



Enjoy Memorial Day Weekend –
Remember those who served.

THE WESTFIELD LEADER

Ad Populos, Non Aditus, Perbenimus

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SIXTY CENTS

Rescue Squads Face Longer Trips When Muhlenberg Hospital Closes

By KATHERINE VOWELL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

PLAINFIELD — As Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in Plainfield makes its final preparations for closing, local volunteer rescue squads are being warned of the various changes about to take place.

Current plans will leave Muhlenberg open to non-critical patients who can receive out-patient care, meaning volunteers will have to decide which patients require in-patient care.

"That is a huge window," said Shawn Lawson, captain of the Plainfield Rescue Squad. "We will have to use our own judgment, because we can't bring anyone [to Muhlenberg] who has to be admitted."

For Plainfield, the current five-to-seven minute trip to Muhlenberg hospital will now range from 20 to 40

minutes each way, depending on the hospital of choice, thereby tripling the amount of time it takes to get to Muhlenberg.

Roughly 85 percent of Plainfield's calls are taken to Muhlenberg, the remainder go to Overlook Hospital in Summit, JFK in Edison, Robert Wood Johnson in New Brunswick and Somerset Medical Center in Somerville.

"It is going to be very challenging for us and the city," Mr. Lawson said. "We average 7,000 calls a year, and the longer our transports take to other hospitals is going to affect the patients traumatically. Going out of town, combined with the level of calls, does not work for us or the patients."

Other rescue squads are facing similar situations with the added commute to alternate hospitals.

"Overlook Hospital is twice as far, twice as long, and [causes our ve-

hicles to use] twice as much fuel," said John Oatis, president of the Fanwood Rescue Squad, who estimates about 50 percent of Fanwood's calls are taken to Muhlenberg.

With gas prices shooting up this summer, the added fuel cost is an additional burden that these volunteer organizations will face once Muhlenberg is closed.

"Muhlenberg has been always, not necessarily better equipped, but better experienced for all emergencies," Mr. Oatis said. "They are the best hospital around as far as emergency rooms, they've seen just about everything. They know how to treat people and get them moved around in an orderly fashion."

Muhlenberg is not the only hospital suffering from financial difficulties. "It is the entire hospital system in general that is suffering," said Mr. Oatis. "We have seen a string of hospitals closing, and it is just going to continue until someone comes up with an answer."

Mr. Oatis, who is also a member of the New Jersey State First Aid Council, 2nd District, said that at a meeting last month, two senior officers from Muhlenberg hospital quoted that the hospital was losing \$1.5 million every month, and between \$15 to \$18 million annually.

"When you hear numbers like that you realize why they can't go much further," Mr. Oatis said. "It all comes down to the money, and it is a business decision on their [Muhlenberg hospital] part."

According to Mr. Oatis, the hospital will continue the programs that are turning a profit, including the School of Nursing. The hospital will also run a satellite emergency room used for basic life support, nothing serious that would require a patient to stay in the hospital.

"They are still going to keep the paramedic unit that work the advanced life support open," Mr. Oatis said. "The unit will be kept on for a while, because they have the ability to stabilize patients, communicate within emergency rooms and provide medications."

With local rescue squads spending more time on the road, the volunteer rescue squads will rely on mutual aid now more than ever.

Edward Laferrera, captain of the South Plainfield Rescue Squad, said that South Plainfield has already developed a close relationship with the Plainfield squad.

"Plainfield uses Muhlenberg on a much more frequent basis than we do," Mr. Laferrera said. "We back up Plainfield because for every call we receive, they probably get four or five. It [Muhlenberg closing] will be a bigger burden on us as well."

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David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

PAINFUL CLOSING...Founded in 1876, Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center is closing due to financial losses. The hospital in Plainfield, as viewed from Hub Stine Field, serves many local towns such as Fanwood, Scotch Plains and Westfield.

Residents Make Budget Suggestions to GW Council

By KATHERINE VOWELL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — At an informal, public council meeting in Garwood, May 17, council members asked the community for suggestions regarding how the borough could share services with neighboring towns to improve efficiency and minimize expenses. This comes at a time when the state has cut \$154,000 in state aid to the borough, which officials said is forcing Garwood to apply for extraordinary aid.

