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## County Offers Education Through Vo-Tech Schools

by Union County Freeholder Chairman Lewis Mingo, Jr.

Recently, Union County broke ground on a new 80,000 square foot addition to the campus of our Vocational-Technical Schools in Scotch Plains. The new building will house classrooms, physical education facilities, labs, a library and office space. It will allow the schools to comply with the state's new graduation requirements, which no longer allow students to attend the schools on a half-day schedule while taking their core schoolwork.

The Vocational-Technical Schools are a little known success story in Union County; though more than 3,500 Union County residents utilize a variety of programs and services there each year. People of all ages use the campus for learning -learning that ranges from auto mechanics to advanced mathematics, to applying computer technology in schools across the county and getting a second chance at education.

The school's Scotch Plains campus is home to the Vocational-Technical Schools and the county's Magnet High School and a variety of other services for residents of all ages. They provide a direct connection between people who want to build a better foundation for their future, and businesses looking for highly trained and highly qualified employees.

Best known is probably the Vocational-Technical High School, which graduated 350 students last year. This school offers courses in more than a dozen fields of study from auto repair and graphic design to food service and cosmetology. More than a thousand students, coming from every municipality in Union County, attend the Vocational Technical High School.

This school prepares young people so well for jobs and careers that this year's graduates will have a placement rate of 95 percent to 97 percent. Nearly all of the students who graduate will get jobs in their fields of study, go on to school, or enlist in the military. The only placement record better than the Vocational-Technical High School belongs to the Magnet High School, which graduated its first class of seniors this June.

The Magnet High School, opened its doors to students in 1999. The first class of 57 students will see 100 percent of its grads heading to college this fall, many of them to Ivy League schools. Our Magnet School is arguably the most technologically advanced high school in the State of New Jersey.

The school provides a rigorous academic program with special emphasis on math and science. Students can earn college credit in the sophomore year through an agreement with Union County College and can get up to a year of college credits upon high school graduation.

This year, Magnet School grads received cumulative scholarships and grants of more than \$3.3 million toward college. Among our students, there, we have two National Merit Scholars, two National Hispanic Recognition Program Finalists, four Edward J. Bloustein Distinguished Scholars, 15 President's Education Award Recipients and three Governor's School Scholars.

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## Subscriber Seeks Explanation About Tardy Mail

Several weeks ago, I called your office to discuss late delivery of my copy of *The Leader*. After a discussion of the issues, I sent the following letter to both the Westfield and Rahway Post Offices.

To Postmasters of Westfield and Rahway:

I subscribe to *The Westfield Leader*, which is mailed to me from Westfield every Thursday morning. I receive it on Monday if I'm lucky. The issue mailed last Thursday has not arrived yet despite being mailed six days ago.

Yesterday, I called your 800-telephone number — an experience in itself. I was given a case number and was told that I would be called today. The case number is KA 7883173. Your return telephone call has yet to be received.

I would like to get an explanation of why I never got called back. I would also like to know why it takes your organization a minimum of four days to move a piece of mail approximately two miles.

I thought you'd like to know that neither Postmaster has seen fit to reply to me. I think it's because my letters got lost in the mail. I continue, with one exception to get *The Leader* on Monday or Tuesday.

Charlotte Kornhauser  
Clark

## Was Free Speech Inhibited at 9/11 Memorial?

Does Westfield respect Free Speech? I was confronted with this question yesterday, Saturday, the day our memorial was dedicated to the memory of those lost in the World Trade Center attack.

I had just finished distributing a dozen copies of an anonymous poem, which praised our national spirit in response to such terror. I was standing near the memorial, on public property; the actual ceremony was not to begin for another 6 hours. A man wearing a badge "Event Coordinator" on his shirt accosted me after reading my handout, accusing me of insensitivity to the next-of-kin and survivors.

He said that anything of a political nature would cause the widows more emotional suffering, or words to that effect. He asked me to leave the area because what I was doing was "inappropriate". Because several policemen were present, I have no doubt that he would have involved them against me if I had more copies to distribute.

I replied that I could not imagine how anyone would interpret what I had done as indecent. He said it was. It was not enough for him to insult me by implying that I was a callous human being. He deprived me of my right to free speech as well. Here in Westfield.

Eric Hausker  
Rahway

## Mountainside Parents Thanked For School District Cleanup

The teaching staff is pleased to finally be back at work in the Mountainside School District! We started our school year two weeks later than originally planned due to construction delays, but we are back and happy to be here with our students.

When the teachers reported for our two workdays Thursday, September 12 and Friday, September 13, we could see that with all the construction paraphernalia, dust, and disorganization, it would be a difficult task to have our classrooms ready in time for the students' arrival on Tuesday, September 17. Teachers and custodians were prepared to work long hours to get the rooms ready, but it looked like an impossible task.

Imagine our delight when parents volunteered to help and did! Many arrived at Deerfield School with buckets, mops, and sponges to help prepare kindergarten and other primary grade classrooms. Several parents unpacked boxes of books and supplies. Some parents had to hire babysitters for their younger children so they could volunteer their time to help us get ready.

