

The Westfield Leader **The Scotch Plains - Fanwood TIMES**
 — Established 1890 — 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, West
 Westfield, N.J. 07091

Tele: (908) 232-4407 • E-mail: editor@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

Published every Thursday by Gale Force Media, L.L.C.

Paul Peyton
 ASSIGNMENT EDITOR
Suzette F. Stalker
 COMMUNITY EDITOR
Horace R. Corbin
 PUBLISHER EMERITUS

Lauren S. Barr
 PUBLISHER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
David B. Corbin
 MANAGING EDITOR & SPORTS EDITOR

Jeff Gruman
 SALES MANAGER
Michael L. Bartiromo
 PRODUCTION MANAGER
Robert P. Connelly
 BUSINESS OPERATIONS MANAGER

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE
 One-year - \$44 • Two-year - \$84 • Three-year - \$122

www.goleader.com/subscribe

Our Fallen Heroes Inspire Us To Face The Challenges of Today

This coming Monday is Memorial Day, the day each year when we remember the fallen among our armed forces and reflect upon the ultimate sacrifice they made on our behalf. The ways in which we observe it will not be the same this year, of course. Engaged as we currently are on a battlefield of a different sort, we must forego the customary parades and concerts, the backyard barbecues and other social activities that are so much a part of this pre-summer holiday.

Yet for all that is different this year, the spirit and significance of this day remain as vital and vibrant as ever. Memorial Day is a celebration of heroes, the men and women who gave, in the words of President Abraham Lincoln, "the last full measure of devotion" to their country. We continue to witness this altruism every day, among the troops defending us abroad, as well as in all those defending us at home in the fight against a formidable, invisible viral foe.

They may or may not wear a uniform, or serve in the same capacity, but all of them share an unwavering commitment to ensuring the health and safety of our nation and its people. Our soldiers, sailors, defenders in the skies; doctors, nurses and their colleagues; police and firefighters; civilians from every city and town... we laud their courage, express our gratitude, and mourn those lost in the efforts to save others.

A second aspect of Memorial Day not dimmed by present-day circumstances is the sense of unity we feel in paying tribute to our fallen troops. The liberty generations

have fought and died for is the greatest tie that binds us as Americans — transcending political allegiances, cultural variations and all socio-economic characteristics.

Some towns will conduct Memorial Day ceremonies without spectators present this year, but available for the public to view remotely. While it is disappointing not to be there in person, these virtual formats allow us to stay connected and remain part of life in our community, which is crucial to our overall well-being. We also should remember that, for military personnel stationed far from home, maintaining family ties remotely is a way of life under any circumstances.

While Memorial Day retains its relevance year to year, certain milestones emphasize more strongly than ever all this holiday represents. This is one of those years — the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War, the 45th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, and the 155th anniversary of the conclusion of the Civil War. All are poignant reminders of the lives given for freedom, the oppressed who were liberated, and the way the world was changed.

Despite the new reality in which we are living, and the scaled-back commemorations, we hope all members of our communities and beyond will observe Memorial Day this year in whatever way possible. We can watch a virtual wreath-laying, visit and decorate a grave, display our country's flag, or privately recall in our minds and hearts those whose valor and sacrifice continue to inspire us and motivate us to confront the challenges we face today.

Any Spending Cuts Must Be Shared by BOEs, County, Towns

Although most municipal and school budgets have been either introduced or adopted by now, the true economic impact on towns from the coronavirus shutdown will probably hit the fan sometime in June when actual revenue numbers from May 1 property-tax payments, which were effectively extended to June 1, are known.

With some 1.1 million New Jerseyans having filed for unemployment benefits over the past eight weeks and with 725,000 receiving benefits, we expect the coronavirus impact will be severe on towns' revenue streams. As we have pointed out, while municipalities are the collector of taxes, they also are responsible for distributing quarterly payments to their local school boards and the County of Union.

Westfield's officials have said "revenue uncertainty" is the most "significant challenge" facing the town this year. Last year \$173.7 million was collected in taxes in town. In addition, school districts will likely see lower aid numbers as the Murphy administration now projects a \$10-million drop in revenue projections through next year, according to an nj.com report.

