



Linda Condillo for The Westfield Leader and The Times
ALL WE WANNA DO IS DANCE... Variety Show girls, from top left to right, Erin Dooley, Alaina Jennings, Payton Murphy, Katie McLaughlin (middle) and Lauren Nagel (front) ham it up backstage at Deerfield School before last Friday night's Mountainside Education Foundation's fundraiser. The event raised funds to replace the middle school's stage curtain.



Vic's Picks

Guster: "Lost and Gone Forever"

By VICTORIA MCCABE
 Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Perhaps the best effort by one of alternative rock's quirkiest, most engaging bands. This 1999 release is their last release as a trio (the group added a fourth member in 2003), so it features the band's signature sound of two guitars and hand drums.

The album's liner notes proudly proclaim that no drumsticks were used on the recordings at all. One might expect a uniformly mellow sound as a result, but in many songs the opposite is true. Percussionist Brian Rosenworcel, "the legendary conguero," is a tremendous talent - with only his bare hands he pulls off furious hand-drum beats that incorporate cymbals and tambourines, among others, and explosively propel many of the cuts on the album. At other turns, softer bongo beats soothe the album's quieter songs.

Guster's trademark vocal harmonies are at their finest on tracks like "What You Wish For" and "Happier." Adam Gardner's baritone and Ryan Miller's tenor play off of each other perfectly; each of the singer/guitarists has a voice strong enough to carry solo lines, and the blend that they achieve when harmonizing is often nothing short of incredible. They have a gift for punctuating a song's main vocal melody with low counter-melodies that bring a whole new depth to their already-layered sound.

From the infectious chorus of rocked-out "Barrel of a Gun" to the at-once plaintive and expansive "Either Way," Guster lays down a tight, diverse set of tracks that can appeal to lovers of many different styles of music. Six years later, "Lost and Gone Forever" is still one of the most solid, fun, albums to grace the alternative music scene in a long time.

Kids Talk to Animals

In Animal Babble

CRANFORD - *Animal Babble*, an original children's theater presentation by Rob Sullivan, will be performed on Union County College's Cranford Campus on Saturday, April 15, at 11 a.m. The Theater Project, Union County College's Professional Theater Company, presents this bilingual (Spanish and English) program. The Animal Babble Zoo is a magical place where animals from different cultures come to play. Monkey speaks Spanish, Tiger speaks Portuguese and Peacock speaks English. Together with their zookeeper, Cecil, this diverse group provides an interactive hour of theater that teaches children respect and appreciation for other languages and cultures.

Directed and written by Rob Sullivan, the cast includes: Anne Ayres, Carla Francischetti, Vikram Hirani and Lilli Marques. Tickets are \$5, but parents are admitted free when chaperoned by a child. The program is recommended for children ages four to nine.

For reservations, call (908) 659-5189.



Get Outta' The House

By CAROL F. DAVIS
 Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Take your four to nine-year old kids to a performance of *Animal Babble* at Union County College in Cranford on Saturday, April 15, at 11 a.m. It's a multi-lingual program about a magical place with songs, stories, and jokes in English/Spanish/Portuguese. Admission is \$5, but parents get in for free. No sneaking in without the kids, either. To reserve your seats, call (908) 659-5189.

New Jersey Center for Visual Arts in Summit has a special exhibit, *Among the Trees*, through Sunday, June 4. The show explores the symbol of the tree through a variety of diverse approaches, perceptions, and materials. The center is at 68 Elm Street. For information, call (908) 273-9121, or log onto: <http://www.artcenternj.org/>. Admission is free.

If you're job-hunting or thinking of a career change, check out *The CareerBuilder.com New York City Career Fair* today, April 13, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. It's free, and you do not have to pre-register. Wear business attire, bring along a bunch of copies of your resumé, and smile. It's at the Metropolitan Pavilion, North and South Pavilions, 125 West 18th Street. There's still time to catch a train.

The *Easter Bunny* will make his (or her) appearance on Sunday, April 15, at the Eastman Plaza Gazebo in downtown Cranford. The big yellow rabbit will take pictures with the kids, hand out small gifts, and hop around like bunnies do. Enter a raffle to win an Easter basket. Hours begin at 10 a.m.

If you'd prefer a more solemn celebration, there's the *Drama of the Last Supper* at the Cranford United Methodist Church Hall on Thursday, April 13, at 7:30 p.m. This is an interactive experience with audience involvement in a moving and educational performance about Jesus and the apostles celebrating Passover. Call (908) 276-0936. The church is located at 201 Lincoln Avenue.

