

CONCEPTS & THOUGHT



**BEE FINALISTS...**Four students participated in the Junior Women's Club of Westfield Annual Spelling Bee. The pupils were among the top 10 finalists and are students in Maureen Quinn's fourth grade class at Holy Trinity Interparochial School in Westfield. Pictured, left to right, are: Grace Kelly, Mrs. Quinn, Amanda Williams, Mary McDermott and Tianna Miles.

**Tamaques School, Study Skills To be Featured on Channel 36**

WESTFIELD — Tamaques Elementary School in Westfield will be featured on cable TV Channel 36 throughout the month of March on the regularly scheduled program, "Focus on Our Schools."

The program can be seen beginning March 3 on Tuesdays at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Thursdays at 2 and 10 p.m.; Saturdays at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.; and Sundays at 4 p.m. through Thursday, March 31.

"Focus on Our Schools," which debuted on WHS-TV36 in November, spotlights one Westfield Public School each month. In November,

McKinley Elementary School was featured; Franklin School in December; Roosevelt Intermediate School in January, and Washington School in February.

Immediately following the "Focus on Our Schools" program in March will be "Strengthening Study Skills," a presentation which took place for elementary school parents in February that was taped for viewing on Channel 36. The featured speakers were six supervisors in the Westfield Public Schools who provided tips for parents in helping their children study at home.

**Pingry Middle, Upper Schools Tell Area Honor Roll Students**

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP — Headmaster John Neiswender of The Pingry School in Bernards Township has reported the names of local students recently appointed to the Middle School's second quarter honor roll and the Upper School's first semester honor roll.

At the Middle School, the roster includes Westfielders Alexander Dairfotis, Samuel Fisher, Meghan Hager, Paul Zoidis, Brendan Burgdorf and William Weldon, and Berkeley Heights student Jennifer Soong.

The Upper School roster includes Westfielders Gordon Peeler, Adrienne

Spiegel, Isaac Davis, Sean Hager, Max Horlbeck, Elizabeth Zoidis, Sean Bruno, Caitlin Jennings, Kelly Peeler, Nadine Reitman, Rita Biagioli, Alexander Meder, Daniel Scheininger and Christopher Svoboda.

Scotch Plains residents John Guiffre, Melissa Loewinger and Rachel Van Wert joined Mountainside residents Erik Moss and John Stamatits in being named to the list.

Berkeley Heights residents John Soo Hoo, Kathleen Soo Hoo, Jennifer Soo Hoo, Kristen Brodgesell and Allison Seebald were also placed on the roster.

**POPCORN™ Because of Winn-Dixie: Not As Super as Its Marketing**

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER  
2 POPCORN

You want cute? You got cute. It's all here in *Because of Winn-Dixie*, unashamedly delivered for folks who've a mind to skip the heavy, Pulitzer Prize-winning stuff for at least one night. Y'know, and sort of give the kids a treat?

Set in the easygoing, idyllic South, there's a big goofy dog, a lonely little girl who pines for information about the Mom she never knew, lots of sweet weirdo characters preaching a kiddy version of do your own thing and a struggling Dad who may or may not win your sympathy.

But before stenciling seen-it-before across this family friendly, PG-rated mélange of new wave lightheartedness and old-fashioned melancholy, note that there's just a little more here. There's a voice trying to eke its way in edgewise, dropping bon mots and petit words of wisdom, when it can. And you'll recognize it when you hear it.

For while screenwriter Joan Singleton is unable to transform novelist Kate DiCamillo's award-winning children's novel into the fully vibrant film we suspect it could be, she's wise enough to glean the author's philosophical punch lines. That is, there's a literary soul to the work. But unfortunately, in this wrapping, one not acquainted with the source might conjecture that either William Faulkner's less successful brother or Harper Lee's chiropractor wrote the lower case charmer.

Of course director William Wang must share some of the guilt. It's a dreamy little world that little Opal (Annasophia Robb) ultimately builds around herself after landing in the strange new town of Naomi, Fla. And the filmmaker might have at least imparted a few childhood notes of his own. In other words, get with the program. It's supposed to be enchantment time. But it doesn't completely happen, leaving the off and on material to be played out in rote storyboard fashion.

