



SCOTCH PLAINS

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# THE TIMES



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**HOT DIGGITY DOG...**Last Thursday evening, Scotch Plains Business & Professional Association (SPBPA) President Ray Pardon manned the barbecue grill and served up delicious hot dogs at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad headquarters during the business organization's barbecue.

Cheri Rogovsky for The Times

### Kenneth Lipstein Seeks Chairmanship Of Scotch Plains Democratic Committee

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Times

Kenneth Lipstein, a former candidate for Scotch Plains Township Council and the township's Municipal Prosecutor in 1999, intends to seek election next month as Scotch Plains Democratic Committee Chairman.

If chosen — no other candidate for the post has emerged — Mr. Lipstein will succeed Stanley Donatelli, who decided not to seek re-election. Mr. Lipstein, an 18-year resident of Scotch Plains, has the support of Mr. Donatelli as well as Councilwoman Geri M. Samuel.

Speaking this week with *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood*, Mr. Lipstein said he feels it's "a good time to become chairman of the Democratic Party." He believes Patricia Romano, who the local Democrats are formally backing in a write-in campaign in the June 26 primary, will be an effective candidate for Township Council in November against Republican Guy



Ken Lipstein

Celentano.

Ms. Romano was selected for the write-in effort after incumbent Democratic Councilwoman Sharynn Porter decided in mid-April not to seek election. This fall's race will fill out the remaining one year of the unexpired term of the late Councilman

Tarquin Jay Bromley, who died last September.

Mrs. Porter, who had been appointed to Mr. Bromley's Council seat, made her intentions for November known too late for the Democrats to field a candidate in the primary.

Instead, according to Mr. Lipstein, Ms. Romano needs to garner 11 write-in votes on June 26 for her name to appear on the Democratic line on the November ballot. The 11-vote figure is based on a statutory formula requiring municipal write-in candidates to receive 5 percent of the total number of votes cast in the previous General Assembly primary. In the 1999 Democratic Assembly primary in Scotch Plains, 217 votes were cast; 5 percent of 217 votes is 11 votes.

Since the 1998 election that saw the Democrats win three council seats and a majority on the governing body, the party has lost three consecutive elections: the 1999 special election held to fill out the remainder of the term of Democrat Franklin P.

### DOT PROPOSES LESS INTRUSIVE ALTERNATIVES

## Bridge Over Rt. 22 Linking Park-Bonnie Appears Dead

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Times

Representatives from the state Department of Transportation (DOT) last week presented a scaled-back and less-costly proposal to alleviate the heavy traffic flow in the area where Route 22 intersects with Park Avenue and Bonnie Burn Road in Scotch Plains.

At an informational session last Wednesday night at the Scotch Plains Municipal Building that was attended by more than three dozen residents from Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Watchung and Mountainside as well as two members of the Scotch Plains Township Council, Township Attorney Douglas W. Hansen, Fanwood Mayor Louis C. Jung and Watchung Mayor Tony Addario, DOT's Peter Kenny said the department's goal was "to make traffic flow better but safer while maintaining the character of the area."

Early last year, DOT had proposed replacing the bridge that spans Route

22 in Scotch Plains with a new, wider crossing that would directly link Park Avenue and Bonnie Burn Road. At last week's meeting, Andre Lupov of Parsons Transportation Group said that the idea behind an entirely new bridge had been "to get the heaviest traffic volume to move most efficiently." That proposal, which also included the construction of jughandles and turn-off lanes, would have resulted in the loss of all buildings on both sides of Park Avenue between Route 22 and Sunset Place, including the Mobil gas station; all buildings between the present bridge and the Bonnie Burn Road turnoff from Route 22, West; the TGIFriday's restaurant building in the Blue Star Shopping Center in Watchung; the Exxon gas station on Route 22, East, and the Excel gas station on Route

22, West. Part of the parking lot owned by Pantagis Renaissance restaurant would also have been taken over for construction of an exit ramp from Route 22 east to Park Avenue.