Trader Joes' - Best Secret

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

of vitamin C. "I also like the bread they sell, and, of course, the Charles Shaw wine." Mr. Cohen, chuckling and scratching his chin remarked, "And they have the best shaving cream."

The two have been shopping at Trader Joe's since it opened in Westfield. In fact, the Westfield location has the distinction of being the home of the first Trader Joe's to open in New Jersey and has been in business for roughly nine years. There are now a total of five stores throughout the state, and New York City only recently welcomed the chain last month. Trader Joe's actually began in 1958 as a chain of convenience stores called "Pronto Markets" in the Los Angeles area. Currently, Trader Joe's has expanded to more than 200 stores in 19 states.

Indeed, shopping at Trader Joe's is different than what one may be used to in a supermarket. According to its website, www.traderjoes.com: "At Trader Joe's, you won't find a lot of brand items. Instead, you'll find interesting products in Trader Joe's label. We buy products we think are winners and that will find a following among our customers. Sometimes, it's a product, which we intend to stock as long as it sells well; sometimes, we buy a product, which is in limited supply, sell through it and you won't find it again."

Apparently, French string beans are always in style. A young couple from Scotch Plains told *The Leader and The Times* that Trader Joe's is the only place they seem to be able to find haricots verts. The pair learned about Trader Joe's via word of mouth from relatives who live in town and have been shopping there ever since. Lou LoGiudice of Mountainside told *The Leader and The Times* he's among the hordes of fans of the unique selection of natural products. A mother-daughter duo from Woodbridge credited grandmother for tipping them off, and a senior from Union pointed out how easy it is to find what she's looking for, noting the smart layout

of the store itself.

One step in the door and its easy to see why customers are devout. Good things are happening - the quasi-grocery/gourmet food source has recently expanded. There are signs of higher intelligence too, especially at the checkout. Instead of the usual annoying chatter among teenage clerks at your run-of-the-mill grocery store, there's good information, if you're listening. Rather than recorded messages about markdowns in the produce aisle, or noise from a disturbing radio channel, you'll hear good music.

Filling the airwaves is today's special - the soundtrack from *Brazil*. A friendly chap with a British accent asks a fellow Trader, "Have you seen this film?" An answer in the affirmative and an offer to loan a DVD ensues from his amiable coworker - and a really good recommendation for a Friday night feature for the customer is given, free of charge. Some things are just better than sales.

Holocaust

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

Plainfield public library will present a series of award-winning films on the Holocaust every Monday evening beginning at 6 p.m. from mid-April through mid-May:

- April 10- *Diary of Anne Frank* - 180 minutes.
- April 17- *Paper Clips* - 80 minutes.
- April 24- *Playing for Time* - 150 minutes.
- May 1- *Garden of the Finzi Continis* - 95 minutes.
- May 8- *Nuit et Brouillard* (Night and Fog) - 32 minutes.
- May 15 *Bent* - 108 minutes.
- May 22- *Au Revoir, Les Enfants* (Goodbye, Children) - 104 minutes.

See It All On The Web:
www.goleader.com

Walk on the Wild Side at Trailside For Earth Week

MOUNTAINSIDE - In honor of Earth Day, the County of Union is offering special programming with the theme "Take a Walk on the Wild Side" during Earth Awareness Week, April 12 - 20, at Trailside Nature and Science Center, located at 452 New Providence Road in Mountainside.

Families with children ages five and up can learn how to transform a lawn into a backyard wildlife habitat in "Hike Backyard versus Nature's Yard" on Thursday, April 13, from 1:30 to 3 p.m. Find out what shrubs and trees attract birds and which flowers butterflies prefer. Families will have the opportunity to work together to build a bird box that will invite feathered friends to nest in their backyard.

Registration is required and the fee is \$4 per person for county residents and \$5 for out-of-county participants. An additional fee of \$5 will be charged for each bird box constructed.

"Pond Search," for families with children ages five and older, offers a chance to investigate the aquatic life at Seeley's Pond on Friday, April 14, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. or Monday, April 17, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Participants will use dip nets to catch and identify fish, dragonfly larvae, crayfish and tadpoles. Registration is required and the fee is \$5 per person for county residents and \$6 non-residents.

