

## WF Shows Its Treasures To 'In Bloom' Judges

By BRIGITTA GREENE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD - From the hanging floral baskets downtown to the red and white begonias in Tamaques Park, the blooms of Westfield received full attention last week. A pair of judges arrived Wednesday afternoon to spend two days assessing the town's performance in eight specific criteria, four of which are based on horticulture.

Westfield will compete against other towns across the nation as a part of a contest presented by America in Bloom, a national organization encouraging community development and preservation through local beautification projects.

The Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) officially partnered with Williams Nursery in April, beginning the "Westfield in Bloom" initiative and encouraging community groups to join in town-wide beautification efforts.

After months of collaboration between community groups - from the Rake and Hoe Garden Club to the department of public works - the town welcomed the judges with a reception at Acquaviva delle fonti on Wednesday night.

The judges then spent Thursday and Friday touring the town, sizing up the community in the areas of tidiness, environment, community involvement, heritage, urban forestry, landscaped areas, turf areas and floral displays.

Remarking to *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* at Wednesday's reception about the town's infusion of flowers and planters, judge Katy Moss Warner said, "If a city can take care of its plants, it sure probably can take care of its people."

Westfield is in the running for a total of nine different awards, to be announced at the Hershey Symposium in Hershey, Pa. in early October. Grand prizes will be awarded in each of the eight categories of evaluation, as well as best overall town within a population category of 20,001 to 50,000, which Westfield is competing in with Junction City, Kan., Michigan City, Ind. and Collierville, Ind. Judges will also bestow an individual overall rating, called a bloom rating, of between one to five "blooms."

Beyond awards, the volunteer judges will present the town with a written evaluation, including recommendations for improvement. This evaluation is valuable to the town, said MJ Gilhooley, press representative for America in Bloom.

She said the report, which a private consulting firm would provide to a town at a cost of \$10,000 to \$25,000, gives communities a competitive edge when applying for grants. Such an advantage is even more valuable today, when the federal government is allocating comparatively large amounts of money to community-development projects, she said.

"Today's economy is putting pressure on the very things that make commerce work," said Ms. Warner, emphasizing the need for communi-

ties to celebrate their beautiful downtown centers and historic spaces rather than the "big box stores and shopping strips."

Dave Williams of Williams Nursery said the financial crisis has also contributed to a growing appreciation for the garden. "People just need to sit back and relax a little," he said. "And there's no better place to sit back and relax than your own community...with your own flowers."

The garden, said Ms. Gilhooley, becomes the perfect metaphor for community growth. "Seeds grow," she said. "You plant them, and they grow. That is what America needs right now."

Community involvement and collaboration, one of the eight judgment criteria, was a key part of Westfield in Bloom, said Sherry Cronin, executive director of the DWC, in her speech on Wednesday night at Acquaviva. She thanked the many clubs and residents who participated in keeping Westfield "in bloom."

Williams Nursery donated a portion of the plants in the 48 new hanging baskets downtown, as well as the plants for the drought-resistant planters in Mindowaskin Park.

Mr. Williams also created a website for community members to post pictures of their gardens or floral displays.

"There's a lot of treasures that we have in town that people don't know about," he said. The website, westfieldinbloom.com, also has updates and photos on the various beautification projects across town.

Ms. Cronin, commenting Monday about the proceedings, said all the work associated with the event was "exhausting" but worthwhile. Ms. Cronin said a tour of Westfield's sights and sounds - including Williams Nursery, Echo Lake Park, Brightwood Park and Fairview Cemetery - was meant for the out-of-town judges but was also an eye-opener for her.

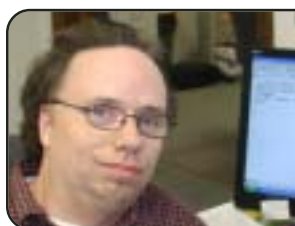
"I didn't realize how big the town truly was... I didn't realize how beautiful Fairview is, with its orchard," she continued. "The town really stepped up, and I think [the judges] paid attention to the community involvement and historic preservation."

Regardless of how the judges ultimately decide, Ms. Cronin said "In Bloom" was "great for the community, but now, we have to keep it up and continue to make Westfield beautiful."

### WF Retailers Sidewalk Sale Set July 16-19

WESTFIELD - Retailers will hold their annual Sidewalk Sale Days, rain or shine, in downtown Westfield from Thursday, July 16 through Sunday, July 19. A clown will provide entertainment Thursday and Friday from noon to 2 p.m. and on Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

A juggler will perform on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and balloon artists will be present on Thursday through Saturday from 3 to 5 p.m. For information, call (908) 789-9444 or visit westfieldtoday.com.



## Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

### Palin to Resign July 26; Pundits Speculate Run for Presidency

Alaska Governor Sarah Palin announced last Friday that she would resign from her post effective July 26, leaving some political pundits to state that the 2008 Republican Vice-Presidential candidate would seek the Presidency in 2012. Gov. Palin said she had decided not to seek a second term in 2010 and did not want to be a "lame-duck governor." Lieutenant Governor Sean Parnell will assume the governorship.

### Menza Begins Tenure as Hillside Mayor, Replacing McCoy-Oliver

Real estate developer Joe Menza took over the reigns of Hillside as its new mayor last week following his victory over At-Large Councilman Jerome Jewell, a candidate backed by Union County Democratic Party Chairman Charlotte DeFilippo.