But worries about the loss of parking at Pantagis, the loss of a number of tax ratables in Scotch Plains and the loss of access to and from Route 22 led to the development of eight alternatives. Six were considered, Mr. Lupov said, but rejected because they were not feasible, leaving the original proposal and two alternatives for consideration. Besides the proposal for the new bridge, two other alternatives were developed that entailed retaining the existing bridge while expanding the intersections on the north and south sides of the bridge.

Mr. Lupov noted that the heaviest

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Cheri Rogovsky for The Times

**HIP-HOP...**Eighth graders from Terrill Middle School in Scotch Plains recently stormed New York City for a DARE Hip-Hop music event and street fair. Instructor Mary Diaz from the Center for Dance Education in Clark, left, kept Jason Krueger, Josh Rogovsky, Michael Baumwoll and Michael Sprung fresh and street wise for the performance.

### Fanwood Block Given Designation As Area In Need of Redevelopment

By SUZETTE F. STALKER  
Specially Written for The Times

Borough Council members approved a resolution last Thursday supporting the Fanwood Planning Board's recent recommendation that a full block of commercial land in Fanwood's downtown be designated as an area in need of redevelopment.

Their unanimous vote capped nearly two hours of discussion on the proposal which, once a redevelopment plan is in place, would give the governing body greater power to address problems at the 6.5-acre site, which is bordered by South, LaGrande and Martine Avenues and by Second Street.

The block is made up of 24 separate tax lots, representing retail, of-

warehouse and light industrial uses. Four of these lots comprise the Dean Oil site at the corner of South and Second, which has sustained soil and groundwater contamination and has been dormant for some 15 years.

About a dozen people turned out for last week's regular council meeting, among them longtime business and property owners on the block who expressed fears that targeting the area for redevelopment would ultimately cause them to lose their livelihoods and change the small-town character of the downtown.

The Planning Board had recommended the council approve the block as an area in need of redevelopment following a report given May 16 by Richard Preiss, a partner with the

planning and real estate consultant firm of Abeles Phillips Preiss and Shapiro, concerning a study of the block which the firm performed on behalf of the governing body earlier this year.

The study was done to determine if the block met criteria for designation as an area in need of redevelopment under New Jersey's 1992 Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, which enables municipalities to launch a preliminary investigation into whether an area qualifies for such status.

During his report before the Planning Board last month, Mr. Preiss, who has worked with borough officials on various projects for about a decade, said his study found that all but seven of the 24 lots met at least one of the state's criteria.

He cited diverse ownership of the lots, the deteriorated condition of certain buildings and what he termed as the faulty design of a central parking area, as well as contamination issues related to the Dean Oil site, among the reasons why redevelopment efforts have been stymied there over the past two decades.

While some buildings, primarily retail stores fronting onto Martine Avenue, did not fall within any of the state's criteria, Mr. Preiss recommended the entire block be designated as an area in need of redevelopment, so officials could focus on this section of the downtown as a whole when developing improvement strategies.

According to Mr. Preiss, a redevelopment plan would reflect borough officials' goals as outlined in the

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### SP Planning Bd. Adopts Master Plan; B'way, Lamberts Zoned for Single Lots

By DEBORAH MADISON  
Specially Written for The Times

The Scotch Plains Planning Board unanimously adopted a new Master Plan for the township at its meeting on Monday night.

The new plan, written by professional planning consultant Susan Kimble, was reviewed by the board at an open public hearing, in order to allow residents an opportunity to make comments and suggestions to the board regarding the plan.

Although the Master Plan is reviewed every six years and minor revisions and additions are made on a yearly basis, the bulk of the previous plan was written in 1976 and was in need of major rewriting.

The Master Plan outlines the township's future goals and objectives for land use, zoning and development. Some of the goals for the municipality, as outlined in the plan, are to: protect the character of residential zones; improve the commercial zones; support open space and lessen flooding.

Scotch Plains is described as being predominantly residential in character and one of the main objectives outlined in the plan is to retain that residential character and protect the residential zones from commercial sprawl by limiting abutting commercial developments and maintaining adequate buffers.

