

Union County Interfaith Council Brings Assistance With a Vision

By TRACY EVANS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times
COUNTY—Self-sufficiency, independence and a stable environment are goals that characterize the efforts of the Interfaith Council for the Homeless.

The key to promoting this growth starts with one thing—a roof.

"This program isn't a handout but more of a hand up," revealed Amy VanPelt, Interfaith's Development Director.

Established in 1986, the Interfaith Council began as a way of providing temporary shelters through seven congregations and a relatively small staff known as the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN).

Today, the IHN has grown to a nation-wide organization involving 26 states but still maintains its headquarters in Plainfield, where they have been housed for four years.

The distinction is that Interfaith Council reaches beyond the shelter model of the national program to provide lasting assistance in the form of social services and permanent housing.

"It is our goal to stop the intergenerational cycle of poverty," Ms. VanPelt continued, "Children have a greater chance of living in poverty as adults when they grow up in poverty. Their well-being is jeopardized."

Families comprise half of the homeless population in Union County, with children counting for half of Interfaith's clients. By utilizing the United States Housing and Urban Development (US HUD) continuum of care philosophy, emergency care is only the beginning of Interfaith's battle toward securing a safe atmosphere for life.

With the help of now 90 congregations within Union County, overnight shelters are offered at week-long intervals to those requiring immediate assistance. In addition to the 28 beds that are currently available, the congregations provide additional support with hot showers, food and even

Children's Entertainer To Appear at Trailside

MOUNTAINSIDE—Children's entertainer Bob Conrad will bring his production of "Cats, Dogs and Magic" to the Trailside Nature and Science Center on Wednesday, August 21, at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Conrad will present magic, puppets, music, ventriloquism, balloon sculpting and chalk-talk cartooning during the program.

A regular columnist in *Laugh Matters* magazine, Mr. Conrad was the editor for 10 years of the official newsletter of the American Puppet Makers Association. He is also one of the association's founders.

"Cats, Dogs and Magic" will be the final event of this summer's Wednesday Matinee series at Trailside. The show is for families with children age 4 and older only. Tickets are \$4 per person and will be sold at the door the day of the performance.

Trailside is located at 452 New Providence Road in Mountainside and is a service of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders. For information, please call (908) 789-3670.

Fanwood Lions Seek Used Hearing Aids, Eyeglasses For Needy

FANWOOD—The Fanwood Lions Club is asking area residents to donate their old eyeglasses and old hearing aids, to be given to Eyes for the Needy in Short Hills.

These items are then checked for prescription, refurbished and given to more than 20 organizations, which in turn distribute them internationally to the needy.

Individuals seeking to donate eyeglasses and hearing aids may deposit them in the receptacle with the Lions' emblem on South Avenue near the borough's Millennium Clock or at the new receptacle at the Fanwood Recycling Center on North Avenue.

tutoring for the children. During this time period, Interfaith meets with those who are receiving the temporary care and selects families eligible for transitional housing, with partial rents available up to one year.

Permanent housing has become an increasingly essential aspect of the program. More than half of the funding to purchase land and provide this affordable housing option comes from government funding.

In addition to the housing program, Interfaith works actively to enable neighborhoods in targeted Plainfield areas to foster "community building," in which residents, landlords and leaders are empowered to create a stable and safe living environment.

During any given week, up to 60 volunteers are necessary to meet the needs of the program. As a result of this need, six months ago, educational information sessions were initiated to help inform potential volunteers.

Karen Howell, Vice-President of Interfaith's Board of Directors, understands how important it is to share these facts with potential volunteers: "You tend to think of homelessness as a problem that exists only in urban areas."

In Union County, as well as the nationwide population, single women and mothers with children comprise the fastest growing segment of people requiring shelter.

"Finding affordable housing in Union County has never been easy," commented Ms. VanPelt, "We are turning a lot more away, and people are staying in emergency shelters longer."

