

## 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](mailto:press@goleader.com) • Web: [www.goleader.com](http://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 WATCHUNG COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

Michelle H. LePoidevin

A&E and EDUCATION

Suzette F. Stalker

COMMUNITY

Paul J. Peyton

BUSINESS and GOVERNMENT

Horace R. Corbin

PUBLISHER

Gail S. Corbin

GENERAL MANAGER

Karen M. Hinds

OFFICE MANAGER

## 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  
Fanwood Business & Professional Association

Periodicals — Postage Paid at Scotch Plains, New Jersey  
P. O. Box 368 • 1906 Bartle Avenue  
Scotch Plains, N.J. 07076

David B. Corbin

SPORTS

Fred K. Lecomte

SALES/SPORTS

Melissa Betkowski

EDUCATION

### SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

One-year — \$24 • Two-year — \$46 • Three-year — \$66 • One-year college (September to May) — \$16

## Residents Should Step Up to Plate By Giving Views And Opinions On Wide Range of Issues

"Fear Strikes Out" is a book of the 1950s about Boston outfielder Jimmy Jensen. Fear is debilitating in baseball and in our society, too.

On local matters, we receive calls from some who wish to express opinions about matters, but they won't sign their name to a letter. They fear reprisal from authorities, or they are concerned that the public may be critical of their opinion.

The subjects that are raised are varied and impor-

tant. The issues include taxes, education, law enforcement, parking, land development and many others. In our view, all opinions are worthwhile. Most importantly, exercising the right to express one's opinion without fear is a cornerstone of our society.

We salute those that step forward with their views, and we encourage others to do so as well. Step up to the plate and sign your name. We'll publish it.

## Redistricting Hearings Would Help Ensure Input From Public of Redrawn Districts

The map for New Jersey's newly drawn 40 legislative districts is out and the court fight is on.

Over the next few days, we will be hearing the term "unpacking," or the spreading out of minority vote, as opposed to a more compact approach which was applied in 1991, the last time redistricting was accomplished.

While Democrats want to spread out the minority vote, the GOP has said their map would have increased from three to five the number of minority districts in the Legislature. They say the Democratic map includes only one such district.

Interestingly, both times the majority party has been on the losing end of the map that has been implemented: Democrats in 1991 and Republicans here in 2001.

If the new map is upheld, Democrats are likely to gain the State Senate seat that has long been held by current Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco of Scotch Plains. The other seat, held by Republican C. Louis Bassano, is likely to go to fellow Republican, Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger.

If the new 21st District stays intact, there will likely be a long list of Assembly candidates set to run in the Tuesday, June 5 Republican Primary. It is likely that the race will come down to three-term Assemblyman Joel Weingarten of Millburn, Assemblyman-elect Tom Kean, Jr. of Westfield, who will be sworn into office on Thursday, May 3, and another likely Assemblyman in the next few weeks, Councilman Eric Munoz of Summit. Mr. Munoz is the front-runner to replace Assemblyman Kevin O'Toole of Verona, who is likely to resign from the Assembly in order to take the place of Mr. Bassano of Union, who resigned Monday, in the State Senate.

Other possible candidates for the Assembly race include former Cranford Mayor Tom Denny, Roselle Park Mayor Joseph Delorio and former Springfield Mayor Harry Pappas.

Some insiders have said the new map increases competition in legislative races. Here in Union County, that does not seem to be the case. The new 21st is quite similar, if not even more Republican, than the old 22nd. The new 22nd now becomes a Democratic district, with little chance for the GOP to retain the Senate and Assembly seats they currently

hold. Had the old districts been kept intact, we believe it was likely the Democrats could have picked up Mr. Bassano's seat and perhaps even an Assembly seat, with Joseph Cryan of Cryan's restaurants the likely Senate candidate. Remember Union is now a solid Democratic town.

Scotch Plains is likely to lose representation in the Legislature for the first time since the 1970s, as both the Senate seat of Acting Governor DiFrancesco and the seat of former Assemblyman Alan M. Augustine are likely to turn Democrat. The new district includes Linden, Plainfield and Rahway. Democrats have chosen Assemblyman Joseph Suliga of Linden for the Senate and Assemblyman Gerald Green of Plainfield and Union County Freeholder Linda d. Stender of Fanwood for the Assembly seats.

Former Scotch Plains Mayor Gabe Spera was set to run for the Assembly in the old 22nd District. We believe the GOP will run a full slate in this new district, with possible candidates from Rahway and Plainfield named to the ticket in an effort to increase the vote for Republicans.

Both Democrats and Republicans submitted redistricting maps, with the Democratic one representing the most significant change from the current districts. Republicans hold 10-seat majorities in both houses of the Legislature and have lost control of several county governments over the past few years that they had gained following the revolt against the 1990 tax increase approved by the Democrat-controlled Legislature during the administration of former Governor Jim Florio.

