

The Westfield Leader The Scotch Plains - Fanwood TIMES Since 1959

Legal Newspaper for the County of Union, New Jersey and for Westfield, Mountainside, Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Cranford and Garwood

Members of: New Jersey Press Association • National Newspaper Association • Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce Scotch Plains Business & Professional Association • Fanwood Business & Professional Association

Periodicals - Postage Paid at Rahway, New Jersey P.O. Box 250 • 251 North Avenue, Westfield, N.J. 07091

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the offices of the newspapers at P. O. Box 250, Westfield, New Jersey 07091

Published every Thursday by Watchung Communications, Inc.

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

One-year - \$36 • Two-year - \$68 • Three-year - \$99

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It Is Nice to See Renewed Interest In Serving on Local School Boards

Last week candidates filed for seats on local school boards throughout Union County and the state. Locally, the most competitive races are in Westfield, where five candidates are seeking three seats and two candidates are vying for an unexpired seat; Cranford, where six candidates are seeking three seats; Garwood, with six candidates for three seats, and two candidates pursuing one Fanwood seat on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education.

One interesting race appears to be in Linden, where two slates of three candidates each are facing off. One is running under the slogan "Moral Fiscal Responsibility" while the other is using the slogan "Education Not Politics." Nine candidates each are running in Plainfield and Union for three board seats in each of those towns.

We are happy to see a renewed interest among local residents wanting to serve on their school boards. We hope that Mountainside residents will feel inspired to seek seats on the borough's school board in the years to come, as only two candidates, both incumbents, filed by the July 29 deadline. Two incumbents also are running unopposed for the open seats representing Scotch Plains on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education.

Locally, we hope candidates comment on the ever increasing school budgets, which are driving up property taxes. Infrastructure improvements, including security upgrades, are another important issue.

School boards are one of the best ways to serve one's community. Members have the opportunity to render decisions on matters ranging from new or changed curriculum to the hiring of teachers and administrators. Boards of education establish policies and regulations by which their local schools are governed.

Every school board member brings his or her own personal and professional experience to the school board. In the end, the board looks to ensure that the student body of its district as a whole excels academically. Board members also are involved in negotiating teacher contracts, crafting budgets and overseeing school construction projects.

Local school boards were given the option to move their school elections from April to November. Here in Union County, all school districts have moved elections to November except Plainfield, which initially did switch to November before moving elections back to April.

We invite candidates to reach out to residents by submitting issue-oriented letters to editor@goleader.com. Political endorsements will not be published in the newspaper, but will be published at no cost in our online version which subscribers can download at www.goleader.com. Those candidates or their supporters who would like to have an endorsement in the printed newspaper can utilize our paid bulletin board service at https://www.goleader.com/form/bulletin.htm.

Fed. Funding Renewal Broadens Horizons For Autism Community

Federal legislation extending funding for programs benefiting youth and adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) was approved by the House late last month and has been forwarded to the Senate, where a companion bill is now before lawmakers. The Autism Cares Act of 2019 authorizes for five years, spanning 2020 through 2024, funds totaling \$1.8 billion to support federal research, education and intervention programs serving those with ASD.

Funds will be directed to programs implemented through the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Resources and Services Administration, as cited on the website of the bill's lead sponsor, Congressman Chris Smith (R), representing New Jersey's 4th District. Senator Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) is chief sponsor of the Senate bill. Rep. Smith authored the original legislation, adopted in 2000, to form what his website, chrissmith.house.gov, defines as a "comprehensive federal response to combat autism."

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) defines ASD as "a developmental disorder that affects communication and behavior," with the types and severity of symptoms varying greatly among people who have it. Renewed bipartisan support for programs addressing ASD will no doubt resonate strongly throughout New Jersey, where 1 in 34 children are impacted by the condition, according to Congressman Smith's website. It notes this statistic is "the highest rate in the country."

Rep. Smith said the bill "powerfully supports and pursues durable remedies and effective interventions" for youngsters with autism spectrum disorder. The legislation also is aimed at improving quality of life for

adults with autism, who he said frequently are "misdiagnosed, under-diagnosed and overlooked," factors that can create hurdles in obtaining housing, employment and health care.

Our communities have long been active in advancing autism awareness and raising funds related to this condition that affects so many individuals and families. Perhaps the most high-profile local effort has been the annual "Rockin' for Autism" festival spearheaded by Fanwood teen Mallory Banks since 2016. The popular event, featuring music, food and activities, has raised thousands of dollars since its inception on behalf of the nonprofit Autism New Jersey.