In Westfield, the school tax levy for 2020-2021 is \$103 million. Last year's county tax for Westfield (we won't know this year's numbers until later this month) was \$40.8 million, along with another \$1.2 million for the open space tax, for a total of \$144.5 million. Doing the math, that comes to over \$36 million in payments every three months just for school and county taxes. The municipal tax is another \$28.5 million.

According to an April 24 letter sent by Scotch Plains Mayor Al Smith to the U.S. Senate and House Leader-

ship, the township has an obligation to raise \$109 million in property taxes, \$69.5 million of which goes to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education, with \$22.7 million going to Union County. The township's budget is \$26 million. The mayor says a 5-percent loss in collection of those taxes would leave Scotch Plains \$5.5 million short of that obligation.

We will be listening intently to financial reports coming in from towns and the county on revenue projections and actual tax collections, which we expect will be down significantly from previous years. The county also is to receive more than \$100 million in COVID-19-related funds per the CARES Act. A good portion of those funds are to be distributed to municipalities. Of course we don't yet know how much will come to the suburban towns.

If spending cuts, staffing reductions or furloughs are necessary to save money, in our view, the pain must be spread across all levels of government. Towns should not have to cut police and firefighters, while making full payments to the county and school districts, if the revenue is not there.

It's time for the unions to step up to the plate for the good of the state. While the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) is already renegotiating health-insurance contracts, we implore all of the collective bargaining unions to dig deeper. We've heard from many that if they knew it would save their jobs and those of their colleagues, they would gladly give up their previously-negotiated raises — now it's time for the leaders to act.

Stay tuned, as we expect the economic impact of the coronavirus shutdown to hit government coffers hard.

Letters to the Editor

High School Seniors Deserve Same Consideration as Jersey Shore

Editor's Note: The following letter was addressed to Governor Phil Murphy.

My name is Alexis Hammer, and I am the senior class president at Westfield High School. I am writing to you on behalf of every high school senior wanting to celebrate their graduation with their peers this June. I am disappointed by your deeming graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2020 not safe, yet you decided that opening the Jersey shore beaches is. If people are allowed to social distance on beaches, then all New Jersey high school seniors should be allowed to have socially-distanced graduations.

I don't understand the logic of withholding this milestone celebration. High school graduation ceremonies will be safe because everyone will be spread out at least six feet apart from each other in an outdoor setting, and we'll be wearing face masks. Only students and faculty will attend, not even our parents, siblings, and grandparents.

Governor Murphy, your decision to open the Jersey Shore beaches more than one month before graduations will take place lets every senior in New Jersey know that you have more confidence and trust in toddlers than us, young adults. We hear you loud and

clear but don't agree that we are more of a health risk than preschool and elementary school kids wanting to play on the beach or waiting on the snack bar and public bathroom lines. Do you think that we are less safe at a controlled graduation ceremony than families getting out of their cars in cramped parking lots and on crowded streets?

I'm not contesting your statement that, "The Shore is central to our Jersey identity," but I am asking that you also acknowledge that proper high school graduations are central to twelfth graders' identities. We can do this safely, and together as a student body, but we need your support and approval to allow this to happen!

The Class of 2020 has been waiting for 12 years for this day, and I am asking you to reconsider your decision and allow New Jersey schools to have in-person graduation ceremonies. We will abide by every social-distancing guideline. Please let us safely have this one last celebration together.

I hope that you will give the New Jersey Class of 2020 the same level of consideration that you put forth when deciding to open the Jersey Shore.

Alexis Hammer
 Senior Class President
 Westfield High School

SP-F BOE Should Reexamine Funding Field Lighting Project

Whatever Joan Mast, Al Smith, Colleen Mahr, Fred Tomkins and Deb Saridaki are smoking....I want some!

How could they possibly, in good conscience, give the go ahead on field lighting in a time when we don't even know if the kids will be back in school in the fall? Let alone playing night games of football? The NFL is trying to figure out how they can get on a schedule.....with NO fans!

At a time when all municipalities are struggling to stay afloat and citizens are worried about feeding AND educating their kids, the school board should reexamine the better use of these funds. Joan Mast is quoted in your article on the subject as saying "the project has been planned for and funds set aside in the capital reserves portion of the capital budget." Well just like all other

Americans the SPF BOE needs to re-evaluate how it is spending our tax dollars. How many bottles of sanitizer or face masks can that money buy?