Happily, unlike the director, a game cast is willing to spice up the doings with not only some pizzazz, but also a few welcome helpings of ham. While not quite the pensively complex cherub Tatum O'Neal was in *Paper Moon*, Miss Robb does a nice enough turn in the lead. And Jeff Daniels is adequately empathic as her Dad, whom she refers to as Preacher, though I half expected her to call him Atticus at any moment. A minister, his occupation has Opal singing the relocation blues, apparently over and over again. And that's the crux of her problem: too much moving, not enough friends.

But at long last, thanks to some of the offbeat folks Opal meets as she sets out on a goodwill expedition to cure her loneliness, those woes may be fast coming to an end. Call the coterie Southern Runyonisque.

Leading off in importance is Cicely Tyson as Gloria, a hermit living in the backwoods and thought to be a witch. And then there's Eva Marie Saint as kindly Miss Franny, the archetypal spinster librarian; Dave Matthews as Otis, the mysterious pet store clerk, and naturally, the title character. Therein lies one of the film's biggest

disappointments. Named after the supermarket chain where Opal found him, the pooch really doesn't have a lot of lines. Perhaps in an artistic quandary, he seems in search of his motivation.

Oh, he's fluffy enough, but Winn-Dixie is relegated to supporting role stuff. Much is made of his ability to smile. And there are several slapstick stunts of minor destruction, no doubt intended to tickle the lower rung of the PG spectrum. But for the most part he serves as a go-between, a catalyst to help his little master make friends. Hence, by not fully integrating into the filigree of the tale, Winn-Dixie never becomes the disarming canine presence the film's marketing so enthusiastically heralds. Benji can breathe easy.

There isn't much of a plot, but rather a journey of discovery with a few standard stumbling blocks, like mean Mr. Alfred (B.J. Hopper), the landlord who vehemently reminds that no dogs are allowed in the trailer park.

But then there is that verboten topic lacing its way through the script, the subtext if you will. And if you give it some thought, it's kind of strange. The kid is ten and doesn't know a thing about her Mom. Isn't that against the law? Apparently too painful to discuss, the Preacher has thus far eluded her beseeching.

However, now Opal has us on her side, and we demand to know. So Dad eventually softens in his resolve. But then, once the answers do start to flow, it seems the mystery should have been more intriguing than that. What was with the big hush-hush? Could it be that aside from being saddled with the rigors of making a living and single-handedly raising a child, Daniels' Preacher has a dark secret himself? He does seem a little odd.

Nah, we're not that lucky. It's just like so much of the movie. There are numerous storytelling mechanisms employed, signposts announcing dilemmas and conflicts ahead. But as you reach each destination, excitedly expecting the magic hinted at, it inevitably goes poof.

It's as if the stars just won't align for this one. Everything about *Because of Winn-Dixie* is slightly askew. When the direction is good, the script is not; when the acting is strong, the story is weak, etc., etc.

Now, there is a school of thought that maintains that children's films should be held up to every bit as much scrutiny as their adult-intended counterparts. This column generally agrees. And by that standard, this movie doesn't stand a dog's chance in the Cineplex. *Lady and the Tramp* it is not.

Still, there is a pleasantness, a wholesome, well-intentioned aura to *Because of Winn-Dixie* that makes you want to loosen the leash a bit. And so accordingly, non-dogmatic grandparents looking to score brownie points with Britney and Max should have no compunction about venturing forth, critical pedigree or not.

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*Because of Winn-Dixie*, rated PG, is a 20th Century Fox release directed by Wayne Wang and stars Annasophia Robb, Jeff Daniels and Cicely Tyson. Running time: 106 minutes.

Arts & Entertainment

☆☆☆ LOCAL STARS ☆☆☆  
**Linda Kolar to Exhibit Oils In March at WF Art Gallery**

WESTFIELD — Westfield artist Linda Kolar will exhibit her oil paintings at the Westfield Art Gallery, located on the first floor of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts, 150-152 East Broad Street in Westfield, during March, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday to Saturday.

The exhibition, entitled "Faces and Places," combines studies of favorite models with regional scenes.

Ms. Kolar, who paints landscapes predominantly outdoors, painted her portraits from live poses at the Riker Hill, Livingston studio of the Art

Centre of New Jersey and at painting sessions of the Nutley Art Group.

Her pictures have won numerous awards at the Art Students' League of New York and in local and regional exhibits. Her paintings and drawings have been purchased for private collections in New Jersey and in New York. She teaches drawing on Monday nights in March at the Westfield Adult School.

