



ON MY HONOR...New Fanwood Postmaster John Alvarez is sworn in before a gathering of family and friends in the reception room of the Fanwood Presbyterian Church. Pictured, left to right, are: sons Jay and Michael, his wife, Anita, District Manager Eugene Rear and Postmaster Alvarez.

John Alvarez Begins Tenure As Fanwood Postmaster

By MICHAEL P. BABIK
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Friends and family alike came out to celebrate as John Alvarez was sworn in last Friday as Fanwood Postmaster in the reception area of the Presbyterian Church in Fanwood.

Mr. Alvarez, a resident of Sayreville, took the oath of office administered by Eugene Rear, District Manager of Customer Service and Sales in Northern New Jersey, while his wife, Anita and two sons, Jay, 11, and Michael, 10, looked on. His sons led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The morning ceremony was conducted by Joseph Basile, Postmaster of Montclair and a long-time friend of Mr. Alvarez.

"John and I go back to the mid-eighties," said Mr. Basile in his welcoming speech. "He's very committed to family and always puts them first."

Mr. Alvarez is very active in the community, serving as hockey coach to the local team and also holding the position of Chairman for the Sayreville Annual Block Party.

"This district is the best district in the county because it's dedicated to customer service," explained Mr. Alvarez, in his speech. "When I arrived here six months ago, they welcomed me with open arms."

The Fanwood Post Office, with the help of Mr. Alvarez, raised \$500 in one hour for a muscular dystrophy charity. They also held a food

drive for needy people as part of a National Association of Letter Carriers. Mr. Alvarez commended the generosity of the Fanwood Post Office toward the surrounding community.

"I am proud to work for the Postal Service and I am proud to serve the community," he concluded in emotional closing remarks to the many family members, friends, and fellow postal workers attending the event.

Also on hand for the event was Fanwood Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly, who welcomed Mr. Alvarez to the borough. "The office of Postmaster surely involves public trust and responsibility. I look forward to working with him in this town," she stated.

As Fanwood Postmaster, Mr. Alvarez will be responsible for 20 postal employees and serving the 7,115 residents of Fanwood. The borough's Post Office handles seven million pieces of mail annually and makes 3,200 deliveries a day, according to a recent Postal Service bulletin.

Mr. Alvarez started out with the United States Postal Service as a letter carrier in Fort Lee, in 1984. By 1988, he was Supervisor of Delivery and Collections, also at Fort Lee. In 1996, he moved to the Milburn Post Office as "Officer in Charge" — the rank just below Postmaster.

Mr. Alvarez replaces former Fanwood Postmaster Jeff Gannon, who is now Postmaster in Maplewood.

County Seeks Volunteers For Rape Crisis Center

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders is seeking volunteers to assist sexual assault survivors, their families and significant others, for the Union County Rape Crisis Center, located at 300 North Avenue, East, in Westfield.

Freeholder Mary P. Ruotolo, Liaison to the Union County Commission on the Status of Women, said that although the classes don't begin until Tuesday, October 6, time is needed to interview prospective volunteers and to schedule training sessions.

Selected volunteers will receive approximately 40 hours of training in dealing with traumatic reactions of survivors and family members, as well as the legal and medical aspects of sexual assault.

Volunteer training classes will be held from 6:30 to 10 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, October 6, 8,

13, 15, 20, 22, 27 and 29, and November 5, 10, 12, 17 and 19.

The Rape Crisis Center, a program under the Department of Human Services, Division of Planning, provides free and confidential services for survivors of sexual assault in Union County.

These services include individual and group therapy, a 24-hour crisis hot line, a speakers bureau, in-service training for hospital personnel, law enforcement, mental health professionals and educators, and consultations with professionals who work with survivors.

The center also provides information and referral services to professionals and the general public.

Volunteers may provide emotional support over the telephone; accompany a victim to a hospital or through the court process, or work on the speakers bureau to provide educational programs on sexual assault topics to schools, groups and organizations. They may also distribute information to the community.

To become a volunteer at the Rape Crisis Center, to schedule an interview or for information on volunteer work or the services offered through the center, please call (908) 233-7273 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Hay Ride Ticket Sales To Begin August 15

Tickets will be on sale for fall hay rides and Campfires beginning Saturday, August 15, at Trailside Nature and Science Center, located at 452 New Providence Road in Mountainside.

This annual series of fall fun is one of the most popular offerings of the county's Division of Parks and Recreation. Taking place at Trailside, the public is invited to participate in one or all of these family-oriented evenings of entertainment refreshments and camaraderie.

"Come enjoy an evening in the crisp fall air in Union County's beautiful Watchung Mountains," said Daniel P. Sullivan, Chairman of the Board of Chosen Freeholders. "Families, kids and adults will all have a great time."

Hayrides will be held Fridays, September 18 and 25, October 9, 16 and 23, and November 6 beginning at 6:30 p.m. In case of rain, participants will be rescheduled to one of the remaining rides, as space allows, or an alternate night, as space allows.

Tickets cost \$3 for county residents and \$4 for all others, and entitle the ticket holder to a hayride through the beautiful Watchung Reservation, singing and storytelling with Jim Rohe and hot chocolate and marshmallows by a roaring campfire.

All tickets must be purchased in advance, no tickets will be sold at the hayrides. Space is limited and early registration is encouraged. Group tickets will be limited to a maximum of 25. Private hay ride rentals are available for larger groups.

