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The Mayor's Notes
Basketball in the Street
Is a Safety Issue

By Andrew Skibitsky
 Mayor of Westfield

A recent letter to the editor from an individual who was "extremely disappointed" about having to comply with Section 13.02H8 of the Westfield Land Use Ordinance regarding the placement of basketball backboards in the public right-of-way and went on to relate the enforcement of said ordinance with the recent report of youths congregating behind Starbucks offers me, as your mayor, the opportunity to keep the public informed on several matters that were raised by the writer.

First, the enforcement of the land use ordinance is certainly not a "seek and destroy" mission" (as the writer characterized it) on the part of the town's sole zoning officer. To be clear, the Land Use Ordinance, of which zoning regulations are a part of, is borne of state land use laws and the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution. Generally, land use laws determine the permissible uses of land so as to promote the public health, safety and general welfare of the population and are very much at the core of the "quality of life" issues the writer refers to. To be clear, our Land Use Ordinance does permit basketball backboards. They must, however, be placed on private property, not in the public right-of-way. Primarily for obvious safety reasons (and not "to eradicate constructive outlets for the youth of our community" as the writer stated), the streets are not to be used as playgrounds. To ignore the law and "allow" backboards or any other recreational equipment, such as skateboard ramps and hockey nets, to be positioned in the public right-of-way places a heavy burden of liability upon all the taxpayers of the town. To be sure, the enforcement of the Land Use Ordinance preserves the quality of life in Westfield.

Second, without a doubt, Westfield is one of the top communities in the state in providing an abundance of varied recreational opportunities for its youth and young adults. The town itself invests a significant portion of its resources to maintaining 10 municipal parks with a multitude of sporting fields and courts, including several basketball courts. The recreation department's (westfieldnj.gov/recreation) programs include "Night Place" for 6th to 8th graders and "Teen Center" for high school students. During the re-

cent renovation at the Memorial Library (wmlnj.org), a special area was designated to meet the unique needs of teens. In the summer months, Memorial Pool sponsors special teen activities. In addition to the town's efforts, the school district (westfieldnj12.org) offers an extensive array of cultural, athletic and academic activities to engage the students. Westfield is also fortunate to have several institutions that serve the varied interests of the youth population, including the Westfield Area Y (westfieldny.org) and the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts (njworkshopforthearts.com), to name just two. Every house of worship offers our youth opportunities to meaningfully participate in the community. And let's not forget the hundreds of adult volunteers in town who coach and guide thousands of our young men and women in organized activities, such as the numerous sporting leagues and scouting opportunities. Lastly, while it is the writer's opinion that removing basketball backboards from the public right-of-way diminishes the quality of life in Westfield, it is apparent to me from the number of complaints the town receives that the majority of residents believe otherwise - it is the placement of basketball backboards on the street that detracts from the quality of life. Clearly, then, the enforcement of the land use ordinance constitutes a wise and necessary expenditure of your tax dollars.

Westfield Flag Football
Does So Much

We thank Westfield Flag Football for supporting our fundraiser for the Foundation for Diabetes Research. FDR is an organization created by New Jersey parents who have children with diabetes. All money raised funds grants focused on curing this disease. Each research project brings us that much closer to a cure.

We Starbuck's for their generous contribution. A special thanks goes to George Lanzano and John Dugan. Not only have they been so supportive of this fundraiser but also they continue to do so much for the children in Westfield by running the successful flag football program.

Kim and Tom Decker
 Westfield

German 'Candid Camera' Chuckles
Westfielder About Parking Tickets

It's not often that we can get a chuckle out of our local parking issues, so I will share a laugh with my fellow Westfielders regarding an hilarious German *Candid Camera* skit I watched on board a flight from Zurich a few weeks ago. The story line goes something like this.

