



**FLURRY OF ACTIVITY...** Park Avenue in Scotch Plains was dotted heavily with large snowflakes on Monday evening. Residents saw about six inches of the wintry mix before Tuesday morning.

## Garwood Council Introduces Preliminary Borough Budget

By ANNA GITHENS  
Specially Written for The Times

**GARWOOD**—The Borough Council introduced a \$5.8 million municipal budget last week, an increase over last year's adopted budget of \$300,000.

Councilwoman Kathleen Villaggio said this year's \$4.1 million tax levy represents an increase of 25 tax points over the 2004 spending plan.

Last year's adopted budget number was \$5.5 million.

"In 2004 we introduced a budget with a 34 point increase, the adopted budget after receiving extraordinary

aid was 20 points," stated Ms. Villaggio, adding that in 2005 there were "several factors that were beyond the finance committee's control, namely a loss of \$235,000 total (broken down into) extraordinary income (\$210,000) and Homeland Security (\$25,000)."

According to Councilwoman Villaggio's report another \$180,000 in expenditures will go towards the following: Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority, \$60,000; pensions, \$40,000; the borough's library, \$19,000; insurance, \$1,000, and sanitation, \$10,000 for a total of \$415,000. Other items included were public safety, health and welfare and the Department of Public Works for a total of \$71,000.

"Our surplus is up over last year by \$56,000 and for the first time in several years we were able to recoup the surplus used last year," she reported. "Last year we used \$500,000 in surplus, this year we are recommending using \$545,000 in surplus. We will be investigating cutting costs in other areas, such as health insurance."

Councilwoman Villaggio added that the Finance Committee has submitted a proposal to the council for a three-year capital budget plan to replace much needed equipment that has either outlived its use or does not meet code requirements. Some examples include computer technology and fire equipment.

Mayor McCarthy commended Councilwoman Villaggio on the budget report and said, "You can tell a lot of time and effort was put into this budget."

There will be a public hearing on the budget on Tuesday, March 22, at 7:30 p.m.

## Bush Visit

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ing is being conducted to gauge opinions of New Jerseyans on the President's proposal for personal Social Security accounts.

"This (Social Security reform) is a real challenge," said Rep. Ferguson. He said every day the current Social Security system comes closer to "fiscal collapse."

The President previously visited Plainfield a few years ago.

"I'm excited to have the President back in New Jersey and in the heart of the (7th) district in Westfield," Rep. Ferguson said.

The congressman noted that although President Bush lost New Jersey to Senator John Kerry in the 2004 election, his 10-point turnaround from 2000 was his campaign's biggest improvement from the 2000 election against former Vice President Al Gore. President Bush lost the 2000 election in New Jersey by 16 percentage points and six points in 2004.

In anticipation of the event, the mayor said the White House "is going to do everything they can to make sure that it (security) works." With that in mind, he said residents should avoid the area of the Armory on Rahway Avenue. Officials said school would be in session at WHS although the mayor said 20 minutes prior to the President's arrival and exit persons would not be able to get to the high school. He the police and fire department will likely help control traffic in the area.

Lorrie Korecky of the Office of School and Community Relations reported Wednesday morning that the only significant difference in the students' schedule was the suspension of open lunch.

"There will be Secret Service and (Presidential) detail people all over the place," the mayor said. He said motorists should avoid the area.

"I would feel that people would realize that with the President coming in... they are going to block off corridors of roads" around the armory.

In addition, protests to the President's proposal are planned. Rep. Frank Pallone (D-Monmouth) is sponsoring several buses for protesters.

A limited number of tickets to Friday's event are available on a "first-come, first-serve basis," Rep. Ferguson said. He said residents should call his office at (908) 757-7835 to inquire about attending the event.

## Authorities Respond to Report Of Altercation Near WHS

By SUZETTE F. STALKER  
Specially Written for The Times

**WESTFIELD**—Police responded to a report of a fight involving a group of people near Westfield High School Friday afternoon, but no injuries were reported and no arrests have been made.

Authorities received a call just before 3 p.m. about a group of "five to eight" juveniles fighting on Codding Road, according to Captain John Parizeau of the Westfield Police Department.

No one remained at the scene by the time police arrived, he said. However, officers found a male juvenile about a block from Codding Road who admitted having been involved in an altercation.

The youth maintained he was not injured and did not say with whom he had been fighting, said Captain

Parizeau. He confirmed that the boy, who police said showed no signs of injury, was taken to his home in Westfield.

It was not known if the juvenile is a student at the high school or how old he is, but he is believed to be a teenager. No complaints had been filed in connection with the altercation as of press time.

Captain Parizeau confirmed that the Westfield Police Department's Detective Bureau is investigating a report of a woman selling drugs in the area, and that the bureau was advised of the incident involving the juvenile, to determine if there is any connection.

