

THE TIMES

Scotch Plains - Fanwood

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FIFTY CENTS

Solid Nutrition Found Online, **Says Stromick**

By JENNIFER PINTO

During the regularly scheduled meeting of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education on April 11, an instructional update was discussed in reference to Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS).

Mrs. Georgia Stromick, a biology and nutrition science teacher at SPFHS, made a presentation on the Nutrition Science Course, which is now taught at the high school. The course receives funding through Mrs. Stromick's award of the Christa McAuliffe Fellowship for 2001-2002.

This new multimedia, bio-chemical course, an elective at SPFHS, was demonstrated by Mrs. Stromick through a PowerPoint presentation.

Mrs. Stromick outlined the course and demonstrated how students work together with this new online interactive class. Students use the course website, along with other educational websites, to learn about nutrition. She also has all homework assignments posted on the website, which allows students who are absent to keep up with their coursework.

Students learn to design lab reports, portfolios, and, most importantly, they become better aquatinted with researching on the Internet.

"They could easily make there own PowerPoint presentation...it is part of their final grade," stated Mrs. Stromick.

The advanced course prepares students to work with computers. There are two students to a computer for "It is an excellent computer based

course...Mrs. Stromick is an excellent teacher," stated SPFHS Principal Dr. David Heisey. The complexity of the questions

for the science competitions were also discussed by Mrs. Stromick and student Chattopadhyay.

Bob Wallden and Stephanie Heath of SPFHS presented the student liaison report. The students briefly addressed the board and the public about upcoming school spirit events between SPFHS and Westfield High School (WHS).

Bob discussed how they were working with WHS on some school spirit events. The students will participate in scavenger hunts, among other ac-

Board of Education Vice President Jessica Simpson jokingly told Bob, "Don't help them, they're our rival." **CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**



DOWN TO THE WIRE...Ester Stuart, a Scotch Plains resident, visits the crowded Fanwood Post Office to file her tax forms. All post offices in the area, including the Fanwood facility, were exceptionally crowded with last-minute tax filers.

Underage Drinking Ordinance in SP Could Be Positive Step, Mayor Believes

By FRED ROSSI

After another round of discussion, some of it a bit heated, the Scotch Plains Township Council appears to be moving toward the introduction of an ordinance that would give local police the right to enter a private residence where underage persons are in possession of or consuming alcoholic beverages.

The State Legislatur ered communities with the ability to enact ordinances in this regard, and a handful of New Jersey towns have already done so. The proposed ordinance, which will be formally drafted by the Scotch Plains government's legal department, would permit police to enter a private residence and take legal action if they witness or have reason to suspect the possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages by someone under 21 years

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Municipal Alliance, a local group that works to prevent substance abuse, has been pushing for enactment of

the ordinance. The council heatedly discussed this issue early last year and then again in February, and Mayor Martin Marks

has been pushing for the governing body to come to some kind of final decision on the matter.

At its conference meeting on Tuesday night, the five council members spent close to an hour discussing the idea of an ordinance, with Councilman Frank Rossi saying it, "gives us a tool for some level of compliance" with underage drinking laws. Councilwoman Geri Samuel, perhaps the most ardent backer of an underage drinking ordinance, said it would make those under 21 years of age

"responsible for their actions." Councilman Rossi explained some of the legal aspects of an ordinance, noting that there already exist statutory guidelines for what accounts for criminal intent and possession. He said it was important for the local police to "act with the same discretion as with other criminal violations." He added that if the ordinance was passed, "we'd require the police department to provide education to officers. This ordinance needs to be

enforced the same as other criminal possession statutes.'

He said the fact that those who would be involved will be minors doesn't change the application of the search and seizure laws. The ordinance, Mr. Rossi said, needs to be "applied with balance and with due

regard for all search and seizure laws." Councilwoman Paulette Coronato, who had been a vocal opponent of the proposed ordinance when it was first discussed last year, remained troubled by what she seemed to think was an unnecessary increase in po-

lice powers. "I have a problem using (the ordinance) in a non-disturbing the peace situation," she said. Instead, she urged parents to take more responsibility for the actions of their children. Parents, she said, not the town, "should impose sanctions" on their minor children.