For details, please call (908) 232-4050 or (908) 789-9696, visit [www.westfieldnj.com](http://www.westfieldnj.com), or e-mail [adultschool@westfieldnj.com](mailto:adultschool@westfieldnj.com).

**Alyson Tieman Represents WF In All-Eastern Honors Chorus**

WESTFIELD — Alyson Tieman, a junior at Westfield High School, will perform in the 2005 All-Eastern Honors Chorus, organized by the National Association for Music Education at its Eastern Division Conference planned at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore, Md. on Thursday, March 3, to Sunday, March 6.

Alyson will be among 700 of the most musically talented high school students in the eastern United States who have been selected to perform in jazz, band, chorus, and orchestra ensembles.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David Tieman of Westfield, she is the only student from Westfield High School to be selected for the All-Eastern Honors group in 2005.

Selection to the all-honors ensembles is highly competitive with members representing New York, Connecticut, Washington, D.C., Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Vermont and New Jersey.

Alyson was chosen based on her successful audition and participation in the New Jersey All-State Chorus in 2004, which resulted in her recommendation from the New Jersey Music Education Association to the All-Eastern Honors Chorus.

A soprano, who has studied for several years with Jeannette Ferrell Maraffi of the American Performance Studios in Mountaintop, Alyson has performed in two operas in Rome, Italy with the Rome Festival, as a child in *Hansel and Gretel*, and most recently as a chorus member and dancer in *Bizet's Carmen*.

Alyson enjoys singing music of all genres and is looking forward to making music her lifelong career, possibly in music education.

The All-Eastern Honors Chorus will perform on March 6 at 2:30 p.m. at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore.

For more information, please visit [www.menc.org](http://www.menc.org) or call MENC at (800) 828-0229.



Alyson Tieman



**IN REHEARSAL...**Westfield resident Julia Stern and Alexandra Giacona of Summit rehearse *Gypsy* at Morristown-Beard School. Julia is a sophomore at the school, which will stage the play throughout March.

**Youth Art Month Displayed In Westfield During March**

WESTFIELD — Residents and visitors in Westfield this March will once again find the downtown store windows decorated with art created by local public school students.

For the 10th consecutive year, the nationally proclaimed Youth Art Month is being celebrated by 56 downtown merchants who are displaying works of art produced by approximately 600 students from the Westfield Public Schools.

Student art includes paintings, drawings, sculpture, and painted furniture designed by students of all ages from each of Westfield's nine public schools.

Dr. Linda King, Fine Arts Supervisor, commended the students, teachers and local merchants for making this annual event possible.

"This exhibition is just a sampling of the wonderful art created by hundreds of Westfield students under the direc-

tion of our 21 art teachers," she said.

Westfield High School art teacher, Leah Jarvis, commented, "The partnership and teamwork between the schools and the downtown merchants is amazing. This is a wonderful way to show off the great student artwork to the community."

**Calderone School Winter Concert Features Zavodng**

MOUNTAINSIDE — Mountainside resident Stefanie Zavodng, a member of the woodwind and brass ensemble at the Calderone School of Music, performed in a winter concert on January 28.

The Calderone School of Music is a New Jersey state registered professional school established in 1975. The school offers Kindermusik from birth to age 7, private music lessons on all instruments, College Prep Division, and Professional Development Division.

For more information, please call Professor Kathleen Calderone at (973) 428-0405 in East Hanover or Professor Anna Hernandez at (973) 467-4688.

**Summit Chorale Will Hold Auditions Mar. 8**

SUMMIT — Experienced choral singers in all voice parts who wish to audition to sing Summit Chorale's third concert this season are invited to attend the group's rehearsal on Tuesday, March 8, at 7:30 p.m.

Weekly rehearsals, under the leadership of Music director Richard Garrin, are held on Tuesday evenings from 7:30 to 10 p.m. on the campus of Drew University in Madison.

Included in the repertoire for this concert is the Robert Ray *Gospel Mass*, as well as arrangements of songs by Gershwin, Porter, Berlin and others.

The final concert will be held on Saturday evening, May 21.

For more information on the audition procedure, please call Membership Chairwoman Ellie Winslow at (973) 762-8486. For more information on the group or Mr. Garrin, please visit [www.summitchorale.org](http://www.summitchorale.org).



