



Horace Corbin, David Corbin and Michael Pollack for The Westfield Leader

REMEMBERING FIREFIGHTER PFEIFFER... Firefighters from across Union County, dressed in full uniform, paid tribute to fallen Westfield firefighter James Pfeiffer, last Thursday, as a funeral procession headed down North Avenue. The firefighter's casket was carried on one of the WFD's engines, as the procession headed toward Fairview Cemetery on East Broad Street. The 30-year-old firefighter died on August 22 from injuries sustained after a fall from a ladder at his home while cutting a tree limb.

Governor Chris Christie

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istration and the \$10-billion shortfall for this year. The Governor said Senate President Steve Sweeney, a Democrat from South Jersey, paraded to his office one day with news cameras in tow, to present spending bills for the Governor to sign.

According to Governor Christie, Mr. Sweeney said, "Governor, I need a little of your time." The Governor said he replied, "Steve, this won't take any time at all," whereupon the Governor wrote "vetoed" and signed his name.

Governor Christie said he told the Senate President that he wants only one thing on his desk - a balanced budget with no tax increases. Further, he noted to Mr. Sweeney that there would be no cot brought into the Governor's office to sleep on while dealing with a government shutdown - referring to the action of Governor Corzine four years ago when the state government was forced to enact an emergency shutdown. Governor Christie said he would instead go to Drumthwacket (the Governor's residence), order a pizza and turn on the Mets' game.

The Governor noted that he has traveled to multiple Republican county events around the state in the last month. He said the GOP is going to make inroads in Union County government this year during the November elections (three Freeholder seats are up for election on the all-Democratic, nine-member board); will take control of county governments this year in Bergen, Passaic and Salem Counties, and then come back to Union County next year to win back the majority.

During personal remarks, the Governor noted how surprised and happy he was to see his wife, Mary Pat, in attendance that night. He also recalled that he recently was able to take his oldest son on an event in Bergen County. While he was talking there, he received a text message from Senator Tom Kean, Jr. of Westfield, the Republican leader in the Senate, - who was in the crowd, unbeknownst to him. The message said how nice it was to see the Governor with his son. Then, Governor Christie said, he realized how similar it must have been for the Senator when his father, Thomas H. Kean, was New Jersey governor.

Governor Christie said he owes a debt of gratitude to the Republican Governors Association, as it had faith in him during his campaign for election - providing \$7.5 million in support to help offset the "enormous wealth" of former Governor Corzine. He said there are 37 governorships up for election this fall, and he has received 25 requests to campaign on behalf of Republican candidates.

He turned to his wife and assured her he was not going to 25 states. Governor Christie did say he was going to California in September to support the election efforts of GOP Gu-

bernatorial nominee Meg Whitman. While there, he said maybe he could convince some companies to relocate to New Jersey.

Regarding the Obama Administration and the trillions of dollars in debt being imposed on the nation, Governor Christie said, "We're going to put up a big stop sign this November."

The Governor praised the efforts and style of Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th), who was unable to be in attendance. He said Mr. Lance, with his knowledge of history, his ethics and style - being perfect today in Congress for New Jersey - also would have fit in well in Congress during its formative years in the 1800s. Drawing enthusiastic applause, the Governor assured the crowd that next year, Rep. Lance would not have to worry about voting for Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the House.

Governor Christie concluded by assuring the audience that he (and they) will be building the party from the bottom up, making it stronger at all levels - to best serve the people of New Jersey.

No questions were taken from the audience, and security personnel whisked the Governor from the podium to his exit through the kitchen. In preliminary remarks prior to the Governor's address, Assemblyman Jon Bramnick of Westfield said he has never seen the kitchen so clean.

Union County Republican Chairman Phil Morin of Cranford told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that the financial contributions from the event were very strong.

Moody's Drops WF's Bond Rating to Aa2

WESTFIELD - Moody's Investors Service has dropped Westfield's municipal bond rating on general obligation bonds one level to Aa2, the third-highest investment grade, according to Bloomberg News.

The move affects \$8.85 million of outstanding debt. Bloomberg reported that Westfield's surplus declined to \$2.12 million last year from \$2.85 million. The town faced a \$1-million reduction in state aid this year under Governor Chris Christie's first budget.

"The town's financial position and liquidity will remain pressured, following five consecutive operating deficits, as continued revenue weaknesses and ongoing expenditure demands challenge the town's ability to regain structurally balanced operations," Moody's wrote.

The Governor's new 2-percent cap on property-tax increases is "credit negative" for the local governments that rely on the levy, said Josellyn Yousef, who authored the town's report for Moody's.

Mountainside, Garwood Schools Open This Week

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE - Mountainside schools open for the borough's 800 schoolchildren this Tuesday, September 7, while Garwood schools open on Thursday, September 9.

Mountainside's Deerfield School will be under the leadership of new principal Kimberly Richards, as she replaces Robert Phillips, who has moved out of state. In addition, seven new teachers have been hired, mostly replacing staffers who are out on maternity leaves. Also joining the district are part-time staff, including a guidance counselor, occupational therapist, life-skills staffer and a full-time director of childcare. Daniel Saragnese has been hired as acting business administrator, replacing Roderic McLaughlin, who took a similar position with a regional district in Bergen County.