Two zoning changes were recommended in the plan to reflect the current development plans for those areas. The Broadway Development site and the Lamberts Mill site are proposed for rezoning to reflect fu-

ture plans to build single-family residential housing at both of those locations.

Other changes include recommendations governing wireless telecommunications antennas and towers, free-standing signs, home-based businesses and senior housing needs.

Mayor Martin L. Marks and several board members lamented the fact that only a handful of residents attended such an important meeting as this. Considering that many residents have presented various objections to Planning Board, Board of Adjustment and zoning issues over the past year, board members were surprised that so few people came out to share their input.

Mr. Marks said that perhaps the township needed to publicize the event more. Five Township Council members were present at the meeting.

Several members of the public addressed the board regarding their concerns over development issues. Two residents expressed their dismay over what was characterized by Mr. Marks as a loophole in the zoning ordinances, which allows a second dwelling to be constructed on a single family lot.

These residents were advised to take their concerns up with the Township Council, which can revise the zoning laws and close or restrict that loophole.

Several residents also voiced their concerns over the zoning of the Bowcraft property. Tina Caldes of Canterbury Drive inquired about why the Bowcraft property was zoned

differently on the land use map than on the tax map.

There was some discussion about whether the Bowcraft property was legally recognized as four lots or merged into one lot. Planning Board Attorney Lawrence A. Woodruff said that he would take the matter up with the township's tax assessor and have the maps corrected, if warranted.

Sally Rowland of Johnson Street expressed to the board that no one in

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### Towns Look to Enact Identical Ordinances on Underage Drinking

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Times

An effort is underway to work out compromise language that could enable both Scotch Plains and Fanwood to enact identical underage alcohol consumption ordinances that would satisfy the concerns of some who had feared constitutionality problems with an original proposal.

Scotch Plains Township Attorney Douglas W. Hansen reported to the Township Council during a meeting held earlier this month with members of the Municipal Alliance Committee (MAC), a local group that works to prevent substance abuse, as well as Scotch Plains Police Chief Thomas O'Brien, Fanwood Police Chief Robert Carboy, and representatives from the joint school system.

Earlier this year, MAC had pushed

for enactment of an ordinance that would permit local police officers to enter a private residence and take legal action if they witness the possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages by someone under 21 years of age.

Similar laws have been passed in several New Jersey communities, including a few located at the shore. At that time, the council held an animated discussion regarding the constitutionality of the ordinance.

Mr. Hansen had expressed his own opinion that the proposed law would violate the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures of properties.

Speaking at the council's conference meeting on Tuesday night, Mr. Hansen said that both police chiefs

had also expressed some concern about the legality of the original draft ordinance. In an attempt to mollify those constitutional concerns, Mr. Hansen, in a letter to MAC's Cathy Cvetovich, put forth several suggestions regarding changes in the ordinance's language.

After consulting with Fanwood Borough Attorney Wilfred P. Coronato, the two attorneys agreed that "one way to clarify the possession issue is to eliminate the word 'possession' as being illegal and leave only the word 'consumption.'"

"Therefore," Mr. Hansen wrote to

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## Fanwood Block Designated As Area Needing Redevelopment

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Master Plan, which could then be implemented by the private sector — either current or future property owners.

Last week, Joseph Ferrucci, also a planner at Abeles Phillips Preiss and Shapiro, reiterated his colleague's earlier statement that, under the pending redevelopment plan, efforts would first be made to work with existing property owners to redevelop lots determined to be in need of such action.

Nevertheless, attendees at Thursday's governing body meeting remained wary of a provision in the plan that would grant officials the power of eminent domain to acquire a property if they ascertained that improvement efforts by the current owner had not proven effective.

Rita Mandel, the owner of several buildings along Martine Avenue, said she "objected...bitterly" to what she perceived as a threat to the stability of businesses along the block.

"Those stores are like my children," she remarked of the establishments housed within the buildings she owns, adding that she has "a good rapport with all my tenants."

