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Letters to the Editor

Parochial High School Teams Should Play In Sports Leagues of Their Own

This letter is in response to a submission by reader Joe Boscia that appeared in *The Westfield Leader's* February 17 edition.

As a former sports writer and newspaper editor, I really thought I'd seen and heard all sides of the public versus private schools argument pertaining to athletics such as Bruce Johnson's position that parochial schools should play in leagues of their own.

I laughed when Mr. Boscia stated that public schools have money to draw excellent coaches, and that parochial schools pay so little that coaches have to teach other classes to make a living. Wake up, Mr. Boscia. Public school coaches teach classes all day and receive a nominal stipend for their sport.

If you broke it down, coaches work for just a few dollars per hour over the course of a season. Many parochial school coaches match their public school counterparts dollar-for-dollar in stipends, and also make additional thousands and thousands of dollars annually by hosting camps and clinics at their schools.

Bob Hurley of St. Anthony, one of the top high school basketball coaches in New Jersey history, is a national product spokesman and a highly sought after speaker at camps and clinics across the country. I doubt that any high school coaches at public schools match his earning potential.

It certainly isn't about the money for most coaches. For some very elite parochial school coaches, however, it's the opportunity to create a dynasty, without the restrictions placed on public schools. Talent is out there and the pathways to the gridirons, the courts and the diamonds are illuminated by triumphs and successes of the past, built on a foundation that knows no geographic boundaries.

These schools should have their own league.

St. Anthony draws student-athletes from many parts of the region for the opportunity to play for a legendary coach. He does not have to recruit.

Kevin Boyle at St. Patrick's is another coach who has no need to recruit, because athletes and families see the value in playing for a coach who will maximize their talents.

What do these two schools have in common? Again, there is no geographic boundary on the talent that arrives each year. It is not limited to a city, a county, a state or even a country. The playing field is not level, as Mr. Johnson understands.

These schools should have their own league.

In terms of his comments on single-sex schools vs. mixed-sex public schools, Mr. Boscia has a serious problem understanding the capabilities and mentality of today's student athlete. I point out that St. Patrick's in Elizabeth and St. Anthony of Jersey City are co-educational schools. These student-athletes have no problem dealing with the fact that they are in a co-ed environment.

And simply the fact that Mr. Boscia states that students in non-co-ed schools tend to be more serious about academics and academics is a medieval perspective and horribly narrow view of the public school student-athlete in 2005.

These schools just should have their own league.

I commend St. Joe's and all schools that have tough policies on drugs and alcohol and solid leadership and discipline, as pointed out by Mr. Boscia. I send my son to a school with these exact, very important characteristics. He goes to Westfield High School.

Mr. Boscia states that Westfield, with its 30,000 residents has a "very large pool of kids to draw on." Okay, let's do the math. Central Catholic in Pittsburgh is permitted to recruit from an area more than 10 times larger than Westfield. Bruce Johnson's main point in his column was that teams like Central Catholic have athletic advantages and should play in their own leagues, which essentially would be a league of superpowers in each sport.

Lastly, I find Mr. Boscia's attack on Mr. Johnson pertaining to religion repulsive. I am a Catholic, a graduate of two Catholic schools, and I'm certain there was no anti-Catholicism in the column.

Religion is a very serious issue, not one to be recklessly thrown about when referring to a sports column you do not like.

Michael Murray, Sr.
Westfield

HS Seniors, Parents Reflect Over College and Coming Adventures

It's been nearly twelve years of hard work, test taking, visiting campuses and submitting applications. Now, many area high school seniors have made their choice for college or are nervously waiting for the mail to arrive for their notices of college acceptance. Most haven't been disappointed. Some ask themselves - "Did I make the right choice? Will I like it? Will I succeed? Will I be homesick?"

It's stressful for the parents, too. The families have worked hard as a team to get to this point. College is expensive and news of the financial aid package hopefully clears up many concerns. And where will our sons and daughters be next year: Boston, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Illinois?

After the racing around to get the acceptances in place is over, a sudden realization happens - high school is soon over, too. "Senioritis" sets in, which can be a little unnerving to some of the teachers. Most know students are making an important transition, leaving home and gaining independence.

Perhaps, they'll be a little jittery about upcoming challenges and unknowns. That's natural and we have confidence that they will handle it. Our young people always have, and they have excelled.

It will be a time of joy and pride for the families from now until graduation. Our teachers will feel a sense of deep inner satisfaction.

Some parents may develop a little touch of the "empty nest" syndrome. But they have a few months to adjust before it becomes reality. They understand that it is best for our young people to grow, to enter the world and to become the fine adults that they will be.

Have last year's seniors been forgotten? They're well into their first year of college - presumably getting good grades, joining fraternities and sororities, making friends, acclimating and developing rapidly as they grow up. It's good to see them when they come home for breaks and notice the change.

