

The Westfield Leader
— Established 1890 —
The Official Newspaper of the Town of Westfield and the County of Union
Member of:
New Jersey Press Association
National Newspaper Association
Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce
Periodicals - Postage Paid at Westfield, New Jersey
P.O. Box 250 • 50 Elm Street
Westfield, N.J. 07091
Tele: (908) 232-4407 • E-mail: press@goleader.com • Web: www.goleader.com • Fax: (908) 232-0473
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the offices of the newspapers at P. O. Box 250, Westfield, New Jersey 07091

THE TIMES of Scotch Plains - Fanwood
— Established 1959 —
Official Newspaper of the Borough of Fanwood and the Township of Scotch Plains
Member of:
New Jersey Press Association
National Newspaper Association
Scotch Plains Business & Professional Association
Periodicals - Postage Paid at Scotch Plains, New Jersey
P. O. Box 368 • 1906 Bartle Avenue
Scotch Plains, N.J. 07076

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE
One-year subscription in county - \$20 • Out-of-county - \$24 • One-year college (September to May) - \$16

POPCORN™
Doug's First Movie:
And It Shows
By Michael S. Goldberger



One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent

THE word
SLEUTHS
BY JO & JOHN JACOBSON

Effort to Curb Influence of Big Money In Politics Needs Local, County Support

The more money you can raise the better your chances are of winning an election. So is the world of politics as we head into the 21st century. In an effort to curb the influence big money contributors have on government, a state-wide watch group has built a "Citizens Army" to begin to reform government starting at the local level. It seems that they have a good cause...a Common Cause, if you will.

The Citizens Army is under the guise of Common Cause New Jersey, the Garden State's grass-roots version of the national group which started in 1970. Common Cause's aim is to reclaim government from elected officials holding national office right down to the state, county, municipal and school board level, who end up answering the whims of their financial contributors.

Although the big spending occurs on the national scene, the Citizen Army has been traveling around the state in an effort to gain support of their efforts through the passage of local ordinances. These laws restrict political fundraising activities from public facilities, whether it be the Town Hall or public schools, as well as the use of public building equipment such as fax machines and computers.

Common Cause's efforts, which have received victories through the passage of ordinances in a number of communities including Metuchen, Morristown, East Brunswick, Edison and Sayreville, has now arrived in Union County. Two weeks ago, the Westfield Town Council became the first municipality in Union County to enact a "Clean Government" ordinance.

Under the Westfield ordinance, all soliciting for funds or the acceptance of political contributions are prohibited on public property. Also, fundraising efforts may not include the use of municipal government telephones, fax machines, postage machines or computers, the use of Town of Westfield property or of vehicles owned by the town.

Any town employee or elected official who observes fundraising efforts occurring on town property is responsible for reporting such occurrences to the Town Clerk. In the same regard, a employee who

reports such activity may not be dismissed, reprimanded or retaliated against for complying with the rules of the ordinance.

Violators of the new ordinance face a maximum of 90 days in jail and a fine up to \$1,000.

We believe that any effort to reform campaign financing must start at the municipal level and work its way up. The sad part of government today is that if you don't have the ability to raise millions of dollars, you're chances for the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives is doubtful.

In addition to those restrictions included in the Westfield ordinance, Common Cause supports stiffer competition for government construction and professional service contracts, limiting contributions from companies doing business with government, and ending the practice of officials moving from elected office to companies they helped regulate.

At the local level, both political parties must hold several fundraisers each year not to mention the individual candidates' cocktail parties in an effort to raise funds to pay for direct mail pieces, newspaper ads, etc.

We would like to see other towns as well as the Union County Freeholder Board pass "Clean Government" themed ordinances that set a strong ethical standard for current and future elected officials to follow.

One of our concerns is that volunteers on campaigns wind up getting government jobs through their campaign efforts. Being involved in a campaign should be a means of actively participating in the political process and not a way to gain government jobs. In addition, big contributors of campaigns should not be receiving jobs and/or contracts for their efforts.

We support Common Cause's efforts to clean up the money chase in government today. Our elected officials are answerable to all their constituents not just the big campaign contributors of the Political Action Committees, or PACs.

America needs to once again become, "A country for the people and by the people."

2 popcorns
Doug Funnie is a good boy — as fine and upstanding a cartoon character as has ever graced an animated feature. And likable? He's loaded with likability. The forthcoming young lad has been winning over the younger set ever since his half-hour sitcom first debuted on Nickelodeon in 1991 (Disney has since bought the young worrywart and moved him to ABC).