Her concern is that the cycle that moves people from immediate care to long-term and permanent housing is not meeting completion. According to an October 2001 statistic provided by Interfaith, the cost of one month's rent in a two-bedroom apartment is \$913, which requires a \$16 per hr job at minimum to maintain.

"In my 13 years with the program, I don't remember it being this bad," echoed Interfaith's Executive Director, Barbara Aaronoff.

The efforts to obtain more space for permanent housing will remain an ongoing challenge for the organization that relies largely on grants to purchase and clean up housing from "slumlords."

Currently, there are 300 families in need, and roughly 80 percent of those who apply have become aware of the program through relatives and friends who themselves have received aid.

"We are not receiving as many phone calls from agencies anymore," reflected Ms. VanPelt, "Instead, there are two or three families that come knocking on our door every day."

This past February, 35 families approached Interfaith for help, but only two could be accommodated.

While this does not reflect any improvement in the numbers of those who need help, Interfaith has proven that it carries out its job with success. "They have to believe that we are really here to help them," Ms. Aaronoff insisted.

Despite persistent housing concerns, the Interfaith Council continues to increase its assistance in service areas that help the program to perpetuate positive turnarounds. Health education workshops will be offered in various host congregations. Advocacy programs will be set up to help clients and work with volunteers and "Families First," a program that fosters youth leadership, will be set up in area middle schools to counteract the rising problem of gangs.

While a temporary bed may be a quick solution, the Interfaith Council seeks to address the lifestyles of its clients and to not only treat the affliction but provide a preventative medicine.

"You could cross paths with people all the time and not realize that they are homeless," Ms. Van Pelt pointed out, "Everybody has a story, whether it's bad luck or a turn in the stock market."

The Interfaith Council is aware that homelessness surrounds residents on a daily basis. Knowledge on how to help is as easy as walking in the council's Plainfield door to attend an information session.



SCOUTS ON STAGE...Fourth-grade Girl Scout Troop No. 778 from Washington Elementary School in Westfield recently presented a play entitled *The Substitutes*, for which they earned a Theater badge. Two Daisy troops and four Brownie troops were invited and asked to donate a canned food item. Cadette Troop No. 916 of Roosevelt Intermediate School of Westfield earned leadership hours by helping kindergarten and first-grade Girl Scouts make paper plate masks before the play began. Pictured, left to right, are: Bottom row, Mary McKeivitt, Chloe Rothenberg, Diana Vasel, Denise Virzi, Lia Fagan and Jaclyn LaSpata, and top row, Lindsay Anderson, Darla Stabler, Ellen Gormley, Jill Kandigian, Emily Goodman and Julia Spiridigliozzi.

Area Librarians Now Eligible For New York Times Award

COUNTY—The *New York Times* has announced that its second annual *New York Times* Librarian Awards program has been expanded to include several counties throughout the tri-state area.

Eligible nominees this year include librarians currently working in public libraries within Union, Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Morris Counties.

Librarians may also be nominated from any borough of New York City, as well as from Fairfield County, Conn. and Nassau, Rockland, Suffolk and Westchester Counties in New York.

Members of the public are invited to show their appreciation for their community's libraries by nominating a librarian for this \$2,500 award.

The *New York Times* will accept nominations through Friday, September 6.

Winners will be selected by a committee representative of the areas now participating in the program and announced in *The New York Times* in October.

One award will be given to a librarian from each borough of New York City and one from each of the counties involved. The award honors librarians who provide outstanding community service on a consistent basis. Each will receive \$2,500 from *The New York Times* in recognition of his or her achievements.

Nomination forms for the awards are currently available at public libraries in participating areas. The form may also be accessed at www.nytc.com/community.html and responses e-mailed to libraryawards@nytimes.com. For more information, please call (212) 556-4520.

Library Committee Plans To Honor Mr. Bernstein

SCOTCH PLAINS—A committee consisting of members of the Scotch Plains Public Library staff, Board of Trustees and Friends of the Library has been formed to organize a retirement party for Director Norbert Bernstein, who will step down after 30 years of service.

