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# THE SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD TIMES

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OUR 46TH YEAR - ISSUE NO. 34-2005

USPS 485200 Periodical - Postage Paid at Scotch Plains, N.J.

Thursday, August 25, 2005

Published Every Thursday Since 1959 www.goleader.com

(908) 232-4407 press@goleader.com

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## NCLB Deems SP's Park Middle School as 'Early Warning' Status

By MICHAEL POLLACK  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

AREA - While Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School passed all No Child Left Behind indicators for the 2004-2005 school year, Park Middle School failed to meet all requirements. Completion of all 40 is necessary to achieve the NCLB standards.

The standards, adopted in early January of 2002, ensure that all children are afforded the best opportunity to learn, and that their educators are held to a standard of excellence. Jon Zlock, a public information spokesman for the New Jersey Department of Education, provided the Times with a release and chart that illustrates how the law works.

According to a press release circulated August 10 by the state Department of Education, "If a school misses AYP (Average Yearly Progress) in any one of the 40 indicators for any test calculation after having achieved AYP in prior years, it is placed on an 'Early Warning' list. Early Warning schools face no NCLB sanctions. This is a category developed by New Jersey as a way to remind school officials that if they do not make AYP in the following year, they will be placed on the NCLB Schools In Need of Improvement List."

Park Middle School in Scotch Plains has entered its first year of Early Warning status, while Scotch Plains Fanwood High School, like Edison Intermediate in Westfield, has scored proficiently on all 40 indicators this year and is on "Hold" status.

Dr. Margaret Hayes, Scotch Plains Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Instruction and Assessment, said that Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School was tested in March and found to have met 40 of 40 indicators and is, "currently meeting all requirements."

Dr. Hayes said that the school remains on the list because of not passing last year and is deemed "Hold status."

Park Middle School, however, did not pass all requirements - meeting 39 of the 40. According to Dr. Hayes, "the black students did not pass the language arts requirement" and, as a result, the school is deemed in Early Warning status.

Dr. Centuolo said, "Those schools deal with more bilingual students and economically disadvantaged students." She added that even towns such as Summit are in trouble because they are faced with students who come from "project housing in that area and others that provide low-income housing."

Dr. Hayes explained that Park Middle School was deficient in passing all requirements for NCLB a couple of years ago because of special education requirements. She said that after Park was found to be failing in an area, "we met as a group of administrators and we recognized that it was one of 40, but we still took it seriously."

The administrators examined the basic skills and developed a program called Reaching, Achieving, Succeeding (RAS) to aid teachers and students.

"RAS was modeled after a similar program in the high school - Achieve Your Potential - that proved to work. It proves the more attention you pay, the more success is achieved," said Dr. Hayes. She noted that all Scotch Plains-Fanwood schools maintain "high standards and we work hard to meet them."

Scotch Plains Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carol Choye said she was proud of the fact that "her staff focused positively at the high school," and helped students pass the requirements. She said the staff at Park did data analysis to follow the children through the system and identify areas where extra help could be provided.



Dr. Carol Choye



Dr. Margaret Hayes

Dr. Choye wanted to avoid questions of fairness, but said, "it really isn't fair" that the high school was not recognized for the work it did. On paper, the school is merely in hold status and doesn't highlight that "a lot of teachers went over and above and stayed after to help children. We worked with the kids caught in the middle. The kids who weren't in the APs, but not in special education either, and we gave them a boost."

Dr. Choye cautioned not to over generalize the failure in the African-American subgroup. "It depends on the number in the subgroup. You may have just as many, if not more, who passed than who didn't. In Scotch Plains and Fanwood, we're proud to have a very diverse population." She noted that there could be a number of variables responsible for the failure of the African-American subgroup in language arts.

"Did we cover all areas of knowledge? Are some learning through reading, listening? Some learn kinesthetically. We need to explore many ways to teach students," Dr. Choye said. She added she is working to build the right foundation for students, and stressed the importance of a partnership with parents."

Park Middle School Principal Lisa Rebinbas said she looks at all students' success in the classroom and seeks to "help those at risk meet the AYP and language arts requirements."

Mrs. Rebinbas said Park is re-vamping its basic skills program to provide support for students and "close the gap between what they know and what they need to know."

While conceding that the school is not where it needs to be, Mrs. Rebinbas said the staff is "working

diligently" to meet the needs of the students and looking at support programs for at-risk kids and putting together supplemental programs in addition.

She said that an inherent issue with the NCLB is that when educational programs are instituted to deal with student success "you don't see educational impact until years down the line. That's long-term impact. That's the measure of success - have they learned more? Have they achieved more?"