In attendance were Council President Kathleen Villaggio, Councilmen Stephen Napolitano and Anthony Sytko and Mayor Dennis McCarthy, who sat by as an observer.

The main topic of discussion revolved around the proposal for a new \$500,000 fire truck for the Garwood Fire Department. With plans to develop North Avenue to accommodate three-story structures, the fire department has requested a ladder truck, which would provide quicker access to a high floor in the event of a fire.

One resident, who requested not to be named, was opposed to purchasing a new fire truck and suggested the borough share a ladder truck owned by bordering towns. "I have a big problem understanding the need with Cranford and Westfield owning ladder trucks," he said. "It seems like a lot of duplication and a big waste of money."

Garwood BOE Approves Personnel, Awards Students

By RAYNOR DENITZIO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — The Garwood Board of Education went into executive session Tuesday night to privately discuss staff and student personnel matters and litigation. In the public session, the board approved several personnel matters, including substitute teachers, junior practicum, student teacher and a nurse.

The public asked questions about the search for a new business administrator, school lunch policy, field trips and fundraising by volunteers with cans in front of businesses seeking donations.

Ceremonies were held to recognize student achievements and contributions by past board members.

The board approved Patricia Ledger as a substitute nurse for the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school year, subject to a background check. The district needs a registered nurse to attend the overnight eighth grade trip.

The board approved a motion to allow Just Off Broadway productions, a local student theater group, to use the Lincoln School gymnasium during the week of July 7 through 12. Program director Marguerite Modero, a teacher in the borough, spoke to the board supporting the group's request.

Coleen Hay, a member of the eighth-grade parent committee, asked why the committee was not permitted to have a canning fundraiser, where participants collect donations in cans while standing in front of local businesses. She said that the committee's fundraising was short of its goal and that such a fundraiser "could have really helped out the eighth-grade parents." She asked the board to revisit the fundraising policy.

Resident Bruce Paterson asked the board for clarification regarding the search for a new school business administrator and about field trips.

Lincoln School student Danny

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Katherine Vowell for The Westfield Leader

RUBBER DUCKIE...The Second Annual Rubber Duck Race took place on Sunday, May 18, at Mindowaskin Park in Westfield to raise awareness and funds for Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). Close to 500 people gathered outside to cheer on 4,500 rubber ducks floating across Mindowaskin pond. This year's race raised \$16,500. Pictured upper left, from left to right, are: Rutgers football player Art Forst; Patrick Higgins, who is diagnosed with SMA and is the son of Maureen and Bill, coordinators of the race, and Rutgers football player Shamar Graves.

WF Parking Fines Go to \$32; \$38 Mil. Muni. Budget OK'd

By MICHAEL POLLACK
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Despite continued protests from business owners, the town council agreed Tuesday evening to increase fines for overtime parking at meters and pay stations from \$20 to \$32, effective immediately. There was not a roll call vote on the decision. After the public portion, the council achieved a simple majority necessary to pass the parking violation penalties.

Michael Blancato said the council's actions would hurt part-time employees the worst and asked if the governing body could postpone its decision for a half-year.

Mr. Blancato said the act of raising the fine is "meant to change behavior;" however, he said that behavior could not change without a "viable solution," referring to a capacity issue.

Mr. Blancato also said he "hopes the behavioral change made doesn't mean people choose not to come to Westfield."

Seeking to clarify parking statistics, Finance Policy Chairman Sal Caruana said more than 27,000 parking tickets were handed out last year;

of that figure, 16,000 were given for overtime meters and pay stations.

Mr. Caruana said that of the 300 days that the town enforces its parking policies, it gives about 53 tickets a day for overtime parking.

Mr. Caruana refuted the claim that the town's enforcement policies and parking costs led to less activity, and

referenced that there were 1.5 million transactions made at pay stations and meters last year.

Still, Mr. Blancato asked that the town give residents and business owners more time to come up with "complete" and "creative" solutions.

He acknowledged that waiting, in

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WF Board of Ed. Approves Emergency Comm. System

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Board of Education Business Administrator Robert Berman presented a proposal Tuesday night for an emergency communications system. Designed by Honeywell, the system provides alerts via e-mail, cell phone, home phone, pager and text message.

The board approved the proposal. Board members Anne Riegel, Gary McCready and Anne Cary were not in attendance.