With as much discussion as has been held recently over the redistricting map, we question why the state does not hold public hearings in each of its 21 counties, or at least in the regions most impacted by population and demographic changes. After all, we require hearings when the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) changes flight patterns — why not let the public decide in what district they feel their town should be located?

Also, wouldn't it be more appropriate that the map be placed into effect two years after the Census comes out, or in this case, in 2003? This would give both the public and candidates sufficient time to comment on the proposed maps and to prepare for the election.

## Letters to the Editor

### All of Mountainside's Teams Deserve To Play on Lighted Baseball Fields

I was extremely concerned when, at the Baseball/Softball opening ceremony on Saturday, April 7, the Mayor of Mountainside announced that funds from a grant would be used to light Major League Field No. 1. He seemed to feel that the planned improvements would somehow benefit all of the children and adults in Mountainside. There seems to be a need to clarify exactly who is really playing where on the fields in town.

Little League Field No. 1 is not used by any Deerfield School team, boys or girls, or by physical education classes. In fact, this field is Board of Education property, which is leased and used exclusively by a private corporation, the Mountainside Youth Baseball Association. This field is used by the Major League, which has six teams made up of approximately 65 boys and one girl. This is a very worthwhile organization, but is by no means representative of a large portion of our town's population.

The Girls Recreation Softball (summer) play on two upper fields on the side of Deerfield School, which slope downhill in left and right field. The women also play behind Beechwood School during June and July. None of the girls or the women's Recreation Softball teams play ball on any of the four Little League fields in town or on the Borough Hall field on Route 22.

The Men's Recreation League, the Men's Senior League, and a PAL summer traveling team presently use the Borough Hall field. The Pony League field, which is behind Deerfield School, is used by Little League teams and the Deerfield School baseball team (all boys).

The three fields that the mayor has listed in his plans for lights and upgrades, (field no. 1) Borough Hall and the Pony League field) are all used exclusively by boys, and men's teams, during the spring and summer seasons with the exception of approximately 13 girls in the summer at the Borough Hall location. There are no plans for upgrades on any of the girls or women's fields.

Perhaps the mayor and council should consider using a portion of these funds to install lights on the Beechwood School field or to level the fields at Deerfield that are used by the girls and women. The Beechwood field size and location are better suited for use by a more inclusive variety of community groups than Major League Field No. 1 and with the intended re-opening of the school, the field would benefit from the upgrade. The leveling and upgrading of the two Deerfield girls' fields would benefit the existing Recreation teams and the Deerfield School softball team. This same area could also be used for soccer and/or field hockey in the fall, if it was leveled.

It is critical to point out that, if only the boys and men's fields are upgraded

### Don't Ask Taxpayers To Support Unlimited Free Student Parking

Brent Bramnick suggested two solutions to the student parking problem at the high school.

Here are a few more:

1. Walk,
2. Bike,
3. Car-pool,
4. Ask mom or dad for a ride.

Please do not ask the taxpayers to support unlimited free student parking.

Dexter Force  
Westfield

### Knights of Columbus Seek Support For Annual Retarded Citizens Drive

The Father John S. Nelligan Council No. 5730, Knights of Columbus, representing the Township of Scotch Plains and the Borough of Fanwood, will be conducting its annual fund drive, in conjunction with the New Jersey State Council of the Knights of Columbus, to aid retarded citizens and those with learning disabilities in the State of New Jersey and, particularly, in Union County.

This drive will take place on Friday,

and lights added, and if state and/or federal funds are being used to pay for these improvements on Board of Education property, than they fall under government and educational guidelines for equal rights access, such as Title IX. The local government and the Board of Education are both obligated by law to follow the state and federal guidelines for equal access when planning or upgrading facilities, their programming, and their usage.

Wake up and smell the hot dogs! The year is 2001 and Title IX was passed in 1972. Put up new fencing if required and light the fields. Use the funds. But it must be with the understanding that all teams, male, female, children and/or adult will be scheduled equally to play under these lights and benefit from the field upgrades. There have been too many empty promises in the past. This time the girls and women should be given written guarantees, before the work begins, that they will be included in the mayor and council's plans. It's been 29 years since Title IX became law and yet another generation of girls is chasing the ball down the hill.

Mary S. Trimmer  
Mountainside

### Seniors Should Take Advantage Of Property Tax Relief Programs

Seniors with lower incomes have until Tuesday, May 1, to file for a state program that freezes their property taxes at current levels. If they qualify, the state will reimburse them for annual property tax increases on their homes.

