



FUN IN THE WORLD

ENJOYING THE TROPICS...The Connelly family enjoys The Westfield Leader while vacationing at the Melia Caribe Tropical resort located on Bavaro Beach Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. Pictured are: Jack, 3, and Erin, almost 6.

IMPORTANT MISSION...Emily Smith, a Westfield High School senior, recently travelled to Asunción, Paraguay as a volunteer for Operation Smile, as part of its medical mission. She is seen here in front of the Government Palace, Palacio de los Lopez, enjoying The Westfield Leader. Ninety-seven children received surgery for cleft lip or palate during the week-long mission.

ON TOP OF THE WORLD...The Staple family holds a copy of The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times on top of the Haleakala crater in Maui during a recent trip. At 10,000 feet above sea level, it takes over an hour to drive up the mountain and is an ideal location for seeing the sunrise. Pictured, from left to right, are: Andy, Ethan and Noah. The trip was a celebration of Ethan's bar mitzvah, which occurred a week earlier at Temple Emanu-El in Westfield.

### Cranford Committee Unveils Birchwood Ordinance

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader
CRANFORD - The township committee, under protest, voted on Tuesday to introduce a court-ordered ordinance that will formally permit the Birchwood Avenue property to include multi-family affordable housing. The ordinance, which will be voted on after a public hearing on Tuesday, May 22, is part of the township's compliance with a state Superior Court Judge's December order allowing Paramus-based S. Hekemian Group, which owns the property, to move forward with its plans to build 360 housing units. Township Attorney Phil Morin said at the committee's meeting this week that the ordinance was being introduced "under protest," a formal designation allowing town governments "saddled" with what he said were "adverse" affordable-housing obligations to legally register their objections. The four township committee members in attendance - Mayor David Robinson was absent - did not speak in detail about the ordinance, with Commissioners Lisa Aduabato Nesi and Edward O'Malley both simply voting to approve the ordinance's introduction "under protest." Deputy Mayor Andis Kalnins, when asked for his vote, said, "Unfortunately, yes." Commissioner Kevin Campbell voted for its introduction, but said he had "serious doubts" if the ordinance is in compliance with the goals of the municipal land use laws. The planning board early next month is set to adopt similar changes to the township master plan - again, under a court order, and again, according to Mr. Morin, under protest. He said that once the township committee formally passes the ordinance on Tuesday, May 22, the court would issue a formal judgment of compliance. Then, he said, the township can file an appeal of the court's decision. In the meantime, the township will continue to actively oppose Hekemian's permit applications with the state Department of Environmental

Protection based on what Mr. Morin said were a "multitude of issues," including flooding impact issues. Work continues on the township's \$33.7-million budget for 2012, and Deputy Mayor Kalnins said that at the committee's Tuesday, May 8 meeting, several amendments will be offered, including one to add a new line of revenue from the Cranford Crossing PILOT (Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes) program that "will ease the tax burden" a bit. He said some added appropriations would be necessary this year for renovations to the lower level of the storm-damaged municipal building. Mr. Kalnins also said that for the first time since 2008, township supervisors would receive a salary increase of 2 percent. The \$33.7-million spending plan was introduced two weeks ago, but a formal public hearing and vote will not occur until June to allow the governing body time to make changes and to await final state aid figures. The public hearing and vote on the ordinance regulating the feeding of wildlife on public and private property will be held at the committee's May 8 meeting. Two weeks ago, the committee approved an amendment to address concerns that had been raised about the scope of the proposed restrictions, with some residents worrying that even the feeding of birds would result in penalties. In other matters, Commissioner O'Malley said last Saturday's town-wide river cleanup was "widely attended and nicely supported." He said some 150 volunteers helped clear nearly the entire river, and noted that another cleanup is set for the fall. At the start of the one-hour meeting, Commissioner O'Malley presented certificates to two local businesses - Life-line Tech Solutions and Dinner In A Pinch - for their efforts at adopting environmentally-sustainable practices as part of the local Go Green initiative. Members of Girl Scout Troop No. 40894 led the committee in the salute to the flag.