She said that meeting 39 of 40 indicators is still "really good," though the school can do more. She said NCLB causes a school to focus on new students each year, instead of tracking a student through his or her subsequent school years. "You're not analyzing eighth graders as they move up. You're comparing their scores to new eighth graders. You're looking at new kids instead of seeing how they perform in grades nine through 11," Mrs. Rebinbas said.

She added that tracking a student's individual progress allows the school system to, "measure Park's success and the high school's success. We want to know how they're progressing and how we could do better by them." When asked if the tests were arbitrary, she disagreed, saying that a school has, "a lot it can learn from the data."

Westfield education representatives informed the Leader that an August 11 Star-Ledger article was incorrect because Edison Intermediate School did indeed meet its Average Yearly Progress (AYP) for 2005. AYP is a standard to make sure a child is achieving at his or her average grade level. By the 2013-2014 school year, all students must be at the proficient level of state testing. This year is the first where schools must test third through eighth graders in mathematics and reading. Come 2007, science will be required.

Westfield's Edison Intermediate School was placed on Early Warning status last year, but did meet requirements this year, which avoided it being placed on the Schools in Need of Improvement List. Technically, according to the DOE press release, "In 2004-2005, 376 schools were placed on the Early Warning List. Forty-seven schools were placed in Early Warning "Hold" status, which means that while they made AYP this year, they did not make it in the 2003-2004 school year. Schools must make AYP two years in a row in order to be removed from either the Early Warning or SINI list."

Dr. Carmen Centuolo, Union County Superintendent of Schools, confirmed that Edison is on "Hold" status, indicating, "We should watch and see. It means that caution should be taken as we work towards progress." If a school is not fully compliant with all testing achievements, she said the "district needs to be aware and we highlight the school to put our full emphasis on it." In terms of the "Hold" status, she said, "it's nothing extremely disturbing."

When posed the question, Dr. Centuolo agreed that aspects of the NCLB are a semantics game. She said the problems are real, though, and they're not affecting the schools one might imagine.

"Most schools are having difficulty. Even Summit had a similar situation. That's a high achieving district. But the NCLB has brought the subgroup population to light."

The subgroups consist of distinctions such as "economically disadvantaged," "limited English" and "special education." Dr. Centuolo reinforced that all subgroups must meet

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## F-SP Business Groups Invite Public to Event

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Scotch Plains and the Fanwood business and professional associations will be holding a joint Network Night on Thursday August 25, 6:30 p.m. at the New Tavern at the Stage House Restaurant & Wine Bar in Scotch Plains.

The public is invited. There is no charge for Association members. The fee for others is \$5.

Hors d'oeuvres & soft drinks will be served. A cash bar is available.

For more information, call Jef Stein at (908) 322-6774 or e-mail info@visitscotchplains.com.

The event is a pre-grand opening of the tavern. Tom Britt is hosting the event.



HAPPY MOMENT... In a private ceremony, Fanwood Library Director Daniel Weiss and Mary Olive Smith were married last Friday afternoon, August 19 by Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr on the grounds of Fanwood Borough Hall. Mr. Weiss is recovering from a knife wound to the neck when he was attacked by his ex-wife on August 1.

## Fanwood Lib. Director Weds; Ex-Wife Bail Set For Friday

By CHRISTIE STORMS  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD - During a break in the intermittent rain showers on Friday afternoon, Fanwood Memorial Library Director Dan Weiss married fiancée Mary Olive Smith on the grounds behind Fanwood Borough Hall at 4 p.m.

Originally, the couple was to be married in North Carolina on August 6, 2005. However, they had postponed their wedding after Mr. Weiss was allegedly stabbed by his ex-wife, Rosemary Dunlap of Westfield, a few days before that ceremony.

While the couple resides in Jersey City, they were so impressed by the

caring and support they received from the Fanwood community during Mr. Weiss' hospitalization and recovery, they asked Mayor Colleen Mahr to perform the ceremony in Fanwood.

"We wanted to keep it as low-key as possible because we still have a really big affair planned for November in North Carolina with our families and friends," Ms. Smith said. "We didn't have music or anything, but it was still really magical being outdoors under the big trees behind Borough Hall."

In attendance were: Mr. Weiss' son, Jesse, of Westfield; Ms. Smith's sister Sandra Smith and her husband Joao deSouza of New York City; Mr.

Weiss' mother, Lucille Weiss of Westfield; and friends Pat and Tom Plante, who photographed the ceremony.

The bride wore a garnet necklace given to her by Mr. Weiss' mother. Her wedding band was comprised of diamonds from her own maternal grandmother's wedding ring.

Mr. Weiss surprised his bride with a bouquet of snapdragons, sweetheart roses and alstromeria. Ms. Plante also brought a bouquet of sweetheart roses, which was carried by Ms. Smith's sister, Sandra, who served as witness to the vows. Employees from the mayor's office sent champagne.