Just because I planned, and set aside money for a trip to Hawaii this fall, doesn't mean that I will be able to go. Those funds can be spent elsewhere. Lights on a field that no one can use at this time and may not be used for a long time is a serious breach of the trust given to these elected and appointed individuals.

I hope other SPF taxpayers open their eyes and I thank Adam Sackett, who wrote the original letter to the board, for bringing this into the light. And thank you Times for reporting on it.

Pat Leonard
 Scotch Plains

Garwood Residents Encouraged to Stay Vigilant While Shopping Local

Two months since the first notification of a positive case of COVID-19 here in Garwood, we are now at a cumulative number of 41 positive cases as of May 15. Sadly, we have lost two residents in our community from complications related to this horrible disease.

I want to thank everyone who is complying with Governor Murphy's executive orders, particularly those regarding social distancing. I know the weather is getting nicer, and we are all getting anxious to get back to any semblance of normalcy. However, we must continue to stay vigilant and take this threat seriously. It is because of our combined efforts that since May 1, Garwood has not reported a positive case. That is 13 consecutive days without a new case in our borough. We are flattening this curve in Garwood and saving lives beyond our community.

The devastating effects on public health are paramount, but so, too, are the economic ones. I encourage everyone to continue to shop local here in Garwood because our local businesses need our support more than ever. For a list of open restaurants, please check out garwood.org/shoplocal. Per Governor Murphy's latest executive order, our non-essential retail businesses will now be allowed to do curbside pickup, so please support them as they re-open. And I encourage all our residents to join me on Shop Local Saturday by purchasing lunch, dinner or both from one of our open restaurants in town.

Recognizing the impact of the pandemic on our small business community, the borough launched a "Shop Local 2020" initiative to help promote our businesses and assist them with setting up an online gift certificate platform. Please email shoplocal@garwood.org for more information, and I will continue to reach out to businesses and be there for them in every way I can, along with our Business and Industry Liaison, Carol Kearney.

While many activities and programs have been canceled in our borough, the June bulk waste pickup program will go on as scheduled. Be sure to complete the application and turn it into Borough Hall by June 1. The application is avail-

able in the vestibule of Borough Hall or on garwood.org. However, due to the COVID-19 emergency, we have canceled the town-wide yard sale because it is not conducive to social distancing.

As a reminder to all taxpayers, the grace period for paying the quarter 2 payments was extended through the end of May by the borough council and as permitted by Governor Murphy due to the COVID-19 emergency. There is a secure drop box in the vestibule of Borough Hall for tax payments and other payments along with a drop box for court payments. You can pay taxes by the drop box, by mail, or online, but be sure to read the applicable fees for each payment method.

Meanwhile, we are continuing to engage our "small town with a big heart" through virtual activities. Last week, we announced the winners of the Garwood Strong poster contest. I would like to extend my congratulations to them all. This week, the Garwood Mayor's Wellness Campaign has launched a Fitness Bingo Challenge on Facebook to promote healthy living with a gift card to &Grain up for grabs, thanks to the generous donation from owner John Ropelski. Also this week, the Garwood Green Team launched a Garwood Gardens contest where residents can submit photos of their gardens to garwoodgreenteam@garwood.org by June 15 to enter to win one of three ShopRite gift cards.

Residents, and anyone else who is interested in receiving information about what our local government is doing or how to support our local businesses, are encouraged to sign up for email updates from the Borough of Garwood by visiting bit.ly/3duP6gE.

I will continue to advocate for our borough as I am on daily calls organized by the county and on weekly calls with the Governor's Office. Also, I have been doing daily updates on my @MayorSaraTodisco Facebook page. Please feel free to reach out to me anytime. My cell number is (908) 377-7890 and my email is STodisco@garwood.org. Stay safe and be well, everyone.