As for the altercation on Codding Road, the captain said the investigation into that matter "is suspended until we get more information or complaints."

## Garwood Ladies Auxiliary Supporting U.S. Troops

By ANNA GITHENS  
Specially Written for The Times

**GARWOOD**—The Ladies Auxiliary of Garwood has been actively supporting United States troops overseas by writing them cards and letters.

This past summer over 100 letters were mailed on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign War's "Operation Up-Link." Just recently the ladies sent valentines and Christmas cards along with many gifts and donations for telephone cards.

"Several of the ladies are writing to our servicemen in Iraq. They are sent three times a year through friends of our troops," says Kitty Madera, President of the "Bay Leaf Post No. 6807" located on 221 South Avenue in Garwood.

Mrs. Madera has been a very devoted member since 1971. This is her second time serving as president and she was previously the treasurer for a number of years. Her late husband, Irv, also a previous member for many years, was in the United States Air Force during World War II.

Post No. 6807 is a segment of the national VFW organization and there is also a state chapter that oversees all the New Jersey local chapters. Commander Bob Springsted, Chaplain George Kondresek and quartermaster Bud Clevenger are officers in the VFW post, which was chartered in 1946 and comprised of 56 members.

The Ladies Auxiliary has 52 members from all over. Some are from Garwood and surrounding towns, such as Clark and Westfield. They also have members from as far away as Georgia and Florida.

In Union County there are a total of four auxiliaries located in Union, Cranford, Linden and Garwood. To become a member, one must be a wife, widow, mother, sister, daughter or granddaughter of someone who is eligible to serve in the VFW post.

A "Gold Star" mother is a mother who has experienced the misfortune of losing a child in combat. The VFW pays honor to these mothers in the auxiliary.

The ladies auxiliary operates on donations alone. They appoint chair people to manage specific causes. Mrs. Madera is the Cancer Chairman, which is a big supporter of cancer aid and research. The Americanism Chairman,

Ann Marie Guerriero, was in charge of putting together the Veterans Day program for the seniors.

The commander and chaplain also attended this event at the school. They involve the students in the school by coordinating essay contests for sixth graders on the subject of patriotism. The winner of the contest receives a \$50 bond. The VFW also has a graduation award to the most outstanding eighth grader.

The VFW National Home, chaired by Lottie Sworen, has served families and children of our nation's veterans for 80 years. They have cared for over 2,000 residents since 1925. The National Home sits on 629 acres in rural Michigan. The facility includes 72 buildings that are sponsored by the VFW and the ladies auxiliary.

There are 50 cottages at the home that are state sponsored, one of which is sponsored by New Jersey.

"Along with caring for a child, the National Home serves as a living memorial to our heroes," says Kitty Madera. Mrs. Madera said VFW National Home for Children Awareness Week, which will be held Sunday, March 20, through Saturday, March 26.

Through National Home, these children of veterans are cared for and educated from kindergarten through college. That week they will be having an open house and are asking ladies to plan fundraising events. They are also looking for donations. Donations can be given to the New Jersey cottage itself.

Operation Uplink also takes care of residents of the area's Veterans Administration hospital, Lyons Hospital. Anne Leonard of the Ladies Auxiliary has been working hard to provide donations to Lyons.

Last week they delivered 15 handmade Afghans, candies and puzzles in donation to the veterans.

Mrs. Madera would like to remind everyone of the Buddy Poppy Drive coming this May, which supports disabled veterans and their families. Most of their revenue comes only from this drive, private donations and dues.

Mrs. Madera dutifully urged Garwood residents to "Fly your flag, vote in elections and support our troops!"

## Jumpstart Students Mark One-Hundred School Days

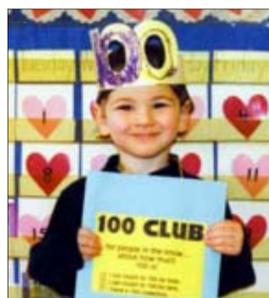
**SCOTCH PLAINS**—February 22 was the 100th day of school for children in the Pre-Kindergarten Jumpstart classes at Brunner Elementary School in Scotch Plains. The activities were planned to help the children begin to understand how much 100 is.

The students began counting on the first day of school in September and they helped plan a celebration to mark the 100th day.

The children wore colorful headbands they decorated and necklaces they constructed with 100 Cheerios. Booklets were also crafted to mark the event. Each class baked a cake and placed 100 candies on the top.

Parent volunteers helped the pupils

work at centers that featured the number 100. The center activities included covering a counting mat with 100 stamps, filling a goody bag with 100 treats and decorating 100 inches of paper.