Mr. Ferrucci anticipated that it was "highly unlikely" that options like the right of eminent domain would have any impact on these stores, which he said are located in "a very healthy retail area."

He noted, however, that it was important for these stores to be included within the overall redevelopment area, so they could benefit from such aspects as projected parking and circulation improvements for the block.

Addressing the eminent domain issue, Mayor Louis C. Jung remarked that such action "would be the absolute last resort that we would want to take" concerning a property. He also noted the governing body would acquire no further powers regarding development on the block prior to adoption of a redevelopment plan.

Helen Ling, the owner of Enchantments and Enchantments Too on South Avenue, who has been in business on the block for 12 years, noted that her building is listed in the borough's Mas-

ter Plan as a historic structure.

"We have to be very careful tonight and not destroy what is part of Fanwood's heritage," she remarked, saying the goal of revitalizing the downtown should be to strengthen Fanwood's identity, not simply give the block "new clothes."

"New clothes don't always fit," she observed.

Joseph Ponzio, a Second Street property owner, said he felt the process of designating the block as an area in need of redevelopment had moved "way too quick," adding that he believed the private sector was best suited to initiate redevelopment efforts. He said discussions on the issue needed to be held between officials, property and business owners from the block in "an open, honest way."

While emphasizing that he was eager to work with officials on improvement proposals, he said he was opposed to the governing body having the right to condemn his property — saying it hampered his ability to sell it.

Council President Joel Whitaker stated that the part of the process which needs to go slowly is the crafting of the redevelopment plan, with input from property and business owners. "The plan is the important thing," he stated.

While acknowledging that anxious feelings are not unusual when contemplating new ventures, Councilman Thomas P. Ryan, Jr. concurred that the initiative needed to go forward. He said the block "doesn't lend itself to private development...otherwise it would have happened."

Besides the resolution designating the block as an area in need of redevelopment, council members also passed a resolution authorizing the governing body to enter into a professional services contract with Mr. Preiss' firm to prepare the redevelopment plan, at an initial fee of \$2,500 for the first six months.

The plan must be introduced by the council through an ordinance and reviewed by the Planning Board. It will then receive a public hearing prior to adoption by the governing body.

## Identical Laws Sought On Underage Drinking

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Ms. Cvetovich, "if a police officer were to be able to observe actual consumption, he of course can enforce the ordinance. Possession can occur at any time an underage person is in the home with alcohol. While we would expect that the police would not irrationally impose it, and the statute does talk about the word 'knowingly,' removing 'possession' alleviates any chance of misconstruction by either the police or anyone else."

Mr. Hansen also proposed the addition of other language regarding the right to a breathalyzer test and the level of reasonable cause on the part of a police officer suspecting underage alcohol consumption. Mr. Hansen told the council that another meeting is planned for July and that he expects to be able to report back to the council in August.

In another matter, the council also heard a report on last week's presentation by the state Department of Transportation (DOT) on ways to rectify the traffic situation in and around the intersection of the Route 22 bridge and Park Avenue and Bonnie Burn Road.

Councilwoman Paulette Coronato and Sharynn Porter, along with Mr. Hansen, had attended the forum, during which DOT presented a scaled-back proposal to widen the existing bridge and expand the northern and southern intersections in an effort to streamline the traffic flow.

Mr. Hansen said that if the council is interested in further studying DOT's proposals, the township government would need to formally inform DOT of that interest, which Mayor Martin L. Marks agreed to do.

The township will also organize a meeting of representatives from the township government, Fanwood, Watchung and Union County to help move the process forward.

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## Bridge Over Rt. 22 Linking Park-Bonnie Appears Dead

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traffic on and around the bridge occurs between 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. and stems from the inability of the Bonnie Burn Road and New Providence Road intersection to adequately handle north-bound traffic. This, he said, results in lines of cars extending over the bridge and back onto Route 22 East and South on Park Avenue into Fanwood.

"If we clear up New Providence and Bonnie Burn, much of that will disappear," he said.

