

More Letters to the Editor

Participants of ALS Softball Tournament Are Thanked

A rain delay did not dampen the spirits of the local softball teams who participated in the May 19, Jim Airey ALS (Lou Gehrig) softball tournament, originally scheduled for Saturday. The events' primary organizers Joe and Joyce Locascio worked diligently with Ray Poerio, Director of Recreation and the Scotch Plains Parks and Recreation Crew, to have the fields (Jerseyland and Brookside) playable for the Sunday tournament.

This is the second year the ALS Awareness Day/Fundraiser was held. This event was possible, despite the deluge on Saturday because of the efforts of Ray and his workers we all are appreciative of their commitment. Jim was diagnosed in 1997 with ALS and prior to his diagnosis was very active in local softball leagues. Feeling helpless in the face of such a daunting diagnosis, family and friends rallied and formed a support group. We decided to have any monetary gain from fund raising events distributed to the ALS-Therapy Development Foundation in Newton Massachusetts.

The money is directed to researchers working on developing new medication, therapies, and hopefully a cure. ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease, which destroys the nerves of a person and then weakens muscles. It is a fatal disease and there is currently no cure, the life span of a person is 3-5 years from diagnosis.

We wanted to know that any monetary gain would go directly to research where results could be realized. When we knew the games would be played, the entire committee went into action, a crew was at our home at 7 a.m., and by 10 a.m. we were ready to play ball, under beautiful blue skies. Friends and family members

were responsible to solicit food, beverages, prizes and donations for the day. We had an overwhelming response to our call for assistance.

Some of the major supporters were: Village Shop-Rite, Merck, Coca-Cola, Costco, J.A.L. Electric, Inc., Tele-View LLC-Deborah Rigger, Prospect Beverage, Hershey's Deli, Scotch Plains; Sideline Sports, Scotch Plains; Ryan Gafthey and Matthew Ballen; Videographers, Chad Zerbe, San Francisco Giants.

We would like to acknowledge Jim Powers and his umpire crew for the donation of their time to this effort, thank you.

Mary Young of Scotch Plains, who lost her husband Dave to ALS a few months ago was in charge of organizing a bake sale at Brookside Park. She commandeered her neighbors, and family to supply the baked goods and we realized a very nice profit from her hard work.

The heart of the day encompassed the countless individuals who adapted to the changes in plans, arrived ready and eager to work, and made the day an overwhelming success.

It is comforting to Jim, Scott, Nicole and myself to fully experience the meaning of support, and to feel the gift of friendship. Feeling cared about, and cared for is very rewarding. If adversity is the doorway to goodness, then we are truly blessed, and fully appreciative of all who took part in making May 19 the success it was. We raised over \$10,000.

We are hopeful that this contribution will help researchers find a cure for ALS
Jim, Susan, Scott and Nicole Airey
Scotch Plains



Tracy Evans for The Westfield Leader and The Times
MARCHING PROUDLY...The Westfield Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution march with pride at the Memorial Day festivities in Westfield.

Ordinance Will Serve as Deterrent To Problems of Underage Drinking

The Township Council of Scotch Plains is discussing a municipal ordinance which will apply penalties to underage drinking on private property. The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Municipal Alliance Committee (MAC) would like to reiterate our reasons for proposing that this ordinance be passed.

Underage drinking has been identified as the dominant substance abuse problem in Scotch Plains and Fanwood.

Cartoon Upsets Reader Supports SPOrdinance

I was appalled by the "cartoon" that appeared in your paper last week. To depict the Scotch Plains Town Council like that was an insult to the Council and the town of Scotch Plains.

While it is your right to disagree with the underage drinking ordinance that the town has under consideration, the cartoon was mean spirited and in extremely poor taste. Equating the Council with Hitler unfairly demonizes the town (and those who care about youth) and trivializes the horrendous tragedies that Hitler caused, while the ordinance could have the long term potential for saving lives.