Area residents, business professionals and law enforcement also have been regularly involved in championing autism awareness for many years through their collective support of organizations and activities dedicated to the cause. Among them is the North/Central New Jersey Walk Now for Autism Speaks event held at Cranford's Nomahegan Park; the Westfield Police Department's Autism Family Day, and the award-winning "Libraries and Autism: We're Connected." Created more than a decade ago by Fanwood Memorial Library Director Dan Weiss and the late Meg Kolaya, former director of the Scotch Plains Public Library, "We're Connected" helps library staff to provide optimal experiences for families with a loved one on the autism spectrum.

We believe the renewed federal funding will ultimately lead to greater understanding of all aspects of the autism spectrum, along with effective intervention strategies and tools for educating the general public on this condition. In our opinion, all of these elements will help those diagnosed with autism to reach their full potential.

Letters to the Editor

Garwood Mayor Todisco Invites Residents to August 10 Breakfast

All Garwood residents are welcome to attend the next "Breakfast with the Mayor" event on Saturday, August 10, from 10 a.m. to noon, at Borough Hall, 403 South Avenue. I am pleased to announce that three former Garwood mayors will join me, including George Casabona (1962-1964), Dennis McCarthy (2003-2010) and Patricia Quattrocchi (2011-2014).

Please drop by to ask questions about past and present local topics, to share your ideas, or to simply

say hello. This free event includes bagels, donuts, coffee and juice.

I believe in a strong, open line of communication between Garwood's residents and their government. I am always available by email at STodisco@garwood.org or phone at (908) 377-7890, if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas you would like to share with me. Hope to see you on August 10!

Sara Todisco Garwood Mayor

The Value In A Cup Of Coffee

"I would like to get downtown Westfield to be more like it was when I was growing up here."

I was told: "you can't say that if you want to win, it's not the same Westfield."

What? All I have ever wanted to do was race cars. At 15, I went looking for a job, back when gas stations repaired cars. My plan was to get a job, buy a car and work on it till I was old enough to drive. So, I went to each station and explained about my mechanical ability and motivation. All offered me a job at \$3.75 an hour except one that offered \$3.50. I went back to my \$3.50 offer with the intention of convincing the owner to offer me the additional 25 cents. What I didn't expect was his reply "wouldn't it be worth 25 cents to learn how to deal with people?" delivered from the biggest smile you've ever seen. "Think about it and get back to me."

I could not shake those words. Looking back on it, he was challenging me to invest in myself. The next afternoon I accepted my \$3.50 an hour job at Romeo's Gulf. From the day I started I began to learn. I watched how Russell would make each customer feel at ease and assure them he would take care of their car. He was a great business owner; he taught me to listen, to be kind and to realize how important helping these families was. He would fix people's cars that couldn't afford the repair and let them pay over time. He understood what community meant and how his business was an

important part of that community.

The best lesson: always have a pot of coffee brewing. Russell made the worst coffee, but that didn't stop the town fathers stopping for a cup. Coffee and discussions that covered everything: economy, government, kids, but the worst were the tragedies. The sadness that affects every town as time passes: the loss of a family member or a loved one, a car crash, sickness. Discussion was the main ingredient stirred in with the cream and sugar. Questions, how it occurred and how the community might support those in need. I listened and learned from the people of Downtown Westfield how to become a better man. They taught me it was never about me, it was always about us as a community.

Time after time watching how this town rallies to help its own, someone's hospital bills, cleaning a yard or just a helping hand, Westfield is a great town. Differences of opinion was always embraced at Romeo's Gulf. So, I will wish you and your families some of the kindness, wisdom and love this town gave me growing up. Westfield, please hold on to the kind soul this town has always had, by stirring in a little community in your next cup of coffee.

I became a licensed NASCAR driver in 1993. Thanks Russell, best .25 cents ever spent.

Rick Bodmer Westfield Council Candidate Vote for Bodmer, Ward 2

I Guarantee That A Reusable/Recyclable Lid Exists For Cranford

I must take exception to The Westfield Leader commentary with the headline "Cranford Ban on Plastics is Questionable at Best." It may not be perfect, it does not go far enough, but it is a start. A start forced upon New Jersey municipalities because of the year-long failure of Senator Robert Smith (the lead representative on the statewide plastics ban), Governor Murphy (who vetoed the previous bill), environmental groups and retailers to reach a satisfactory compromise on statewide legislation.

The commentary does a decent job explaining why single-use plastics must be banned, so I will not add to that. Let's focus on the perceived shortcomings. If the need for a lid on coffee cups is important from a safety perspective, the bill can exempt them. Or, Cranford should look to other states where they have already been banned to see how that issue has been resolved.

One should also not underestimate plastic manufacturers. I will guarantee that a reusable/recyclable lid already exists, and will be marched out upon the ban of existing lids. Just like plastic water companies reduced the amount of plastic in their bottles, and auto manufacturers suddenly increased gas mileage efficiency when required.