It's unclear whether Councilwoman Coronato will ultimately sup-CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

WF, SP-F APPROVE SCHOOL SPENDING PLANS **Mountainside Voters** Reject BOE Budget

BY LAUREN S. PASS

Voter turn out was low in all four local municipalities on Tuesday. Westfield, which has 18.856 registered voters, passed the \$65.4 mil-

lion school budget 1,997 to 1,446. Westfield Superintendent Dr. William Foley said, "I am pleased that Westfield residents have supported the school budget and the resulting tax increase. We have all faced difficult decisions, balancing academic goals with even greater fiscal chal-

The future of school funding needs to be addressed by the Governor and the Legislature," he contin-

Mountainside Council for review. Mountainside's Chief School Administrator, Dr. Gerald Schaller, commented on the defeated budget to The Westfield Leader and The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood. "This will be a hard pill to swallow for our system. We've already cut 1.8 million (from the budget). I'm concerned it will hurt programs for our students. It's up to the Borough Council

According to Borough Administrator James Debbie, Jr. the council will receive the complete budget in two business days, and will have one month to review and make any changes they feel are necessary. The



now.'



Arlene Gardner (Incumbent)

72,070 votes



7 1,845 votes

463 vote yes



1,669 votes

Westfield 2002-2003 Budget: APPROVED **1,979** vote yes **1,446** vote no

2,080 votes





📝 Marks the Winner





SP-F 2002-2003 Budget:

1,680 vote yes **1,425** vote no

ued. "The extent of school funding

that is currently supported by the

local Westfield homeowner is close

In Scotch Plains, which has 14,183

voters and Fanwood, which has 4,674,

the \$55.2 million budget passed nar-

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Superin-

tendent Dr. Carol Choye stated, "I

want to express my sincere thanks to

the voters for reaffirming their un-

derstanding of the importance of

She added, "We will continue to

work hard to provide a strong aca-

demic program to meet the learning

needs of all our students. Educa-

tional excellence is an investment in

the future of our students and our

In Mountainside, where there are

4,617 voters, 1,128 residents came

out to vote. They defeated the \$10.9

million budget, 463 to 604; 161 vot-

ers did not answer the budget ques-

rowly, 1,680 to 1,425.

education.

communities."

to 90 percent. This has to change."

APPROVED

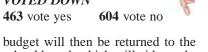
Susan Dyckman TrippWhitehouse Edward Saradak

Picture Available

John Perrin 717votes

Mtsde 2002-2003 Budget:

VOTED DOWN 604 vote no



school board, which will either submit it to the state for approval, or appeal to the State Commissioner of Education in Trenton. In Westfield, incumbent and Board

of Education President Arlene Gardner won re-election with 2,070 votes. Ms. Gardner has worked as Assistant Counsel to the Governor of New Jersey, and in private law practice. She has been a member of the school board since 1996.

Newcomer Alice Hunnicutt was the top vote getter with 2,080. She currently serves as the director for the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network's Transition from School to Adult Life project.

William Ziff, who received 1,845, also won election to a three-year term. He is an attorney with Ziff and Ziff, Esqs., with offices on Elm Street.

George Kattak, a certified public accountant, licensed school accountant and a certified fraud examiner, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**

Union County Residents Oppose Plans to Develop Land Near Reservation

By FRED ROSSI

Last week, the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders passed a bond ordinance authorizing the acquisition of property in Summit for open space purposes and then heard pleas from several Summit residents that none of the land be set aside for potential development.

The 63-acre parcel of land, which abuts the Watchung Reservation and is owned by the New Jersey American Water Company, will be purchased using some \$9 million in funds from the county's open space trust fund.