Sara Todisco
 Garwood Mayor



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions — only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

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. Perse — Grayish blue
2. Cunctative — Slow-moving; sluggish
3. Rodomontade — To boast or brag
4. Yarage — Manageability of a ship at sea

ORGULOUS

1. Proud; haughty
2. Awkward; clumsy
3. Pertaining to overindulgence in any activity
4. Communicating knowledge; systematically investigating

RHIPIDATE

1. Nature of having a rattling in the chest due to an obstruction
2. Formed like a fan
3. Having perennial roots but annual stems and leaves
4. In botany and zoology, having very small crevices or cracks

ROBORATION

1. A strengthening
2. A nightgown
3. Quivering; shaking
4. A very loud noise; explosion

SEVUM

1. A medieval wind instrument similar to the trombone
2. In botany, the second, or inner coat, of an ovule
3. Fat, as used in the preparation of ointments
4. A soluble poison formed in the putrefaction of blood and other protein matter

Acceptance: A Core Principle of the Mental Health Council

For our third week of letters to the editor for Mental Health Awareness Month, the Westfield Mental Health Council introduces the second ingredient to CAKE: acceptance. As a reminder, CAKE represents compassion, acceptance, kindness, and empathy. These four "ingredients" are the building blocks of a stigma-free community.

Merriam-Webster defines acceptance as "a readiness or willingness to accept or adapt to a given circumstance."

As defined, it makes sense that acceptance is key to creating strong communities. However, how does one demonstrate acceptance within a community utilizing specific behaviors? Perhaps, this ingredient is a call for us to look inward before we can take action outward.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many strains on individuals in our community. Residents are struggling with balancing multiple roles: parent, teacher, worker, cleaner and chef, leaving many feeling exhausted and thin on patience. Others may be alone, unemployed, and unable to move forward. Many of us are likely experiencing a mixture of these roles and feelings all at once, and often contradicting one another, from day to day. For that reason, before we can become a closer knit community, perhaps the most important step is self acceptance.

Self acceptance begins with the imperfections that live in all of us, not in the form of resignation, but rather as empowerment to not dwell on self-perceived flaws — the errors we make at work, the homework our children forget to do, the dusty house, and oh the dreaded bathroom cleaning we put off each week. To find true acceptance, we must embrace that we are filled with stunning flaws that make us unique and move forward. Once we see the imperfections, that pawed piece of icing on our beautifully decorated CAKE, we can embrace the diversity of our community. We can welcome the differences amongst our residents, be it mental health, race, gender, socioeconomic status and many other distinguishing factors. After all, you can't bake a cake with only flour. You need the eggs, sugar, sweet vanilla, chocolate frosting and many more ingredients to enjoy that delicious piece CAKE and share it with others.

You can find more information on the CAKE initiative, as well as additional mental health resources at www.westfieldnj.gov/mentalhealth. Lastly, please feel free to send your CAKE-filled thoughts and ideas to cake@westfieldnj.gov.

Marta LaRusso
 Sub-Committee Member
 Westfield Mental Health Council



State LD-21 Sen. Thomas Kean, Jr. (R) 425 North Ave. E. Westfield, N.J. 07090 (908) 232-3673 Asm. Jon Bramnick (R) 251 North Ave. West Westfield, N.J. 07090 (908) 232-2073 Asm. Nancy Munoz (R) 57 Union Place, Suite 310 Summit, N.J. 07901 (908) 918-0414	State LD-22 Sen. Nicholas Scutari (D) 1514 E. Saint Georges Ave. Linden, N.J. 07036 (908) 587-0404 Asm. Jim Kennedy (D) 34 E. Cherry St. Rahway, N.J. 07065 (732) 943-2660 Asw. Linda Carter (D) 200 West 2nd St., Suite 102 Plainfield, N.J. 07060 (908) 561-5757	7th Congressional District Representative Tom Malinowski (D) 75-77 N. Bridge St., Somerville, N.J. 08876 (908) 547-3307 [Westfield, Mountainside, Garwood, Summit and Cranford are in the 7th Congressional District]
LD-21 includes Westfield, Mountainside, Garwood, Summit and Cranford.	LD-22 includes Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Plainfield, Clark, Rahway and Linden.	12th Congressional District Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D) 850 Bear Tavern Road, Suite 201, Ewing, N.J. 08628 (609) 883-0026 [Fanwood, Plainfield and most of Scotch Plains are in the 12th Congressional District]

senkean@njleg.org, senscutari@njleg.org, asmbramnick@njleg.org, asmunoz@njleg.org, asmkennedy@njleg.org, aswcarter@njleg.org