I sincerely wish that you, and the people who oppose the underage drinking ordinance, would take the time and energy to really understand it. The ordinance puts the consequences of illegal drinking on the youth, allowing for fines and the possible short term suspension of a driver's license for those caught drinking.

There is absolutely nothing in the ordinance, which gives police any more power than they currently have to enter a home. Underage drinking is a problem far too many people sweep under the rug—they say, "It's a rite of passage." But excessive underage drinking can lead to alcoholism, a lifetime curse. It can lead to automobile accidents, alcoholic poisoning and death, unwanted pregnancies and more.

Why shouldn't we try to protect our youth with an ordinance that, while we know it will never totally eliminate underage drinking, may at least provide a deterrent to some?

Sharon F. Machrone
Scotch Plains

This assertion is based on information from key informants, such as the police department, school district personnel and local mental health/drug and alcohol treatment providers.

The proposed ordinance does not extend the authority of the police to enter private property. In order to enter private property in a case where underage drinking is suspected, the police must either observe an illegal act or have probable cause to suspect an illegal act.

The proposed ordinance closes a loophole that presently exists. At this time, underage persons possessing or consuming alcohol in public are subject to the same fines and suspension of driving privileges that the ordinance proposes for underage drinking on private property.

The proposed ordinance makes the prohibition of underage consumption of alcohol more consistent by applying penalties no matter where it occurs. A consistent message is of primary importance when dealing with teenagers.

Currently, if underage drinking occurs on private property, only the property owner faces any penalty. The proposed ordinance will make teenagers responsible for their own behavior because they will pay the penalty in the loss of driving privileges.

The proposed ordinance recognizes and specifically preserves the rights of parents. A parent may give permission for his/her child to consume alcohol in their home, for religious or any other purposes.

The Alliance believes passage of this ordinance will be beneficial to our community by helping to reduce underage drinking. Underage drinking is illegal for many good reasons: Young people under the influence of alcohol are less likely to control their angry impulses and more likely to engage in risky behavior, such as fighting, daredevil stunts or risky sexual behavior.

Alcohol is often a component in cases of date rape, and there is always the danger of drinking and driving. Passage of the ordinance will not jeopardize our constitutional rights and is a valuable opportunity to keep our young people safe.

Cathy Cvetovich, Coordinator
Scotch Plains-Fanwood Municipal Alliance Committee

Reader Praises Leader/Times For Printing Cartoon Opposition Letters

I want to praise the Leader/Times for printing the many letters of opposition it received regarding a political cartoon that used the image of Hitler to illustrate the paper's opinion. Although I have taken issue with this paper for not indicating when they edit letters from the community, I admire its willingness to engage in a free exchange of ideas when they publish community letters, especially from those who diametrically oppose the paper's stance.

Regarding the recent controversy, I see two points to visit.

One: invoking Hitler. To "use Hitler" is an extreme device, but can be an effective one for obvious reason. Who else so readily, so quickly portrays the antithesis of our Constitution? Approximately 18 million died in the Nazi death camps; 6 million were Jews. Hitler was not just the antichrist of one race; he was

an anathema to the entire human race. No sector can necessarily claim a greater abhorrence than another — we share the common fear of knowing such evil once walked the earth. When someone invokes Hitler, an awesome sense of scale is established immediately.

Two: the proposed ordinance. Obviously, the Leader/Times is against the proposed ordinance, having used the drastic image of Hitler to illustrate its opinion. I also oppose this ordinance. I do not believe underaged-drinking is sufficient cause to encroach on the Fourth Amendment.

Notice: the letters opposed to the paper's cartoon did not question the paper's stance, only the method by which it was expressed — a packaging issue. Let's look again. There was something important inside that wrapper.

Deborah Graffox
Scotch Plains

Drinking Ordinance Is Shocking and In Conflict with Federal Law

This letter was originally sent to Mayor Martin Marks and Members of the Scotch Plains Council

We are writing to express our strong objection to the proposed ordinance providing police access into private homes sans a search warrant. It is shocking that such an ordinance, in apparent direct conflict with federal law, has been endorsed in other municipalities. That should provide no justification for our elected township authorities making the same reckless decision.