To these wonderful parents, the teachers and aides of Deerfield School say a heartfelt "thank you." The public schools in our great country always work better when they function as a partnership between professional educators, students, and parents. The parents who helped us get ready showed us their support with a lot of hard work, and we appreciate it very much.

Jeannette Maraffi  
President  
Mountainside Education Association

## Deadlines

General News - Friday 4pm  
Weekend Sports - Monday 12pm  
Classifieds - Tuesday 2pm  
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## To Reach Us

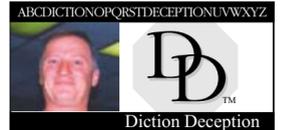
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Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions — only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly — good guess. If you get two — well-read individual. If you get three — word expert. If you get all four — You must have a lot of free time!

**All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.**

### Answers to last week's arcane words.

1. Cunctative — Slow-moving; sluggish
2. Rhipidate — Formed like a fan
3. Telectic — Pertaining to the final end or purpose
4. Zythum — A malt beverage brewed by the ancient Egyptians

### RODOMONTADE

1. Any order of mammals having large incisor teeth, such as the rat, beaver or hare
2. A whale distinguished from common whales by having a dorsal fin
3. To boast or brag
4. A vagrant or loiterer

### ROBORATION

1. A strengthening
2. A nightgown
3. Quivering; shaking
4. A very loud noise; explosion

### GLUTTONY

1. In botany, having a sticky, moist surface
2. The act of swallowing
3. The act or result of excessive overeating
4. A surplus in supplies, materials, etc.

### GNÖFF

1. A miser
2. To banish or ostracize
3. To disregard or consider unimportant
4. A sneeze or grunt

## Letters to the Editor

### Salaries of Union County Officials Are Compiled By Local Reader

Sometime ago, you published salaries of public officials from Westfield, Scotch Plains and Fanwood. While that was great, I thought that the paper would also publish salaries from Union County officials. Maybe you were too busy with other matters.

I compiled information for your readers from the Union County government. Please see below.

Salaries: County Manager, \$129,000; County Counsel, \$123,240; County Medical Examiner, \$120,000; Chief of Investigations, \$117,532; Deputy Chief, \$116,358; Deputy County Manager,

\$113,500.00; County Clerk, \$111,647; Surrogate, \$111,647; Sheriff, \$111,647; Operations and Facilities, \$109,082; Rannels Director, \$107,465; Finance Director, \$105,467; Human Services Director, \$101,025; Operational Services Director, \$100,827; Freeholder Chairman, \$27,875; Freeholder Vice-Chairman, \$26,875; Freeholders, \$25,875.

I hope this assists, and that the readers are now more aware of where our Union County tax dollars are going.

Vincent Lehotsky  
Rahway

### Mayor McDermott Shares Sentiments, Thanks Those Involved in Memorial Pk.

I know I share the sentiments of a whole community when I extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to the hundreds of people who helped organize a weekend of tribute to our fallen neighbors of September 11, 2001.

A beautiful and heartfelt weekend of remembrance began on Friday morning with the assembly of an honor guard vigil at the new September 11th Memorial Park. For more than 30 hours, Westfield police, fire and rescue personnel joined with Jaycees and Y's Men to keep a solemn and respectful vigil at the park.

On Saturday, hundreds of children participated in a "Walk for Dads" fundraiser for the Park that brought parents and children together for a tremendous cause. Finally, at 6 p.m., Westfield's newest park was opened in a ceremony

that through song and prayer helped to bring our community closer — a touching reminder of the unique spirit of community that fortifies this town even in its darkest hours.

My thanks to Janis Weinstein, Chair of the Memorial Park Committee, and all of the committee members, Mark Fischbach, Craig Stock, Sally Cohen-Alameno, Barbara Ball, Sal Caruana, Sherry Cronin, David Foltz, Andrea McDermott, Jane Santivan, and Renee Trabert for working so hard this year to create an enduring memorial to honor the many friends and neighbors that Westfield, and our nation, lost on September 11, 2001.

Mayor Greg McDermott  
Westfield

### Fallig Family Thankful For Support Since Accident at Westfield High

Our daughter, Rachel Fallig, was one of the children injured in the tragic accident at Westfield High School on 9/11/02. We would like to take this opportunity to send our thanks to the Westfield community for their warm expressions of caring and best wishes for Rachel and our family.

The accident at Westfield High School was a terrible tragedy that has affected not only the families directly involved, but has been felt across the community

and the state. We send our thanks to the wonderful staff at UMDNJ in Newark, to Rabbi's Rene Edelman and Doug Segal and the clergy and staff at Temple Emanuel, to Maureen Mazzarese, Marie Koch and the guidance staff at Westfield High, and to our friends and neighbors whose well wishes and prayers have helped us all through this most difficult of times.

We would also like to send special thanks to Karym Hoens, our friend and neighbor, who, upon hearing that Rachel had been taken to UMDNJ and knowing that her parents were working over an hour away from the hospital, immediately rushed to the hospital to be with Rachel so she wouldn't have to be alone until her parents arrived. Her true and deep compassion and caring make us proud to call her friend.

