

WESTFIELD Recreation Department Events

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Children's Yoga: Children's Yoga is taught using age appropriate techniques. The early spring session will be held for pre-schoolers through March. Classes, which began yesterday, will take place on Wednesdays through March 23. Call the Recreation Department to sign up.

Spring Break Golf Camp: This hands-on camp is for ages eight to 14 and will be held at the Oak Ridge Golf Course in Clark with teaching pro Bill McCluney. This course will be given Monday through Wednesday, April 4 to 6. Course times are 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. or noon to 3 p.m. The fee is \$99 per child.

Karate: Classes are for ages five and older, and are held at Karate N' Motion in Westfield. Classes are offered at the beginning and intermediate levels and are held on Thursdays or Saturdays. Times are as follows: Thursdays, February 3 through April 7, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., for children age eight and over; Saturdays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., February 5 to April 9, for children ages five to seven. The \$55 cost per child is in addition to the \$25 price of the required uniform. Uniforms can be purchased at Karate N' Motion.

Pre-School Dance: Geared for children ages three to five years old, classes have begun and will be held at the Westfield School of Dance on Wednesdays, from 9:30 to 10:15 a.m., through June 8. The cost of the program is \$185 per child.

Soccer Squirts: This one-hour course introduces children ages three to five years old to group experiences and basic motor skills through soccer related activities. The course will be held at Tamaques Park on Tuesdays from 10 to 11 a.m. or from 1:15 to 2:15 p.m. from April 19 to May 31. The cost of the program is \$95 per child.

MultiSports: This one-hour course introduces children ages three to five

years old to a variety of sports from around the world. The course will be held in Tamaques Park on Mondays from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. or from noon to 1 p.m. from April 18 to June 6. There will be no class on Memorial Day, May 30. The fee for the program is \$95 per child.

Night Place: The Night Place program is held throughout the school year on select Friday evenings. This program is open to all middle school students for a nominal fee. The program is held from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Edison Intermediate School. The cost is \$2 in advance and \$3 at the door. The dates are: February 11, April 15, and May 13.

Teen Center: The Teen Center is open on most Friday evenings during the school year between the hours of 7 and 11 p.m. for all Westfield High School students.

Total Toning: Classes are held on Mondays and Thursdays from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Community Room, 425 East Broad Street, through February 10 at a cost of \$65 per person.

Atlantic City Trip to Bally's: Saturday, February 12, from 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. The cost is \$26 per person and the bus departs at 9 a.m.

Rent: Thursday, March 3, at 8 p.m. This musical will be performed at the State Theatre in New Brunswick. The cost is \$52 per person and the bus departs at 7 p.m.

The Temptations and the Four Tops: Sunday, March 13, at 7 p.m. Two of Motown's best-loved groups team up at the State Theatre. The cost is \$65 per person and the bus departs at 6 p.m.

Kodo Drummers: Wednesday, March 16, at 8 p.m. at the State Theatre. This act explores traditional Japanese drum. The cost is \$60 per person and the bus departs at 7 p.m.

Union County Moving Ahead on Purchase Of Former Industrial Site in Berkeley Heights

By PAUL PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ELIZABETH – The County freeholder board moved a step closer last week to acquiring a 17-acre former industrial site in Berkeley Heights for \$13 million. The acquisition was first announced last October.

The purchase represents a joint agreement between the county and the township, with the county paying \$8 million and the township \$5 million. Last Thursday, the freeholders introduced an ordinance to authorize the purchase, including the issuance of bonds. A public hearing, followed by a vote to adopt the ordinance, will be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, February 10, in the county's administration building in Elizabeth.

Originally slated for development of 259 residential units, the property, located off Snyder Avenue, will now be home to a senior citizen center, playing fields and a recreation area. Berkeley Heights will retain four acres of their portion of the acreage to operate a senior center, and also will be responsible for the maintenance of the playing fields and recreation area that will be developed by the county on its portion of the property.

The Snyder Avenue property currently contains two vacant industrial buildings, which housed Shaw Plastics and the former Barry Oil Service/Duffy Fuels facility.

According to county officials, part of the property is contaminated with asbestos and oil. As a condition of sale, the current owner of the property has agreed to clean up the land.

Freeholder Dan Sullivan, Chairman of the Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Committee, said the purchase of the property would provide "open space and increased recreational opportunities for our children and seniors."

The acquisition of the Berkeley Heights property brings the total number of acres preserved under the county's open space fund to 127. Among land preserved through the fund to date are: the 63-acre American Water property off Glenside Avenue in Summit; the 13-acre Esposito Farm off Madison Hill Road in Clark; a five-acre parcel off of Green Lane in Union; the 23-acre Sevell Farm and Ponderosa on Cooper Road in Scotch Plains, and the six-acre Peterson Farm in Plainfield.

In other business, the board ap-

proved a resolution to hire Metuchen-based Goose Control Technology of New Jersey for the purpose of managing the Canada geese population that is rampant in county parks.

County Manager George Devaney said the \$115,000 contract is the maximum amount of money that will be paid to the company this year. He said that if the program is successful early on in reducing the geese population, the full amount of the contract would not be used.

Garwood resident Bruce Paterson said he was concerned the county might be looking at this kind of expenditure every year.

Mr. Devaney said it was important that the county conduct a management program every year to control the number of geese in county parks.

Charles Sigmund, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that Goose Control Technology, which was used last year, will remove geese from the parks over a two-day period this summer. The geese will be transported by truck to a processing plant in New York and given to food banks.