After the board voted 7-0, with Freeholders Mary Ruotolo and Alexander Mirabella absent, a group of Summit residents who live near the site spoke to the board about their hope that no consideration be given to subdividing the property for development. Freeholder Chairman Lewis Mingo, Jr., without providing any details, admitted that, "consideration to subdivide is an option we do have." He emphasized that no decisions on the possibility are pending and said the main thrust of the land purchase is to conserve open

The Summit residents said they opposed any development because they wanted to keep open space and also to avoid what they said was a potential flooding problem in the area if any development occurred. Freeholder Daniel Sullivan pointed out that before the open space trust funds were available, the water com-

Regional 2

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Community ... 6

open space.'

duce its 2002 budget at its April 25 meeting, with a public hearing and vote set for May 23. Mr. Sullivan told The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood

pany had been in "very serious" negotiations with developers to more fully develop their land. "We're doing everything we can to preserve

The Freeholder Board will intro-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

tion. The budget will now go to the Garbage Haulers Protest TV Stereotypes; **Emphasize Honest Service to Customers**

By DEBORAH MADISON

On the popular HBO series "The Sopranos," fictional mob boss Tony Soprano dabbles in a number of questionable business enterprises. However, the one legitimate business in which he engages is a residential garbage disposal company.

Now, Italian-Americans are not alone in thinking the series unfairly stereotypes their culture. Many rubbish disposal company owners and managers also have a gripe with the show, which they feel perpetuates an undeserved reputation.

"That's just in the movies," said Jerry Infantino, co-owner of Infantino Brothers Disposal in Westfield. Like all of the other major disposal company owners, he claimed no such connection currently exists between the mafia and legitimate disposal

However, one company owner, who wished to remain anonymous, said there formerly was a heavy mob connection in the industry, prior to the 1970s, when the state took over and began heavily regulating the in-

In fact, many of the owners and managers complained of over-regulation by the state government since

The owners are referring to regulations such as the state telling disposal companies where they must dump, rather than letting the owners choose. It's not only the variation in dumping fees, but a matter of convenience, explained one company owner.

Owners also complained about the excessive amount of required paper work; the need to record how much garbage they picked up; where they dumped it and the time it took.

"The county and state did not efficiently take over the industry. For one thing, they miscalculated and

overbuilt many incinerators, that are not cost effective," said one company owner Mr. Infantino, who co-owns his

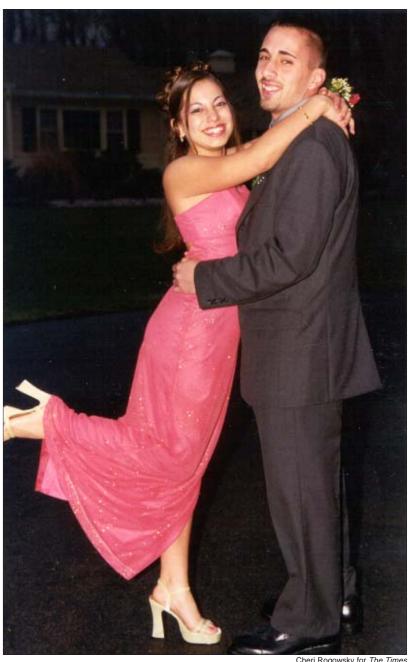
business with his brother, said there were over 1,900 disposal companies in New Jersey before the state took over in 1970. Now, he said, that number has diminished to 325.

"Between the numerous fees and the bigger companies buying up the smaller ones, it's tough for the smaller companies to stay in business," he

Infantino Brothers was started in 1945 by Mr. Infantino's father. Back then, Mr. Infantino recalled, a hauler could park a garbage truck behind someone's house and no one complained. Now, he has to pay a fee to rent parking space for his trucks.

Furino, has owned RND Disposal in Westfield for over 30 years. However, he said the cousins do not consider themselves to be competitors.

Mr. Infantino's cousin, Peter



KICKING UP HER HEELS...Emily Caballero, a junior, and Michael Buffardi, a senior, from Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, danced the night away during their junior prom at The Westwood in Garwood on Saturday.

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CYAN YELLOW MAGENTA BLACK

"There's enough garbage to go **CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**



PATRIOTIC PIN MAKERS... Valerie and Alicia Eaton of Scotch Plains crafted over 50 flag pins during the past six months, raising approximately \$175, which was donated to the American Red Cross. The September 11 tragedy inspired the youngsters to get involved and make a difference. Both Valerie and Alicia are students at Evergreen Elementary School in Scotch Plains.

