

# Pedestrian Deaths, Parking Deck Study, Are Top 1999 Stories in Westfield

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state aid from the Trenton to help support its 1999 budget with a jump from \$3,089,059 to \$3,706,838.

The Westfield Downtown Corporation, the governing body for the town's special improvement district, passed a 1999 spending plan of \$281,000, representing an increase of \$16,000 over 1998. A total of \$98,000 was set aside for promotional efforts with half of that amount, \$45,000, dedicated to a regional advertising program to promote the downtown.

The *Westfield Leader* broke a story that revealed Recreation Director Glenn S. Burrell's request to the Town Council to consider the development of a section of Brightwood Park, the town's last natural setting, for use as a multi-purpose field. The proposal re-

Seven Japanese exchange students were welcomed to town by the Westfield High School community.

The Westfield Police Benevolent Association (P.B.A.) Local No. 90 agreed on terms with the town on a new three-year contract, which includes pay increases for town police of 3.6 percent, 3.4 percent and 3.8 percent during the course of the agreement.

In the wake of the two pedestrian fatalities, the police formulated a plan that includes both concentrated and selective enforcement of speed limits in the town.

The Town Council introduced a 1999 municipal budget of \$23,691,363, a plan that hikes taxes by 3 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. The impact on the average assessed home in

Westfielder Colleen Sexton had the opportunity to play the leading role of Lucy for the Saturday, April 3, matinee Broadway production of *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Board of Education incumbents Arlene Gardner, Annmarie Puleio and newcomer William Wallace were victorious during school board elections held on April 20. Mr. Wallace defeated Genevieve Weber by nearly 100 votes. He replaced long-term school board Susan Jacobson who chose not to seek another term.

Westfield Republican Town Council incumbents Gregory S. McDermott, First Ward; Matthew P. Albano, Second Ward; Neil F. Sullivan, Third Ward; and Janis Fried Weinstein, Fourth Ward, officially announced their intentions to seek reelection.

Meanwhile, Democrats filing election petitions were: Marilyn Gulotta, First Ward; Joseph Stoner, Second Ward; Claire Lazarowitz, Third Ward, and Schuyler Quackenbush, Fourth Ward.

The Town Council adopted a municipal budget of \$23.6 million, a spending plan that reflected a \$600,000 increase in the tax levy, for an average hike of \$52 per homeowner in Westfield.

Arthur C. Fried was honored April 18 by the B'nai B'rith during a testimonial luncheon in his honor. He served on the Board of Adjustment for 16 years and was one of the originators of the Westfield Foundation, which is now worth over \$5 million.

The Westfield Board of Education bid farewell after 12 years to Mrs. Jacobson. During her tenure, Mrs. Jacobson served in the posts of both Vice President and President of the board. She was first elected from a field of 13 candidates in 1987.



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
**PREPARING FOR THE LUNCH RUSH...** Tim DeRubeis and his wife, Angela, work side by side at the Elm Delicatessen that they operated together in Westfield for the last 35 years. The delicatessen, a local gathering place, closed its doors for good on Saturday, March 27, 1999.

ceived heavy opposition from park users at a later meeting.

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders unveiled a five-year, \$10 million road improvement program. Dubbed the "Union County Investment in Infrastructure" plan, the program included enhancements to a dozen intersections, numerous bridges and culverts. Eighteen miles of roadway was slated to be resurfaced in 1999 alone. North Avenue in Westfield was among those roads to be resurfaced in 1999.

Tensions continued to mount in town as persons not using the marked crosswalks, a violation known as jaywalking, received \$43 tickets from police officers. The crackdown followed the death of Mrs. Interdonato. An increase in speeding tickets was also reported by police officials.

Westfield Municipal Library officials began their push for full funding of the library's Board of Trustees budget allocation request of \$1.5 million with another \$14,000 sought for expanded hours so that the library could open on Sundays. While providing more than the state mandated percentage of the library budget, in past years, the Town Council had not funded the full library budget request.

The Town Council granted a demolition permit to a contractor to knock down the remaining portion of the former Excellent Diner on North Avenue. A three-story retail and office building was approved for the site by the Planning Board in 1998. The cab portion of the diner was moved to Germany several years ago.

The town grieved following the sudden death of Jennifer Ryan at just 28. Miss Ryan, who owned a landscape design company, was active with the youth of the town, mostly through her involvement as an adult advisor to high school youth at the Presbyterian Church in Westfield. She also helped design the Bicentennial Youth Square Garden at Mountain Avenue, Orchard and Lawrence Streets.

