

WF Residents Are Urged to Get Their Parking Money Back From Town

The statute books are strewn with archaic laws, administrative regulations and ordinances that legislative and regulatory bodies simply forgot to repeal once they became irrelevant and useless. Most of the time, these orphaned provisions, like those relating to horses and buggies, are quaintly harmless and become fodder for nostalgic Sunday newspaper magazine articles. Sometimes, though, they remain offensive and onerous long after the reasons for their enactment have disappeared.

Westfield, too, is burdened by the regulatory shadow of the past. I am referring, specifically, to the parking fees that were substantially increased in contemplation of building a parking deck. After the Mayor wisely agreed to abide by the results of a public referendum, the voters of Westfield soundly defeated the deck proposal. Nevertheless, parking fees have not yet been rolled back to pre-deck proposal rates and the town continues to unconsciously withhold repayment of thousands of dollars of increased fees that were earmarked for a project that will not be built. That's just wrong.

The fact that a referendum was held in the first place is a testament to the determined efforts of the many citizens who spoke out and questioned why a project of such huge and far-reaching magnitude

would be undertaken without bothering to learn if our taxpayers actually favored it. It took months of dedicated letter writing, e-mails and public statements at Council meetings before the Mayor finally relented and allowed the referendum.

Ultimately, the people spoke and the project ended. This was an example of participatory democracy at its very best and we should be proud, regardless of our individual opinions about the defunct deck plan, that a decision clearly reflecting the will of our taxpayers has been reached. However, although the deck issue has been resolved, our job as citizens will not be complete until we persuade the Council to roll back the increased fees and refund the overcharges.

If recent Westfield history teaches us anything at all, it is that our local government responds when we speak out concertedly, loudly and consistently. I urge everyone who is outraged by the continued increased fees and the lack of a refund to contact all of the members of the Council by mail or e-mail to make it clear that their failure to act is not acceptable and to attend and make a brief statement at the next Council meeting on January 18. If we act together, we can - and we will - win.

Robert Ratner
Westfield

On Cost of Education, the Trouble And the Solution Is in Trenton.

It is with sadness and frustration that I write this letter to you in response to the criticisms in recent weeks of the benefits received by teachers, and not just those in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school system. Comparing the corporate world to education is like comparing America to Europe.

The cultures are very different and unique and need each other to flourish. But because of the uniqueness of both, they have different needs and interests and should be addressed accordingly. In short, benefits are the difference between providing students with effective, high quality education and mediocrity.

Cutting into the benefits of teachers will drive many away from the profession and discourage viable replacements stepping up to fill vacancies. There is a gross myth floating around that all teachers make 80k.

After 25 years and two MA degrees, yes, a teacher can and should make 80k. The reality is much different. As a former graduate of SP-F HS, a former resident of Scotch Plains and a former teacher and coach in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood system, I implore you to look intelligently at the negative bias being espoused by the critics.

I left both the school system and my lifelong residency in town for one reason: economics. As a 10-year teacher with a Masters degree I made a whopping \$48k per year as an employee of the SP-F school system. As a husband and father of two, that wasn't enough to keep me around. The only way I made it that long was the benefits.

I was able to travel several districts east and make a much better salary, with benefits, but unfortunately it wasn't enough to keep me in New Jersey. Sadly for Scotch Plains-Fanwood, my story is not some rare exception, but becoming the norm and getting worse. I understand the economic frustration of my neighbors and live that same frustration.

Medical care is outrageously expensive, and thanks to inept state policy, the burden of education has become outrageous for the taxpayers. The solution is not to take away from the educators and compromise the education of your children, which is exactly what will happen. The solution is to write Trenton and use your muscle at the state capital.

Put pressure on the politicians at the state

level, not locally where political hands are tied. Teachers fought and waited decades for fair and equitable wages and benefits. Reversing that trend will be detrimental to the long-term health of quality education.

Although I can no longer afford to live in the town where I grew up and once worked, my heart is always in Scotch Plains. I am hopeful the wise residents of Scotch Plains and Fanwood will focus their frustration elsewhere and keep effective teachers in town.

David Bello
Holland, PA (formerly Scotch Plains)

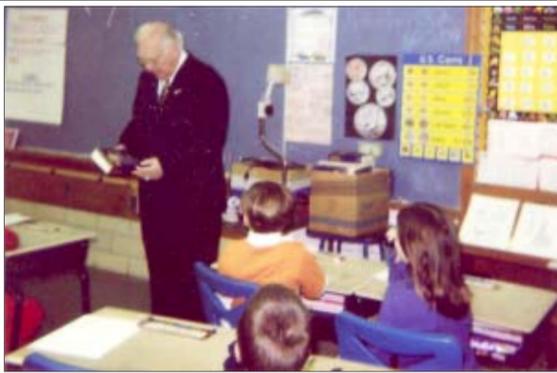
Officials Express Pride With Chertoff Choice

WESTFIELD — Senator Tom Kean, Jr. (R-21), Asm. Eric Munoz, M.D. (R-21) and Asm. Jon Bramnick (R-21) expressed pride and joy as President Bush announced that former Union County resident Michael Chertoff would be his new Homeland Security Chief.