Westfield Residents to See 4.5 Cent Increase in Budget

By LAUREN S. PASS

WESTFIELD -- On Tuesday night, the Westfield Town Council held its regular public session where they approved the 2002 municipal budget. Democratic First Ward Councilman Carl Salisbury was not in attendance.

The budget was passed in a six to two vote. Democratic Third Ward Councilman Kevin Walsh and Democratic Fourth Ward Councilwoman Susan Jacobson voted against it.

The budget includes a 4.5 cent increase per \$100 of assessed home value. The average home will see an \$81 increase for the year.

Republican Councilman Matthew Albano stated that the increase in the budget was due to an increase in operating expenses, as well as salaries. He added that there would be no reduction

Prior to the meeting, Town Administrator James Gildea stated that the Town Treasurer Liy-Huei Tsai will be doing a self-review of the town budget so that the spending plan can be put into use immediately, rather than waiting approximately two weeks for approval from Trenton.

Former Republican Third Ward Councilman and Westfield resident Neil Sullivan spoke against the portion of the budget that used the sale of land, over \$500,000, to balance the budget. Mr. Sullivan stated that 2001 was supposed to be the last year that practice was used. He added that the monies should be used for recreation purposes, and that the council should look for

other methods to keep the budget down. Councilman Albano responded that the money was not being used for an operating expense, but to offset the increase in Union County Improvement Authority (UCIA) leasing. UCIA provides the municipality with money for capital improvement projects.

Town Administrator Gildea told The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood that the money from the sale of land has been accumulated over the years, and that it the use of UCIA is to spread the cost of equipment over time.

Mayor Gregory McDermott thanked the finance committee and Mr. Gildea for their hard work on the budget. He also stated that the residents will see improvements in the public works department this year.

Clark Avenue resident Bill Risberg

Nj's Largest

almost here.

arriving daily.

& Perennials are

New Shipments

Cool Plants

Selection of Annuals

approached the council with regard to the discussion that took place at last week's conference session regarding religious symbols on town property.

Mr. Risberg stated that he has been a resident since 1963 and that he and his family have enjoyed the tree lighting and the arrival of Santa Claus. He went on to say that he feels the menorah lighting to be educational and that he is not offended by it.

"If it ain't broke don't fix it," he told Mayor McDermott and council. He also questioned whether anyone had complained to the council in reference to the decorations.

Mayor McDermott stated that no one had complained and that the debate came about in reference to the process of the town accepting gifts.

Lawrence Avenue resident Ann Weimer also spoke about the holiday decorations. She said that the decorations encourage shoppers and that the loss of the tradition would have a deep effect on people, and thus should not be changed.

In other business, the council passed a resolution awarding the contract to The Atlantic Group for the redevelopment project of lots 1 and 8, and lots 3

Republican First Ward Councilman Peter Echausse abstained from the vote. He stated that he felt that the council was making a good choice in The Atlantic Group, but that he was unable to attend the meeting where the five companies were interviewed, and thus did not feel that he should vote.

Mayor McDermott stated that The Atlantic Group has done projects similar to Westfield's.

Democratic Councilwoman Claire Lazarowitz, Chairwoman of the Public Safety Committee stated that members of the Council attended an open house at the Westfield Volunteer Rescue Squad on Sunday. She explained that members of the council, as well as Town Attorney Robert Cockren, had a tour of the facility and met with the volunteers. She went on to say that the Rescue Squad is in need of volunteer Emergency Medical Technicians and dispatchers.

Councilwoman Jacobson presented the first reading of the ordinance to change the permit fee for cleanup week from \$50 to \$65. Residents will be able to purchase the permits on-line this year. The second reading will be held at the Tuesday, April 30 meeting.



By DEBORAH MADISON

Each year, the New Jersey Department of Education compiles and publishes a variety of reports, which evaluate and compare data on all of New Jersey's 2,300-plus schools in dozens of key categories.

By utilizing the information from these various reports, parents and educators can evaluate how each district compares to other districts throughout the state and with the state averages.