**FEEDING FRENZY...**Members of the cast staging *Little Shop of Horrors* at Roosevelt Intermediate School in Westfield, pictured, left to right, are: top row; Kristy Perez, Dan Morse, Brian Hart, Amanda Chang, Amanda Garfinkel and Kate Brennan, and bottom row; Kelly Sullivan, Morgan Bunting, Julian Seltzer, Jenna Roth, and Christin Aswad. Not pictured is Katie Davidson.

**Little Shop of Horrors Comes To Roosevelt Intermediate**

WESTFIELD — Roosevelt Intermediate School (RIS) will present *Little Shop of Horrors* on Friday and Saturday, March 4 and 5, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, March 6, at 2 p.m. in the Alice Lee Roosevelt Auditorium.

Tickets will be sold for \$10 at the door 30 minutes before each show.

*Little Shop of Horrors* involves Seymour Krelbourn, a shy, mild-mannered florist shop worker, who is trying to find a way to impress his co-worker, Audrey. He gets his moment to shine after discovering an exotic little plant, which becomes a larger-than-life sensation. The only problem is the plant has a strange and unusual appetite that threatens the entire planet.

The show is directed by RIS drama teacher, Taryn Glist, who is in her fifth year of creating quality musical theater with Westfield students. John Brzozowski and Kay Leavy, RIS vocal teachers, are the musical directors and Robert Greenwood, RIS art teacher, has created the scenic design.

Meredith Schachter, RIS math teacher, is the technical director and Eddy Riosoco joins the team for a fourth year as guest choreographer.

Fifty-one cast members a crew of 55 talented middle school students are involved in the production.

Julian Seltzer plays the male lead role of Seymour and Amanda Chang plays the female lead role of Audrey.

**Bones Jazz Group to Perform At Next Mid-Day Musicales**

WESTFIELD — The First Congregational Church of Westfield, located at 125 Elmer Street, will present the jazz group Bones, Incorporated, in a free, half-hour program at noon on Wednesday, March 9, as part of their ongoing Mid-Day Musicales series.

A \$5 soup and sandwich luncheon will be available in the church social hall following the concert.

Bones, Incorporated, which presents classic and new jazz in the format of four trombones and rhythm section, is

known for its versatility. The group's repertoire is varied, from re-workings of classic American pop standards and jazz tunes to new jazz compositions.

The members of Bones, Incorporated, are Matt Bilyk, Eddie Clark, Rick Stepton, and Ben Williams on trombone, Diane Moser on piano, Tim Metz on bass, and Russ "Styles" DiBona on drums. Individually, the members of the group have appeared with notable jazz and popular musicians.

**One Voice, Easter Musical, Set By Torn Curtain Productions**

SCOTCH PLAINS — Torn Curtain Productions will present the Easter musical, *One Voice*, on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, March 18, 19, 24 and 25, at Evangel Church, located at 1251 Terrill Road in Scotch Plains.

**'Meet the Orchestra' Series to Continue**

NEW PROVIDENCE — Suburban Community Music Center's (SCMC) "Meet the Orchestra" youth concert series for children ages 3 to 8, featuring performances by members of the New Jersey Youth Symphony will continue on Sunday, March 6, with "Meet The Woodwinds" hosted by Diana Charos, Director of the New Jersey Youth Symphony Flute Choir. Performances are scheduled for 2 and 3:15 p.m.

All concerts take place in Burgdorf Hall — the performance space of both the SCMC and New Jersey Youth Symphony at 570 Central Avenue Central Avenue in New Providence. Single tickets for adults and children cost \$5.

The series familiarizes youngsters with the appearance, sound, and feel of each instrument of the orchestra. Children hear each instrument demonstrated by an enthusiastic young member of the Youth Symphony in an informal setting, as the conductor guides the audience through an exploration of the entire orchestral family.

For more information about "Meet The Orchestra" or to learn more about SCMC, please visit [www.scmcmusic.org](http://www.scmcmusic.org).

**Echofission**

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Den, the former Elbow Room, The Loop Lounge and the Ramapo Valley Brewery among its venues.

Echofission includes drummer Jon Abate, main lead vocalist and guitarist Gebhardt Zurburg, keyboardist Ken Sidotti and bass, vocalist Lou Verile.

"When I heard about the tsunami, I wanted to turn it into something positive," said Mr. Rango, the band's main lead guitarist and vocalist, when asked about how and why he came up with the idea of staging a fundraiser.

Advance tickets are \$15 each and may be ordered by visiting [www.xxroads.com](http://www.xxroads.com). The Crossroads is located at 78 North Avenue in Garwood.

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