According to Joan Iuliano of the library staff, the date has been set for Sunday, October 6, between noon and 4 p.m. at L'Affaire in Mountainside.

Tickets will be \$50 each. This will include a cash bar, hors d'oeuvres, a full luncheon with choices of entrees and a special dessert for the occasion.

"An extensive invitation list has been drawn up; any area resident wishing to be on that list is urged to call the library at (908) 322-5007," said Ms. Iuliano. "We plan to send out invitations by mid-August."

A program for the event, as well as other details, are pending.

CONTACT 5K Race Slated For Saturday In Fanwood

FANWOOD—CONTACT We Care's Annual 5K Race, open to runners of all ages, will take place this Saturday, August 17. The United States Track and Field sanctioned event will kick off from Fanwood's LaGrande Park at 5:45 p.m.

The festivities will include food, music and fun for the entire family. The annual race is CONTACT's major fundraiser.

This year's race will also include an invitational wheelchair event and the

KIDS Sprint for children ages two to 12. Registration is open through the day of the race. The 5K race fee is \$18. KIDS Sprint registration is \$7. For directions and more information, please call Nancy Levine at (908) 490-1480.

CONTACT We Care is a non-profit, 24-hour crisis hotline. Fall volunteer training will begin on Monday, September 9. For more information, please call the office at (908) 490-1480.

What Would You Do If You Were President For A Day?

By REV. KEVIN BRENNAN

What would you do if you were President for a day? The powers of the Presidency were recently turned over to Vice-President Richard Cheney for a two-hour period while President Bush underwent a colonoscopy. But what if you had an entire day to be President?

Would you try to enact some form of legislation? Appoint some of your friends to governmental positions? Designate that cable companies could never raise your rates again? Just such an opportunity presented itself to David Rice Atchison in March of 1849, and what he did with his day as President is rather alarming.

President James Polk was scheduled to step down from office on Saturday, March 4, 1849. His successor was President-elect Zachary Taylor, who was scheduled to take the oath of office the following day. But since that was a Sunday, and Zachary Taylor was a committed Christian who felt it would be wrong to take the oath on the Sabbath, it meant that for one day, Sunday, March 5, there would be no one in office.

Normally, the Vice-President would step in, but his term expired along with that of James Polk. That left David Rice Atchison, the president of the Senate, to serve as President of the United States for a day. Atchison became President for a 24-hour period, even though he was not elected nor sworn into that office. Technically,

he was the 12th President of the United States, although he is not acknowledged as such.

So what did Atchison do with this unique opportunity? He stayed up late Saturday evening partying and celebrating Taylor's victory. Then he went to bed and didn't get up until Sunday was nearly over! He was President for a day and slept through it! Historians later realized that since there was technically no Vice-President, or President of the Senate, and since both the Senate and House of Representatives were out of session for the weekend, that Sunday was perhaps the only day in American history when only one person was in charge of everything. And that person was sound asleep!

This brings me to an interesting verse from the Bible. Psalm 121:3,4—"My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip. He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."

It's kind of nice to know that when it comes to our lives and the very universe we live in, there is One who is in charge, and He is not sleeping. It is our responsibility to reach out to the Lord for the help that we need.

Reverend Brennan is the Pastor of the Evangel Church, located at 1251 Terrill Road in Scotch Plains.

Westfield Y Announces Trips For '60 and Better' This Fall

WESTFIELD—The Westfield Y, located at 220 Clark Street, has announced its fall schedule of trips for the "60 and Better Set." These trips are open to the public and reservations are taken on a first come, first served basis.

A trip is planned on Thursday, September 19, to Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton. While visiting the 22-acre site, participants will take a leisurely stroll through lush greenery for the viewing of both lifelike and abstract sculptures.

Two large buildings with indoor exhibitions and a formal water garden will also be included on the itinerary. Attendees will have an opportunity to enjoy a gourmet boxed lunch at the café there.

The fee for this trip is \$56. Interested individuals are asked to register and make their lunch selection by Wednesday, September 4.