### Westfield Board of Ed

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
cator Frank Uveges with the Philhower Award for outstanding work done with students. It was announced that Mr. Uveges is an elementary school counselor for both the Wilson and Tamaques Elementary School. It was noted that the business portion of the meeting will immediately follow in the Wilson School auditorium. In addition, it was reported that next week's meeting will include further discussion of adding the cost of a new \$1.5-million turf field onto the proposed \$13.6-million bond referendum for September 2012. It was also reported that the discussion will include a review of proposed sites for the new turf field in addition to lighting concerns and possible spectator seating. Either Edison or Roosevelt Intermediate Schools are being considered for the turf field. Board President Richard Mattessich noted that, "the board welcomes public input on the issue and intends to vote on it during the May 1 meeting." It was also announced that on Tuesday, May 15, at 8 p.m., the board of education is planning to discuss and vote on a proposed parking and safety solution jointly formulated by the BOE and the Westfield Town Council during the April 18 Westfield High School and Edison School Parking meeting (see story on front page). The meeting was held with the public last week to review and receive input on a safe parking plan for certain areas on and around the Westfield High School and Edison School. The plan can be reviewed from the district's homepage www.westfieldnj12.org under the important message column.



### Freeholders Intro. \$483 Mil. Budget, \$11.9-Mil. Tax Hike

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader
COUNTY - The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders introduced a \$483-million budget last Thursday with \$303 million to be raised in county taxes, an increase of \$11.9 million over last year. The freeholders are scheduled to vote to adopt the budget following a public hearing on Thursday, May 31. As previously reported, in an effort to close a \$36-million budget hole, the county has sent out layoff notices to 280 employees, amounting to almost 10 percent of the county workforce. In addition, program cutbacks, including MusicFest, the elimination of the Division of Consumer Affairs have been approved. In addition, privatization for some or all operations at Rumlens Specialized Hospital and the Watchung Stables are being considered, officials have said. While County Manager Al Faella said the average tax increase in the county will be \$93, Westfield homeowners will see an average increase of \$200, Scotch Plains \$170, Fanwood \$121, Cranford \$132, Garwood \$112 and Mountainside \$204. "This was one of the most difficult fiscal years in recent history of the county," Freeholder Fiscal Affairs Committee Chairman Dan Sullivan said. "This has been a very long and painstaking process, with department directors going over their budgets numerous times, being asked to make deductions on deductions." "Our goal has been achieved in presenting a balanced budget that will put the county in a stronger position [for] whatever budget challenges may be ahead," Mr. Sullivan said. During public comments, Summit Councilman Dave Bomgaars said county taxes in the city are going up 11.2 percent this year, compared to 0.1 percent for the school tax and 0.4 percent for the municipal tax. The county open space is going up 3.1 percent in the city. He said county taxes in Summit are increasing by \$3 million to \$30.8 million. "I believe that is the second-highest year-to-year increase on a community in the history of Union County," Mr. Bomgaars said. He urged the county to cut costs in "non-essential areas." "The residents of Summit pay more over to the county for your government than they do to our own municipal government," Mr. Bomgaars said. "We give \$5 million more to you folks than we keep to run the City of Summit." When spending outside of the state's 2-percent cap is factored, Bruce Paterson of Garwood said, county taxes are going up 4.2 percent in the borough. He also said he was disappointed that the county did not hold open budget meetings this year, as in past years. Freeholder Chairman Al Mirabella said meetings were conducted in private as personnel matters were being discussed concerning the planned layoffs. "Garwood's taxes are going up 7 percent. I think this is wrong," Mr. Paterson said. "I believe you guys are lost financially." He said it was unfortunate the county was "cutting essential services." "I think the blame is on all of you because you don't know what you're doing up here," Mr. Paterson said. "One thing that I find very sad is that you are cutting corrections officers," he added, citing an incident several years ago when two inmates from the county jail escaped, and expressing concern about a public-safety risk. Jim Buettner of Cranford said the budget contains a lot of "wishes, needs and wants that I think a lot of the taxpayers could actually live without." He also questioned whether construction of new ice skating center at Oak Ridge Park, still in the planning stages, and the banquet center/clubhouse under construction at Galloping Hill Golf Course, are essential services that need to be in the budget. He also suggested the county join the state health plan to save money. The county's health insurance premiums are up \$6.7 million to \$45.5 million. In other business, County Counsel Robert Barry said an ordinance approved by the freeholders on Thursday contains a number of changes, including removing the requirement for county residency for



