

Westfield Schools Open Today With New Administrators

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - Westfield schools open with full-day sessions today and tomorrow before breaking for the three-day Labor Day holiday weekend.

Parents and pupils at McKinley Elementary will be greeted today by new principal Matthew Bolton. He replaces Claudia Andreski, who has retired. Mr. Bolton served last year as both assistant principal at Roosevelt Intermediate School and Interim Principal of Lincoln School's Early Childhood Center. Audrey Zavetz has returned as Lincoln principal following a leave of absence.

Derrick Nelson has been hired as

the new assistant principal at Roosevelt. He was previously assistant principal at the K-7 Park Avenue School in Orange. In addition, the district has welcomed Richard Charwin as director of guidance, and promoted Sandra Mamary to athletic director. Mr. Charwin comes from Bernards High School, where he ran its guidance program for the past seven years, while Ms. Mamary previously was Westfield High School (WHS)'s athletic trainer. She replaces Ed Tranchina, who has retired.

Margaret Dolan, superintendent of schools, said the district is under a tight budget this year after it lost 90 percent, or \$4.2 million, in state aid. She said the \$442,000 the district did

receive was used up to pay \$216,000 in tuition costs for 36 students attending high school at one of five high schools operated by the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools, such as the Magnet High School and performing arts school, and another \$302,400 went to transportation expenses for students attending private schools.

"The way I view it, the taxpayers of Westfield are not getting any funds to support public education because we already used it (state aid) on mandates," she said. The superintendent said the district has achieved a million dollars in savings through its energy conservation program over the past three years, as well as another million dollars by changing health care providers.

"The 90 percent cut of state aid has had impacts on every aspect of our district," she said. "So, we are not buying library books. We are not buying computers. Our school and department budgets were held to 2007 levels."

In addition, she said administrators are not being reimbursed to attend professional meetings unless those sessions are required by the state.

The superintendent also said the district has cut 54 positions over the last two years, including administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries and custodians.

"And that is definitely being felt in the district; there is no question about it," Superintendent Dolan said. "Everyone is committed and focused on providing the best education for our students, but there are fewer people doing that."

With 6,296 students enrolled as of last Thursday, Ms. Dolan said the district is averaging 22 to 25 students in the elementary grade classes and 24 to 25 students at the intermediate and high school levels. She said the goal is the "lower 20s," especially for the lower grades.

Superintendent Dolan said enrollment numbers "have been changing much more than they generally do in August; in a year where our staff is tighter" as families are moving into the district.

"But should we have spikes in the enrollment, there is no money in the budget for additional staff," she said, adding the district's only option is to increase class sizes.

The superintendent said she would use any federal stimulus money received through the state to hire additional teachers to lower class sizes.

In an effort to generate additional funds this year, the district has established an annual activity fee of \$125 for athletic, drama and musical programs, and \$60 for all other school activities. Ms. Dolan said the district estimates the fee will net \$180,000, accounting for 15 percent of the district's extra-curriculum costs. The district also is looking for additional grants, such as one obtained from the Police Athletic League (PAL), for Westfield's after-school program.

"So far it's (the new fee) been working well," she said, noting that those enrolled in fall sports programs have been sending in their payments.

She said the four-year-old Leaps and Bounds program has saved the district "some money" by providing an in-district program for autistic children. An extra section has been added this year for the program.

"It (Leaps and Bounds) also allows a child to be educated in their home town, and it allows us to provide opportunities for students to be with other students," she said. She said the district has spread the word throughout the county that it has room to handle students from other districts. As a result, Westfield has "a few students that are coming from a variety of districts around here" for which Westfield is compensated.

In terms of new curriculum this

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TALKING ABOUT THE CAR WASH, YEAH!...The Westfield High School Marching Band cools off and soaks its director, Doug Schwarz, after an afternoon of hard work. The band provided a free car wash on August 18, but still made almost \$400 from voluntary donations from patrons.

Union County Moving Ahead With Solar-Panel Program

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

AREA - Union County is moving ahead with its solar-energy program, with 44 solar-panel installations being planned in 17 of the county's 21 municipalities, including some on county facilities, according to officials. The county will hire a private company, through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, to act as the solar developer.

According to Sebastian D'Elia, the county's director of communications, the Union County Improvement Authority (UCIA) has approved two installations in Cranford; seven in Hillside (city and board of education - BOE); eight in Linden; five in Roselle Park; New Providence (BOE) and Roselle (BOE); one each in Garwood (BOE), Plainfield and Rahway; five in Springfield; four in Plainfield (City); two on county buildings; one at Union County College and two at the Morris-Union Jointure Commission. The Mountainside Board of Education on Tuesday opted not to participate in the first round of the program.

The contracts to be signed by government entities are for 15 years, and under the terms of the contracts, the still-to-be-selected solar developer "will be required to install, maintain and, if necessary, repair the solar panel installations, which are typically guaranteed to last for 25 years," according to UCIA Executive Director Charlotte DeFilippo.