Scene opens up with a camera shot of a vigilant parking enforcement officer standing in the center of a parking lot in a picturesque town in Switzerland. This is where the fun starts. Car drives into the lot and proceeds to a parking space. Said officer jogs over to the driver and shoves a parking violation into the driver's hands as the person is parking! As the driver is screaming at the enforcement officer, the officer literally leaps into action toward the next approaching car and issues another violation - literally without any

opportunity for either driver to get out of their car to pay the parking meters. One after the next, the scene recurs. You can only imagine the outrage and eventual comedy/relief when all the drivers realize they were spoofed on *Candid Camera!*

From my perspective, thinking about home as one typically does on a long flight, I found it somewhat ironic that our local parking issues were indirectly mimicked on this skit. I know others may not find this as humorous as I. However, I only try to inject some levity into an issue that just seems to mildly gnaw at us whenever we venture into town for a quick shop or bite to eat.

Happy parking everyone! Many thanks and best wishes.

Wally Okby
 Westfield

SPFHs A/V Club Secretary Seeks
To Clear Up Previous 'Misunderstanding'

In the October 2 edition of *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, Ross Blacker wrote of his concern about the lack of student commentary on Scotch Plains television. First off, I would like to thank Mayor Marks for the professionalism that his commentary has lent to SPTV, and then I would also like to thank Mr. Blacker for complimenting our channel. However, while appreciated, his notion about the mayor's role as an announcer was unfounded. There is much participation among Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School in the production of sports and other local events. The misunderstanding lies in the fact that the students, who spend many hours after school working on programs that air on SPTV, are not doing this as part of the curriculum. Instead, they are doing it as a part of an extracurricular club, the SPFHs A/V Club to be exact. Student work onscreen takes place primarily within the hours of school, in broadcast journalism classes. These classes produce *Raider News*, and the role of most of these students does not extend into other productions for SPTV.

However, there are still plenty of students lending their voices to SPTV. Jun-

ior Jeremy Cimafonte and sophomore Christina Lewis provided commentary for the boy's first soccer game this fall, and senior Matt Morrelli recently commented on a football game. Student work also goes beyond SPFHs events. Last spring, sophomore Sarah Drum and SPFHs graduate provided commentary for the Scotch Plains Memorial Day Parade. In fact, the entire parade was also shot by SPFHs students.

It may be true that there are not as many student commentators as there used to be, but this is due to the fact that most students in our club have chosen equally (and sometimes more) challenging tasks of going on behind the camera. If you have gone to any soccer, football game or recent Scotch Plains Day, you will see teenagers running all over the place with cameras or tripods, searching for the perfect shot. If this is not student participation, then as a student and TV club member myself, I don't know what is.

Thank you for your compliments and concerns.

Laura Thompson
 Secretary, SPFHs A/V Club

Acting is 'Bizarre and Exciting
Experience' for Scotch Plains Stand-In

The other day, I made \$110 doing absolutely nothing but standing around in an oversized white tuxedo for 13 hours at the Gershwin Hotel in Manhattan, punctuated by playing Pokémon and writing a college English paper on my laptop. Sound like a get-rich-quick scheme to you? Well, it's actually not, and it's anything but easy money, I'll tell you that much.

On October 20, I had the pleasure of acting in a five-part miniseries called "Stingray Sam," to be released in 2009 over the Internet and cell phone carriers. I didn't read the script, but from my 13 hours on set, I feel this production will turn out similar to Richard Elfman's trippy 1980 musical *Forbidden Zone*. For those of you unfamiliar with *Forbidden Zone*, it's the kind of movie my friend Justin would have saved on his Xbox to watch late at night while enjoying the hallucinogenic effects of the chemical found in cough medicine.

"Stingray Sam" seemed to have a pretty crazy premise. From what I can tell, the main character seemed to be one middle-aged man with a moustache who wore a tight red metallic spandex suit and a long, trailing fuzzy white cape. He was, apparently, some kind of outer-space cult leader; I, one of the actors wearing white tuxedos, played the part of one of his disciples, whom he eventually turns on mid-series and has arrested and locked up.