### Garwood Sets Salary Review, Hears Tax Complaints

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader
GARWOOD - The borough council unanimously voted Tuesday to approve a resolution to establish a compensation review procedure for the purposes of determining salaries and wages for full-time employees of the borough who are not the members of any employee bargaining unit, are not afforded compensation protection by law, and whose compensation is solely with the discretion of the mayor and council. Under the resolution, each department head within police, public works and administration are charged with the responsibility for the annual evaluation of their respective employees' performance and recommending appropriate salary adjustments. The mayor and council would have the final vote in determining the percentage increase in compensation. Three residents of The Pointe, a newly built condominium complex located along North Avenue in the borough, voiced their opposition to The Pointe residents paying what they said is double the taxes than the average taxpayer in the borough. Christine Spear, a resident of The Pointe, said, "I, too, would like to express my displeasure of the unfair taxes imposed on us for services we do not receive - snow removal in particular is one example. We are paying twice through our taxes and again because we are required to have private snow removal." The borough is currently in litigation with The Pointe about the costs associated with snow removal and other related services. Carl Teschke, who lives with his wife, Olga, at The Pointe, said, "We have meetings with upwards of 60 to 65 people - every meeting you hear about taxes, taxes, taxes. We have about 44 units over there, and eight are paying about \$14,000 [as] they have larger units, the rest of us we're paying \$12,000. We have a lot of seniors over there, and we have super seniors. They are not working people over there. ... You guys got jobs and income and I dare say if I ask you, none of you are paying \$12,000, \$14,000 for your taxes. I think you ought to give us consideration, it is just not fair." Resident Tom Pedas, who spoke at the last borough meeting, also spoke up again, asking that taxes for The Pointe residents be reduced by half. Resident Bruce Paterson told The Westfield Leader that he filed a notification with the borough clerk on Tuesday to begin a recall petition for Councilman

### Mountainside BOE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
to pre-audit all of my work." Mr. Saragnese continued, "I've rearranged my time so I'm here in the district the maximum amount of time the last two weeks in June so I can finish up appropriately. I will be returning to the district when Mr. Morrison indicates that he is ready to finalize the audit [in the fall]." The board then discussed the meeting schedule for the next several months. The date for the board's next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, May 15, and after much deliberation, the board's annual retreat for discussing district goals was tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, June 6. The board said its retreat is open to the public for observation and it will commence at 6:30 p.m. When it is finally approved, the board's meeting schedule will be updated on the district's website link, http://www.mountainsideschools.org/index.php/boe/meetings. During the committee reports portion of the meeting, Christopher Minks, chairman of the BOE's personnel/negotiations committee, commented on the ongoing contract negotiations between the district and the MEA. "We're eager to continue good faith negotiations with the MEA, and while the board has two offers which include financial terms, and raises for teachers and staff that are both fair, affordable, and in our belief, generous, to our teachers and staff, the key is affordable. This board will not make an offer that we cannot afford." Mr. Minks stated that the board has not yet received a response from the MEA for either offer and that the next step in the negotiations will include a fact finder, who will assist in the negotiations. In other news, the Ms. Lubarsky announced that three students from the district were recognized by the AAA NJ Automobile Club and Foundation "for safety and education for their achievement in their traffic safety poster program." In the kindergarten category, Beechwood student Jack Wargaski was awarded first place while another Beechwood student, Anthony Zacieracha, was awarded second place. In the second grade category, Beechwood student Joe DiCosmo was awarded third place. The next BOE meeting open to the public is scheduled for Tuesday, May 15, at 7:30 p.m., at Beechwood School's Susan O. Collier Media Center.

STAR BRIGHT...Children's Specialized Friends, previously known as the Children's Specialized Hospital Auxiliary, staged "Stepping Out with CSH Stars" on Saturday night at the Gran Centurions in Clark. Professional Dance Studio 22 in Mountainside and Paragon Ballroom in Roselle Park generously donated their time and talents, making it an exciting time for the large crowd of supporters.



Pictured, left to right, photo 1: Jennifer Vestal (professional) and the winners Miss New Jersey, Katharyn Nicolle, and Nikita Malakhov (professional); photo 2: Event Chairwoman Gail Sloan, standing, and judges Carol Kearney, Anthony Marolda and Gene Jannotti; photo 3, Event Assistants Mary Ann Anthony, Susan Schwarz, Kathryn Spada, Susan Doherty and Carolyn Cordeiro. Posing are Joan and John Blake. Carol Kearney won the prize for the brightest shoes, posing with Mr. Jannotti.