

# The Westfield Leader

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— Established 1890 —  
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## THE TIMES

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## SUPERINTENDENT'S JOURNAL

# SP-F District Facing Deficit Unless Savings Are Generated

By DR. CAROL B. CHOYE  
Superintendent of Schools  
Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District

In grammar, a double negative makes a positive. In mathematics, multiplying negative numbers yields a positive. How is it then that in the area of school finance, sometimes several positives can yield a negative?

That's exactly the situation we are facing right now in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood public schools. We're analyzing just how it is that after carefully budgeting for the current year so cost increases were closely controlled and the local tax impact was minimized, the district now finds itself without a free balance and facing a potential deficit unless steps to generate savings are taken immediately.

What happened? We're dealing with a situation I describe as a "convergence of circumstances." Despite our conservative planning of the 1997-1998 budget, several unanticipated costs have combined to undermine our "best laid plans."

- Prudent insurance planning: In order to provide the most cost-effective insurance plan for the district, the Board of Education has maintained a long-term relationship with an independent insurance carrier and thus has been able to obtain health insurance rates more favorable than those of the state insurance plan.

As of this September, long after budgeting for this school year was completed, the insurance carrier notified the district that increases were required in accounts for "premium stabilization" and for terminal reserve liability.

Furthermore, due to recent state legislation, a surcharge of \$144,000 was levied on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood public schools because we choose not to participate in the state's insurance program.

So after building a positive insurance history and obtaining insurance at the most reasonable cost, suddenly our free balance was unexpectedly encumbered for nearly a half million dollars.

- Positive programs for students: We are proud of all the programs we offer district students and have earned an enviable reputation in the area of special education. The district currently has 60 out-of-district special education placements for which the state pays less than a third of the costs — not including costs for transportation.

The district has no way of forecasting or controlling the number of special education students whose families will choose to live in the district.

The number of our students who attend programs at the Union County Vocational Technical Schools has increased this year from 31 to 42.

A form of voucher system was recently established for students who attend the new magnet Union County High School for Science and Technology, known as a magnet school.

This school year accepted six Scotch Plains-Fanwood students into their program after assuring districts that a maxi-

## THE WORD

# HALLOWEEN

No Longer Hallowed

Some old customs never die, they don't even fade away. This applies especially to hallowed old pagan customs, such as Halloween, that predate Christianity.

In fact, Halloween was indirectly the invention of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, which in 700 A.D. created a new holy day to take the place of a much older and very popular pagan feast day.

The Druids, and later the Celts, had been celebrating the Druid summer's end for thousands of years prior to the arrival of Christianity; the original holiday was called *Shawin* or *Summer-end*.

The church selected the name All Saints' Day, or All Hallows Day, which they superimposed on the existing pagan feast. *Hallow* means "holy or saintly" and survives today in the "Lord's Prayer," for example, "hallowed be Thy name."

Halloween (holy evening) was simply the "e'en," or evening, preceding "All Hallows Day." This was, and still is, celebrated on October 31. St. Valentine's Day, Christmas, and Easter are other examples of holidays that the Church decided to celebrate at the same time of the year as the much older pagan festivals.

The ghosts, spirits, fairies, witches and elves which are still closely associated with Halloween are remnants of the original Druid and Celtic beliefs. All Hallows "e'en" had previously been the last day of the Celtic calendar, a time when witches and warlocks, as well as evil spirits and souls of the dead, were thought to be abroad.

Cats were believed by these primitive people to have been humans changed to a feline state, because of their evil deeds.

Halloween today has little to do with All Saints' Day. Nevertheless, over the millennia, the varied and colorful folk customs that surround this festival have been embraced and passed on by following generations of people, who know a good thing when they see it.

So, when the local "candy-jackers" threaten you with a "trick" if they do not get a "treat," remember that they simply are following a time honored custom, if not the demands of a sweet tooth.

## Local Voters' Decisions Could Impact Who Has Majority in Town, Borough

Although this is not a Presidential election year, voters' decisions at the polls this Tuesday, November 4, could actually change the majority parties in Westfield and Fanwood in 1998, while possibly setting up a change in Union County government by 1999.

At the state level, local voters will pull the levers in races for Governor, State Senator and the Assembly in the 22nd Legislative District.

We have provided in this editorial a sketch of how the Westfield, Fanwood and County races look in terms of party majority and makeup. We ask our readers to also read our full election coverage which begins on the front page of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times of Scotch Plains and Fanwood*, which includes quotes from some of the candidates, a little about their platforms and basic biographical information. We have staff written stories on the local, county and state races as well as the questions on this year's election ballot.

