

## Freeholders Commend EZ Ryders Motorcycle Club

Union County Freeholder Chairman Lewis Mingo, Jr., praised the generosity of members of the EZ Ryders Motorcycle Club for collecting toys for children at Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center's Pediatric Unit and spoke of the need not to judge others because of outward appearances.

"Many people look at a group of motorcyclists and never consider the diversity of the different clubs and what they do to help others. When my daughter Nicole joined the EZ Ryders Motorcycle Club I learned just how much good a group of motorcyclists could do. This group is comprised of young professionals and entrepreneurs. They are affiliated with other charity organizations

such as the United Way, Cancer Care, Order of the Eastern Star and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority," Chairman Mingo said.

Chairman Mingo made his comments as he presented a resolution to the officers of the club for donating money to youth boxing, hosting a Toy Run for a medical center in Asbury Park, serving Thanksgiving dinner at Covenant Garden Senior Center in Plainfield and working as volunteers to assist with relief efforts in the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Center.

"On behalf of the entire board I would like to extend our sincerest appreciation to the EZ Ryders Motorcycle Club, Inc. for their generosity of their time, talents and contributions. As legislators we should make an extra effort to recognize groups like this club for their hard work. I congratulate, thank and truly praise each of you," Chairman Mingo said.

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**NEWLY SWORN IN** - Carol Cohen of Westfield, left, former Union County Counsel and outgoing President of the Union County Women's Political Caucus, administers the oath of office to the Caucus' newly elected officers. They are, pictured from left, Elizabeth Cox (Summit), State Delegate; Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi (Union), Alternate State Delegate; Brenda King (Plainfield), Vice President; Ellen Steinberg, a Union attorney, Programming Chairwoman; Summit Councilwoman P. Kelly Hatfield, President; Summit Councilwoman Cindy Martin, Treasurer; Springfield Councilwoman Clara Hareluk, Counsel, and Elizabeth Cornwell of Linden, Publicity Chairwoman.

## Suliga Bill to Crack Down On Toll-Road Towers

TRENTON - A bill sponsored by Senator Joseph S. Suliga to crack down on high-charging toll-road towing contractors was approved this week by the Senate Transportation Committee.

The legislation, Senate Bill 239, is part of Senator Suliga's three-year campaign to ensure that drivers on the Garden State Parkway get a fair deal when their cars break down. The Committee approved the bill 6-0 and forwarded it to the full Senate for consideration.

The measure would apply to New Jersey's three toll roads - the Garden State Parkway, the New Jersey Turnpike and the Atlantic City Expressway.

"When people's cars break down, they, literally, become hostages of the highway repairmen," said Senator Suliga who conducted an undercover staff probe in June of 1999.

"It's clear from our findings that towers on toll-roads need a strict set of guidelines on rates that must be shared with drivers at the time their vehicles break down," said Senator Suliga. "If a company contracts to provide towing at a certain rate, they shouldn't be able to dupe drivers into paying spiked charges."

The Union County Democrat had staff members feign breakdowns on an 11-mile section of the Garden State Parkway where the licensed toll operator had contracted to provide free towing to its garage or to

the closest exit. In two instances, members of Senator Suliga's staff were charged towing fees of \$68 and \$71.

The probe led to subsequent revelations of more than a dozen irregularities in charges made to unsuspecting drivers by the same towing firm.

"This legislation will require towing contractors to indicate their range of fees in advance and require them to post decals on their tow trucks that they hold valid contracts with the particular toll road authority," Senator Suliga said.

"Overcharging drivers is consumer fraud, clear and simple," Senator Suliga said. Towing contractors who fail to provide their schedule of fees face penalties ranging from \$300 to \$600 and multiple offenders face termination of their contracts, according to the bill.

The Union County Democrat crafted the legislation on a statewide basis for the three toll roads after the Whitman Administration failed to heed his request to conduct a comprehensive probe of the practices of towing contractors.

"If the services aren't provided as promised by the companies to get their contracts, then the bad apples have to be thrown out," Senator Suliga said. "If we stand by and allow highway rip-offs by unscrupulous towing companies, we're all complicit in consumer fraud."

## Mindowaskin Park Overlook Project Nears Success

WESTFIELD - The Friends of Mindowaskin Park, who are actively involved in promoting reconstruction of the historic granite overlook, have reported that fundraising so far exceeds \$95,000.

Friends President Nancy Priest stated, "We have been overwhelmed by the amount of enthusiasm the community has toward this project. Once people could actually see the overlook being rebuilt, we received many inquiries to purchase engraved granite pavers and other items."

The Town of Westfield appropriated \$222,000 in recent years to fund the overlook using concrete. The Friends of Mindowaskin Park undertook the challenge to raise additional money in order to place granite on the restored structure.

The contractor, Tec-Con, completed the substructure about two weeks ago. Spring Valley Monument will complete the remaining part of the project by installing the granite including pavers, ballisters, railings, urns, and benches.

Mayor Gregory McDermott said, "This project has been a wonderful example of how a public/private partnership can work. The Friends worked very hard to bring this project to fruition."

Kris McAloon, Assistant Town Engineer, who has been overseeing the substructure portion of the project said, "This has been one of the easiest capital projects to manage, given the detailed plans prepared by Dave Rogers and the Friends of Mindowaskin Park."

David Foltz, Treasurer of the Friends of Mindowaskin Park, reported, "The Friends have raised over \$350,000 for the park since the group started in 1992. Over 93 percent of the funds raised have been put right back into the park, a statistic unmatched by many non-profit groups."

Volunteer board members of the Friends of Mindowaskin Park include Debby Burslem, Sherry Cronin, David Foltz, B. Carol Molnar, Melba Nixon, Mrs. Priest, Marilyn Shields, Craig Stock, Barbara Vincentsen, and David Williams.

### Mr. Bramnick Slated To Appear Saturday At Benefit Auction

WESTFIELD - Jon Bramnick, the winner of New Jersey's Funniest Lawyer contest, will perform on Saturday, March 9, on behalf of the AIDS Benefit Committee of New Jersey (ABCNJ) at its 14th Gala Auction.

The comedy auction will start at 6 p.m. at Temple Emanu-El, located at 756 East Broad Street in Westfield.

Mr. Bramnick, who performs at charitable events, will also lend his talents to the Charles Addams Art Scholarship Fund on Sunday, April 7, in the Westfield Community Room at the Westfield Municipal Building, located at 425 East Broad Street.

For more information, please visit Mr. Bramnick's website at Comedyauctioneers.com.

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