



**WE REMEMBER...**Members of the community remembered the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. on Monday. Pictured, left to right, are: Rabbi Douglas Sagal, Hattie Harris, Patricia Faggins, Westfield Superintendent of Schools Dr. William Foley, The Reverend Lawton Nelson, The Reverend Leon Randall, Andrew Lee, Elizabeth Wolf, and Dolores Graves. The group gathered at the site, where a monument memorializing the Civil Rights leader, will be placed.

## Martin Luther King, Jr. Honored With March, Service, Future Monument

By BETSEY BURGDFOR  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD—Despite the cold temperatures and the layer of snow that fell in the early morning hours, marchers gathered Monday afternoon to remember Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The group assembled shortly after noon at the future location of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, located on the South Avenue circle at West Broad Street behind the Town Bank of Westfield.

The Martin Luther King (MLK) Association of Westfield is erecting the monument, with the help of the Westfield Foundation.

According to Patricia Faggins, Founder and Treasurer of the MLK Association, the Westfield Founda-

tion awarded them a \$1,750 grant earmarked for the monument.

The MLK Association matched the grant and began formulating plans for the monument. A granite tribute accompanied by a plaque with an inscription by The Reverend Leon Randall, Pastor of St. Luke's A.M.E. Zion Church in Westfield, recognizing Dr. King's contribution to equality was decided on. The group will break ground this spring with the dedication to be held sometime in May.

Rev. Randall consecrated the future area of the monument with a short prayer. The Reverend Dr. Lawton Nelson, Jr., Pastor of A.M.E. Zion St. Augustine Church in Bridgeton, also offered a prayer. Rev. Nelson was also the keynote speaker at the services that followed.

After the consecration, the small group of marchers, carrying quotes attributed to Dr. King, proceeded down East Broad Street towards Temple Emanu-El for the service. "Love is the key to the solution of the problems of the world," one sign read.

Westfield Superintendent of Schools Dr. William Foley was among the marchers. Mayor Greg McDermott and First Ward Councilman Sal Caruana were among



**MARCHING FOR KING...**Christina Henry and Tamara Handy marched in memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. on Monday.

those who attended the service.

Services at the temple began at 1 p.m. with a crowd of approximately 300 attending. As well as honoring the achievements of Dr. King, the MLK Association also honored students whose essays regarding the leader were chosen by the association. Winners of the essay, poem and art contest received grants from the association ranging in amount from \$50 to \$500. For information regarding contest winners, see story Page 5.

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## Baby Jesus Statue Returned To Saint Helen's Parish

By PAUL PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - The Parish of St. Helen's Roman Catholic Church in Westfield happily reported the return of the Baby Jesus figurine last Thursday evening.

The statue had been reported missing from the crèche in front of the church, located at 1600 Rahway Avenue, on January 3.

The Reverend Monsignor William Harms, Pastor of St. Helen's, told *The Westfield Leader* that the Baby Jesus statue was returned in a black garbage bag and placed at the door of the Parish Hall between 8 and 8:30 p.m. last Thursday.

Monsignor Harms said he believes the publicity generated from the front-page story in the January 6 edition of *The Leader* along with a note in the parish bulletin had a lot to do with the individual or individuals returning the statue.

The statue, valued at \$500, is imported from Italy. It was removed from the parish's crèche, which is assembled every year by a group of eight volunteers.

Monsignor Harms said the Westfield Police Department was contacted regarding to return of the figurine.

"So they can close that case so to speak," Monsignor Harms said.

## Councilman Peter Echausse Proposes Rolling Back Parking Permit Fees

By PAUL PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - A proposal to roll back long-term parking fees may come within the next few months from Westfield Town Council Finance Policy Committee Chairman Peter Echausse.

He told *The Leader* yesterday that by March or April he would likely present to the council "a potential to rolling back the fees to what I believe is a reasonable rate."

Prior to the increase in fees, long-term commuter parking cost \$20 per month or \$240 annually. Current annual fees for commuters are \$702 for the South Avenue train station lot or the \$360 for the Waterson Street lot which is located two blocks from the station.

"I think that is too low, quite frankly and I would argue that the citizens of Westfield might have been subsidizing commuters parking permits. So I think we have to strike some sort of a balance," Councilman Echausse said.