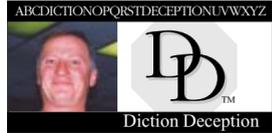
There's a villain too. Another old man wearing a gold metallic spandex suit and no cape carries around a large jar of olives

and dances in competition with a tiny toy robot. There was a behind-the-scenes crew member who had a striking resemblance to the Swedish chipmunk, Dubmoor, of whom I am a huge fan. I found this to be rather amusing. The whole ordeal was a bizarre experience, and I'd love to be able to divulge more details about the story. The adventure doesn't stop there for me. As a background actor, I was able to exchange e-mail addresses and phone numbers with the production manager, Ciara Lacy, with the implication that I would be working with her on set as a crew member in future productions.

A quick Google search of Ms. Lacy's name results not only with her page on IMDb.com but also with a Spin.com online magazine article in which she was interviewed at a Brooklyn rooftop screening of Michael Gondry's *The Science of Sleep* on September 20, 2006. Gondry also directed *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *Be Kind Rewind*, the latter of which I unsuccessfully tried to help out with the production while it was being filmed in Passaic back in October 2006.

From my point of view on the set of "Stingray Sam," being surrounded by what seemed to be a swirling torrent of idiosyncrasy, how could I not want to find out how this turns out? Let me just say that this is show is definitely worth the \$2.99 it's probably going to cost to download onto your phone.

Tom Fortunato
 Scotch Plains



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions - only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly - good guess. If you get two - well-read individual. If you get three - word expert. If you get all four - You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.

Answers to last week's arcane words.
 1. Fulmination - A thundering or lightning
 2. Persultation - An eruption of blood from an artery
 3. Maculose - Covered with spots
 4. Sphygmus - The pulse

MALAISE
 1. Widespread epidemic of catastrophic proportions
 2. Extreme dislike, hatred
 3. Harsh in taste, acid
 4. Physical discomfort before an illness

PUNDONOR
 1. A fur-lined gown
 2. A point of honor
 3. A type of dugout canoe
 4. A confidence man; swindler

BUNTONS
 1. Small number; insufficiency
 2. A calcareous deposit found in the sacs of the ear
 3. Horizontal timbers in a mine shaft used for support
 4. A small spike or elongated cluster of flowers in grasses

CLEM
 1. To starve or die of hunger
 2. Inflammation of a mucous membrane; especially of the nose or throat
 3. Desperate; wanting
 4. The foam formed by the force of a waterfall on the rocks below

More Letters:
Pages 10-11

SP Blood Drive Is
Great Act of Kindness

Our first annual blood drive at the Scotch Plains Farmers' Marketplace was a big success. I'd like to thank our valued visitors for their "Act of Kindness." With their donations, I am told we saved approximately 90 lives that day. Wow, what a great feeling knowing this. Also, [it is gratifying] knowing that there are people in our community who genuinely care and give of themselves to help others in need. Additional thanks go to Lois Keegan of the Blood Center of New Jersey and their kind staff and Jean Ann Honig of Seabound Cruises for her assistance and support.

As director of the Scotch Plains Farmers' Marketplace and board member of the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association, we look forward to expanding our effort each and every season and saving more lives. Thanks again.

Jeffrey Stein
 Scotch Plains

Community Responds
To Fight World Hunger

The Crop Walk on Sunday, October 19, was a great success made possible by scores of volunteers, a hundred-plus walkers and by the coverage of your paper. The 10 houses of worship and organizations which participated in the walk will announce the amount of the funds raised to the Community Thanksgiving Service on Monday, November 24, at the Fanwood Presbyterian Church at 7 p.m. They will be joined by other houses of worship, which will be taking a collection to help fight world hunger.

CROP, the acronym for Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty, is under the direction of Church World Service, an Ecumenical world organization. The organizers of this year's CROP Walk wish to thank all the supporters: walkers, workers, promoters and, most of all, donors of this worthwhile cause.