There is also significant traffic between 5 and 6 p.m., Mr. Lupov said, but it is not as severe as during the morning.

The alternative solution recommended by DOT, referred to throughout the evening's discussions as Alternative 9, would entail a new, widened bridge in the same location as the present crossing. Plans also call for a widening of the intersection at New Providence Road and Bonnie Burn Road as well as an expansion of the area where the south side of the bridge intersects with Park Avenue.

A new traffic light would also be installed at the latter location. Alternative 9 calls for dedicated left turn lanes and separate right turn lanes at both intersections, which, according to a computer-generated video of the area, would lead to a smoother-flowing traffic pattern north of Route 22 and, thus, much less congestion on Route 22, Park Avenue and some of the secondary roads leading into the central business district.

A wide sidewalk would also be included in a newly-built bridge. Only one building would have to be removed under Alternative 9's plan, a structure at the northeast corner of the New Providence-Bonnie Burn intersection.

While the initial plan for an entirely new bridge, along with jughandles and turn-offs, would produce the most desirable traffic-reduction results, DOT estimates its cost at \$16.5 million while calling for the displacement of 10 buildings.

In contrast, Alternative 9 will cost \$7.7 million and result in the removal of just one building while still drastically streamlining the traffic flow in the area. Simply improving the New Providence-Bonnie Burn intersection, which Mr. Lupov pointed to as the main reason for the traffic back-ups in the area, would result in that intersection "working about as well (in 2025) as it did before Route 78 opened" 15 years ago.

The third proposal discussed at the meeting, referred to as Alternative 8, called for improvements only to the northern intersection, at a cost of \$2.3 million.

"We have to be careful. We certainly don't want to lose any businesses. Our goal should be to alleviate the situation without causing any distress to our downtown businesses," Councilwoman Porter added.

Fanwood Mayor Jung said his main concerns were the traffic backing up on Park Avenue into Fanwood in the mornings and, more specifically, the line of cars in front of Park Middle School. More than half the student population at that school live in Fanwood, he pointed out.

"Alternative 9 would shorten the queue up enough to clear Park Avenue" in front of the school, he told *The Times*.

"That's good and I certainly support that," Mr. Jung said.

He was impressed by Alternative 9 because "it meets a lot of the objectives and it costs less" than an entirely new bridge would cost. He guessed that, as discussions about the alternatives move forward, there will be further meetings between officials from Scotch Plains, Watchung and Fanwood.

Ultimately, he said, "this is a Watchung-Scotch Plains issue and it's their decision to make, but I wouldn't see us opposing Alternative 9."

No final decision about DOT's proposals by the Scotch Plains or Watchung government is expected until after the summer. In the meantime, it's expected the local governing bodies will discuss the various plans and allow more public input before making up their minds.

While several residents who spoke at the meeting saw no reason to make any improvements to the area, due to their feeling that traffic was only a problem during a short period of time in the morning and evening, others who voiced an opinion seemed relieved that DOT's initial proposal for a new bridge directly linking Park Avenue and Bonnie Burn Road was, apparently, being shelved.

Ray Pardon, President of the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association, said DOT's initial plan would have been "a nightmare and a disaster" for business owners in town. Alternative 9, he noted, was less costly and would have less of an impact on the township's downtown business district.

In response to a question from a resident of Sunset Place, which intersects with Park Avenue adjacent to the southern end of the bridge, Mr. Kenny said construction would not formally start for several years once local approval for the project was given. First, he noted, surveying and design work must be done. In addition, state and federal regulations require certain environmental impact studies to be undertaken, an especially important task given that the project is in the vicinity of the Green Brook and the Watchung Reservation.

Mr. Kenny did assure that construction would not be done at night and said he did not foresee the bridge ever being completely closed to vehicular traffic during the construction.

Councilwoman Paulette Coronato told *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* that "there is a lot to consider" in DOT's proposals.

"It's not something we can make a snap judgment on," she said.

While saying that Alternative 9 "looks good," she said she was "personally leaning to Alternative 8," which calls for improvements only to the New Providence-Bonnie Burn intersection. That idea might be best because it would alleviate traffic "without doing too much to our downtown," she said.