On Monday, October 21, a trip is planned to the new home of the Museum of Modern Art in Queens. The day will begin with a guided tour of the museum.

Afterwards, participants will have an opportunity to sample the wide variety of ethnic and non-ethnic eating places close to the museum. Individuals will

take lunch on their own in one of the area restaurants. A list of restaurants will be provided. The fee for this trip is \$52.

Finally, a Cape May Victorian Christmas trip is scheduled for December 17 through 19. This three-day, two-night trip will include two nights accommodations, two breakfasts, two dinners, including a dinner theater show, and one lunch.

Festive activities will feature a tour of the Emlen Physick Estate; tours of three Victorian mansions; an evening heated Holly Trolley tour; Wheaton Village and a visit to Cape May Point.

The fee for this trip is \$355 per person for a double room and \$425 per person for a single room. A \$100 deposit will hold a reservation for the trip until Monday, November 4.

No Y membership is required for trips. To ensure a space, please register at the Y front desk. No refunds will be issued unless a seat can be sold.

Transportation, bus driver gratuity and all entry fees are included. Meals are included where specified. For more information please call the Y at (908) 233-2700.

Are you a caregiver?



Believe it or not, these people are caring for a parent suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Caring for yourself can enable you to care for others.

No one knows better than Potomac Homes how draining it can be to care for someone with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. We have been doing just that for more than a decade in familiar home-like settings. We recognize the need for people who care for a loved one to get away and recharge, because by caring for themselves, they can better care for someone else. We have rooms available for one and two week stays to enable our families to help maintain a balance in their life.

Take some time for yourself, walk on the beach, nurture your own family and friendships, call us and arrange a respite stay at one of our homes to help you help others.

800-935-9898

Visit our website at
www.potomacgrouphomes.com

New residence opening in Greenbrook!
Call now for Pre-Opening rates & a complimentary tour!



Potomac Homes
Our homes are close to yours

Cresskill | Greenbrook | Hillsdale | Mahwah | Montville
ParamusPark Ridge | Ramsey | Woodcliff Lake

We are pledged to the letter and spirit of U.S. policy for the achievement of equal housing opportunity throughout the Nation. We encourage and support an affirmative advertising and marketing program in which there are no barriers to obtaining housing because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin.

"Keeping Families Connected Is Our Top Priority"



Unlimited National night and weekend minutes¹
and 1000 mobile-to-mobile minutes for life as long as you remain on the original plan selected at activation for just \$39.99 monthly access.

Annual 1 or 2-year agreement required. Calls placed outside calling area are 69 cents per minute.

FREE

- Long Distance
- Voice Mail
- Call Waiting

verizon wireless
Authorized Retailer



OWNER OPERATED • SERVING UNION CO.
15 Broad Street Westfield, NJ
908.654.6440 Fax: 908.654.6441

Good News

Call to Me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things which you have not known.

Jeremiah 33:3 *The Gospel*

Back to School Savings

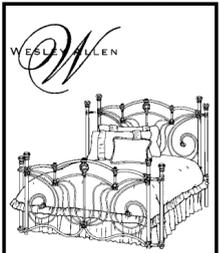
MATTRESS FACTORY

Visit Our Website • www.mattressfac.com

Mattresses & Box Springs

Made on the Premises

Open To The Public



Wesley Allen Beds
on Display

Tired of Your Mattress

- Hi-Risers
- Brass Beds
- Bunkie Boards
- Custom Sizes
- Electric Beds
- Folding Cots
- Split Box Springs
- Crib Mattresses
- Sofa Bed Mattresses
- California King Sizes



FUTONS

Family Owned For Over 20 Years

Owned & Operated by the Shovlin Family for Over 20 Years

Garwood Factory Showroom

518 North Avenue, Garwood
(908) 789-0140 or Toll-free 877-MATT-FAC

MON-FRI 10 TO 6 • THURS 10 TO 8 • SUN 12 TO 5