Westfield, \$174,000, was an increase of \$52 over 1998.

The council agreed to move forward with the process of finding a consultant to select the site as well as the size of Westfield's first parking deck. Request for proposals, or rfp's, were due by mid to late May.

Nellie Suggs, an equal opportunity specialist with the United States Customs Service, and Fanwood Municipal Judge Susan MacMullan, both of Westfield, were among 12 women honored during the seventh annual Women of Excellence Awards ceremony held in Garwood. The event was sponsored by the Union County Commission on the Status of Women.

The Elm Deli closed its doors after 35 years of serving sandwiches and soups. Tim and Angela DeRubeis were honored during a reception following their last day in business, March 27, an event which was attended by many of Elm's loyal customer base, including a

Westfield High School was the venue for MSNBC's live telecast of a special broadcast on the Littleton, Colo., high school shootings that occurred in April. The show was hosted by NBC's Tom Brokaw and Jane Pauley and included guests from around the country. The discussion for the MSNBC program, "Lessons of Littleton," focused on school violence, gun control and related issues.

Eva Morton, a third-grade teacher at Washington Elementary School in Westfield, was presented with the Charles A. Philhower Fellowship Award for excellence in elementary education. The award, presented annually by the Rotary Club of Westfield, was named after Mr. Philhower, a former long-time educator and Westfield Superintendent of Schools.

Union County officials announced the county was moving ahead with the \$15 million expansion and renovation of the North Avenue-based Union

County Bank of Westfield named Robert W. Downs, Sr. as its new Chief Executive Officer and President. Funeral services were held for Westfield Fire Captain Scott V. Garber who sitting in Union County.

**JUNE**

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large contingent from *The Westfield Leader* which was located across the street from the deli.

The Westfield Board of Education approved a \$54.6 million budget with a \$46.58 million tax levy. The levy called for an increase of 7 cents per \$100 of assessed value, the equivalent of \$122 increase over 1998 for the average assessed home in town of \$174,000.

**APRIL**

Gary Goodman, the owner of 37 and 39 Elm Street, revealed that a restaurant would fill the space of the Elm Delicatessen and Backroom Antiques, businesses which did not have their leases renewed.

While Backroom moved to another location in town, the Elm Deli, operated by Tim and Angela DeRubeis for the past 35 years, went out of business on March 27.

Westfield became the backdrop during several days of filming for a CBS TV pilot called "Stuckeyville." Westfield was one of 15 towns scouted for the program.

Mayor Jardim appointed a 12-member advisory board to begin looking at revamping programming and operations for the town's cable television access channel, TV-36.

Mr. Brandt was honored during a dinner at Gran Centurions in Clark on March 26 following his retirement as Town Attorney as of December 31, 1998. Mr. Brandt served in that capacity for 20 years. He had been a Second Ward Councilman in the mid-1970s.



Courtesy of Lauren G. Geoggs  
**SOLEMN OCCASION...** The coffin of Westfield Fire Captain Scott V. Garber is carried by pallbearers to a waiting Westfield Fire Department engine following a Funeral Mass held Saturday, June 5, 1999 at St. Helen's Roman Catholic Church in Westfield. Following a procession in town, a graveside ceremony was held at Fairview Cemetery on East Broad Street. Captain Garber died suddenly on June 1, 1999 at his Westfield home.

County Police Headquarters. Plans for the newly redesigned building included additional space for the Union County Prosecutor's Forensic Laboratory and shelter space for county vehicles.

The second annual "Passport to Education" dance party to benefit technology in the Westfield public schools proved to be another success. Over 450 people attended the event at the National Guard Armory. A number of musical groups, headlined by Terry King and Don Thomas, formerly of "The Drifters," performed during the five-hour, casual-attire bash. The event, co-sponsored by the Education Fund of Westfield and Comcast@Home, netted \$15,000 for the school district.

Taylor Hardware, a fixture in downtown Westfield for over 80 years, announced it was closing its doors.

The United Fund of Westfield attained its 1998-1999 goal of \$615,000.

Legendary Astronaut Dr. Story Musgrave spoke during guest appearances for the Westfield "Y" Lecture Series and before the Sharing, Talents and Skills program at Westfield High School.

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders approved a \$288.2 million budget, a spending plan that saw the county portion of property taxes collected in Westfield increasing by \$106,537. The overall tax levy, though, dropped for the third consecutive year.

The State Senate confirmed Governor Christine Todd Whitman's appointment of Westfield attorney James Heimlich as a Superior Court Judge

died suddenly on June 1. Captain Garber's coffin, draped with the United States flag, was placed on the back of one of the town's fire engines and driven down North Avenue en route to Fairview Cemetery where he was buried.