To all students, we say - it's a great time of your life - take advantage of it and have fun too. In your spare moments, thank dad and mom for helping make this possible.

We Invite all BOE Candidates and Elected Officials to Write to You

The Westfield Leader and *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* will provide space each week for school board candidates to express their views to our readers. Also, this is a standing offer throughout the year to all elected officials of the region.

School Board candidates file applications to run for office by the approaching deadline of 4 p.m. on Monday, February 28. The elections in the region for the public to choose school board members and to decide on the school budgets will be held on Tuesday, April 19. Polls will be open from 2 to 9 p.m.

We commend those who take the time to write you in this forum. Also, the candidates would like to hear from our readers about the issues felt to be important. Voters and candidates alike, please e-mail all items to editor@goleader.com.

Our intent is to get to the heart of the important local issues. Personal attacks, spin and "fluff" will be rejected by our editors whose sole judgment shall apply if criteria are deemed out-of-policy.

A submittal of about 300 to 400 words is recommended. Alternately, a photograph with caption information and a smaller write-up of about 150 words may be submitted. Submissions must be received by Friday evening of the week prior to publication.

On the last Thursday edition prior to the election, no releases are accepted as the space is dedicated for our editors to summarize the campaign, the candidates and issues of the election.

Paid political advertisements are welcome and by law, they will be clearly denoted as such.

Several years ago in an editorial about campaigning in New Jersey, we coined the term "silly season." It's necessary to keep a sense of humor about politics in New Jersey, but we know how important the job is.

We appreciate the effort and good intentions of all those serving and seeking to serve. Thank you and good luck to all.

Westfield High School Principal Petix Explains Visit by Drug-Sniffing Dogs

Editor's Note: This letter was sent to parents and guardians of Westfield High School students.

On September 13, 2004, I sent an e-mail to parents and announced to the student body that "Westfield High School is not a safe haven to sell, buy, possess or use drugs."

I also informed the school and parent community that "the administration plans to address the drug problem aggressively by working cooperatively with law enforcement officials, including the conducting of drug searches using dogs from the Narcotics K-9 Unit."

While I do not believe that the presence of illegal drugs at Westfield High School is any worse than at any other typical suburban high school, I nevertheless believe that even the smallest amount of drugs at Westfield High School is unacceptable.

Since September, the high school administration has collaborated with the Union County prosecutor, the Westfield Police Department, and the K-9 Unit Search and Rescue Squad of the Union County Sheriff's Department to plan an effective and legal inspection of the school.

This morning (February 16), we implemented that plan. Four teams consisting of dogs, representatives of the aforementioned groups and school personnel searched designated areas and classrooms for drugs.

In order to keep the disruption to our educational program to a minimum, the K-9 Unit conducted a random rather than complete search of the building. The dogs did not come in contact with students.

The idea of bringing the K-9 Unit to the school for unannounced inspections has been well received by most Westfield High School students and parents with whom we have spoken. Students have said that the threat of an inspection by the K-9 Unit has been a deterrent to those who might sell, purchase, possess or use drugs on our campus.

It is my hope and belief that the actual appearance of the dogs has sent a clear message to every student: we will not tolerate illicit drugs on our campus, and we will aggressively pursue those who bring them to our campus.

Please contact me if you have any questions about this issue.

Robert G. Petix
Principal
Westfield High School

Kevin Devaney Extends Gratitude to All For Support of Korean War Memorial

I would like to thank Westfield's Mayor Gregory McDermott and the Town Council for approving and supporting my plan to add a Korean War Memorial Garden to Memorial Park.

On Veterans Day, November 11, 2004, the memorial was officially dedicated in a ceremony to honor our local Korean War veterans and the three men from Westfield who died in the war. Eight months earlier, a complete list of Westfield men who had died did not exist. I chose to correct this, and developed this proposal to build the memorial as the service part of my Boy Scout Eagle Badge.

Landscape designer Craig Stock mentored me in designing the memorial park. Tim Doerr, owner of Master Memorials, helped me with my proposal. James Gildea, Westfield Town Administrator, and Westfield's Department of Public Works, specifically, Ken Marsh, Kris McAloon, Claude Schaffer and their staffs, contributed manpower and expertise as the project began.

The monument is lit by night by a design by Robert Newell Lighting Design. Rich Forte of Forte Electric installed wiring and fixtures. Westfield's DPW and PSE&G helped finish the project.

Many others contributed to making the memorial a reality: William Weldon, of Weldon Materials, Inc., Rick Pigna, of Aldo Pigna & Sons, Masons, and Russell Evans, owner of Print Tech gave generously of their time, expertise and materials; Williams Nursery and The Gift House; Ari Milton Brafman & Journeyman Title Agency, Inc.; Smith & Hawken; Westfield Lumber & Home Center and Bartell Farm & Garden Supply.