"This infusion of renewable energy will reduce the cost of power presently being used at each location, while at the same time providing local governments with budgetary certainty for at least a portion of their

9/11 Ceremony To Be Held in Westfield

WESTFIELD - The Town of Westfield will observe the ninth anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks with a community gathering on Saturday, September 11, at the September 11 Memorial site on North Avenue at East Broad Street.

The commemoration ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. with opening remarks from Mayor Andrew Skibitsky. Local clergy will offer prayers of commemoration followed by the presentation of the ceremonial wreath by an honor guard. The ceremony will conclude with a period of quiet contemplation, as those in attendance stand united as a community to support each other and those who lost loved ones.

The ceremony will be held rain or shine.

overall energy costs," Ms. DeFilippo said in an e-mail to *The Westfield Leader*. "The goal of the program is to reduce energy costs for the county, participating local governmental entities, including municipalities and boards of education, and meeting the goal of the state's Energy Master Plan, which sets a 20-percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020."

When asked about who is responsible for the \$45 million in debt to be borne for the project, Ms. DeFilippo responded that, "The bonds that will pay for the project are Improvement Authority bonds, guaranteed by the county, and this debt will be paid off by the solar developer, to be selected through the public bidding process."

"The solar developer will be required to put up security - backing his ability to fulfill the work-performance obligations - via either cash or a letter of credit. There is no [legal] exposure on the bonds to any of the participating governmental agencies, as they are Improvement Authority bonds," Ms. DeFilippo said. "Participating governmental agencies will sign up for 15-year contracts, as stipulated under state law (Local Public Contracts Law/Schools Contracts Law). There will also be a mechanism included for governing agencies that may wish to opt out during

the lifetime of the contract for any reason."

To achieve the energy savings to participating towns and school districts, the solar power provider will be able to take advantage of "federal tax incentives, economies of scale and the sale of [Solar Renewable Energy Certificates]," she said.

"Each participant simply pays for the solar electricity generated by its installation. Energy provided by the proposed solar projects will provide for a portion of each local government's energy needs at a guaranteed rate. The guaranteed rate is expected to be anywhere from 25 to 33 percent lower than current utility rates," according to a county press release.

Westfield Town Administrator Jim Gildea said his town was "ahead of the curve" because solar panels will be installed on the town's library in the next few weeks through a power-purchase agreement the library has through a private company. He said the town was not a fit, however, for the county's program due to the type and age of roofs on municipal buildings.

Mr. Gildea said the municipal building has a slate roof; the public works building's roof is too old, and the fire department building on North Av-

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LIFTING A HERO...Firemen lower the casket of fallen Westfield firefighter Jim Pfeiffer, last Thursday, before a Mass of Christian Burial took place at Saint James the Apostle Roman Catholic Church in Springfield. Mr. Pfeiffer died last Sunday after falling at his Mountainside home.

Governor Christie Attends County GOP Event Tuesday

By HORACE CORBIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SUMMIT - New Jersey Governor Chris Christie was in Union County Tuesday night at the Grand Summit Hotel, spearheading a fundraiser for the Union County Republican Party. He told the enthusiastic crowd of about 200 how the Union County Republican Convention was his first big win, something he will not forget, in his quest for Governor - eventually defeating then Governor Jon Corzine - a former Summit resident, he noted.

Several members of the crowd chanted "past resident, past Governor." In a largely partisan and ideological speech, interrupted several times with applause, the Governor noted that, during his seven years as U.S. Attorney for New Jersey, when he traveled throughout the country, he was always asked only two things - about political corruption in New Jersey and about "The Sopranos." Now, he said, during his travels, the image of New Jersey has changed. He is asked now about the reforms occurring in the state and how other states can follow New Jersey's lead.

"We're about one year ahead of everyone else," he said. Following up, he said it makes him proud every day at

work serving the people of New Jersey when he thinks that, being born in this state, he is now the Governor.

"I enjoy my job every day - well, maybe last week wasn't so good," he said (referring to the events leading to his firing of Education Commissioner Bret Schundler, a former Westfield resident).

Governor Christie said the state would finally control property taxes, and take specific actions on ethics and pensions, grow private jobs and reform the K-12 education system. He said New Jersey would have less spending, lower taxes, smaller government and a brighter future for the people and for their children and grandchildren. "We're going to put our people back to work," he stated.

This fall, he said, the major work is to enact legislation to provide the so-called "tool kit," essential for mayors and leaders of other segments of government to implement these reforms. The foremost undertaking, he said, is to pressure and direct the Democratic-controlled Legislature to get the job done.

He recalled how his administration struggled to deal with the \$2-billion budget gap left by the Corzine admin-

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RALLYING THE TEAM...New Jersey Governor Chris Christie speaks about government reform to Union County Republicans Tuesday night in Summit. Pictured, left to right, are: Governor Christie, his wife, Mary Pat Christie; Asw. Nancy Munoz, Asm. Jon Brannick, County GOP Chairman Phil Morin, state Sen. Tom Kean, Jr. and former Rep. Mike Ferguson.



HAVE A SEAT...Classmates from Westfield High School Class of 1988 display the bench they donated to the town for people to use when they visit downtown Westfield. Pictured, from left to right, are: Jim Gildea, Jim Mozoki, Dan Ginsburg, Michael Corso and Kevin Zippler.

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