He said in an interview yesterday that he would likely make a proposal to roll fees back by March or April after the municipal budget process is complete. He said any proposal would have to be approved by the Finance and Policy Committee as well as full Town Council.

Councilman Echausse's announcement followed the remarks of two residents who demanded a reversal of fees in light of town voters' defeat of plans to build downtown parking garages.

During discussions on an ordinance to raise fees, Councilman Echausse

said he made sure that the revised fees would not be solely dedicated to building a parking structure but that the revenue would be used for other downtown parking improvements.

Among the improvements is the purchase of 14 more pay stations for downtown municipal lots. In addition, officials said last week that the town would look at previous plans to reconfigure a portion of the North Avenue municipal lot in front of the train station as well as leveling lots on Elm and Prospect Streets to create one larger lot. Both plans, officials have, would increase parking capacity by about 30 spaces.

"But I think it is appropriate to take a look at the fees we are charging the commuters. And we will start that process with the 2005 budget," he said.

Resident Robert Ratner of Lamberts Mill Road said parking fees were raised two years ago in advance of plans to build a deck but not reversed after the deck redevelopment project was defeated in November.

"The fees have not been reduced and, in fact, there has been no refund of the overcharge," he told the council. "This, in essence, amounts to a tax on a portion of the population that has benefited no portion of the population."

He said not refunding the inflated fees is "wrong" but not reducing the fee structure is "unconscious able."

Marie Zamarely of Knollwood Terrace, a 14-year parking permit holder, said she feels that any money that was dedicated towards parking structure that has not been spent

should be refunded to permit holders.

Ms. Zamarely said parking fees should be rolled back to their original amount or at least reduced "to something reasonable."

"I ask the council to do the right thing; not to wait for a public outcry but in fact do what they should do," she said.

On another matter, Robert Nehring of Carlton Road applauded Mayor Greg McDermott and the Town Council's plans to review existing town codes that address maximum height limits, overall property coverage and floor area ratios for new construction in town.

"I think that developers should be required to post a bond before getting permission to tear down a home. The town would hold the bond money to assure that the site is kept clean and safe and conforms to all town requirements during the entire construction phase," Mr. Nehring said.

He reasoned that a bond "may discourage builders who plan to disregard the interests of the neighborhood." In the case of a home being torn down to build a new home, Mr. Nehring proposed a one-year limit to complete construction on the new home. The bond would not be re-

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**HERALDING SOUND...**The trompett en Chamad, which recently arrived at St. Paul's Episcopal Church as part of the church's new organ, will herald triumphant sound as early as Easter Sunday, as estimated by St. Paul's Minister of Music, Charles Banks. For the full story and additional photographs, see story on Page 18.

## Mountainside Borough Council Increasing Fees For 2005 Community Pool Season

By KIMBERLY BROADWELL  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE - The Borough Council introduced an ordinance Tuesday night to increase fees for the Mountainside Community Pool.

The increase in 2005 summer season fees were recommended by the borough's Recreation Commission.

Fees will be \$235 for a resident family, up from \$220. Single memberships would increase \$10 to \$120 with senior memberships facing a \$5 increase to \$75.

Non-resident families who use the pool will see a \$30 increase in their fees to \$440 for the summer season. Fees both for single non-resident membership and a senior non-resident would increase by \$15 to total \$220 and \$180 respectively. The ordinance also states that the non-resident initiation fee would be increased by \$5 to total \$35 for a family and \$20 for a single membership.

The governing body also introduced an ordinance to increase the fee for certified copies of vital statistics from \$5 a copy to \$15 per copy. These documents are defined as copies of birth, death and marriage records.

The council noted that the increase was needed because of state mandated certified paper now being used for such documents. Mayor Vigilanti stated that this special safety paper

cannot be duplicated or white-out may not be used on it.

It is numerically ordered by the state, and any mistake made on these official copies must be sent back with a recording of what the mistake was.

The mayor noted that the new process is much more costly, but done by the state as a result of the September 11 terrorists attacks noting that the process is a security measure.

The mayor and council also passed an ordinance seeking their annual Community Development Block Grant. The mayor noted that the grant would be used for a senior citizen coordinator, a senior van driver and to fund the borough's Senior Handyman Program.