The commentary mentions potential issues with specific retailers. Are you aware that Dairy Queen already uses lids with recyclable ones on it? Why can't other retailers? Dunkin' Donuts sells reusable cups, but doesn't let customers refill them in their stores. Doesn't seem like a positive recycling policy.

Starbucks does allow reusable cups to be refilled. Why doesn't DD? Concerned about customers having to buy a reusable cup? How about reusing your own from home? My wife and I don't buy plastic water, we reuse metal containers from home. Tough to drink a Slurpee without a straw? How about taking a metal straw? Truly one of life's greatest challenges. My wife and I keep reusable containers in our car for when we take restaurant "doggie bags" so that we don't take Styrofoam or any container. We take metal utensils with us in our daily lunch bags so we don't use plastic utensils.

The commentary made a pitch for significantly increasing littering fees. Do we really want police to spend their time chasing litterers? Many years ago, the State of NJ had a choice to either place a returnable deposit on bottles/cans or charge a user fee on manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors that produce litter generating products. The state chose the user fee, and we taxpayers are paying that user fee every time

we purchase a disposable package.

So, we pay for an anti-litter program that towns sometimes get back, but our litter production has not decreased. I supported the deposit bill, which would have hit consumers directly in their pockets when they chose not to return the container for the deposit. It would also have provided an incentive for others to pick up the litter and get money back. Increasing littering fees is not the answer. Making people pay for potential litter is.

I support Cranford's initiative. I know that my hometown of Garwood is looking at this policy, as well as New York City's and Connecticut's laws while our state legislators continue to fail to bring forth legislation. I await a statewide ban on single-use plastics - but we can't wait for them to act.

Bill Nierstedt Garwood



ABCDICTIONOPQRSTDECEPTIONUVWXYZ If you can guess one correctly - good guess. If you get two - well-read individual. If you get three - word expert. If you get all four - You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.

Answers to last week's arcane words.

- 1. Mazama - The Rocky Mountain goat
2. Stercoraceous - Having the nature of feces
3. Jacare - A Brazilian alligator
4. Arctation - Contraction of a natural opening

ECHINODERMATOUS
1. Having the characteristics of spines
2. Covered with warts or moles
3. Ossified; bony
4. Leathery or toughened outer surface

VARAN
1. A Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American unit of linear measure
2. The monitor lizard
3. A small pit or dent in the skin
4. A scar

IRIDEREMIA
1. Total absence of sunlight
2. Absence of pigment in the skin
3. Partial or total absence of the iris
4. Discontent

TROIKA
1. An astringent or repellent
2. A short, thick stick of wood used as a weapon
3. A hut built on stilts by the Tartars
4. A carriage drawn by three horses abreast

Policy on Political Endorsements

The newspaper will publish political endorsements in its online media, available with download of the newspaper at www.goleader.com. Submittals should be emailed to editor@goleader.com.

Those who would like their political endorsements also published in the printed newspaper can do so by using the paid service at https://www.goleader.com/form/bulletin.htm.

We publish letters to the editor in the printed newspaper on issues of importance to our readers at the discretion of the editors.

Letters to the Editor

The Deadline is Monday 9 AM for publication on the coming Thursday. The size limit is 200-500 words.

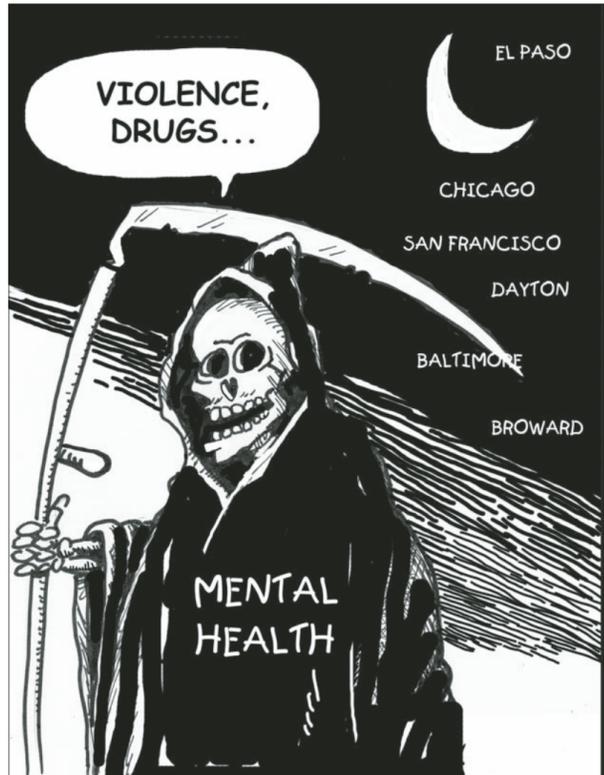


Table with 3 columns: State LD-21, State LD-22, and 7th Congressional District. Lists representatives and their contact information for various districts.