Most recently published this year, the New Jersey School Report Cards compiled by the state Department of Education have been distributed to all of New Jersey's 618 school districts for public inspection. Reports for each school were mailed to parents in each respective school neighborhood.

Compiled annually since 1995, the Report Cards have encompassed a growing list of categories over the past seven years. The School Report Cards include statistical, financial and demographic information about each school in every district, including vocational, charter and special services schools.

Along with other data, the 2002 Report Cards included faculty and administrator levels of education, salaries and benefits, per pupil expenditures and revenues, just to name a few of the categories. The report also included demographics for each school on enrollment, disabilities, languages spoken, class size and mobility, dropout/suspension rates and computer/internet access per pupil.

Also included are mean scores for the SATs and the percentages of students scoring advanced proficient, proficient and partially pro-

Open House Scheduled At Union Catholic HS

SCOTCH PLAINS - Union Catholic High School in Scotch Plains will hold a Spring Open House on Wednesday, May 1, at 7:30 p.m. for sixth and seventh graders and their parents.

A guided tour, academic presentation and information regarding the school's Laptop Learning Vision program will be presented.

For more information, please call the Office of Institutional Development at (908) 889-9475.

Rider University Places Parisi, Baker and Mele On Dean's List for Fall

AREA - Rider University in Lawrenceville has announced that Westfield resident Jodi Baker and Melissa Parisi and Melanie Mele of Scotch Plains were named to the fall Dean's List for the 2001-2002 academic year.

Melissa is a communications major at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Jodi is majoring in elementary education and psychology. Melanie is focusing her studies in elementary education and communications. Both Jodi and Melanie are students in the College of Educa-

BOE Elections

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 did not win election. He received 1,669 votes.

Scotch Plains incumbent Edward Saradaki will begin his third term on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education. He received 1,348 votes. Mr. Saradaki is currently employed as the Corporate Financial and Network Controller

for Enslow Publishers, Inc. Newcomer Tripp Whitehouse was the top vote getter with 1,376 votes. He is currently a Director of

Finance for Telcordia Technologies in Piscataway. Mr. Whitehouse will be representing Scotch Plains. Susan Dyckman, President of the Coles Elementary School Parent-

for Fanwood with 654 votes. In Mountainside, incumbents Frank Goggi, who received 742 votes, and John Perrin, who received 717 votes, won their second

Teacher Association, won the seat

term on the board. Mr. Goggi resides on Ridge Drive with his wife, Carol, their 1-year old daughter and 8-year-old son. Mr. Perrin is a licensed architect and has been a resident of Mountainside for 23 years and was appointed to the board last Sep-

tember to fill a vacancy. Elections in Scotch Plains, Fanwood and Mountainside were uncontested.

Bill Sheppard contributed to this

ficient for the fourth, eighth and high school proficiency assessment tests, the ESPA (Elementary School Proficiency Assessment), GEPA (Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment) and HSPT (High School Proficiency Test), respectively.

Garbage

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 around," explained Mr. Furino. Both Infantino Brothers and RND service approximately 1,500 customers and several retail and commercial businesses.

Mr. Furino explained that he is not only the owner, but also his company's secretary, accountant and customer service rep, and holds several other positions. On call 24 hours a day, he admits it's hard work wearing so many hats, but said he prefers it that way.

As to why garbage pickup fees have risen so much, Mr. Infantino cited the many costs he incurs in operating his business. Every garbage company pays a fee to the county to dispose of the refuse collected by weight. Approximately 30 percent of the fee charged to customers goes to the county to cover this cost, he said.

Additionally, garbage truck drivers must have special licenses to operate their vehicles. This costs the owner money to hire someone with that special expertise. Then there is mileage and the cost of frequently replacing expensive tires.

Mr. Infantino noted, however, that his firm is able to keep costs down by not having to hire additional personnel, as some larger companies do.

"You get personal service with a smaller company," he explained. "When you call here, you get the owner, me. A big company can't give you that kind of service."

Steve Scioscia is the manager of one of those bigger companies. He started out as the owner of Fanwood Disposal, which, along with Collavito and DeCuollo, were bought up by Waste Management, a publicly-traded nationwide corporation. There are five branches in New Jersey.