"I have known Mike for a number of years on both a personal and professional level," stated Kean. "He is a talented and experienced public servant who will uphold the highest standards of honor and integrity that is required of him in his new post. I am confident that he will do an outstanding job as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security and that he will be an asset in America's efforts as we wage war against terrorism at home and abroad."

Assemblyman Munoz added, "I am honored that a former resident of the 21st District was selected to serve in President Bush's cabinet as head of Homeland Security. Mr. Chertoff's academic background, legal experience, and commitment to the cause of justice make him a strong candidate for this position."

"President Bush's decision to select a citizen of New Jersey to head the Department of Homeland Security reflects the administration's commitment to our state," noted Asm. Bramnick. "The Tri-State area was greatly impacted by the events of 9-11. I am sure Mr. Chertoff will not only serve our country well, but he will also have a keen knowledge of the importance of addressing homeland security issues for the state of New Jersey."



READING IS GOOD...As part of its annual program, the Mountainside Rotary Club recently distributed 96 student dictionaries to third-grade students at Deerfield School in Mountainside. Pictured above, past Rotary President William Deunfer presents books to Miss Bara's class.

Westfield Historical Society To Feature 'Baltic Sagas'

WESTFIELD—Tales of marauding Vikings, armored knights, war, Tsars and Empresses, rockets and Communism will be discussed by author/photographer Karl Heinze in his talk to the Westfield Historical Society at its Friday, January 21 meeting.

The meeting will take place at 7:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Westfield Municipal Building, located at 425 East Broad Street.

In an audio-visual presentation, Mr. Heinze will discuss his new book, "Baltic Sagas — Events and Personalities that Changed the World." He will tell of strong-willed men and women, courage, love, murder, greed, seduction and intrigue.

Mr. Heinze's stories focus on such

events as the Crusades, the Hanseatic League, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, the Winter War of 1939, the beginning of the Space Age and the fall of Soviet Communism.

"This is not a comprehensive history of the region, but I have selected events and personalities that were important to the area and had an interesting story," Mr. Heinze explained. "I have included several scenes throughout the book that are based on historical events, but to which I have sometimes added reasonable assumptions as to the dialogue and incidents."

The program is open to the public at no charge, and light refreshments will be served after the presentation.

Lee Hale Named to DWC Board of Directors

WESTFIELD—Town resident Lee Hale has been appointed to the board of the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC). Appointed by Mayor Greg McDermott and the Town Council, Mr. Hale will serve a three-year term.

Mr. Hale has lived in Westfield for over 50 years and has volunteered with many organizations in town. He served on the Westfield Town Council from 1975 to 1976 and on the New Jersey Supreme Court's Fee Arbitration Committee.

He served as the president of the Westfield 'Y' and the Westfield Foundation. He was Finance Chairman of the Westfield United Fund and the St. Elizabeth's Hospital (now Trinitas Hospital) and was on the finance committee for the Cancer Institute of New Jersey. He was a trustee for the Elizabeth General Medical Center (now Trinitas Hospital).

Mr. Hale is actively involved in Westfield High School athletics. He has been a Westfield High School Booster since 1962 and was the organization's president from 1965 to 1966. Mr. Hale is the co-founder of the Westfield Athletic Hall of Fame in which he recently became inducted.

Mr. Hale was the author of the history of Echo Lake Country Club, "100 Years in the Forefront of New Jersey Golf" and was co-author of "The Coaching Edge," the story of Gary Kehler's coaching career at Westfield High School.

Having graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, Mr. Hale served in World War II and received a

purple heart in the 78th Lightning Division. Before his retirement, he was an officer for Merck & Co., Inc. and a director of Summit Trust and Lincoln Federal Savings.

Mr. Hale and his wife, Anne, have three children, Catherine Elliot Hale, Barbara Wright Hale, and Thomas Mason Hale.

He has been volunteering with the Downtown Westfield Corporation for the past two years and was instrumental in preparing the application that won Westfield the 2004 Great American Main Street Award by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



Lee Hale



TOUR OF DUTY...Army Specialist Charles Triplet of Scotch Plains is serving with the U.S. Army's 116th cavalry in Iraq. He is on a one-year tour of duty, which began on December 13. Specialist Triplet is the son of Nancy Courtright of Indiantown, Fla., and Peter Triplet of Scotch Plains, and the grandson of Nancy Dell-Bene of Scotch Plains, as well as the brother of Theresa Triplet of Palmbay, Fla. and Peter and Michael Triplet of Scotch Plains.

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