Cena Politt
 Fanwood

Walking School Bus is a
Westfield Tradition

When I first considered having my older son walk to school with the neighborhood walking group, I was opposed to the idea. "It's too far, it's too cold, he's too young, he'll get abducted, he has to cross Central Avenue" were the litany of excuses I came up with to explain my reticence. But here I am three years later to say, I love that my children walk to school. Not only does my fourth grader still walk, but he was joined this year by his first grade brother who couldn't wait to be a part of the group. Yes, it is far (almost a mile), sometimes it is cold and they still have to cross Central Avenue. But overall, the positives have far outweighed any opposition I had.

The distance doesn't seem to be a big deal to the kids, except those first few days when their backpacks are extra heavy or on music instruction day. But they are champs. They carry their belongings without complaint (mostly) and it has never been easier to get them out the door in time to meet up with other neighborhood kids. Now that I've been walking with the kids, I've gotten a tiny peek into their social lives. It's such a nice way to feel connected with them. My first grader even held my hand while we walked.

Beyond the motivation of leaving on time and the social benefits, we are all getting some exercise and fresh air plus spending less on gas and helping to keep congestion down around the grade school. The ever-vigilant crossing guards keep my mind at ease (yes, even crossing Central!) and it's always fun to see who'll be walking on any given morning.

I can't take the credit for our successful walking group. That honor belongs to Debbie Skibitsky, our First Lady of Westfield, who started the group years ago when her kids were at Jefferson. I'm just trying to maintain the tradition of making Westfield a great place for our kids to grow up.

Ann Chen
 Westfield

Don't Scorn Magic of Past Souls

Although not sanctioned by any government calendar, Halloween is a favorite holiday - colorful and festive. Kids dress up as witches, skeletons and ghosts, knocking on doors for treats - lest tricks and haunts follow. It's a rite of fall, but strange in that all the fun seems based on the darkside - death, goblins, haunted houses and horror.

Is it a hedonistic legacy or important sacrament? Where did we learn to put fire in pumpkins, spread fake cobwebs to instill fright, decorate halls with phony human bones, pipe eerie music into our homes, dress in monstrous costumes and hope to fly off into the night on broomsticks like evil witches? It inspires us to party, to mask what we are and to honor the strange - hoping to win a prize, but based on what? Maybe it was the Celts, centuries ago who created this practice, before beliefs existed, as we now like to think of our sophisticated selves.

Is it because we're not so sure of our beliefs today, that we gleefully pay homage to these rites of our roots? Do we refuse to laugh at the supposed ignorance of peoples

long ago, those without science we say - those mired in fright and superstition and darkness as night each year extends over day; as winter winds howl during the fading fall. Are the sounds they heard, calls from spirits; lonely souls close at hand only during this time of year? Things we seldom listen for today - are they still there?

Ancient cultures divided their calendars according to the seasons of the year, heavily influenced by cycles of weather with pastoral markings taken from the heavens. Astronomy provided the accepted wisdom of their time. We may scoff today and challenge these superstitions. But, is it buried in the DNA of our souls? How can one tell in looking at the moon tonight or tomorrow night? Was that a bat or witch flickering by? Is there more to the wind? Does it carry the moans of our forefather's spirits?

For those that mock, we say spend Halloween night at Gallows Hill Road by Fairview Cemetery and your opinions may change. For others we say, play it safe, don't scorn the magic of souls past. Put on your masks, don costumes, light jack-o-lanterns and party. Happy Halloween!

Former WF Resident Assails 'With Us or Against Us' Attitude

I grew up in Westfield, graduated from WHS in 2001 and moved out to Seattle after college to work for Microsoft. I read *The Westfield Leader* every week online and love the fact that it's available that way. It's so nice to be able to see what's going on in Westfield, a place that I cherish and still refer to as "home."

