penyak, Sr. to construct a two-family home on 121 Cacciola Place, situated on the corner of Central Avenue and Cacciola Place, by a vote of eight to one.

Board Member Anthony Cerami was the only member agreeable with having the applicant come back to another meeting with plans for alternative options of the construction, a motion he first made (prior to a motion to deny) and no other board member seconded.

Three neighbors and Westfielders Concerned About Responsible Development (WECARE) member Sharon Stockwell addressed the board in their opposition of the proposed plans to build a two-family home on the lot where an abandoned house currently sits. It is the same property that has had a raccoon infestation because of its disrepair and received complaints from neighbors.

The raccoon problem was not brought to the board's attention during Monday's hearing.

Mark Doherty, a board member, said "I'm not willing to entertain another proposal." He said he only wants to see plans for a one-family home.

Judy Thornton, town planner consultant, said a one-family home is the permitted use for the lot size, but it is zoned for either a single-family or a multi-family home.

James Watson, a planner representing the applicant, said the current home is a two-family home.



ISRAEL AT 60...Local political figures attended the Westfield Symphony Orchestra and Temple Emanu-El's joint effort last week to celebrate Israel's 60th anniversary. Pictured, from left to right, are: Cantor Martha Novick, Westfield Councilwoman JoAnn Neylan and Vicki Kimmins, Maestro David Wroe, Westfield Mayor Andy Skibitsky, Assemblywoman Linda Stender (LD-22, Fanwood) and Rabbi Douglas Sagal. See article on page 24.

## Residents Seek Relief From Neighboring Decrepit Properties

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD — Residents living next to dilapidated Westfield properties asked the town council, Tuesday night, if it had any recourse to speed up the town's demolition process.

Len Berman of Prospect Street and Patricia Lee of Cacciola Place, who have lived next to vacant and deteriorating houses for years, heard similar answers from the council, which said that it could not force an individual owner to tear down a property.

Mr. Berman, who lives near 772 and 766 Prospect Street, asked the council when residents of the area could expect the demolitions to occur.

The board of adjustment has approved both demolitions, and eventually, three medium-sized homes will exist there. The developer picked up notification papers, Tuesday, and must now inform contiguous owners, according to Town Administrator Jim Gildea.

Town Attorney Robert Cockren said, once a notice is distributed to the neighborhood specifying that the demolition is "forthcoming," the owner "may demolish" the home. "He is not required to [demolish]," Mr. Cockren said.

Mr. Berman replied, "This has gone on for two years. What other options exist? Can he be fined for animals running around, the grass being high?"

Mr. Gildea said property-maintenance violations have been issued. The

owner has 30 days to abate or choose to appeal.

First Ward Councilman Sal Caruana said, "practically speaking," the owner has three options - knock the house down, address the violations or go to court and appeal.

Mr. Berman, under the impression that builder Ralph Rapuano, Jr. owns the property, asked the council if there was any way to hold his "fee to the fire," saying, "This is not the first time [he has let a property fall into disrepair.] It's chronic. It could happen on your block next."

Mr. Gildea repeated to Mr. Berman, "We are doing what we can under the law. There's not much else we can do."

Mr. Caruana said that WECARE (Westfielders Concerned About Responsible Development), who had representatives present, submitted a "well written" report on the possibility of enacting a vacant-property ordinance, which proposes the adoption of rules governing how an owner must deal with unoccupied properties.

Mr. Caruana said the proposal, which is being considered by the council's Code Review and Town Property Committee, could help in future instances of this nature.

Mr. Cockren said the town has the power to involve the board of health if a "health issue" arises at the property.

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## Mountainside Bd. of Ed. Teacher Contract Progresses

By KATHERINE EMIRE-NIEVES  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

MOUNTAINSIDE — The Mountainside Board of Education (BOE), on Tuesday night, recognized six district students who participated in and were accepted to the state level for Reflections, a PTA-sponsored, nationally recognized program that supports arts education.

This year's theme was "I can make a difference by..." The categories available to enter were literature, musical composition, photography, visual arts, dance, and film/video production.

Of the 141 student entries from Mountainside, 18 made it to the county level and six made it to the state level. The six students are: Max Sichel (grade 5) for musical composition; Isha and Shree Mehrotra (grade 5) for photography; Amanda Fischer (grade 6) for visual arts; Cooper Truman (grade 7) for literature; and Logan Turner (grade 8) also for literature.

All were present at the meeting and were honored with certificates of participation by Marianne Jennings of Mountainside, who was instrumental in getting the district involved in the program. Ms. Jennings said that Mountainside represented the most entries in the state for Union County.