Mayor Menza said it was his responsibility to prepare and submit an annual operating budget and to sign all contracts, according to politickernj.com. He replaces Karen McCoy-Oliver, whose battles with the council were highlighted when she refused to sign off on pay raises for township department heads.

### Pateron Orders New York Senate to Work Over Holiday

New York Governor David Paterson has elevated the state Senate stalemate from a "conflict" to a "crisis," according to *The Times-Union*. Republicans seized control of the New York Senate last month after getting

### Christie to Speak Before UC ELC

CLARK - Chris Christie, the Republican gubernatorial candidate facing Governor Jon Corzine in November, will speak at the meeting Wednesday, July 15 meeting of Union County Employer Legislative Committee (ELC) at Lana's Fine Dining at Hyatt Hills Golf Course.

Mr. Christie served from 2002 through November 2008 as the United States Attorney for New Jersey, building a reputation for successful corruption prosecutions.

The July 15 event will begin at 8 a.m. with networking followed by a full breakfast and meeting from 8:30 to 10 a.m.

The cost to attend is \$20 per person. Checks should be made payable to checks payable to Union County ELC c/o Organization Resources, 34 Ridgedale Avenue, Summit, NJ 07901.

Lana's is located at 1300 Raritan Road in Clark at Hyatt Hills Golf Course, located off exit 135 on the Garden State Parkway.

The Union County ELC is affiliated with the New Jersey Business and Industry Association. The ELC has extended an invitation to Governor Corzine to speak at its Wednesday, August 19 meeting.

the support of two renegade Democrats, Senators Pedro Espada, Jr. of the Bronx and Senator Hiram Monserrate of Queens.

The governor issued proclamations for special session every day at 3 p.m. through July 6. He also asked State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, a Democrat, to withhold the pay of senators' salaries. So far, Mr. DiNapoli has declined to take that step.

### McNamara Dies; Headed Defense During Vietnam War in '60s

Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, 93, died on Monday. He headed the Pentagon for seven years, beginning in 1961, under President John F. Kennedy and continuing under President Lyndon B. Johnson. He has been associated with the Vietnam War, which was nicknamed "McNamara's War." He also ran the defense department during the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, and the Cuban missile crisis the following year. He later ran the World Bank before retiring in 1981.

### President Obama's Trip Includes Russia, Italy, Speech in Ghana

After a July 4 barbecue at the White House, President Barack Obama flew to Moscow on Sunday to begin an overseas trip that includes G-8 meetings, a visit with Pope Benedict at the Vatican and a speech in Ghana.

President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev struck a preliminary agreement Monday to reduce their stockpiles of nuclear weapons to 1,500 each, the lowest levels of any U.S.-Russia arms control agreement, according to an 880 WCBS Radio report.

### Ex-D.C. Mayor Barry

#### Arrested on Stalking Charge

U.S. Park Police arrested former Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry July 4 and charged him with misdemeanor stalking. Police were stopped in Anacostia Park when a woman flagged down an officer on patrol and pointed to Barry, who was in another car. Barry was processed and released pending a court date.

The ex-mayor was previously arrested for smoking crack cocaine in a hotel room in 1990. He was re-elected in 1994 to a four-year term as mayor and won a seat on the D.C. Council in 2004, where he continues to serve. Mr. Barry had been on probation since 2005 for not filing or paying income taxes.



EMERGENCY OPERATIONS...Union County Emergency Management Director Chris Scaturro, center, speaks to U.S. Congressman Leonard Lance (R-7th, Union), left, and Union County Freeholder Chairman Al Mirabella about enhancements to Union County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) that are being made possible by a \$500,000 federal grant requested by Mr. Lance. The funds would expand the capabilities of the EOC to connect with each municipal police, fire and emergency management office during an emergency. The project includes the purchase of two new banks of radios to expand communications, three additional consoles to outfit each station, four new computers for each position, a new LCD monitor, and new Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensing for each radio frequency.

## House Approves \$500,000 For County Emergency Ctr.

WESTFIELD - Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th, Union) has announced that the House of Representatives passed legislation last month that includes Mr. Lance's request for \$500,000 for enhancements to Union County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

This federal investment would help the county enhance its emergency operations center through upgraded technologies and improved communications equipment, the Congressman said.

Mr. Lance made the announcement during a visit to the Union County EOC and in front of scores of law enforcement and community leaders taking part in a Threat and Risk Assessment program conducted at the EOC on July 1.

"Union County emergency operations personnel do an outstanding job keeping our citizens safe and responding to emergencies," Mr. Lance said. "It's critical they have the right resources they need to prepare for and respond emergencies. This federal investment will go a long way toward that goal."

"These enhancements will allow us to monitor emergency activities more effectively during an activation of the Union County EOC." Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella

said. "These important funds will allow us the capability to serve as a back-up communications center to Union County Fire Mutual Aid and any municipality that needs to temporarily relocate operations for any reason. We appreciate Congressman Lance's efforts and support of our project," the freeholder chairman added.

According to Union County officials, the funds would expand the capabilities of the Union County Emergency Operations Center to connect with each municipal police, fire and emergency managements office, and also to serve as a redundant center to Union County Fire Mutual Aid and all municipal departments during an emergency.

The project includes the purchase of two new banks of radios to expand communications, three additional consoles to outfit each station, four new computers for each position, a new LCD monitor, and new FCC licensing for each radio frequency.

Also included in the project are minor renovations to accommodate these new capabilities, a backup generator and training for the communications center personnel on the modernized equipment.

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