★★★ Westfield ★★★

Fresh on the heels of winning two seats on the Westfield Town Council and the Mayor's office in 1996, Democrats are seeking to take the majority on the council for the first time in Westfield's history. To accomplish this feat, they only need to pick up a seat in either the First or Third Wards, while maintaining a seat in the Fourth Ward. The Republicans hold a slim 5-4 majority on the governing body.

Westfield is divided by the train tracks for the Raritan Valley line of New Jersey Transit. The Republicans occupy all four seats on the north side of town (First and Second Wards), while the Democrats hold three of the four seats on the south side (Third and Fourth Wards.)

A sweep by the Democrats in the contested races in the First, Third and Fourth Wards would give them a 6-3 advantage on the council, including the vote of Mayor Thomas C. Jardim. If they take one additional seat, the council would be a 4-4 split between the two parties with the Mayor becoming the tie-breaking vote.

Meanwhile, Republicans are hoping to gain a seat in the Fourth Ward while maintaining seats in the First and Third Wards. If they are successful, they would increase their majority on the governing body to 6-3.

The Fourth Ward seat, which was held for 11 years by Democrat James Hely, will be held next year by either Democratic incumbent Donnell Carr or his opponent, Republican Janis Fried Weinstein. Interestingly, both Councilman Carr and Mrs. Weinstein were appointed but not elected to the council.

While Mrs. Weinstein finished out the expired term of Michael E. Panagos last year, before losing her election bid, Councilman Carr was appointed to fill out the term of Mr. Hely.

Among the Republicans, Councilmen Matthew P. Albano and Neil F. Sullivan, Jr. in the Second and Third Wards, respectively, were elected after facing no opposition in 1995. Mr. Albano is running unopposed again this year, while Mr. Sullivan is being challenged by Democrat Kenneth Rotter, who is seeking elected office for the first time.

Newcomers Marc B. McCabe, a Democrat, and Republican Gregory S. McDermott will challenge for the First Ward seat currently occupied by Republican Norman N. Greco.

★★★ Freeholders ★★★

This year's race for three seats on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders will not change the majority party, but it could change the makeup of the board. The three Republicans on the board, Frank H. Lehr, Henry W. Kurz and Edwin H. Force, are seeking reelection. The Democrats, by virtue of picking up two seats last year, have a majority, at 6-3, for the first time since 1991.

Currently, Democrats on the board represent Elizabeth (two seats), Linden, Fanwood, Westfield, and Plainfield. If the Democrats win, Summit — Mr. Lehr's hometown — and Cranford, where Mr. Force resides, would lose representation on the board in favor of Union, the hometown of Democrat Deborah Scanlon, and Rahway, where fellow Democrat Chester Holmes is a resident.

By the virtue of Freeholder Kurz and his opponent, Democrat Alexander Mirabella, Roselle Park will not lose a seat on the board. Union was represented last year by Republican Linda DiGiovanni, who lost her reelection bid in 1996. Rahway was last represented in 1995 when Walter McLeod served. He has since retired from the board.

The three incumbents each served in elective office in their respective towns prior to joining the board. Mr. Kurz served on the Roselle Park council, while Mr. Force and Mr. Lehr are former Mayors and council members in their respective towns.

As far as their opponents go, Ms. Scanlon served as an elected member of the Union Board of Education and Mr. Mirabella is a former Roselle Park councilman, while Mr. Holmes served on the Rahway City Council.

While the Democrats are looking for a 9-0 majority, the Republicans hope to maintain their current seats and then gain at least two seats next year so that they could gain the majority back by 1999. If the Democrats sweep, Republicans couldn't gain control back until at least 2000.

★★★ Fanwood ★★★

Democrats hope to increase their majority on the Borough Council to 5-2. The Democrats have had control since the administration of the late former Mayor Patricia MacDonald Kuran, who served two terms from 1983 to 1991.

The Democrats hope to maintain the seat of Councilman William E. Populus, Jr., who is seeking a second three-year term, and pick up the seat held by Dr. Chester R. Lindsey, the unsuccessful Republican Mayoral contender in 1995, who is not seeking reelection. Patricia Plante is Councilman Populus' runningmate.

Republicans Joel Whitaker and David Trumpp are hoping to sweep and give their party a 4-3 edge. Currently, there is a 3-3 deadlock on the council, which arises from time to time on partisan issues, which is broken by Democratic Mayor Maryanne S. Connolly.

Mr. Whitaker ran unsuccessfully for the council in 1994. This is Mr. Trumpp's first attempt at seeking political office. His father, former Fanwood Mayor Theodore "Ted" Trumpp, is the current Republican Municipal Chairman in Fanwood.

We encourage voters to cast their tallies for the best candidates. After all, the only election that has any significance is the one in the election polls.

imum of only two would be accepted. The added tuition for these programs increased district costs by thousands of dollars.