We have lived in Scotch Plains for 27 years and always felt very well protected by our local police force. We have felt the police have sufficient authority to administer the law and have noted on several occasions their positive use of

discretionary authority with appropriate consideration.

Entering homes on the basis of unsubstantiated complaints will lead to a loss of privacy Americans have always enjoyed. However, it will also result in serious errors and potential law suits against the township when they do occur. While we appreciate the importance of preventing underage teens from drinking, there are better and more suitable means of doing this. For example, we would support additional educational programs for parents and teens about the dangers of drinking.

Stanley M. Brown and Pamela Barsam-Brown
Scotch Plains

Proposed Starting/Dismissal Hours For SP-F Schools Are Contested

I am writing to voice my opposition to the proposed plan to change the present schedule of school hours in the Fanwood-Scotch Plains elementary, middle and high schools.

Comparing the time schedules for beginning instruction and dismissal with other school systems in our area, none of the neighboring schools have the elementary children beginning so late and dismissing so late.

This schedule could have our youngest children, who need the most parental supervision, left unattended both in the morning and at dismissal time.

The proposal has middle school children dismissed 35 minutes earlier than the elementary schools. This would eliminate any chance of older siblings walking or meeting up with younger siblings.

The proposed times for the high

school are the earliest beginning and earliest dismissal times compared to other area high schools. This is despite research showing that teens perform better academically later in the morning hours.

It has been stated that our high school students need more time allotted at the end of the school day to prepare for sports activities! This is not educationally sound.

The Board of Education meets on Thursday, June 6, to discuss the proposed changes. Although the meeting time conflicts with those of the Parent-Teacher Association and others, I urge all parents to contact Board of Education members and attend the meeting to voice their opinions.

Patricia Walsh
Fanwood

Resident Agrees with Ordinance 2044, Disagrees with Traffic Calming Ideas

I am happy that Ordinance 2044 was approved and includes road improvements in certain areas of the town. It is understandable that we need to spend some additional money to create more conducive traffic patterns and keep our streets safe for our children.

What I do not understand are the remedies prescribed for traffic calming. Rumble strips have been installed on certain streets and temporary speed bumps have also been suggested as a means to deter drivers from traveling at excessive speeds. The rationale seems to be that because we obviously cannot rely on motorists in this town (they may not all be Westfield residents) to obey the highly visible speed limit signs that are posted around town, we must create additional traffic impediments.

Has anyone ever seen a vehicle slow down when approaching a rumble strip? I agree with the South Euclid Avenue resident that rumble strips can only be depended upon for excess noise. A Fairmont Avenue resident suggested speed bumps, but I doubt if those rugged drivers in their hulking SUVs will care.

In past editions of the Leader we have been encouraged to self-police the roads by slowing down, thus forcing drivers to conform. In contrast, psychology experts tell us such a tactic could incite a potential road rage incident. How many times have you driven down a Westfield street at 25 mph only to have a not-so-social motorist behind you flashing his brights or honking his horn to induce you

to speed up or get out of the way?

I suggest a more effective way to calm motorists. We should return to more aggressive issuance of speeding tickets and traffic summonses.

Consequently, such a policy of increased doggedness by the Westfield police would place more of a strain on the resources of the department. With the other pressing traffic issues that exist in this town, officers do not want to spend the better part of their day constantly pulling people over for speeding and suffering through the inherent paperwork. Let us consider making it worth their while. Why not give them a cut of the action, a type of commission if you will? The only people who would object would be those drivers whom we are attempting to calm in the first place.

Just think of the additional revenue the town would enjoy if we initiate such a policy. Considering the frequency of haphazard driving that occurs in this town, this revenue windfall could probably pay for the proposed parking deck.

Excessive speeding and reckless/careless driving laws are on the books. We do not have to keep throwing additional money at our problem. We should concentrate on enforcing the laws that already exist.

If we are really serious about changing the behavior of motorists who drive in our town, let's hit them where it hurts — in the wallet!

Lance Tupper
Westfield

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