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## SP Seeks to Clarify State, County Position on Reducing Deer Herd

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - Scotch Plains officials are making further efforts to clarify the positions of the state and Union County about a deer reduction program in the Ashbrook Reservation, which the township has attempted to bring about for the past few years.

Early in the year, the state declined to issue a permit allowing Scotch Plains to reduce the burgeoning deer herd in the reservation. Earlier this summer, state and township officials toured the county-owned reservation to get a first-hand view of the deer herd, whose increasing size in recent years has caused a number of car accidents, as well as resident complaints of deer wandering off the reservation and into neighborhood yards, where they destroy landscaping and tip garbage cans.

Last month, Susan Martka of the Department of Environmental Protection's Fish and Wildlife Division wrote to Scotch Plains about a possible deer reduction program in the Ashbrook Reservation, but township officials found the correspondence unclear as to the state's position on a new permit application this year.

Township Manager Thomas Atkins told the township council at its August 9 conference meeting that he had spoken to Ms. Martka and received some clarification about the state's position, which he declined to discuss publicly. But it appears the DEP favors first trying to thin the deer herd via a bow-and-arrow method before resorting to contracting with a professional firm using rifles, the option long favored by township officials.

Township representatives plan to meet with Union County officials soon to get their input on the various proposals. Mr. Atkins told the council last week that before any deer reduction option is considered, Scotch Plains will need to know "what the county government would accept since it's their property."

Township officials were angered when the expected deer hunt last March was put off. The state opted not to consider the township's permit application because it wanted a more thorough review of what was, for them, a new application. The state wanted to consider whether hunters

could reduce the reservation's deer herd instead of incorporating a formal control program.

The state also claimed the permit application was not timely filed, with state officials maintaining that they require 120 days to review an application. Township officials noted that state and county representatives had been aware of Scotch Plains' plans for more than a year, and that if the

120-day rule had been a valid reason for the state's decision, then the county's deer census that was conducted in late November 2004 had also been done in an untimely fashion.

Thirdly, the state put off consideration of the township's application because it was receiving many new applications and wanted to study all of them thoroughly.

## DOT Study Sought on Highway Projects

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - With the modification of the Route 22 bridge in Scotch Plains and widening of the intersection at the northern end of the bridge expected to begin next year, the township council is asking the State Department of Transportation (DOT) to further examine how that long-planned project will be affected by the DOT's new plan to expand a nearby interchange on Route 78.

Last week, the council approved a resolution asking the DOT to look into how traffic at the intersection of Bonnie Burn Road and New Providence Road - at the northern end of the bridge that connects with Park Avenue - will be affected by the planned expansion of Interchange 43 on Route 78.

DOT plans to enlarge that interchange so that highway drivers will be able to directly access to southbound Diamond Hill Road, which becomes New Providence Road nearer to Scotch Plains, instead of being forced to drive northward.

Township officials, during a recent meeting with DOT personnel, were made aware of the proposed interchange expansion, and expressed concern that an increase in southbound traffic on New Providence Road could further exacerbate what is already a congested road, especially during the afternoon rush hour.

Officials from neighboring Watchung have also expressed some concern, and have mentioned the possibility of widening New Providence Road, which is presently a one-lane roadway. One problem with any po-

tential widening, though, is the presence of the Weldon Quarry on one side of the road and the Watchung Reservation property on the other side. Another is that the county-controlled road lies in Union and Somerset Counties.

The council resolution approved last week notes that DOT officials apparently did not address the impact of the expanded Route 78 interchange on the Bonnie Burn-New Providence project and on the expected increase in vehicular traffic on New Providence Road, and requested an evaluation of these concerns.

Four years ago, after extensive discussions and a public hearing, the council endorsed a plan for a new, widened bridge across Route 22 in the same location as the present crossing. Plans also call for a widening of the intersection at New Providence Road and Bonnie Burn Road as well as an expansion of the area where the south side of the bridge intersects with Park Avenue. A new traffic light would also be installed at the latter location.

The plans also call for dedicated left turn lanes and separate right turn lanes at both intersections, which would lead to a smoother-flowing traffic pattern north of Route 22 and, thus, much less congestion on Route 22, Park Avenue and some of the secondary roads leading into the central business district.

A wide sidewalk would also be included in a newly built bridge. In recent months, there has been considerable survey work in connection with the project, which is expected to get underway in 2006.



Benjamin B. Corbin for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
ON THE JOB...The Fanwood Volunteer Fire Department extinguishes a fire inside the walls of home on 109 North Avenue last Saturday. The home is undergoing improvements with exterior paint removal work in progress.

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