100 DAYS SMARTER...John DeMarco smiles as he becomes a member of the 100 Club.

## Westfield Mayor McDermott Will Not Seek Third Term

By PAUL PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Times

**WESTFIELD**—Mayor Greg McDermott officially announced Tuesday night that he will not seek reelection.

"I will not be seeking a third term as mayor. It's been a tradition in this town that a mayor never runs for more than two terms. I believe it is time for me to move on," Mayor McDermott told *The Westfield Leader* during a personal interview in the mayor's office following Tuesday night's Town Council meeting. The mayor said his decision follows his own philosophy of rotating people in and out of various municipal boards.

Mayor McDermott was first elected mayor in November 2000 following three years as councilman from the first ward. "It has been a terrific five years. I've learned a tremendous amount," he said.

Mayor McDermott said First Ward Councilman Andy Skibitsky, who has been selected by the Westfield Town Republican Committee to run for mayor

### Mayor Selling Home: See Story on Page 3

on the party line in the June Primary Election, "is going to be a very good replacement for me."

Democrats have not announced their mayoral candidate.

Mayor McDermott vowed not to be a so-called "lame duck" mayor. He sees a number of major issues ahead this year including municipal parking capacity and Westfield High School parking issues as well as over development in town.



LOTS OF LOVE...Sammy Venick and Christopher Bottone, kindergarteners at Evergreen Elementary School in Scotch Plains, marked Valentine's Day by distributing their heartfelt messages to classmates in foil-covered mailboxes.

## Public Hearing Set for Tuesday On Fee-Based Spring Clean-Up

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warned the council of what he called potential "unintended consequences" of enacting an ordinance regulating vendors, saying that a new law could be construed as outlawing the sales of Mothers Day and Easter flowers by local student and civic groups or, even in an extreme situation, a child's lemonade stand.

With no enthusiasm among council members for such an ordinance, the matter was set aside. Mayor Martin Marks felt it would be a good idea if township officials spoke with the Martine Avenue hot dog vendor about potential problems with vehicular traffic exiting the swim club's parking lot once the facility opens in late May.

Mr. Atkins summarized a meeting he and 13 other municipal managers from Union County held last month with county Manager George Devanney about a number of issues, including the

proposed 2005 county budget, which will result in an average increase of \$132 in the county portion of township property taxes.

Mr. Atkins said the primary reasons for the increased spending at the county level were higher pension and health insurance costs as well as salary increases for some unionized employees.

Mayor Marks asked whether it would be possible to put together a "layman's explanation" of how the county tax levy for municipalities is calculated and why there are disparities between the towns in Union County. The Mayor felt it would help township residents better understand that part of their property tax bill. Mr. Atkins said he would ask the township's auditing firm to present a simple explanation of how the county's tax bill is calculated so that it can be presented to the public in the near future.

Mr. Devanney also told the municipal managers that a county-sponsored animal control effort was not going to be addressed this year, but said it was very possible that the county Freeholder Board would make it a priority in 2006.

## Redevelopment

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coordinated so that traffic flows similar to the way it does at Midway and Martine Avenues. The County of Union would manage the project, which is strictly equipment and striping.

Regarding public safety issues, the council discussed the possibility of minor work that may be needed on new cell towers. The police and fire departments claim interference from the towers are causing problems with their communications system.

Councilman Molenaar cited that it is not unusual to have adjustments needed during the first year of use as it is not an exact science. The council will also be considering canceling its last bid for cell providers and reauthorizing new bids to be done and received next month.

Council members also announced plans to mark and celebrate the birthday of the Recycling Center President, Bob Sommerich. He will turn 90 on Thursday, March 17.

## SP Budget

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tax levies. This week's meeting was held the same day that Acting Gov. Richard Codey released his 2005 state budget proposals.

It appears that state aid to municipalities will be frozen at best or cut slightly, and Mayor Martin marks pointed out that this would mean that state assistance to Scotch Plains will be at 2001 levels.

Last year, the state provided Scotch Plains and other towns with a \$90,000 homeland security appropriation that was required to be included in 2004 municipal budget figures. As a result, last year's municipal property tax increase was cut from four points to three points. A similar appropriation from Trenton is not expected this year, so township officials are hoping that this "cut" is the only reduction in state assistance for 2005.



NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY...Commerce Bank, in conjunction with the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce (WACC) and the Downtown Westfield Corporation, held a wine and cheese reception and networking social on February 16 to introduce the bank, which recently opened a branch on North Avenue, to the Westfield community. Pictured, left to right, are: Jean Stone, Mary Santorella, WACC Executive Director Allison O'Hara, and Commerce Bank Regional Vice President Brian Ziemba.

## DIVORCING? MEDIATE!

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