For additional information, please contact the Division of Parks and Recreation at (908) 527-4900. This program is sponsored by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

UCVTS Reports Rise In Female Enrollment

Women enrolled in classes at Union County Vocational-Technical Schools' (UCVTS) Adult Education Department are acquiring a variety of skills which they intend to utilize in their careers and for special projects, school administrators have revealed.

Three women currently enrolled in the masonry course plan to use their newly-acquired skills to build and repair steps and walls, and to erect barbecue pits, in addition to a myriad of other projects.

Eight women employed by NJ Transit have been taking classes the past few semesters in order to attain certificates in the electrical trade.

Other classes marked by increased female enrollment, according to UCVTS administrators, are welding, power engineering (black seal), carpentry and home repairs, alarm system installation, computer-assisted drafting and drawing, and automotive mechanics.

Thomas Highsmith, Director of Adult Education, stated that many of these classes provide students with the basics for do-it-yourself projects, knowledge to obtain reasonable estimates from contractors, and an understanding of the properties of materials used.

For more information on these and other Adult Education classes, please call (908) 889-2922 or visit the UCVTS Web site on the Internet at www.ucvts.tec.nj.us



TRUE HERO...Lieutenant Michael Brennan, a Fanwood resident and member of the Westfield Fire Department, resuscitated a young girl who collapsed July 14 in Forest Road Park in Fanwood. He and fellow members of the Oldtimers Softball League from St. Bartholomew's Church in Scotch Plains were practicing for a game in the park when the incident took place.

Stricken Youth Saved By Local Firefighter

By SUZETTE F. STALKER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

When Fanwood resident Michael Brennan arrived at Forest Road Park on the evening of July 14, he anticipated a typical summer evening of softball and camaraderie with fellow members of his local team.

Instead, the 39-year-old Westfield Fire Department lieutenant and father of two wound up a hero after successfully resuscitating a 14-year-old girl who collapsed suddenly in the outfield area of the Fanwood park at about 6:30 p.m.

Lieutenant Brennan and other members of the Oldtimers Softball League from St. Bartholomew's Roman Catholic Church in Scotch Plains were engaged in pre-game practice when one of the players saw the girl, who was standing with two other youths, fall to the ground.

Lieutenant Brennan's teammate, knowing his fellow ballplayer possessed cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) skills, alerted him to the unfolding emergency. The veteran firefighter rushed to the victim, while other members of the team summoned additional assistance.

Although she still had a heartbeat, the youngster had stopped breathing by the time Lieutenant Brennan reached her. He said he began resuscitation efforts, and after giving her two breaths, she regained consciousness.

Since a pre-existing medical condition seemed out of the ordinary in a young teenager, he asked the victim whether she had used a narcotic. He said the stricken girl was reluctant to come forth with information, and then lost consciousness again.

Lieutenant Brennan revealed that after he revived the victim a second time, the teenager admitted that she had used a chemical substance prior to collapsing.

He said borough police soon arrived with oxygen, along with members of the Fanwood Volunteer Rescue Squad. The girl was revived a third time, according to Lieutenant Brennan, before being transported to Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in Plainfield, where she was treated and later released.

Fanwood Police Chief Robert Carbo confirmed Tuesday that although it is known the girl had smoked a cigar in the park, authorities are still awaiting laboratory tests to determine whether it was laced with an illegal substance. He said no charges have been filed in the case.

The Chief added that authorities have spoken to the two other youths who were with the victim in the park, noting that the incident is still under investigation by police.

"We're very fortunate that we have people who have the training and are willing to get involved when an emergency occurs," Chief Carbo observed about Lieutenant Brennan's role in resuscitating the teenager.

In addition to the quick response by local police and rescue squad members, Lieutenant Brennan praised his softball teammates for helping to keep onlookers a safe distance away from the victim while rescue efforts were performed.

He also described how a group of youngsters, about 9 or 10 years old, had stopped and attempted to help the victim just after she collapsed.

"I take my hat off to those kids because it took a lot of guts for them to stop and try to help her," remarked Lieutenant Brennan. He said the children remained to watch the resuscitation procedure, adding that he hoped the incident would dissuade the youngsters from ever experimenting with a controlled substance.

The lieutenant, who will mark his 15th anniversary with the Westfield Fire Department in September, was born and raised in Westfield and has lived in Fanwood for 15 years.

Lieutenant Brennan and his wife have two sons, 13-year-old Justin and 7-year-old Kyle. He has been a member of the Westfield Volunteer Rescue Squad for eight years.

He said the girl he rescued in the park last week called to thank him for his efforts. "It was a scare," the lieutenant admitted. "It was nice to hear her voice. I think she realized what she did. Hopefully, there was a lesson there."

In addition to his service as a firefighter and an emergency medical technician (EMT), he has also been a CPR instructor at Overlook Hospital in Summit for the past eight years.

While modest about his own act of heroism last week, the lieutenant emphasized the importance of acquiring even basic CPR skills. "Anybody can learn what I did," he observed. "It doesn't take any special training as an EMT."

He noted that the life-saving techniques he used can be learned in a two-hour course, explaining that rescue breathing — which he used to resuscitate the young victim in last week's incident — is included in every CPR course.

"I've had a few of my students do saves and that, to me, is very rewarding," Lieutenant Brennan commented. He added that having a student say "what you taught me actually worked" or "someone is walking around today because of what I did," has been truly inspiring.