I've never written a letter to the editor before, but after reading last week's edition, I felt compelled to respond to a letter that you published. I understand that you probably get quite a few submissions, but I'd love it if you could include the voice of Westfield native from all the way across the country.

Something tells me that Maria Carluccio isn't aware of the irony contained in her October 23 rant to *The Leader*, so I feel that it might bear my pointing it out to her. After apologizing for blaming the deplorable actions of one idiotic individual on an entire group of people, she then proceeded to base her entire rant on these same broad-brush strokes.

In Ms. Carluccio's worldview, Americans are simply either "conservatives" or "non-conservatives" (who are "better known as liberals" according to her). It's unclear to me where Libertarians, Green Party supporters or anyone else would fall on Ms. Carluccio's two-toned spec-

trum, but let's ignore that for the moment. The point is that the labels "conservative" and "liberal" don't map directly to party lines or voting preferences.

I have plenty of conservative friends who view the Bush presidency as an absolute disaster and who laugh at the claim that there's anything "conservative" about the deficits that he's run up. Some of them are even voting for Obama. But in Ms. Carluccio's "you're either with us or you're against us" world, these people aren't "conservatives." Last time I checked, President Bush's approval rating was hovering somewhere below 30 percent, so we're apparently facing somewhat of a national epidemic in that over 70 percent of the country (many of them conservatives) suffer from what Ms. Carluccio refers to as "Bush Derangement Syndrome."

Turn on the news, and you'll see many of McCain's top advisors parroting this same line of thinking. Just last week, his advisor Nancy Pfothenhauser proclaimed that there are actually two Virginias - the northern part of the state that supports Obama, and "Real Virginia," which supports McCain. She apparently didn't see the irony in the fact that she made this statement from Arlington, which is located in the "fake" part of the state, where John McCain's headquarters is based and

where he also owns a home.

Sarah Palin made a similar comment while in North Carolina - referring to it as a part of "real America." Have we really devolved that far? The economy is crumbling beneath our feet, and we're busy building up a rubric for who qualifies as a "real" American?

In her letter, Ms. Carluccio lists Bill Ayers and Jeremiah Wright as two people whose associations with Obama make Ms. Carluccio "question Senator Obama's judgment." She conveniently fails to mention John Hagee, a preacher with whom McCain has a relationship and someone who has routinely referred to the Catholic Church as the "great whore," "the apostate church" and as being responsible for the rise of anti-Semitism under Hitler. She also fails to mention that McCain was a member of the Keating Five and that the Senate Ethics Committee criticized him for exercising "poor judgment" in his report.

While enumerating a list of despicable dictators who have come out in support for Obama, she also neglected to mention that the extremist website al-Hesbah recently claimed "Al-Qaeda will have to support McCain in the coming election." Yet none of this makes me question Obama or McCain's judgment. I think Ronald Reagan summed it up best; when informed that he was being endorsed by the KKK, he claimed that this only meant that they agreed with him, not that he agreed with them on anything at all.

Ms. Carluccio apparently views things differently than Reagan, and for her, these ridiculous endorsements and "us" versus "them" rhetoric is actually meaningful. Indeed, Obama derives a lot of support precisely from the fact that he refuses to buy into this divisive false dichotomy that has been the driving force behind our politics for too long. And guess what? Americans aren't buying into it either, and it has nothing to do with voting for Obama or McCain.

At a campaign rally last week, a McCain supporter was giving out fake Obama bumper stickers that had a Communist sickle and Islamic crescent on them while claiming that Obama wasn't really an American. Fortunately, McCain supporters cannot be painted with Ms. Carluccio's broad-brush strokes. They turned on the man and argued with his hate mongering until he left the premises. I wonder what Ms. Carluccio would have done?

How do these two wildly different groups of McCain supporters map to the "conservative" / "non-conservative" vision of American that she espouses?

Geoffrey Sherry
 Westfield

Matt Hall
 Seattle, WA