This is one of five programs providing property tax relief to seniors, and it is generally the one that will save them the most. It is called the Property Tax Reimbursement Program. Individuals who are over 65 (and those on disability), have been New Jersey residents for 10 years, have been in their present home for three years and have an income below about \$19,000 for singles and about \$23,000 for couples (the eligibility ceilings vary from year to year), should check the precise requirements to see if they qualify.

Citizens who qualified for the program last year should have received renewal forms for this year from the Division of Taxation. If you qualified last year and believe you continue to be eligible, but did not receive the forms for this year, call the hotline number below. If you did not qualify or apply last year, but believe you may qualify this year,

you need to obtain an application form from one of the sources below. Application forms, whether renewal or new, must be mailed by May 1.

Further details can be obtained from the state's toll-free Property Tax Reimbursement Program Hotline, (800) 882-6597. If you have computer access to the Internet, you can obtain a wealth of information, including filing forms and instructions, at <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/proprefz.htm> or [www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/proprefz.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/proprefz.htm).

In addition, citizens in *The Leader* and *The Times* readership area have a particularly valuable resource. Our State Senator (now also our Acting Governor), Donald T. DiFrancesco, sponsored the legislation that created this program. His staff is ready to assist citizens who need forms and instructions. Senator DiFrancesco's office is located at 1816 Front Street, Scotch Plains and his staff can be reached at (908) 322-5500.

A. Welles Sumner  
Scotch Plains

### Resident Questions Need to Spend For Additional WHS Student Spaces

While reading Melissa Betkowski's informative article about student parking problems at Westfield High School (WHS), I soon realized that I had more questions than solutions. While demand for student parking spaces has historically exceeded supply, this was never a problem requiring PTSO or Board of Education (BOE) solution.

WHS administrators used to handle it by setting and enforcing rules. Students, though perhaps disgruntled, seldom if ever usurped spaces assigned to the regular faculty. Yet I do recall that students' vehicles were occupying slots reserved for substitutes and visitors starting in 1998. I was accused of being hostile

when I informed a WHS assistant principal of this.

Now it appears that student confiscation of full-time faculty spaces is deliberate and commonplace.

My first question triggered by Melissa's report is, why has the WHS administration allowed this problem to escalate? The second is, why has the BOE and PTSO not kicked this issue back down to the high school for resolution? Probably neither body wants to be perceived as being insensitive to student needs.

Then we have Mr. Bramnick's (President of the Student Council) two proposals that will be presented to the Town Council. The first is to pave a grassy field behind the Armory, the second, to allow students extra parking time in two-hour zones. Why does Brent think student parking deserves additional tax dollars and why does he think students deserve immunity from the two-hour limit? These would be my third and fourth questions.

Mrs. Walsh's quoted response about the \$100,000 and Mr. Kessler's concern about commuter feelings suggest, thankfully, that they are not in a rush to create more parking spaces for students. But why haven't they told Dr. Petix to fix the problem? And why is the Town Council now asked to decide what is a WHS issue? Isn't there some precedent for the Town Council not to be involved in school affairs? They are always hands off on the school budget. These are my last three questions.

For solutions, I came up with only three. The first would be to let students park in the large grassy area along Rahway Avenue. The second would be for our exploding school budget to accommodate a full time Vice Principal-Student Parking. The third, and perhaps the best, is to inform students that confiscation of teachers' parking spaces will result in fines, tows, and losses of license.

John McCloskey  
Westfield

### More Letters to the Editor Page 5

### Westfield BOE President Thanks Public For Support of 2001-2002 School Budget

On behalf of the Westfield Board of Education, I would like to thank the Westfield community for voting in favor of the 2001-2002 school budget.

The 3-to-1 vote was once again an affirmation of the community's strong support of education. Both the basic budget and the second question were approved, permitting important educational and co-curricular activities to continue.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Finance Committee, particularly Michael Kessler, the Chairman, for months of work in preparing a very challenging budget. Michael, whose financial expertise was a real asset to the board, will be retiring as a board member this month.

A fond farewell to my friend and board member Eileen Satkin, whose second term on the board is coming to an end. As a professional in the education community, Eileen's keen observa-

tions and emphasis on the individual student will be missed.

Welcome to Lisa Alter, Ginny Leiz and Richard Solomon, our newly-elected board members. Their experience and interest in education will be a real benefit to our community.

Lastly, I want to thank the entire board, school administration and Westfield community for their support during my nine years on the Board of Education. It has been an honor to serve a community that recognizes the importance of education. It has also been a real pleasure to work with dedicated teachers and staff and talented students.

As I retire from the Board of Education, my interest in our schools will continue. The schools will always remain an important part of our community and it was a privilege to be involved with continuing their success.

Danielle Walsh, President  
Westfield Board of Education

