

Letters to the Editor

Tour of Notable Homes Received Tremendous Support, Thank You

On behalf of the Friends of the New Jersey Festival Orchestra (NJFO), I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire community for their tremendous support of our annual *Tour of Notable Homes* held on May 9th. We have hosted this tour for more than 30 years and Westfield and the surrounding communities continue to enthusiastically attend the Friend's primary fundraiser of the year in support of the New Jersey Festival Orchestra, the region's premier, fully professional orchestra.

We want to particularly thank our amazing homeowners - The Ceramis, the Kesslers, The Sherrys and The Vincentsens - who graciously allowed us to showcase their "notable" homes

as well as the many local merchants and vendors who underwrote our tour or donated key services or products to help make this a record breaking year for the Friends. Of course, we are also deeply grateful to the dozens of volunteers, both in our organization and in the community, who gave of their time, energy and talents to ensure that all of our visitors could enjoy a fun-filled and memorable day.

Again, the Friends of NJFO thank you for being a friend and for helping us keep world-class music alive and thriving in our community.

Alicia Barker Westfield
President, Friends of NJFO

Universities and Media Are Incubators Of Pol. Correctness, Thought Control

Historical writings, regardless of time and place, are replete with lamentations that societies are falling apart. Fueled by technology, there is little doubt that in America such concerns are more justified than ever. The traditional family unit is falling apart. Our future human capital, children, are coddled while those of ISIS are, beginning at age 10, learning to behead infidels. The sexual revolution, largely unchallenged, is broadly destabilizing. We're, with little resistance, surrendering our individual freedom to government. Thought and speech control have now become acceptable. Voices supporting globalism to replace nationalism and our freedom are gaining momentum. The virtual world, instead of nature's one, is being passionately embraced and will soon have us embracing irresistible, programmed robotic sweethearts. Christianity and Judeo Christian values, cornerstones of the success of America, are losing ground to secularism. Our universities and media are educational incubators of political correctness which, unmasked, is nothing more than the push to control the behavior of individuals, families and institutions. The list is long.

We have crossed the threshold into a revolutionary, disruptive and seemingly brakeless new world, the overall good and bad of which are just too big to see, though a Huxley-Orwell type destiny is certainly possible. For these reasons, we urgently need highly visible national leaders who can guide us through these tumultuous times. Cicero wrote, and Machiavelli agreed, that in troubled times peoples are eagerly receptive to the messages of leaders whom they trust. Pope Francis is such an example; but he stands alone. Where, then, are the others and why are they hiding? The forces propelling the aforementioned movements are formidable and those leaders who oppose them would, because of our superb investigative technology, be mercilessly vetted for his real or insinuated sins. To date, it appears that men are greater sinners than women. Thus, if I were to run for mayor of Westfield-fear not, Mayor Skibitsky it would then be discovered that I, in the fourth grade in a crowded cloak-

room, forcibly kissed the class snob, Mary Ellen, in order to teach her a lesson and take her a notch or two down from her pedestal. I was then brought before the principal, reprimanded and almost suspended. This being discovered, current forces would label me as a man who began abusing women as a child which accusations would destabilize my personal life and diminishing my chances to become mayor- just because of a single kiss. (For the record, I have kissed other women since).

Despite these formidable barriers, history teaches that difficult times are the fodder for the emergence of great leaders. I perceive that they will soon arrive and learn how to use their sins- and we are all sinners- to their strategic advantage with dynamic and highly persuasive impact. It requires the type of courage which Solzhenitsyn and President Reagan alluded to.

For encouragement, I would recommend that they view the Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan movie where Jane is kidnapped by the baddies and he, bestriding his elephant, trumpets out a resounding Umgowa calling on Cheetah and the other jungle animals to join him as he plunges forward into the jungle, fearless of the dangers that await him, to save the life of his beloved wife.