Mountainside Chief School Administrator Jeanette Baubles told *The Westfield Leader* that the district's state-aid cut, which amounted to \$780,000, represented 94 percent of the previous year's funding. She said the district has been "very blessed" because its "fiscally prudent" practices have put the K-8 district in better shape than most others in dealing with the large aid cut. However, she said next year's 2-percent cap on tax levies "is something that going to impact most school districts," including her own.

Ms. Baubles said the state-aid cut to Mountainside will likely result in the district eliminating its middle-school tennis and field hockey programs, although the boys' and girls' soccer teams will still be funded by the district. She said the district, at the recommendation of Union County Superintendent of Schools Carmen Centuolo, is reaching out to the borough's recreation department to see if it can fill in the gaps and offer any of the sports programs cut by the district. The district also eliminated its summer school and enrichment programs this summer, although the district did hold its summer camp program.

Garwood schools open on Thursday, September 9, with all students from pre-

kindergarten through eighth grade now being housed under one roof, at Lincoln School, due to the closing of Washington School. In addition, new Clark Board of Education Business Administrator John Bolil has replaced Garwood Business Administrator William Muzzio, who resigned over the summer, through a new shared-services agreement between the two districts. Garwood teenagers attend Arthur L. Johnson High School in Clark. Mr. Bolil officially joined the Clark district yesterday.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Schools open for the new school year this Tuesday, September 7, with two new principals and 55 new teachers. New teachers were hired to replace 30 retirees, with the rest due to maternity and medical leaves, as well as resignations, according to Sally Rowland, an assistant to Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes.

Students at Brunner School will be greeted by new principal Scott Bortnick, who previously served as supervisor of science for grades K-12. Sasha Slocum, a former Board of Education member and assistant principal last year at Plainfield High School, takes over as principal at McGinn School.

Other administration changes include Vincent Dionisio, supervisor of science; Diane Peneno, K-12 supervisor of special education; Ryan Miller, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) assistant principal and athletics, and Ralph Gerace, Terrill Middle School assistant principal. In addition, Joan Mast has been promoted to assistant superintendent for curriculum instruction and technology. She was previously at the supervisory level.

"We are enthusiastic about the new administrators who are coming on board to fill vacancies due to attrition," Superintendent Hayes said in an e-mail to *The Times*.

Similar to Westfield, Scotch Plains-Fanwood has installed a new student activity fee of \$100 for SPFHS students taking part in sports, music or co-curricular activities, as well for middle-school students participating in the seventh- and eighth-grade instrumental music programs.

County Solar Energy

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enue is an historic structure, thus making all three buildings ineligible for the county's program.

Westfield Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan said the UCIA and its consultant, PMK Group, Inc., inspected the roofs on the district's buildings but determined that the aging structures were not suitable for the first round of the program. She said the district was told it might be able to participate in a second round of the program in December.

"It (solar energy) is definitely one of the areas we are looking at" to cut the district's energy costs, she said. The superintendent said the district has saved more than \$1 million over the past three years on energy usage (electricity and natural gas) through the district's energy-conservation program.

She said the selection process for inclusion in the county solar program takes into consideration "the location of your roofs, the placement of your roofs and the types of roofs you have." Ms. Dolan said the district has been looking at energy-conservation companies and "investigating all [possibilities], to see what will be the best option for us."

Scotch Plains Township Manager Chris Marion, who is in his first year in the position, said the township did not have the time to conduct an inventory of its municipal buildings to see if the township fits the strict criteria for the program.

Correction

A story on page 2 of last week's newspaper regarding coverage of the Westfield Board of Education's August 24 meeting incorrectly stated that Matthew Kravetsky was dismissed as a Franklin School teacher. The story should have reported that Mr. Kravetsky had worked at Tamaques School before his rehiring last week as a second-grade teacher at Franklin School.

"My focus was really on roads and drainage, but it sounds like an interesting program," Mr. Marion said. "If it is successful this year, we would be interested in [participating] in the future."

WF Schools

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year, Superintendent Dolan said Westfield was one of only a few districts to receive a grant to pilot a financial literacy course at the high school level.

"We think that it is very important...that [students] understand the fundamentals of running their own finances," Ms. Dolan said. She said the recent mortgage crisis and housing problems, where people signed agreements they could not afford, was the basis of the pilot program.

Lorre Korecky, community relations coordinator for the district, said the district also is launching Podcasts of board of education meetings, as well as of TV-36 programs this year. WHS broadcast students will be involved in making the Podcasts.

With the current tight economic conditions, the superintendent said the district continues to be supported by both residents and community organizations.

"We are very fortunate in this town to have a community that values education and supports education. During a very difficult fiscal year, the community came out and supported the budget and we are very grateful for that," she said.

"We have so many caring groups that care about the next generation and support our students and schools in so many ways. Our goal [is] we are going to be efficient and we also are going to maintain a tradition of excellence in our schools."

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