Organizations and individuals gave over 300 hours of labor. Friends and family from my Westfield Presbyterian Boy Scout Troop 72 and from Westfield High School worked through all kinds of weather.

Some sponsoring organizations are: American Legion and Sons of American Legion; Veterans of Foreign Wars, Knights of Columbus, the Downtown Westfield Corporation, the Westfield Foundation, Westfield's Rotary, Optimist and Jaycees, Town Bank, Fleet Bank, Westfield High School Class of 1946, and many, many individuals.

Westfield Garden Club and Rake and Hoe Club of Westfield, along with American Legion, Sons of American Legion and Westfield VFW, gave beautiful wreaths at the dedication. Clyne & Murphy, Duke's Sub & Deli, Hershey's Delicatessen and Robert Treat Delicatessen supplied the great subs and sandwiches that the veterans, their families and guests enjoyed at the reception hosted by American Legion Martin Walberg Post No. 3, following the dedication ceremony.

Publicizing the project was very important as well. I would like to thank Channel 36 and Doug Black; Channel 36's program "Hometown," with Mayor McDermott; my brother, Sean, for filming "Conversations with Veterans," and all those who participated, Westfield High School *Hi's Eye*, Roosevelt Middle School's *Rough Rider*, *The Westfield Leader/Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, *The Record Press*, *Suburban News*, and *The Star Ledger*.

And finally, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the dedication ceremony. Thanks to Consul Bihn Seo from the Korean Consulate in New York City; to Andrew Baamode, Field Representative from Congressman Mike Ferguson's Office; State Senator Thomas Kean, Jr., Assemblyman Jon Bramnick, Freeholder Chairman Angel Estrada, Freeholder Chester Holmes, Freeholder Bette Jane Kowalski, Richard Alexander, Commander of the Union County Korean War Veterans Association; Sal Mione, Union County Office of Veterans Affairs; Mayor Gregory McDermott, Town Council members Rafael Betancourt, Sal Caruana, Peter Echausse, Police Chief Bernard Tracy, and Fire Chief Daniel Kelly. Thank you also to Reverend Christina McCormick for her invocation and benediction, Dr. Theodore Schlosberg for playing taps, Westfield Concert Choir, under the direction of William Mathews, John Panosh, Town Bell Master, BSA Troop 72 Color Guard, William Barton, who supplied the sound system, and Quentin Armstrong, G. Ernest Anderson and William Gundrum, the veterans who memorialized Westfield's soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice in the Korean War.

Kevin Devaney
Boy Scout Troop 72
Westfield High School, Class of 2006

Letters to the Editor

Parochial Schools Offer Inner-City Kids Benefits Otherwise Not Available

I agree with Bruce Johnson's February 3rd article in *The Westfield Leader* called "Time to Put Parochial Schools in a League of Their Own." For sure, parochial schools are "in a league of their own."

I do respect his point that sports programs of parochial high schools have the benefit of recruiting students from other districts. But perhaps that inequality is a small price to pay when you consider the benefits to the students themselves, particularly minority students. For the many minority children living in our inner cities, such as Elizabeth and Newark, where else can they get the opportunity to receive a high quality, values-based education? Certainly, if they do not live in Westfield, they can't come to school here or join any of the great sports programs offered by our town. You better believe there are kids who are in need of "that good ol' Catholic School education." If it were not for Catholic schools, few children in the inner cities would have a chance at any kind of success, let alone success in sports. As a director of a scholarship fund for inner-city children, I can attest to the fact that 97 percent of inner-city students attending Catholic high schools graduate and go on to higher education. More than 80 percent of the students attending inner-city Catholic schools are non-Catholic. Where else can they get such a deal: a safe environment, academic excellence, character development, and, yes, for a few of them - the chance to play on a good sports team?