The Westfield Fire Department and town resolved a grievance over a dispute involving fire personnel responses to medical calls when voluntary Emergency Medical Technicians are unable to respond. The Firemen's Benevolent Association Local No. 30 had filed the grievance. Union officials said while firemen had been trained as "first responders" to emergency aid calls, the union was required to be contacted before firefighters could be dispatched on such calls.

Westfield Police Sergeant Patrick Gray was seriously injured in a motor vehicle accident at Boulevard and West Grove Street. He returned to duty later in the year.

Residents near Tamaques Park voiced their opposition to any plan by the town to add parking spaces at the park during a forum held by the Town Council's Public Works Committee.

Assemblyman Bagger, a 1978 Westfield High School graduate, was the guest speaker for the graduating class of the 289-member WHS Class of 1999.

The Town Council adopted an ordinance requiring the owners of dwellings of two or more families to obtain a certificate of occupancy before the property can be sold.

The council also approved a new

\$100,000 annual sidewalk replacement program, the cost of which will be split equally between property owners and the town.

The Westfield Neighborhood Council marked its 30th anniversary with its second annual Street Fair on Cacciola Place on June 19. The event featured rides, games, grilled food and toy vendors.

A fire at a building used by the Westfield Community Center (WCC) at Palsted Avenue and West Broad Street was believed to be accidental based on a fire department preliminary report. The house was slated to be torn down and replaced with a WCC annex facility to house child care and expanded adult care programs.

Department of Transportation officials appeared before the council on June 22 to state their belief that a T-shaped intersection is the best solution to deal with traffic flow and safety concerns caused by the South Avenue traffic circle. The New Jersey Historic Preservation Office and the Westfield Historic Preservation Office both stated their concerns for the elimination of the present circle due to the historic significance of the circle and of surrounding properties.

**JULY**

Ginger Hardwick announced her resignation from the Board of Education after four years following the sudden death of her husband Steven Lapidus, a First Amendment attorney, in February.

The Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Westfield Corporation signed a lease for a combined second-floor office space in the Fleet Bank building in the downtown. Previously, the Chamber was located on Quimby Street while the DWC was located on Elm Street.

The *Westfield Leader* reported that Ken Marcotte had closed his latest restaurant, the Paprika Grille, after a short run. Previously, Mr. Marcotte had operated a restaurant under his name at the location.

The Westfield Board of Education ratified a three-year contract with the Westfield Education Association. The new contract called for a 3.8 percent annually over the length of the pact.

The Westfield Memorial Pool reported a surge in membership as the 1,900 in family applications sold out for the first time since the facility opened in 1970.

The Town Council approved a new \$100,000 residential sidewalk replacement program. The program was split 50-50 between homeowners and the town.

Mr. Heimlich was sworn in as a judge on the Union County Superior Court at a ceremony at the Union County Courthouse in Elizabeth.

The Board of Adjustment approved variances sought by the Westfield Community Center for an annex building at Palsted and West Broad Street.

The *Leader* began a series on the condition of softball fields in the town. The first article discussed the field

# For the Past 32 Years, Ric Miller of Music Staff Has Witnessed Major Changes in Record Industry

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
 Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

**WESTFIELD** — From the days of 45's to CD's of the 1990s, from "Cream's" "Fresh Cream" album with Eric Clapton, Ginger Baker and Jack Bruce, to the Backstreet Boys and 'N Sync, or from listening booths to Ticketmaster, Ric Miller has witnessed the dramatic changes in the music business over the past three decades first hand.

Proprietor of Music Staff for 29 years, Ric has announced he will retire from the business by the end of January. He is hoping to sell the business which has been known as Music Staff for over 50 years.

But, regardless of whether a deal is struck, he will be leaving the business that has been a major part of life.

Ric began working in the store in 1967 as a Westfield High School 10th grader at the time when the store was owned by Barbara and Jane Ryan. They founded Music Staff from what was originally a record aisle in the local hardware store the Ryans purchased. They later offered to sell the store to Ric.

After consulting with his "financial advisors," his parents, Fred and Catherine Miller, Ric decided to make the move with their help. Ric's mother, who was working for a company that was located above the now defunct Good Friends Hardware Store (now Sam Goody's), quit her job and began running Music Staff while Ric was away at college at Kent State in Ohio. Mrs. Miller died in 1981.

"She was one of the first business women in town, which she was always proud of," Ric acknowledged.