Mr. Scioscia's branch covers Union, Somerset, Middlesex, Essex, Hudson and Morris Counties.

"Even though they (Waste Management) purchased the smaller guys out," explained Mr. Scioscia, "they kept on the local management, keeping the service personal."

Mr. Scioscia's branch of Waste Management has approximately 20,000 customers, in all of the towns not covered by municipal contracts. Westfield, Scotch Plains, Fanwood and Mountainside have no municipal contracts, requiring each home or business owner to subscribe for garbage pickup.

Mr. Scioscia also finds some local ordinances restrictive and an inconvenience to his customers, such as the no-curbside decree in Westfield. He understands, however, why it's there.

"If you put the cans curbside, it starts to look like some of the less attractive towns," he explained. Still, many customers, not knowing about the ordinance, call him to ask why

he does not offer curbside service. Likewise, most towns have a twice-weekly pick-up requirement written into their ordinances, to prevent unpleasant odors from accu-

mulating. Rates, Mr. Scioscia explained, are based on the geographic terrain of each house. If his haulers have to traverse an acre of front yard before they reach the cans, that's going to cost a little more than cans that are

only 10 feet from the road.

However, most of the companies' rates are competitive and within a few dollars of each other, Mr. Infantino said.

"Despite our size, we have a very efficient customer service department," Mr. Scioscia emphasized. "Our response time is rated on all customer callbacks by the national corporate office, so customer satisfaction and communication is a big part of our service."

The largest company servicing the Union County area, as well as Somerset, Middlesex, Mercer and Monmouth counties, is Midco. Based in South Plainfield, it is also a national corporation.

Joe Vitulli, Manager of the South Plainfield branch, said the company has been there approximately 12 years and has more than 60,000 customers, both residential and commercial.

He attributes this overwhelming success to excellent service. "We have clean trucks and safe driving records. Our trucks won't leak all over your roads," Mr. Vitulli re-

Overall, state trends from the Report Cards show that enrollments, along with spending, are increasing and class sizes are decreasing. Computer and Internet access per pupil continued to rise in 2001, along with the cost of providing this technology. The state average is now one computer for every five students, more than doubling that rate from four years ago.

The spending gap between poorer districts and wealthier districts has continued to narrow, however, higher test scores still correlated with the highest income districts. A district's spending per pupil was not as much of an indicator of higher test scores as was the District's Factor Grouping (DFG).

The DFG is a rating system, devised by the state, which rates districts based on a formula that calculates and compares districts according to a number of socioeconomic factors that have been found to have a strong correlation with educational outcomes.

The socioeconomic status of each district is calculated by a formula, which includes income, occupation and educational level of residents in each district.

The DFG rankings range from A, the lowest, to J, the highest, so that districts are grouped according to an interval of one-tenth of the total range between the highest and low-

Westfield, Scotch Plains-Fanwood and Mountainside all have a designated DFG of "I" and were among the top scores in all grade level assessments in the county.

Elizabeth, which received an "A" DFG, had the lowest scores in all three grade levels for all subjects in Union County, and along with Jersey City and Camden, exhibited some of the lowest scores in the

Westfield's SAT mean score for 2001 was 1,113 with a HSPT score of 96. Westfield was most closely correlated with Summit in scoring.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood tallied a mean SAT score of 1,073 and a HSPT of 88, similar in scores to Hunterdon Central.

Mountainside students, who share a high school with Berkeley Heights, scored 1,101 on their SAT's and 93 on the HSPT, similar in scoring to New Providence.

The top SAT score in the state was Milburn at 1,207. The top scoring HSPT's were Haddonfield and Mountain Lakes, both at 98, while several high schools in Essex County scored the lowest on both SAT's in the 600s to 700s and scores below 15 on the HSPT.

SP Ordinance

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 = port the ordinance, even if a program of police education is put into place.

Councilwoman Samuel firmly backed the ordinance, saying that "the biggest problem with teenagers in Scotch Plains is underage drinking." Responding to Mrs. Coronato's argument that parents should be more responsible for their children, Mrs. Samuel said, "it's kids being more responsible," that was the real issue.