A veritable Everykid, you imagine he's what an adolescent Henry Fonda might look like if he were a cartoon character. The spirit of American youth, he picks up where Andy Hardy and Archie left off. A thoughtful moralist and hopeless romantic, Doug interestingly proves that responsible behavior and the joys of childhood aren't mutually exclusive entities.

And just how the good-hearted pre-teen traverses that temptation-ridden tightrope holds the key to his charm. Hence, it makes you feel like an ogre not to give his first movie a real good review.

Problem is, screenwriter Ken Scarborough spreads creator Jim Jenkins's humorous young lad too thin in his first feature-length foray. Director Maurice Joyce, while creating a good-natured atmosphere for his kiddie hijinks, doesn't manage to duplicate the slight edge that distinguishes the tighter, half-hour show.

And while it's nice to see the whole gang, not taking advantage of the extra 57 minutes to expand on their quirky personalities is a mistake. Certainly the filmmakers must know that the charm of "Doug," the series, is in its characterizations and not its story lines.

Nonetheless, that's where the emphasis is placed.

The muckraking plot is sure to at least gain the approval, if not the laughter, of adult liberals and ecologists alike. Whether their children will laugh with any regularity at this primer for the social reformers of tomorrow is another matter. And while not exactly a junior rendition of *The Usual Suspects*, the various nuances of the heroic story expect a lot of their young viewers.

When a lake that's been polluted by the villainous Bluffco Industries spits out a cute sea monster, Doug and his best friend, Skeeter, hatch plans to aggrandize themselves. With the Valentine's Dance approaching, the title character figures his cachet as a monster discov-

erer will certainly win him a date with the apple of his pre-adolescent eye, the comely Patti Mayonnaise.

Meanwhile, Doug and Skeeter become enamored of the buck-toothed creature and name him Herman Melville after he starts chomping on a volume of "Moby Dick."

About to announce his find, Doug learns that major league impediments stand in his way. Bluffington's richest citizen and the president of Bluffco, Bill Bluff, has received word of his and Skeeter's discovery. The industrial giant is determined to quash any news about pollution and kidnap the monster.

Little children may find it funny when, to protect the friendly mutant's identity, the boys dress up Herman Melville like a girl (hey, it worked for Milton Berle) and successfully pass him off at school as an exchange student.

Meanwhile, the corporate demagogue gears up like the perfidious megalomaniac in a James Bond movie, private army and all. He'll stop at nothing, though he does have an Achilles heel in the form of his ever-demanding daughter, Beebe (the middle school is named after her).

Doug's First Movie sports more subtext than many adult adventure yarns produced today. In one side-bar, Roger Klotz, the rich bully also racing to spoil Doug's plans, hires a brain trust of nerds, a la the Manhattan Project, to build a mechanical monster catcher.

In another sub-plot, suave upperclassman and school newspaper bigwig, Guy Graham (secretly a toady for Boss Bluff), defames Doug while challenging him for Patti's affections. And of course, everything's heading for the big showdown — the night of the much vaunted Valentine's Dance.

While all this convoluted may prove visually engaging on some level or another, the kind of bona fide witticisms necessary for solid amusement value are too few and far between. And without the laughs, all that's left is Doug the moralist.

Thus it befalls the critic to give *Doug's First Movie* a less than sparkling evaluation. But then, straight-shooter Doug wouldn't have it any other way.

Doug's First Movie, rated G, is a Walt Disney Pictures release directed by Maurice Joyce and stars the voices of Thomas McHugh, Constance Shulman, and Fred Newman. Running time: 87 minutes.

DUKES
When the pugnacious, but cowardly, lion in *The Wizard of Oz* challenged his acquaintances to "put up your dukes" he was, as most people know, simply challenging them to put up their fists in preparation for a fight.

The origin of this noble sounding word, however, stems from a lower-class Cockney section of England where a colorful, rhyming slang was originally developed as a secret underworld language.

"Duke," meaning fist, is a Cockney construction. It must first be explained that the word "forks" has also been an English idiom for "fingers," because of the likeness of the fork's tines to the fingers of the hand.

Carried one step further, fingers or forks, when clenched make a fist. The Cockney rhyme from which "dukes" is derived is "Duke of Yorks," wherein the word "Duke" is the code word for forks.

The next time you see a duke coming your way, duck!