These are all positive programs which meet the needs of students, but the number of students served and the related costs rose well beyond what was anticipated during the budget process.

- Concern for the taxpayer: In order to minimize local property tax increases, we have applied free balance monies when it was fiscally prudent to do so and have chosen not to maintain sizable reserves. This is consistent with recent state demands for districts to minimize free balances.

In planning budgets, we have been careful to cover only one-time costs like our new modular classrooms when using free balance money, but unexpected charges and assessments have now totally wiped out any available free balance funds for the current school year.

So despite all our positive efforts to provide the best programs for our students, to maintain manageable class sizes in appropriate facilities, to provide staff, equipment and supplies for our growing enrollment, to produce budgets which are below state caps and to be mindful of concerns over local property taxes, we find ourselves in a challenging financial situation.

We must continue to provide a high-quality education for our students, meet our financial responsibilities and generate a comfortable level of free balance during the current year.

In order to discuss this situation with the public and outline our current plan of action, the Board of Education and I have scheduled a special meeting for today, Thursday, October 23, at 8 p.m. in the Board Meeting Room at the Administrative Offices, located at Cedar Street and Evergreen Avenue in Scotch Plains.

I am confident that with the efforts and understanding of everyone in the district, we will meet the challenge we're facing while continuing to strive toward our ultimate goal as a school community — optimum student learning and achievement.

## Democracy and Freedom Refreshed by Our Youth

horace@goleader.com

By HORACE R. CORBIN  
*Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

This column was written after receiving the following letter from a young girl on October 25 via e-mail. After responding to Chelsea, I thought it most appropriate to publish this in the Election Issue — HRC From: Chelsea (by email 25-Oct-97) To: editor@goleader.com

To whom it may concern:

I am 15 years old and would like to know (in detail if possible) what are the issues between Christie Whitman and Jim McGreevey. What does she plan to do and what does he plan to do? What is more effective? Will Christie Whitman make it better?

If you could get back to me before Monday October 27, I would deeply appreciate it. I may not be able to vote yet but I can discuss this with my parents and that would help a lot!

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,  
Chelsea

Dear Chelsea,

Your letter is insightful (and inspiring). You raise important questions. Does campaign rhetoric have anything to do with what politicians actually do while they're in office? Do they really say anything meaningful during campaigning? Can politicians truly do any of what they promise? What can leaders actually achieve. Who are their real friends and what are their real interests? Why do they run for office?

Is it best to vote for your personal interests only, or must one consider the good of the whole society? How does one judge? Does one vote with one's heart or with one's intellect? Does one vote for someone or against someone? Does one vote for a party or for an individual?

Does the moment require crisis leadership or skilled infrastructure management? Is it the leader or the composite system that determines what is best?

These concepts and many more come to mind, inspired by your questions. The answers come from everyone that votes;

and from everyone that doesn't vote - and it's a private matter, ultimately, as you walk into the voting booth with the curtain closing behind you.

Being informed, studying and discussing matters in advance helps. But the voter's job is not over after the election; perhaps just beginning. Our leaders need input while in office; and yes, their actions need to be evaluated from time to time; nobody's perfect and adjustments become necessary.

Remember, our forefathers in the Constitution made this your government, our government. With freedom comes enormous responsibility. Freedom requires good hearts, strong minds, vigilant eyes and brave spirits.

This is strictly my personal opinion, but you must form your own opinion. I believe that if you expect and insist on the best from individuals and leaders (and act that way yourself), most often they will be strengthened by your position and respond in kind, making for a better society.

I think it was Churchill who said (something like this), "Democracy is a terrible form of government, but it's the best one yet man has ever discovered."

As democracy and freedom depend on involved people — refreshed and replenished by our youth — I'm extremely encouraged to receive your letter.

To learn more about the campaign, Governor Whitman's campaign website is [www.christie97.org](http://www.christie97.org)

Senator McGreevey's campaign website is [www.mcgreevey.com](http://www.mcgreevey.com)

Regards,  
Horace Corbin, Publisher  
Chelsea can't vote yet, but you can on Tuesday, November 4.

## Letters to the Editor

### Leader Thanked For Supporting People for Animals

Just a little note to say "thank you" for your continuing support of People for Animals.

I know that you will be delighted to hear that the featured dogs, Maggie and Jeffrey, from the October 11 and September 27 adoption days, were both adopted to Westfield area residents who saw their pictures in *The Westfield Leader*.

Your support is invaluable to us. Many thanks.

The family that adopted Maggie previously adopted Annie. Annie also was a featured dog in *The Leader* and that is how the family first found Annie and People for Animals.