Councilman Guy Celentano saw the ordinance as a way to "help break up some of the (teenage) parties," and said it would help to "nip it (underage drinking) in the bud before the party gets out of control.

Mayor Marks said passage of an underage drinking ordinance would not only be an attempt to "eliminate a problem," but also send a message to the community. Speaking of the downsides of enacting an ordinance, the Mayor said it could be challenged, forcing the township to defend it in appellate court, or it could be improperly applied by a police officer, possibly leading to a lawsuit against the township.

However, if no action was taken to enact an ordinance, it would send a message to the community, he said, especially if there were to be a tragedy stemming from underage drinking.

The public could then say to the council, Mayor Marks surmised, that the governing body had an opportunity to do something to curb underage drinking and, instead, did nothing.

"It's not an easy decision to make," he admitted, sympathizing somewhat with Mrs. Coronato's arguments. "But it's such a critical issue nowadays.'

The council is likely to introduce the ordinance early next month, with a public hearing and vote to be held in early June.

The highest fourth-grade assessment score in Union County for language arts was attained by Summit's Brayton Elementary School and the highest math score in Union County was achieved by Roselle Park's Sherman Elementary School.

The highest eighth grade scores were attained by Cranford in both language and math, who came in a close second to Warren, in Somerset County, which attained the highest math score in the State for eighth

Union County Vocational-Technical High School in Scotch Plains scored the highest for the county in both reading and math when compared to all other public high schools.

Typically, vocational-technical schools spend more per pupil than public schools, while charter schools tend to spend less. Vocational schools and charter schools have their own DFG ranking of V

and R, respectively. The Department of Education's website suggests that an assessment of how well a particular school is doing is to look at the last five years of scores for that school to determine whether the scores show

an upward or downward trend. Educators caution that many factors must be taken into account when evaluating a district and that test scores or money spent per pupil, alone, is not an adequate indicator of overall performance.

However, realtors often use test scores alone to price and sell houses in many of the state's best-rated districts.

There has been much controversy lately over the educational system's focus on teaching to raise test scores. The pressure on districts to keep test scores high, having a direct bearing on the value of homes, tax revenues, school budgets and administrators' salaries, has been launched as a criticism against an educational system riddled with this conflict of interest.

The New Jersey School Report Cards can be found at: http:// nj.evalsoft.com/ and the entire DFG listing can be found at http:// www.state.nj.us/njded/finance/sf/ dfg90.shtml.

Nutrition

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 Dr. Heisey also spoke to the members of the school board and the public, announcing that four SP-F students, who are all Girl Scouts, will appear on a segment of NBC's "The Today Show," that will air on Thursday, April 18, between 7 and 9 a.m.

A liaison from the Girls Scouts recommended that "The Today Show" use SPFHS for their segment, which will focus on how teenage girls use the Internet.

In other business, letters to the school board regarding budget issues related to the music department and project graduation were briefly mentioned.

The board approved the personnel agenda, which included the transfer of multiple teachers due to the fifth grade being transferred to the middle schools.

Also approved were requests to attend workshops and buses for project graduation. The next public meeting will be on April 18 at 7:45 p.m.

Reservation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that the original \$323.9 million spending proposal put forth in January by former County Manager Michael Lapolla had been pared during budget hearings in the interim, with the operating budget cut by about \$500,000 and the capital budget sliced nearly in half.

On a related matter, County Finance Director Lawrence Caroselli told The Times that tax rates figures for the county's 21 municipalities that were published last week in The Star-Ledger, while not significantly off base, were, nevertheless, "not entirely accurate." He said the figures were based in part on last year's rates, and said that more exact tax rate estimates would be ready by the time of the county budget's introduction next week.

In other business, the Freeholders reappointed Gail Iammatteo of Scotch Plains to the Union County Vocational-Technical Board of Education Advisory Board.

Resolutions were also approved congratulating the Westfield Boy Scout Troop No. 72 on their 80th anniversary and congratulating Rabbi Kroloff of Temple Emanu-El of Westfield upon his retirement.