Letters to Editor

Terrill PTA Supports Proposed BOE Budget
The Executive Board of the Terrill Middle School Parent-Teacher Association has voted to endorse the budget proposed by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education.

We feel this budget represents an effort to maintain the current standard of education in our schools, as well as allowing for innovations and curriculum review.

The Board of Education has discretionary control over only about 10 percent of the budget, and it is this amount that is used for the programs that benefit our children. If the budget is voted down, it is our children who will suffer.

We urge all eligible voters in our communities to vote in favor of the budget on Tuesday, April 20, and to become informed about the candidates for the Board of Education for whom they are voting.

Barbara Gleason
Corresponding Secretary
Terrill Middle School
Parent-Teacher Association

Talking Business

For the second time in four years a new banner will be flying over Westfield's only supermarket, Edwards Super Food Store on Elm Street.

Royal Ahold NV, parent firm to Edwards, announced March 9 that it will acquire the struggling Pathmark supermarket chain for \$1.75 billion from its holding company, Supermarkets General Corp.

All 73 Edwards stores in New York, New Jersey and Long Island will carry the Pathmark banner.

Pathmark has debt of \$1.5 billion, which will be assumed by Ahold. In addition, the Dutch concern will pay \$250 million in stock. The chain was formed back in the late 1960's after its owners left the ShopRite cooperative.

Carteret-based Pathmark, which operates 76 stores, has a 12 market share in the metro New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia market. Its stiffest competition comes from A&P, ShopRite and Grand Union.

The Westfield store was purchased as part of Ahold's acquisition of 28 Elizabeth-based Mayfair Foodtown Supermarkets in 1995. Ahold then changed the banners on most of the stores to Edwards.

Upon its purchase of Pathmark from Super Markets General Corp., Royal Ahold officials announced that all 73 Edwards stores in would be changed to Pathmarks.

Union County Pathmarks are located in Garwood, Elizabeth, Linden and Union. Edwards has stores in Union, Elizabeth and Linden.

Pathmark's 132 stores, 62 of which are in New Jersey, generate sales revenue to the tune of \$3.7 billion.

Ahold, based in Zaandam, Holland, was already the fifth largest supermarket operator in the United States, with \$29.2 billion in sales worldwide and \$16.2 billion in the U.S. The firm owns 1,000 food stores through its five U.S.-based chains.

Royal Ahold, which acquired New England-based Stop & Shop Inc. in 1996 for \$2.9 billion in cash and debt assumption, also owns Tops in western New York State (Buffalo), Giant Food stores in Maryland and Virginia and BI-LO in the Carolinas.

Abroad, Ahold operates supermarket chains and hypermarkets in The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, the Czech Republic and Poland.

North Plainfield officials are reviewing court documents to see if they will challenge a court ruling that paves the way for construction of a giant 750,000-square-foot shopping center on Route 22 in Watchung.

Lions Club Thanks Egg Hunt Participants
The Lions Club of Westfield would like to thank those who helped make its 64th annual Easter Egg Hunt last Saturday a success.

Special thanks to William Barton for providing the sound system, Past Captain of the Westfield Special Police Charles P. Ross, Westfield Auxiliary Policeman Chris Beck, and the Public Works Department.

The Lions also thank *The Westfield Leader* for its help in annually publicizing this event.

Mike Gordeuk
Westfield Lions Club Treasurer
Westfield

Letters to the Editor

Contributions Should Be Sent to Aid Tragedies In War in the Balkans

As in Vietnam, Rwanda, Somalia, et al., we are trapped in another quagmire, this time in the Balkans. While the U.S. and other U.N. members and N.A.T.O. ponder what to do about heartless petty tyrant Slobodan Milosevic, the atrocities continue as more than 500,000 unarmed starving civilians have either been massacred or driven from their homes in clear violation of international human rights and ethnic cleansing regulations.

As the cold-blooded genocide killing continues unabated, there are at least two reasons why we should not seek to simply minimize our risk of casualties by extricating ourselves from physical involvement.

One is the historical documentation that when trouble breaks out in that part of the world and is ignored, matters worsen and spread (World Wars I and II for example). The other is a moral obligation to attempt to stop the murder of innocent people.

Is there anything that you and I can do at this time to reduce the suffering? Yes. Yes. Yes. Cash is badly needed. Please choose from the 10 organizations listed below (more groups will join these shortly). Get out your checkbooks and pray for peace.

American Red Cross, International Response Fund, P.O. Box 37243, Washington, D.C. 20013, (800) HELP-NOW.

