



Scotch Plains-Fanwood School News
'Achieving Your Potential'
Midst Carrots & Sticks

by Carol Choye, PhD., Superintendent of Schools

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal education legislation is an interesting mixture of "carrots and sticks," positive goals mixed with negative consequences.

The NCLB legislation takes the positive and laudable step of setting high expectations for all students. It sets increasingly rigorous benchmarks for achievement on state assessment tests over the next several years.

The legislation requires the reporting of test results for all students and, for the first time, broken out for a number of sub-groups based on socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, and learning disabilities.

In all, 40 indicators of progress have been set. If the benchmarks set for every sub-group are not met, even if only one of the 40 indicators is not achieved, an entire school is labeled "in need of improvement" for failing to make "annual yearly progress" (AYP). This negative label may, in fact, be based on the performance of a handful of students.

In Scotch Plains-Fanwood, where our goal has always been to help every child succeed, we decided to meet the challenges of NCLB by turning federal concerns over achieving AYP into a positive local program for our students, redefining AYP as "Achieve Your Potential."

Based on the knowledge that students thrive when they are positively supported and encouraged, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) AYP program was designed to provide identified students with the extra measures of attention, support, and caring that can promote success in their studies as well as on the "high stakes" tests they face each year.

Designing the SPFHS "Achieve Your Potential" program involved the collaborative efforts of the entire school community. Early in the school year, administrators, supervisors, teachers, and counselors collected and analyzed existing data on students' test and classroom performance and conducted a student survey in order to identify those students who would most likely benefit from an intense program of skills enhancement and test preparation.

SPFHS Principal Dr. David Heisey took the lead in promoting the program to the 100+ identified students and their parents to encourage participation and bolster student motivation.

Through professional development activities, our teachers in special education, mathematics, and language arts realigned the junior curriculum to create a framework of those skills

assessed in the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). Teachers also designed a pull-out tutorial program in math and language arts that allowed students to receive extra skill support during a portion of their physical education time while still meeting state physical education requirements.

An evening program was set up where students could hone their test-taking skills. Even Saturday detention time was used to provide extra academic enrichment for students. Parents were involved from the early inception of the program until its completion and student incentives, team-building activities, and a culminating celebration were important elements of the program. A generous grant from Provident Bank in Scotch Plains helped underwrite the project.

By now, the intense work of the program has been done and this year's tests have been taken. It remains to be seen how well our students have scored according to the official numbers. But, if I were to judge from the smiling and excited faces of our students as they returned from a recent team-building activity, our local "Achieve Your Potential" program has achieved its goal.

I believe we built a strong program based on positive initiatives that help students feel smart and able enough to meet the tasks at hand, that teach them that learning is enjoyable, and that let them know they are worthy of help and support from the adults in their lives.

I commend and congratulate everyone involved in these exceptional efforts — students, staff, parents, and community supporters — for helping to make this project a success.

Master Gardeners Announce
Spring Speaker Series

WESTFIELD — The Rutgers Cooperative Research & Extension Master Gardeners of Union County are getting ready for the 2005 Spring Garden Speaker's Series.

Attendees will learn some valuable and fun information as well as gaining great tips on gardening subjects. Classes are free, but space is limited. Lectures will start at 7:30 p.m. Call Rutgers Cooperative Research & Extension at (908) 654-9854 to reserve your seat.

The lecture series is as follows: "Vegetable Gardening," Thursday, April 7. Master Gardener Steve Schoeman will discuss the different aspects of vegetable gardening such as bed preparation, seed selection, varieties, spacing, watering, fertilizing and harvesting.

Flowers and herbs to accompany the garden will also be discussed.

"All You Would Ever Want to Know about Bats" lecture is scheduled for Tuesday, April 12. How do they see in the dark? How should one deal with these unexpected visitors? Why are bats so vital to the survival of the rain forests? Do vampire bats attack humans? One lucky person in attendance will receive a bat house to take home and everyone will receive plans on how to build a simple bat house.

Master Gardener Glenn Owens, who has been actively involved with bats for 23 years, will be the lecturer.

"Ikebana, The Art of Japanese Flower Arranging" is scheduled for Thursday, April 28. The newest Master Gardener speaker, Alice Flandrup, will lecture about the beginnings of Ikebana in Japan, the meaning and interpretation of the different arrangements, and various flowers and ferns that lend themselves well to Ikebana.

"Shade Gardening," instructed by Master Gardener Andrea Landis, is scheduled for Thursday, May 5. This lecture will teach gardeners how to select the right plants that will survive

and thrive in the shade.