Ric's father, a traffic manager with the old Ballentine Beer company in Newark, used to spend his spare time sitting in a lounge chair in the store talking with customers. With the droves of teenagers that would head to Music Staff after school let out, Ric noted that his parents "always loved kids."

"So, technically I had seniority (in the business) but they (his parents) had veto power in the long run," he said.

The long hours of an independent retailer has not been easy. During the Christmas season, Ric works 12 hours a day, seven days a week.

The business started at the current site of Lia's on Elm Street. When CD's entered the picture, Ric opened up Music Staff CD Annex two doors



**RETIRING AFTER 32 YEARS...** Ric Miller, right, proprietor for the past 32 years of Music Staff and his assistant, Bob McManigal, stand behind the counter of the landmark music store on Quimby Street. Mr. Miller is retiring after running the business for the past 32 years.

down. Tapes, cassettes and LP's were sold at the main Music Staff store. The stores were later combined and moved into the current store front of Periwinkles on Elm Street. Music Staff has been at its current location on Quimby Street for the past five years.

When Ric first started in the business the big seller were 45's, "and kids would come in bunches and buy six or 12 '45's" and then listen to LP's in the two listening booths set up at the store.

"They would go to the booth and sit on the floor and steam up the windows and sneak cigarettes on the floor, but it was a ritual that would happen," he said.

The big business time for Music Staff used to be after school. Summers were considered the slow time. But over the years things have changed, with numerous after-school activities scheduled. The summers and day hours are now busier than during after-school hours. Holiday seasons, of course, are also a hectic time.

Reminiscing, Ric recalled when "The Critters" was the popular local band. The group would play at high school dances.

At the high point in the business, Music Staff had a music merchandise

of over 20,000 music titles.

Ric said independent stores like Music Staff are strong position because they offer a newer product line than the chain stores. Ric has sold numerous music over the years by non-established artists. Without hearing the music, he would base his decision on the album cover and the description of the label and cover.

"It is sort of like intuition," he said. "You've got to sort through all the hype (provided in information from the artists) and get to the bottom of it."

Ric recalled that the local area used to be a major arena for major artists such as "The Who," "Chicago" and Rod Stewart, all of which played at Union Catholic High School in Scotch Plains. The MC5, the first noted punk, alternative music band, played at Westfield High School around 1968.

Ric has been assisted for many years by Doris "Dodie" Jackson, previously employed at Vance Florist on South Avenue, and Bob McManigal. Mrs. Jackson has been with the store since 1976 while Mr. McManigal came onboard in the mid-1980s. Both are Westfield residents.

Some of the high school students

who used to work in the store have stayed in the music business.

One ex-employee works as a producer for Arista Records in New York City. Another former employee works on the management team of Hootie and the Blowfish.

One of the benefits of the business has been that Ric has had the opportunity to see hundreds of concerts over the years for free. He recalls going into Manhattan up to four times a week to such venues as The Bottom Line and the Academy of Music. He saw "YES" open for Jethro Tull in the late '60s prior to becoming a headliner themselves. He saw "Pink Floyd," famous for "The Wall" album, perform in Long Island and Los Angeles.

"The industry was run by people...by musicians, by '60's people, by hippies. It wasn't all corporate America," he said, noting that he used to deal directly with salesmen when errors were made in orders.

Today, in a mega-million industry, complimentary tickets are no longer offered to retailers. And a lot of the large labels no longer sell merchandise to stores that do under \$1 million in billing with them.

"We buy directly from all the major manufacturers and we always have for 30 years," he said.

Another change is in the number of damaged products. In the days of records, manufacturers frequently replace damaged albums. Today, due to the extremely low occurrence of "breakage," companies will not replace damaged CDs or, for that matter, ones where CD pockets contained an incorrect product. This equals a small percentage of the manufacturer's products.

Music Staff is a Ticketmaster location. From concerts to World Series tickets, the store has attracted crowds of high schoolers, the 20-something set and parents for the various show tickets when they go on sale.

"They've called me The Ticket Nazi over the years," Ric stated, noting that he has often had to inform large, disappointed crowds of fans that a particular concert has been sold out.

Looking back over the years, Ric said his years at Music Staff was "a hobby as well as a passion. It was never a job."

He considers his long-time customers part of his "extended family."

"It's been a pleasure," he concluded.

conditions from the players perspective. Town officials responded to these complaints in the second story by explaining some of the plans in the works for town parks.

Downtown browsers enjoyed the second annual Sweet Sounds Downtown jazz promotion.

The Westfield Community TV Media Advisory Group began its deliberations on revamping the operations and programming of the town's cable access station, TV-36.