Americares, 161 Cherry Street, New Canaan, Connecticut, 06840, (800) 486-4357.

Care, 151 Ellis Street, Northeast Atlanta, Georgia, 30303, (800) 422-7385.

Catholic Relief Services, P.O. Box 17090, Baltimore, Maryland, 21203-7090, (800) 736-3467.

Church World Service, 28606 Phillips Street, P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, Indiana, 46515, (800) 297-1516, Extension No. 222.

Doctors Without Borders, 6 East 39 Street Eighth Floor, New York, 10016, (888) 392-0392.

Lutheran World Relief, P.O. Box 6186, Church Street Station, New York, 10277, (800) 597-5972.

Oxfam America, Kosovo Relief Fund, 26 West Street, Boston, Massachusetts, 02111 (800) 776-XFAM.

Save the Children, P.O. Box 975, 54 Wilton Road, Westport, Connecticut, 06880, (800) 243-5075.

U.S. Committee for Unicef, 333 East 38th Street, New York, 10016 (800) FOR-KIDS.

Maurice Fenichel
Fanwood

EARLY DEADLINE FOR 4/15/99 ISSUE FRIDAY • 4 P.M.

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Photos - B/W and Color
No Panoramic or Polaroid
Typed, not handwritten
Upper and lower case
Need name & daytime phone
For our complete editorial policies request a copy of our Policy Guide

School Budget Cartoon Not Very Humorous

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but sometimes, it is nice to know what those words are.

Your (not too tasteful) illustration on March 18 of a woman boarding the school bus seemed to imply the school budget was bloated. Fine, but where?

The Westfield school district has reduced it's per student spending by almost \$900, it is over \$200,000 below the state recommended cap, and the average spending per student is actually below the stage average. It is hard to see where the excess baggage is supposed to be.

In fact, I remember a similar cartoon slighting the bond issue. But no editorial was forthcoming regarding what your stand was on it. So, kind editor, could you please tell us what you disagree with? Thank you.

Gary McCready
Westfield

Student Seeks Interview With Former Students Of Roosevelt School

I am a student at Roosevelt Intermediate School in Westfield. As a participant in the Teddy Roosevelt Scholars Program, I am researching the history of Roosevelt Middle (Junior High) School. I am interested in conducting a short telephone interview with past students and teachers at Roosevelt.

If you are interested in participating in this project, would you please contact me at Roosevelt, in care of Walter Buda, at (908) 789-4560.

Eileen M. Gessner
Westfield

Iowa Fifth-Grader Seeks Information On New Jersey

Good morning. My name is Becky Guzman, and I'm a fifth-grade student from West Ridge Elementary School in Harlan, Iowa. Our class is studying geography and history of the United States.

We would appreciate if you would send us a postcard, articles on something about your state so we can learn more about our country to West Ridge Elementary School, 1401 19th Street, Harlan, IA 51537. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

Becky Guzman
Harlan, Iowa



Freeholder Anticipates Slated Grief Workshop

I was very interested to hear of the upcoming Hospice Foundation of America teleconference, "Living With Grief: At Work, At School, At Worship," being hosted locally on Wednesday, April 14, by The Center For Hope Hospice at Union County College in Cranford.

Loss touches us all, and grief is truly a universal condition. While we often discuss how we grieve, rarely do we consider where we grieve.

This broadcast will explore the places where we grieve and show how grief affects our moods and motivation, as well as our abilities to function and our relationships with others.

As society begins to discuss end-of-life issues more openly, it is important that educational teleconferences such as this are made possible by thoughtful organizations. They deserve our attention and support.

Mary P. Ruotolo
Westfield

Daughter of Deli Owner Thanks Community

I know that I have written before, but today I am writing to not only say thank you but also to say good-bye. The party hosted March 27, by Ginny and Warren Rorden and the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce was, in a word, bitter-sweet.

The generous outpouring of support, and the compassion from the people who attended, as well as from those people who were loyal customers and friends was to say the least emotionally overwhelming.

I do know that my parents had absolutely no idea how much they were respected by the community, and I know they will treasure their memories even more now. I know that I speak for my entire family by saying thank you to all of you who have been loyal patrons, to all of you who have been kind, and to all of you who came to the deli for more than just a meal.

The deli has been our second home, and I think many would agree a fixture of Westfield that will sorely be missed. So again, our thanks, and our last farewell to the Elm Delicatessen.

Teresa DeRubeis-Schaefer
Westfield