"Epiphytic Cactus" is scheduled for Thursday, May 19. Epiphytic Cactus, known commonly as orchid cactus, is easy to care for and produces some of the most beautiful flowers in the plant kingdom. Master Gardener Dr. Eve Shaw will discuss orchid cactus and their close relatives.

Soil test kits will be made available at each lecture for \$10 each. They are very valuable in helping to evaluate and repair soil. Classes are held at the County Administration Building, located at 300 North Avenue East in Westfield. Parking is available in the back of the building.

Forrester Blasts
Dem. Opponent

AREA — Doug Forrester, Republican candidate for Governor, today criticized Senator Jon Corzine for claiming he can bring "management approaches" to New Jersey government.

"Over the last four years, Jon Corzine funded the political bosses and supported the politicians that created this mess for New Jersey: outrageously high taxes, exorbitant spending, and runaway corruption," said Mr. Forrester. "To promise a business approach now is just campaign rhetoric - where was Jon Corzine last year when his cronies increased spending 17 percent and created a \$4 billion deficit for our taxpayers to shoulder? As governor, I'll bring real reform to New Jersey by eliminating wasteful spending and rooting out corruption so we can lower property taxes for New Jersey families."



KEEPING KIDS WARM...The Handcrafter Group of the Women's Association of the Community Presbyterian Church of Mountainside is knitting, crocheting and sewing fleece blankets for patients at Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside. The group meets on the second Saturday of every month at 10 a.m. in the church's Memorial Room at Meeting House Lane and Deer Path in Mountainside. New members are welcome.



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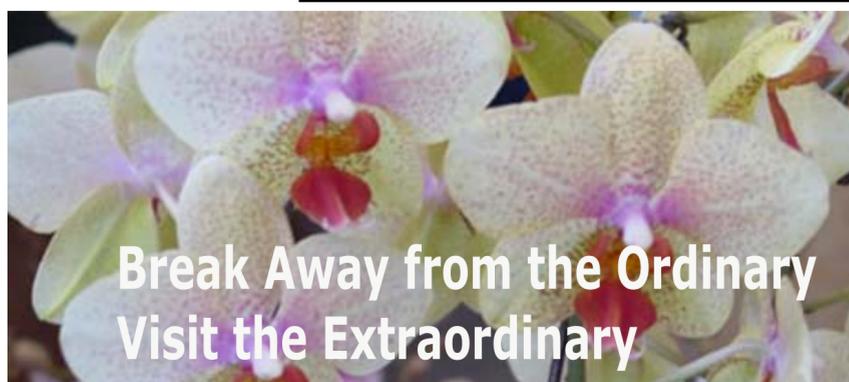
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It's Time to
 Celebrate ... You.

Mark your calendar for Celebrating Women, a free day of laughter and learning featuring Star Jones.

Join us and keynote speaker Star Jones, co-host of ABC-TV's *The View*, as she shares the story of her journey from determined law student to national celebrity and answers questions from the audience. Celebrating Women will also feature presentations by Overlook Hospital's medical experts that explore a wide range of issues, including:

- Stress management
- Pregnancy
- Plastic surgery options
- Heart disease
- Raising healthy and confident kids
- Cancer risks as you age

Before the lectures, you can visit educational displays and take advantage of free cholesterol and blood pressure screenings. In addition, 25 coupons for free bone density and body fat screenings will be raffled off, and you can enjoy a free luncheon.

Saturday, April 30, 7:30AM to 2:00PM
Overlook Hospital, 99 Beauvoir Avenue, Summit, New Jersey

Call 1-800-AHS-9580 today to reserve your spot at Celebrating Women. Hurry — space is limited.

Overlook Hospital

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 HEALTH SYSTEM

Celebrate Easter

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Thursday, March 24 at 8:00 P.M.

Choral Eucharist, foot washing, stripping of the Altars & watch

GOOD FRIDAY

Friday, March 25

Good Friday Service at 12:00 P.M.

with Homily & St. Paul's Parish Choir

Children's Good Friday Service at 3:30 P.M.

THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

Saturday, March 26

Holy Baptism & Holy Eucharist at 8:00 P.M.

EASTER DAY

Sunday, March 27

Holy Eucharist (Rite I) at 7:45 A.M.

Children's Holy Eucharist at 9:00 A.M.

with Flowering of the Cross, Children's Choirs & Brass

Holy Eucharist (Rite II) at 11:15 A.M.

with Sermon by the Rector,

The St. Paul's Parish Choir & Choir of Men, Girls & Boys with Brass Quintet & Percussion

The Rev'd Andrew C. Hamersley, rector

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

414 East Broad Street - Westfield, New Jersey

Information: 908-232-8506, EXT. 10

at St. Paul's