To all who have helped us through, we thank you. Our thoughts and best wishes are with all of the children and their families who were impacted by this terrible accident.

Robertta and Michael Fallig  
Westfield

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## Athletic Programs Help Build Character— So Important For All Students Today

The Westfield High School Ice Hockey Association (WHSIHA) was established in 1994 by parents of young kids. The organization's purpose was to raise money to donate to the Board of Education (BOE) to start funding for the hockey program. The Board would not consider starting a team unless the volunteers came up with the money to fund it.

Once the hockey parents came up with the money, they "requested" the Board to accept the money and sanction the team. There was a proviso from the BOE, however. As we understand it, the Board required that the WHSIHA agree to not ask for funding until 1998. The Board was concerned about the popularity of the sport.

High school hockey has grown dramatically since. In 1994, there were 55 high school hockey teams in New Jersey. In 2001, there are 103 teams. There are over 30 kids on the Westfield team. Yet the BOE still does not fund the program. It is the only sport at the Westfield High School, except perhaps girls' lacrosse, which does not receive funding. Every penny necessary for the team comes from the parents, through dues and/or fund-raising.

This year, the hockey program budget will probably exceed \$65,000. Without some help, each skater will need to pay about \$2,000 to fund the team. In comparison, Summit, Chatham, Johnson and Cranford all receive funding.

The lack of support from the BOE has not dimmed the enthusiasm that the student athletes have for the game, or for their community. They bleed "Westfield blue." Last year, in the aftermath of 9/11, they raised several thousand dollars along with Cranford in a charity hockey game to benefit families who lost loved ones on that tragic day. In what can only be described by those fortunate enough to be in attendance (there were over 500 people at Warinanco Ice arena that night) as a gut-wrenching thrill, Westfield overcame an early deficit to rally and beat Cranford.

Later that year, the Westfield Ice Hockey team members donated their time to help construct the memorial to 9/11 victims at the circle in downtown Westfield. They have given freely to the

children of Westfield by volunteering to teach them how to roller skate at a camp held at Tamaques Park this summer. They helped in hockey clinics for kids and assisted at the Armory during "Friday Night Roller Skating Sessions" this summer.

Many members of the Westfield High School Hockey team entered the Bridgewater Spring and Summer Leagues this year and came away with the Championship trophy in each session. In accomplishing this feat, they beat teams comprised of other high school players that they are likely to meet in the upcoming hockey season.

The hockey student-athlete has a very hard task, but from this he grows in character. He attends practices twice a week after school, most of which are a half hour ride to the nearest rink. At the rink, it takes 30 minutes to dress. The practice is an hour and then another 20-30 minutes is required to peel off the layers of equipment and to get dressed. The ride home is half an hour. It is then shower, dinner and homework. The games are the easy part.

To keep the team alive, the parents and the players work hard at raising money. They have fundraisers, hold roller skating sessions and conduct training camps. The Skate-a-thon at Warinanco Rink is a fall favorite. It will take place this year on November 2. This year, the team was given a signed Eric Lindros N.Y. Ranger jersey to be used as a raffle prize. A former Ranger player, Vic Hadfield, to help the team raise money, donated the jersey.

In an age where character building is so important, we think the Westfield Board of Education should take a second look at the good investment that the hockey program makes in the kids. We think the BOE should give a higher priority overall to athletic education and training. We're not calling for more expenditure, just a minor shift in priorities.

We have heard grumbling that the BOE is considering removing general funding of some existing athletic programs at the high school. Their theory is that community, commercial and volunteer contributions could fund athletic programs. If the BOE proceeds in this direction, we think it would be an error.

## Elected Board of Education Members Should Have Free Speech on Issues

As we understand it, the members of the Board of Education (BOE) are elected by the public to represent and serve the public. But it seems that the Board of Education in Scotch Plains-Fanwood has an ill-gotten policy, in our view, about individual members not being permitted to express their opinion on issues.

Though the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education consists of nine elected members, the Board President is the only member allowed to speak to the public or to the press on board matters. Are the other members of the Board of Education not allowed to express their individual concerns regarding issues?

The public statement policy issued to this newspaper by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools states:

"The Board of Education recognizes that arbitrary or independent actions of Board members can produce serious consequences for the effectiveness of school operations. An essential quality of a good board member is a commitment to group decisions cooperatively reached.

On matters relating to actions or proposed actions of the Board of Education, the board President is the designated spokesperson for the Board unless the Board by action authorizes other Board personnel of staff to comment to the press.

No member of the Board of Education individually will speak for, or in the name of, the total Board unless by explicit direction of the Board."

To us, this policy serves as food for thought for all of the township and borough taxpayers who trust not one member of the board, but instead nine elected members of the board to manage the affairs for the best interest of the public.

Members of the township council, the borough council and mayors speak freely to the public and to the press. Council members gladly return calls and speak on any subject, providing it is not a legal matter required to be kept private.

For the good of the community and for the good of education for the children, we think that all elected members of the SP-F Board of Education should speak more freely on issues to the public. We hope the SPF-BOE reconsiders current policy.