She also is interested in the county's position on the proposed project and is curious as to how Watchung residents respond when DOT makes a similar presentation there in the coming weeks.

"It's a very complicated issue and not an isolated one because we have to think about Watchung and Fanwood," she said.

Mrs. Coronato, who attended last week's session with fellow council member Sharynn Porter, added that she was "glad to see that (DOT) did listen to us" regarding local opposition to a new, expanded bridge across Route 22.

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## Township Planning Bd. Adopts Master Plan

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her neighborhood wanted the Broadway Development site developed for residential housing and that they would prefer recreational, open space for those 11.7 acres.

Ms. Rowland stated that the neighborhood surrounding Jerusalem Road had recently been inundated with over-development.

"Is it only about ratables?" Ms. Rowland asked the board. "We're overbuilding; zoning needs to reflect what the neighborhood wants, not what the developers want."

Mr. Marks explained that the Broadway developer wanted a much denser housing development, which the board reduced by more than 50 percent.

"Developers and land owners have a right to develop within the constraints of the zoning ordinance," Mr. Marks responded, adding, "we have been taken to

court over denials that are unreasonable."

"And, we looked at that parcel for recreational use, but only had \$180,000 to purchase open space. That amount of money doesn't go very far," Mr. Marks observed.

Ms. Kimble told the board that she recommended that the township review and re-codify the entire zoning ordinance to reflect recent changes and development objectives. She said many of the issues that had been highlighted during the meeting could be clarified and that tighter controls over these issues could be gained by properly wording the ordinances.

The approved Master Plan will be presented to the Township Council for comments and recommendations this week. Those recommendations will then be reviewed by the Planning Board, which may warrant further revisions to the plan.

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## Douglas M. Fasciale

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## Rotary-Garbe Foundation Grants Scholarship Awards

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Rotary-Garbe Foundation of Scotch Plains, founded in 1955, has awarded its Class of 2001 Scholarships to seven seniors at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

Foundation Chairman Robert H. Kraus and Vice Chairman Joseph Y. Qutub presented the scholarship awards to the students.

Earning scholarships in the amount of \$4,000 (\$1,000 for four years) are: Robert Bugg of Scotch Plains, Katiq Chang of Fanwood, Kathleen DeLuca of Scotch Plains, Catherine Mangan of Scotch Plains, and Katherine O'Connor of Fanwood.

Receiving scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 are: Sheila Marikar of Scotch Plains and Anne Percoco of Fanwood.

The goal of the Rotary-Garbe Foundation has been to assist local students with continuing education expenses and to carry on the tradition started by Mr. and Mrs. William M. Garbe, Citizens of Scotch Plains.

a founding member and past president of the Rotary Club of Westfield, District Governor from 1956-1957, the Garbes founded The Garbe Foundation, Inc.

The Garbes have now assisted 292 students from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood area to receive a college education.

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## Lasus, Mangione Inducted Into Honor Societies

SCOTCH PLAINS — David S. Lasus of Scotch Plains has been inducted into the national honor society, Alpha Lambda Delta at the University of Delaware, while Fanwood resident Marisa Mangione was inducted into the international English honor society, Sigma Tau Delta at the university.

## Lauren Friend Placed On Spring Dean's List

SCOTCH PLAINS — The College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass. has noted that Lauren Friend of Scotch Plains was placed on the Dean's List for the second semester of the 2000-2001 academic year.

The daughter of Norma Friend of Scotch Plains, Lauren is pursuing a major in English.

## Robert Trainor Awarded At Gettysburg College

SCOTCH PLAINS — Robert Trainor of Scotch Plains received the Holly Gabriel Memorial Award at Gettysburg College's Spring Honors Day ceremonies on Saturday, May 19. A recent graduate of the college, with a degree in anthropology/sociology, this award is presented to a senior sociology major who demonstrates superior academic achievement, concern for the welfare of others, and the intent to continue this service beyond graduation.