Lorraine Cunningham
Westfield

Public School Reports Surprise This Resident

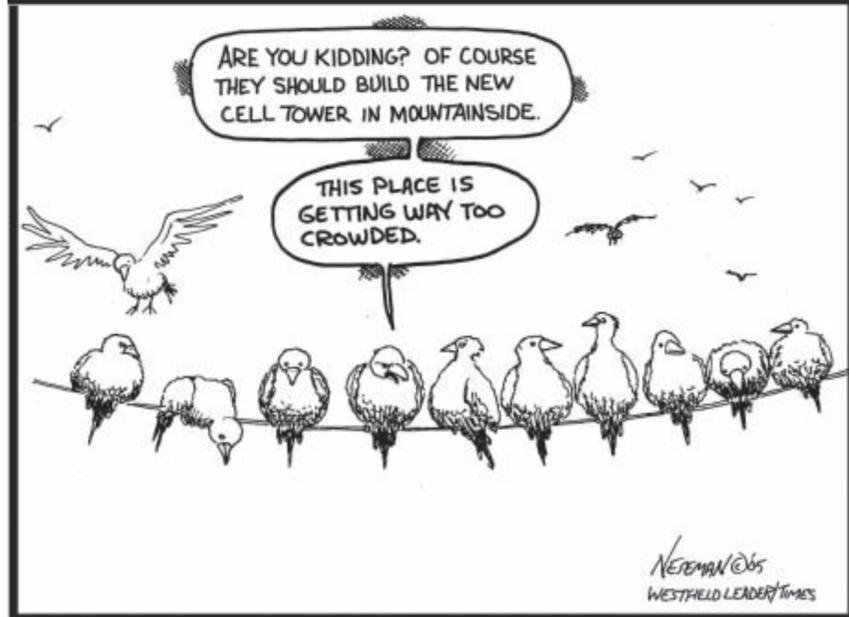
Two things surprised me in "A Report on the Westfield Public Schools 2003-2004."

First, there were only two National Merit Finalists. When my children attended WHS (1970-1978), there were considerably more each year.

Second, the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 Goals [surprise me]. Goals are what you try to achieve, not paths towards those goals. The "goals" listed can be met with a minimum of effort - one phone call will serve to "Explore Alternative sources of funding."

If the goal were, say, "Obtain 5 percent of funding from alternative sources," one could then measure to what extent the goal was achieved.

Werner Glass
Westfield



Resident Finds it Interesting That Lewis Mingo Landed a County Job

Former Union County Freeholder Lewis Mingo landed himself a county job. It seems that Mr. Mingo of Plainfield, whose freeholder term expired in December of last year, has accepted a full-time position as Confidential Aide and Director of Senior Services at a salary of \$65,000 a year.

It has not been a secret that he "decided" not to run for another term on the Union County Freeholder Board because of changes of power within the Plainfield Democratic Committee. As luck would have it, a position with the county just happened to come available. Luckier still for Mingo is that the job happens to be working in an area he says he has an interest - children's and senior issues. What an amazing coincidence.

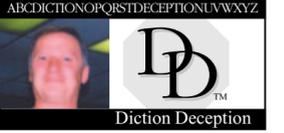
Of further interest is that he will be concentrating on issues affecting the elderly in the western end of the county. Plainfield happens to be in the western end of the county where he resides and the job is anchored in a Plainfield office. What good fortune.

The powers that be insist that this job was not created specifically for the former Freeholder. Yet, according to the county government's Press Secretary and Director of Communications, Sebastian D'Elia, the job "was fine-tuned to meet the issues of the western end" of the county.

How fortuitous it is, that by taking this position and more than doubling his county salary from part-time Freeholder to full-time employee, he will greatly increase his county pension upon retirement.

Lewis Mingo is quoted in the Worrall newspapers as saying "it just happened and the timing was right." Oh that all of us should just happen to be in the right place at the right time like Mr. Mingo. He certainly is a lucky, lucky man.

Patricia Quattrochi
Garwood



- 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. Drawk - Coarse weeds growing in grain; wild oats
 2. Fermillet - A buckle or clasp
 3. Timbrology - The science or study of postage stamps
 4. Imprecation - A curse
- LAPIN**
1. A sort of coarse canvas
 2. Shiny; glossy
 3. Rabbit fur used in imitation of more valuable skins
 4. To whip or lash
- LEFFE**
1. Friendly; likeable
 2. In Scots law, a legal stay of proceedings
 3. The head of a household in France
 4. Loved one; a friend
- PARGET**
1. A grimace
 2. Very pale or faded
 3. Plaster or wall coating
 4. An illustration for a book
- MEAR**
1. Topsoil
 2. A boundary
 3. An enzyme that assists a bee in making honey
 4. A horsefly

County Court House 1903 Time Capsule Ceremony Set Friday

The public is invited to the unveiling of the 1903 Cornerstone Capsule and opening ceremonies for the Court House Centennial Celebration on Friday, February 25, at 2 p.m. at the Union County Court House Rotunda, First Floor, 2 Broad Street, Elizabeth.

Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi, Freeholder Chairman Rick Proctor, the Plainfield Girls' Choir, other dignitaries and performers will join in the ceremony.

2005 marks the 100th Anniversary of the dedication of the Union County Court House. A year-long celebration is planned with exhibits and events to showcase the Court House's century as the center of law, justice and government in Union County. This ceremony will showcase the contents of a time capsule buried in 1903 and kick-off the celebration.

For more information or directions, please call (908) 436-2072.

Firefighter/EMT John McCormack
Westfield