The new teacher contract is in the hands of the teachers after being signed by representatives of both the committee of the board and the committee of the Mountainside Education Association (MEA). Board President Mary Beth Schaumburg said, "This is a very positive step toward the ultimate goal." She expects a new contract to come before the board for final approval at the next meeting on Tuesday, May 27.

Kindergarten and third grade student orientations to ease the transition to school are scheduled for June 5 and 6. On June 4, a parents-only orientation will take place at Beechwood School with teachers present to answer questions.

On the morning of June 3, second graders, who will become third graders, will be bused to Deerfield School to visit with teachers, listen to academic presentations and become familiarized with the lunch line there. They will also have the opportunity to meet the school nurse, guidance counselor and office staff. On June 18, parents can ask questions of Jeanette Baubles, and current Deerfield School third graders will be on hand to help out the current second graders.

The BOE also approved the follow

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LEAVING A LEGACY...Robert Sherr is retiring after 30 years as director of health for the Westfield Regional Health Department. He is being replaced by Megan Cornish, who currently serves as the department's public nurse supervisor.

## Garwood Council Hosts 'Students in Government'

By RAYNOR DENITZIO  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

GARWOOD — The borough council approved an ordinance to raise the sewerage rate cap for businesses and announced a finance meeting to be held Saturday, May 17 at 11:30 a.m. At the meeting the council intends to gather input from the public and reviewed estimates for road projects.

Student Council members from the Lincoln School were able to get a first-hand look at local government on Tuesday as the council hosted its annual "Students in Government Day."

"I love this night, and you see all the kids enjoyed themselves," said Council President Kathleen Villaggio. "This town is made up of kids. To get them involved in Garwood is great."

Members of the student council attended the meeting and played the role of elected and appointed officials, delivering committee reports and fielding questions from residents.

"It was cool because people actually wanted our answers," said Sarah Palmer, an eighth grader who served as a council member for the meeting.

Among the students who participated, Nicole Beyer stood in for the mayor, with Joe Mondri serving as council president. Frank Cepparulo, Meghan Emmons, Kaeley Hay, Amanda Rusin and Ms. Palmer comprised the rest of the council. Sally Beriont served as municipal clerk for the evening.

"The kids always do a fantastic job," said Councilman Anthony Sytko. Mr. Sytko said he remembered participating in the program when he was a student, and that he was impressed with the way the students handled themselves.

"I think we may see the next generation of Garwood leaders here tonight," said Mr. Sytko.

Students also played the roles of

other borough officials, with Garrett Montagne serving as chief of police, Nicole Shuron as fire chief, Jackie Weisser as borough attorney, Laura Villaraud as borough engineer and Margaret Sinnick as public works manager.

"It was exciting to see how our actual council works," said Ms. Shuron.

Mayor Dennis McCarthy thanked both the children and parents for their participation, and presented students with a certificate commemorating the evening. After the meeting, students and residents were invited to stay for refreshments with the council.

"[It's] something I never did as a child so it's a nice exposure," said Lauren Weisser, whose daughter Jackie played borough attorney.

Ms. Villaggio said that the borough's finance committee is holding an informal public meeting on Saturday at 11:30 a.m. at the borough hall, where residents can discuss budget matters with the committee.

Ms. Villaggio said it was important for the borough to get input from the citizens as they examine ideas for shared services and lowering costs. Ms. Villaggio said she will be attending a state budget summit in Trenton on May 20 hosted by the New Jersey League of Municipalities.

In other business, the council approved an ordinance to raise the sewerage rate cap for businesses in the borough from 20,000 gallons of water to 50,000 gallons. This ordinance was introduced during the council's last meeting in April.

Borough engineer Donald Guarriello returned estimates for road projects on Second Avenue, Myrtle Avenue and Willow Avenue, which were discussed last meeting. Mr. Guarriello estimates the projects to cost around \$170,000, \$150,000 and \$98,000, respectively.



CONGRATULATIONS...Education Fund of Garwood President Coleen Hay looks on as Patti Elias, Garwood Teacher-of-the-Year, is congratulated by Garwood Superintendent of Schools Teresa Quigley on April 24 at the fourth annual appreciation dinner held at the Westwood. Pictured, left to right, are: Mrs. Hay, Mrs. Elias and Mrs. Quigley.



DINER CHAT...A mother and daughter from Union accept greetings at Vicki's Diner in Westfield from state Senator Leonard Lance (LD-23, Flemington), left, and Senator Tom Kean, Jr. (LD-21, Westfield), last Thursday, as they were touring the 7th Congressional District for votes in the upcoming June 3 Republican Primary for Mr. Lance, who is seeking the Congressional seat. See stories on Pages 2 and 3.

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