Mayor Vigilanti noted that the handyman program would be available to seniors who need some "minor repairs" done in their home. He also noted that the fees for these seniors would be fixed on the "ability to pay."

During the public portion of Tuesday's meeting, resident Gary Whyte updated the mayor and council on the odor at Beechwood School. School staff noticed the odor after the heat in the building was turned off last May. School officials have said the odor dissipated when the heat was turned on November 1.

Mr. Whyte, who has a child at

Beechwood, stated that during the cleanup of the school to see if the odor would dissipate, 58 linear feet of soaking wet insulation was removed from the building's roof. He also stated the material was sent to a lab for testing and found to have been saturated with bacteria.

He stated that the real test to see if the odor is finally gone will be in the spring when the heat will be turned off and the air conditioning will be turned on again.

Mr. Whyte also gave an update on the "Flat Stanley" project, as he saw that Flat Stanley, a character in a children's book who travels the world, was sitting with the mayor and council at the borough's re-organizational meeting. School children are encouraged to send the character on worldwide journeys.

He noted that at present Flat Stanley

was on a boat heading to Ecuador to help with the importing of bananas and is scheduled to return on January 27. Mr. Whyte stated that it was his son's turn to send Flat Stanley somewhere and so he was sent to help with the family business of importing bananas.

He also stated that when Flat Stanley returns next Thursday, children from that class would welcome Flat Stanley home and have lunch with him on the boat.

According to Mr. Whyte, the official Flat Stanley Website students make a paper Flat Stanley and mail it along with a blank journal to someone on a list of participants, a celebrity or a politician. The recipient treats the visiting Stanley as a guest and takes it places.

After a few weeks Stanley is mailed

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## Mountainside School Bd. Okays Teacher Contract

By BETSEY BURGDFOR  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE - The Board of Education ratified a three-year contract with the Mountainside Education Association last week after negotiations beginning July of 2004. The new contract allots a 4.3 percent raise in teacher salaries. As reported at the Mountainside school board meeting last week, other conditions of the contract remain unchanged.

Mountainside's 56 teachers were without a new contract since last July, when it was up for renewal. During contract negotiations, teachers were covered under the previous contract.

For the past six months, teachers frequently attended the board meetings, wearing red shirts. The red shirts were "to keep negotiations on board members minds," one educator told *The Westfield Leader* last fall.

Teachers' Union President Jeannette Maraffi confirmed that the teachers were relieved that health benefits remained intact, as this was one contract item under discussion.

Ms. Maraffi had told *The Leader* that 47 percent of Mountainside teachers are untenured, and that she would like to see that figure improved.

Teacher tenure is an employment security device by which the teacher attains permanent status and protection against dismissal — except for cases involving "just cause." An edu-

cator must complete a probationary period of three full years plus one day to qualify for tenure.

According to Interim Chief School Administrator Walter Rusak, 27 teachers in Mountainside are not tenured. The tenure process has three levels — first year, second year and third year. In Mountainside, 12 are first year, nine are second year and six are third year candidates. Although there are 56 regular teachers, others are employed as aids and as learning disabilities consultants. Nine of the first year tenure status teachers come from other school districts and thus have more than one year of teaching experience.

Five teachers in the third year tenure status are eligible for recommendation this year — the other will be recommended in March to the board.

By comparison, Westfield employs 524 teachers of which 358, or 68 percent are tenured. Another 7 percent will be considered for tenure this May. The remaining 127 teachers, or 24 percent of the staff, are not yet eligible for tenure. The beginning teacher's salary in Westfield is \$47,853. The beginning salary in Mountainside is \$43,450.

Tenure is defined by state statute and relies on the recommendations of administrators. In Mountainside, Mr. Rusak makes tenure recommendations to the board. The school board has final decision authority on tenure matters.



**KEEPING IT BEAUTIFUL...**Louise Shepnew, left, President of the Westfield Garden Club, presents a certificate to Denise Jackson and David Williams of Williams Nursery and Gift House of Westfield. The business was one of six local companies honored through the club's "Random Acts of Beauty" 2004 project for their contributions to the aesthetics of the community. See story and additional photograph on page 8.

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