Stephen DeFelice Westfield

Newspaper Commentary

School Systems in the State Have Neutered 2% Cap with Bonded Debt

Only two-and-a-half years after Westfield voters passed a \$13.6-million bond referendum to replace roofs on all of the town's 12 district school buildings including the administration building on Elm Street, the board of education is at it again, this time proposing a \$9-million referendum to make needed repairs at its schools. This would be the sixth bond referendum placed before voters in the past 15 years.

At the May 19th school board meeting, Mitch Slater, who sits on the board's finance committee, indicated that over the next two years a number of major repairs are necessary such as replacing boilers and alarm systems, as well as renovations.

The district is claiming the state's 2-percent cap makes it impossible for the district to accomplish all the work that needs to get done.

First off, there is no 2-percent cap, as exemptions such as capital projects, health insurance and pensions and emergencies allow counties and local governments to exceed the cap. Remember, every time a bond is passed it increases the local school tax for the life of the bond, which is typically between 10 and 20 years.

Back in December of 1998, residents supported an \$11.7-million bond referendum to provide 15 new classrooms in two schools, to cable classrooms and libraries for technology and to perform capital improvements throughout the district, including bringing lavatories into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), replacing floors and expanding the Wilson School library.

The 1998 bond passed 2,800 to 1,033 in a vote that drew 19 percent of eligible voters to the polls.

In 2000, 29 percent of eligible voters approved a \$21-million bond to fund construction at Westfield High School and Kehler Stadium. The 2000 bond made possible a 55,000-square-foot addition to the Westfield High School (WHS) science wing as well as general renovations to the WHS building.

In December of 2004, Westfield voters approved a \$1.4-million bond referendum to install a new artificial turf field and running track at Kehler Stadium. The referendum passed by

75 votes - 1,371 to 1,298 - in a vote that brought out 2,667 residents (a 13-percent turnout). The bond aimed to make Kehler Stadium a year-round facility and to increase its possible uses from football and state tournament soccer to allow girls' and boys' soccer and lacrosse, field hockey and town recreation leagues to use the field.

The 2004 bond was to be paid off over a 10-year period, costing the average Westfield family approximately \$18 per year.

In January 2007 voters passed a \$9.4-million bond to renovate the Lincoln School building into an early childhood development center whereby pre-school and kindergarten classes would be centrally located. The bond, which passed by a vote tally of 2,763 votes for and 2,144 votes against, increased property taxes \$80 a year for the average assessed home in town.

And most recently, in December of 2012, voters passed a \$13.6-million bond for replacement of roofs at Westfield schools. That bond came just three months after voters rejected a \$17-million bond referendum that, in addition to the roofs, included \$3.5 million for a lighted turf soccer field.

In our view, the school board is using bonding as a way to get around the 2 percent cap. Money needs to be put aside each year to fund maintenance and replacements, i.e. roofs and boilers. The budget should not be all salaries, wages and benefits.

The 2-percent cap program included removing the right of taxpayers to vote on budgets. It seems to be having the opposite effect - schools spend whatever they want and voters seem to have no say. This is an issue needing to be addressed by all towns in the state.



HAPPY...Dunellen musician/artist Ricky Syers brought his handmade marionettes to the Chelsea at Fanwood on May 26th. Mr. Syers' marionettes have appeared in television commercials for Pizza Hut and McDonald's in Norway.

Thank You For Caring

I'd like to thank all of the great volunteers, members of our Post 3 Legion Family (A.L.S.A.L. AUXL), our friends at the Knights of Columbus, VFW, Westfield Troop 73 and Mountaineer Boy Scout troops, for a job well done in working together to place 4,182 flags on our veterans' graves at Fairview Cemetery in Westfield.

You took the time to pay tribute to friends, family members and people you never knew, who have fought in American wars so we could live in freedom.

I look forward to you all volunteering your time and talent next year. Thanks again for a job well done.

Katherine Wening
American Legion Post 3 Westfield

Deadlines

General News - Friday 4pm
Weekend Sports - Monday 12pm
Classifieds - Tuesday 12pm
Ad Reservation - Friday 4pm
Ad Submittal - Monday 12pm

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