The county will conduct a sampling of county parks in advance of the program to determine where the highest geese populations are located. Mr. Sigmund said golf courses and parkland where water is present have the biggest geese problem.

Two years ago, the county was criticized by animal rights groups for a geese management program whereby geese were removed from parks, placed in trucks and gassed. The program was conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Fish and Wildlife Services and county employees.

At Thursday's meeting, the board also approved a resolution for the county to pick up half the costs of deer management programs conducted by municipalities on county-owned property. The maximum the county would pay is \$15,000 this year.

Freeholders Al Mirabella of Fanwood, board Vice Chairman, and Freeholder Nancy Ward of Linden voted against the resolution, which was approved by a 6-2 tally. Freeholder Ward was the only freeholder to vote against the geese control contract, which passed 7-1.

The board also approved a \$30,000 contract to Harbor Consultants of Cranford to provide general engineering services for potential future acquisitions for the county's open space fund.

During the public portion of



Fred Lecomte for *The Leader* and *The Times*
SAVED FROM DEVELOPMENT...The Union County freeholders are expected to adopt an ordinance this month paving the way for a joint purchase with Berkeley Heights of this 17-acre site in the township. The land will be spared from development and instead feature a senior center, playing fields and a recreation area.

Thursday's meeting, Mr. Paterson, a 2004 Republican candidate for freeholder, was critical of the proposed budget put forward by the county manager.

He said the county tax levy has jumped in the past five years from \$150 million to \$224 million, when the open space fund is factored into the total figure.

"Taxes went up almost 50 percent in five years," said Mr. Paterson, noting that the county portion of property tax bills would rise 7 percent this year alone if the proposed budget is approved.

He said overall county spending has jumped from \$306 million in 2000 to \$374 million in the proposed 2005 budget.

"It's all financial failure," Mr. Paterson said. He blasted the board for approving salary increases to departments this past December. "You guys just spend willy nilly," he remarked.

Most county department heads, who receive over \$100,000 in annual income, received between 3 and 5.5 percent raises that were retroactive to January 2004.

"I heard words given like performance (as a reason for the raises)," Mr. Paterson said. "There was no performance."

Garwood resident and 2004 Republican Freeholder candidate Patricia Quattrocchi asked the board to take a look at the beauty and cosmetology room at the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools in Scotch Plains. She said the chairs in the room are broken and the equipment aging.

"I was just disappointed in the way the room looked," she said, noting the county should look to spruce it up.

Union County Receives \$4 Million HUD Grant

COUNTY – The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and Congressman Mike Ferguson (R-7th) announced last Thursday that the county has been awarded more than \$4 million by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to help provide shelter and care for those without a home of their own.

The federal department's Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance program provides funding for a range of assistance programs to homeless persons, including transitional housing, permanent housing and a variety of supportive services, Congressman Ferguson said.

"These federal dollars will help important organizations throughout Union County provide helpful support services to our community," he said.

Of the \$4,023,425 allotted to Union County organizations, the breakdown includes: Interfaith Council for the Homeless of Union County, \$699,457; the County of Union, \$2,277,468; American Red Cross, \$173,705; Community Access Unlimited, \$564,271; and Bridgeway Rehabilitation Center, \$77,510.

HUD said these groups would use the funding to develop housing and related services for people moving from homelessness to independent living.

Additionally, Union County received \$231,014 for Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG), which provide homeless persons with basic shelter and essential supportive services.

"This award will go a long way toward helping individuals and families find permanent housing in our communities," said Union County Freeholder Chairman Rick Proctor.

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TREE TIPS: Construction On Wooded Lots

By: Martin Schmiede, President of Schmiede Tree Expert Company
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Many people have paid for wooded lots only to find a year or two later that they own a stand of uncut dead firewood. They did not take precautions during construction. Excavators are not arborists. They do not know the special requirements of trees. Retaining consulting arborists before the first earth is turned are very shrewd investments.

Trees on wooded lots or in newly developed areas go through shock periods. Developments change water-tables. Water is no longer where the roots have been accustomed to its life-providing levels. Tree trunks previously sheltered in forest-like environments are suddenly exposed to sunlight and wind.

Weakly sheltered root systems are subject to freezing, drying and uprooting. Disturbed root systems allow only partial production. Split and shattered roots invite fungus and reduce anchorage. Roots sheared off by construction equipment take a long time to regrow. The damage is swift; the reconstruction is slow.

Certain trees, especially the beeches, live in symbiotic relationships with mycorrhizal fungus strands. The strands attach themselves to the roots of these trees, providing the roots with partially digested nutrients. Severe disturbances result when these beneficial fungus strands are damaged or destroyed.

The two most common causes of tree deaths on wooded lots, however, are grade changes in elevations and construction equipment hitting trunks. The problems of equipment striking trees should be obvious, but the property owner should ensure

that undisturbed islands are left around trees to be saved. The clearing of these protective islands should be by hand. If this is done, the excavators are responsible if construction equipment comes too close to the trees.

It is additionally wise and prudent to fence off these islands. Elevation changes as little as six inches can kill trees. Raising the grade levels will cause oxygen starvation of the root systems. Lowering the grades will expose the roots to air, drying them out so they will not absorb water.

These problems can be remedied. Build wells around trees when the grades surrounding them must be raised. These can be constructed attractively using bricks or timbers. If the grade levels must be lowered, berms can be erected around the affected root areas.

If paying premium prices for wooded lots, it is worth some extra dollars consulting arborists to assure that the trees will survive the construction periods. Every new house deserves some old trees!

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