Dawne Luetscher  
President  
People for Animals

### Covering Squash Plants With Bags Seems to Stop Rabbits, Ground Hogs

I have been growing the butternut squash at the Miller-Cory Museum for four years. The second year, I had to share more with the rabbits and ground hogs than I wanted.

In the third and fourth summer, on a tip from one of the workers at Farmer John's Organic Farm in Warren, I covered each squash with a paper bag, large enough for the squash to grow into, and tied a string around the bag at the neck of the squash.

Today, I harvested about 20 squash. For the second year, the animals could not seem to find the squashes in the paper bags. I did share my good fortune with the animals by leaving a few on the vine.

I hope this tip is helpful to Westfielders who are growing squash and want to harvest more of what they grow.

Barbara L. Lukosi  
Westfield

### Lions Thank Leader For Helping Success Of White Cane Day

On behalf of the Westfield Lions Club, I personally would like to thank the staff of *The Westfield Leader* on the great job with the publication of our White Cane proclamation with Mayor Thomas C. Jardim. The club enjoyed the article — it made our White Cane Day a successful one.

The article got the public's eye and they responded. We will be using the paper for other events in this Lions year. Again, the club thanks *The Leader* for a great job well done.

Jeffrey S. Broadwell  
Club President

## POLICY ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

All letters to the Editor must bear a signature, a street address and a daytime telephone number so authors may be verified. Letters that are E-mailed to the Editor also must contain a daytime telephone number. Our E-mail address is [goleader@aol.com](mailto:goleader@aol.com).

Letters may be no longer than one-and-a-half pages, typewritten and double-spaced. Letters must be typed upper and lower case. All letters are subject to editing due to space limitations and style.

The deadline for letters is Friday by 4 p.m., if they are to appear in the following issue.

## Letters to the Editor

### Pedestrian Signs Must be Installed Promptly to Deter Traffic Accidents

I was very pleased to learn that Councilwoman Gail S. Vernick and Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger were successful in getting the State Commissioner of Transportation to accept the proposed guidelines which would allow the installation of pedestrian safety signs in Westfield.

These signs, which bolt into the roadway at designated spots throughout town, will serve as a visible reminder to motorists to yield to pedestrians. As the mother of a child who was struck by a car while attempting to cross East Broad Street at the library two years ago, I greet the news of these signs with particular relief and gratitude.

Mrs. Vernick has fought for some 15 months to get state approval for the town's usage of these signs, and I am thankful for her persistence and her success.

The Mayor has expressed interest in formulating a "Master Plan" for pedestrian safety in Westfield. I support whatever we can do as a town to increase the safety of our citizens. However, I urge the Mayor and town officials to do whatever they can to insure the prompt placement of these important devices.

We have waited long enough for their arrival, and the sooner they are in place, the better the chance of heading off another pedestrian accident.

Nancy Gannett Vickers  
Westfield

We Deliver To People...  
Not Driveways

## Favorite Halloween Rituals We Never Quite Outgrow

By Louis H. Clark

'Tis the night before Halloween and all through the house, everyone is preparing. My wife has bought enough candy to feed a medium size orphanage. My youngest daughter, Lily, never goes out except as someone beautiful. Last year, it was Snow White. This year it's going to be her costume from her ballet class. There was much argument about that, but my wife put her foot down and said Lily was going to wear her white Mary Janes — stones were not going to hurt her feet.

My son is getting a little shamed about it. At 13, he says, "So I'm a big kid now. Anyway, I'm just going out to make sure nothing happens to Lily."

Lily looked up when he said that. "He's lying," she said. "He wants to go out with me because I always get more candy than he does."

Carol is at the exalted age of 16, and she sighs for the fun she is going to miss. She doesn't eat any of the candy because it makes "zits" on her face. But she yields to a bunch of telephone calls and is going out "for the last time" with a "singing group" calling themselves The Generator Exchange.

And what did I do? I sit there in my chair before the television and read a book. Suddenly, my wife will remember that I'm not doing anything and will appear. "Just what are you going to do for Halloween?" she asks.

"You know my big job is tomorrow night, when I give out the candy."

With that she hands me a pumpkin and a knife and escorts me into the kitchen.

For some reason no one understands — not even I do — the only usual thing I am good at doing is making scary looking pumpkin heads. I personally think I am good at it because I hate doing it. I cut up everything, make my grizzled faces with the worn teeth, and it's all over in 15 minutes.

I can then sit down with ease because I have done my work. There is a new gadget I bought this year. It's an electric light bulb that shines menacingly and works on batteries. But I know better than to tell anyone about it; they'll start yelling for the candles.

Funny, in life they all use computers at school, have everything mechanical you can think of, but when it comes to Halloween, it's traditional things they demand.

Happy, traditional Halloween, and don't eat all that leftover candy. You won't get "zits" — just fat.

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