Mr. Berman said the communication system is part of the goals set and is within the budget of \$15,000. The cost to the school district is \$16,363 for the first year and \$13,200 for subsequent years. The Town of Westfield is paying an additional \$6,550 for the first year to share the system with the school district.

The system will be phased in. First, it will be used for only emergencies. As parents become comfortable with it, schedule and event reminders, report cards, and attendance confirmations will be added. Parents would choose which alerts they wish to receive.

The system computer centers are in Ohio and Massachusetts. Should an emergency occur in Westfield or New Jersey, the server will continue running. In the event of a local emergency, a two-to four-minute response time for messages is projected. Should a country-wide emergency occur, a seven- to 10-minute response time is projected.

Mr. Berman said other school districts within the county and state use an alert system such the one being implemented in Westfield.

In other business, Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan told *The Westfield Leader* that she met with principals of the intermediate schools and assistant counselor Marie Koch to discuss how the peer leadership program could be continued.

Ms. Koch's job was eliminated for budget reasons. Ms. Dolan says they are "working it through," but a decision is not yet made. Ms. Dolan said that the elimination or preserving of the position is part of the discussion.

On curriculum, Anita O'Neal, interim assistant superintendent, presented a revision to the kindergarten

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Communities to Celebrate Memorial Day on Monday

By LAURA MORTKOWITZ
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Area communities will hold various Memorial Day observances on Monday, May 26, to honor those military men and women who gave or risked their lives protecting the United States.

Opening ceremonies in Westfield will begin at 9 a.m. at the Monument to Veterans of World War I at the North Avenue and East Broad Street Plaza. All Westfield and Mountainside organizations are invited to participate. The grand marshal will be Lieutenant Colonel Michael Hrycak, who has lived in Cranford since 1960.

Lt. Col. Hrycak has served in the United States Army since graduating from Rutgers College, having been commissioned as a second lieutenant through the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) in 1981. He was promoted to major in 1996 and to lieutenant colonel in 2003, and has served in the Iraqi Theater of Operation.

The opening ceremonies will feature multiple guest speakers, such as Peter Hogeboom, this year's Master of Ceremonies; Al Riker, American Legion chaplain, and Westfield Mayor Andrew Skibitsky. Kerry Stubbs will sing "God Bless America" *acappella*, and Theodore Schlosberg of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts will perform taps.

There also will be cannon volleys by Lambs Artillery and special bell tolls by Jack Panosh, bell master and curator for the Westfield Town Clock.

After opening ceremonies, the parade will proceed north on East Broad

Street to Fairview Cemetery, where closing ceremonies will be held. The Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution will hold their annual memorial service at the Revolutionary War cemetery.

The communities of Scotch Plains and Fanwood will begin their Memorial Day observances at 8 a.m. at American Legion Post 209 on Park Avenue and Sunset Place in Scotch Plains. Wreaths will be laid at the Fanwood Memorial Library at North Avenue and Tillotson Road at 9 a.m., and presented at the Veterans Monument at Park Avenue and Front Street in Scotch Plains at 10 a.m.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Memorial Day Parade, themed "The 55th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice," will begin at 10:45 a.m. from the Scotch Plains Municipal Building, located at 430 Park Avenue. It will proceed down Park Avenue and Martine Avenue before ending at LaGrande Park in Fanwood.

Donald Wussler will serve as the parade's grand marshal. Mr. Wussler is a Korean War veteran from the United States Army 7th Infantry Division and the recipient of a Purple Heart.

Beginning later in the day, Garwood will offer a solemn celebration at noon. The program will be held at the Garwood Knights of Columbus Hall at 43 South Avenue. There will be a guest speaker and refreshments for those in attendance. All are welcome, with a special invitation extended to children and young adults.



Fred Rossi for The Westfield Leader

HOLE IN ONE...Scotch Plains Parks and Recreation Director Ray Perio (center) accepts an award, at last week's Scotch Plains township council meeting, from Bruce Kaufmann and Dee MacKay of the New Jersey Recreation and Park Association for excellence in design for the township's mini-golf facility at Scotch Hills Country Club. Mr. Kaufmann and Ms. MacKay serve as Westfield's recreation director and assistant recreation director, respectively.

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