County Surrogate Ann Conti of Mountainside died following a year-long battle with cancer. She had served in the elected position since 1983.

Union County announced that the town had been awarded a \$450,000 grant to fund part of the town's \$1.2 million Downtown Improvement Plan. The "Downtown Union County" grant program was slated by the town for improvements along the Central Avenue corridor.

**AUGUST**

In the midst of the worst drought in New Jersey in 33 years, Governor Christine Todd Whitman declared a drought warning the first week of August. Many of the state's rivers hit all-time record lows.

The Planning Board approved a plan by Rahway Avenue resident George H. Harb to subdivide two parcels he owns into eight building lots along with construction of a 40-foot-wide dead end street and cul-de-sac. Six homes were to be built with a seventh lot remaining

a pocket park on Central and creation of a Paul Robeson Memorial Park at Waterson Street and Rahway Avenue.

The \$120,000 renovation at Sycamore Field began with new sod and a irrigation system among the improvements.

Councilman Goldman pulled a resolution he was sponsoring calling for a non-binding referendum to change terms for the mayor and Town Council from two to three years. Councilman Sullivan proposed a second ballot question to request voters to decide whether a "non-partisan" format would be better. This would move elections to May and remove political parties, such as Republican and Democrat, from the process. Mr. Goldman pulled his resolution after finding that there was not enough support for it to pass.

Town officials unveiled a proposal for a jitney bus service in the downtown through the use of Union County's Para-transit program. The program, at \$1 per ride, would cost the town \$63,000 annually. Four routes were proposed.

Governor Whitman announced mandatory water restrictions as the drought continued.

The Town Council hired Rich and Associates, Inc., of Southfield, Mich., to prepare a detailed report on a parking deck to be constructed within the central business district.

Edward A. Gottko announced his retirement as Town Administrator effective December 31, 1999. Mr. Gottko began his employment with the town

in 1979 as Town Engineer. He became Administrator in 1993.

Westfield High School senior Heather Dennis completed a 4,000-mile bike trip, with a group of other students, from Seattle to Sea Bright.

Anne L. Riegel was sworn in as a member of the Westfield Board of Education, replacing Ms. Hardwick.

Freeholder Scutari created a bipartisan ad hoc committee to begin looking at an open space tax referendum for the year 2000. The five-member committee included Westfield First Ward



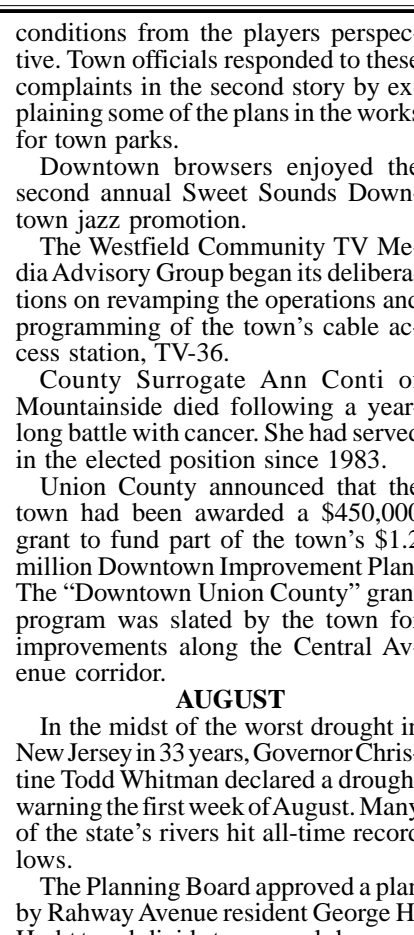
Cheri Rogowsky for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
**PANEL OF EXPERTS...** MSNBC anchor Tom Brokaw questions panelists, pictured left to right, former Wyoming Senator Alan Simpson; Larry Pratt, Executive Director of Gun Owners of America; Hugh Price, President of the National Urban League; Dave Thomas, District Attorney for Jefferson County in Colorado; Governor Christine Todd Whitman, and Secretary of Education Richard Riley during a live telecast of "Lessons of Littleton" on April 28, 1999.

vacant. Mr. Harb's home at 931 Rahway was the eighth lot.

Mr. Burrell announced plans to renovate 10 town parks in conjunction with the \$117,500 obtained from the 1998 Union County Pocket Park matching grant.

These improvements included renovating the playing surface and a playground at Sycamore Field, constructing a picnic shelter at Tamaques Park along with a new restroom facility.

The Recreation Director also listed the following projects for the 1999 grant: Mindowaskin Park, Clark Park,



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