Back by popular demand is "EcoArt for Kids" for families with children ages four and up on Friday, April 14. Families may drop in between 10 a.m. and noon to use their artistic abilities and create crafts from recycled objects. Colorful magazine pictures will become beautiful Earth Day cards. Egg cartons will be transformed into yellow school buses.

"Salamander Search," offered Monday, April 17 from 2 to 3:30 p.m., will allow students to explore the hidden corners of the reservation in search of elusive amphibians. Turn over rocks and logs to look for northern redbacks, slimy and northern red salamanders. Discover how to handle these creatures and learn how they are indicators of the environment's health.

For a complete listing of Earth Awareness Week workshops or for information on upcoming spring programs and special events, call (908) 789-3670 or visit www.ucnj.org/trailside.

Dixieland Jazz Band To Perform Easter Vigil

WESTFIELD - The Big Apple Dixieland Jazz Band under the baton of director Dick Voigt will return to Westfield's First United Methodist Church, One East Broad Street, at 8 p.m. on Saturday, April 15, when the ensemble will lead and entertain during a New Orleans style Easter Vigil, a prelude to Easter Sunday services.

The vigil, fashioned after a street funeral, starts off in a somber mood and gradually moves to a conclusion, which is joyful and exhibits dancing with jazz rhythms in upbeat styles.

The Big Apple Jazz Band, made up of musicians who have played with jazz greats ranging from Duke Ellington to Sophie Tucker, has become popular with Westfield and area



Courtesy of Dale Daniels
SURVIVAL... John Woolf, a Holocaust survivor from Hungary who lived through Auschwitz, is one of 29 New Jersey Holocaust survivors sharing their stories in the traveling exhibit, "Survival of the Human Spirit: Triumph over Adversity" currently in display at the Plainfield Library.

POPCORN™

Slither: Creepy Crawly Chutzpah

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
 2 & 1/2 popcorns

More repulsive than horrifying, director James Gunn's *Slither* suggests a new category of film in its order. Though his bizarre takeoff on several movies with "Dead" in the title is billed as a horror-comedy, the gooey goings-on about alien slugs that turn Earthlings into zombies might more aptly be called an ugly mess.

The thing is, it's a fairly funny ugly mess. You've heard of films that are so bad that they're good? Well, this one's so disgusting it's comical. Poking fun at the folkways and mores of a rural South Carolina town invaded by these nauseating creatures, Mr. Gunn draws no line, except maybe the Mason-Dixon one. Some may take umbrage.

Save for Elizabeth Banks as Starla Grant, the movie's comely maiden in distress, and Nathan Fillion as Bill Parley, the handsome sheriff who still loves her even if she did marry the town rich guy, everyone is pretty gross. Sure, you've seen your share of squiggly, loathsome monsters with all manner of unearthly fluids spewing from their pockmarked epidermis. But when's the last time a movie character had the indecency to pick his nose in your presence?

The director, who also wrote the zany script, has no compunction about mixing pitiable health habits with the dreaded behavior of slithery extraterrestrials in conquest of our world. There's probably a scathing metaphor there. We're better off ignoring it. This is first and foremost a farce.

In other words, it may be repugnant, but it's just too crazy to be evil. And therein lies the difference. Indeed, there's plenty of excitement as the slobby denizens run for their lives, and perhaps their souls as well. Still, it's not very frightening. Filmgoers are apt to emit at least five yecchs for each yipe.

The plot is purposely typical. Michael Rooker's Grant, having had a tiff with Starla, storms out of the house. He'll show her. He'll go drinking and find a lady who appreciates him, even if he is an overbearing, unpolished galoot whose only virtue, truth be told, is his loot.

Happy to accommodate is Brenda Guttierrez (Brenda James), the adoring gal he didn't even know existed. Of course it doesn't matter whether or not Grant accepts Brenda's offer of comfort and compassion in his time of marital stress. This is Hollywood and there are standards concerning wayward spouses, even in these enlightened times. No indiscreet deed goes unpunished. Aggressors from outer space are always happy to enforce our moral code.

It is therefore no surprise when Grant is the first to be smitten by the slug, which, to be completely effective in its total consumption of your being, must enter through the mouth. Shades of *Alien* (1979), it then pops out elsewhere. There's one big yecch for sure.

The pestilence spreads across the countryside. Other moments of revulsion follow in usual horror movie cadence, each scene trying to one-up the last. But, aside from engaging the viewer in the customary guessing game—who will die next, and who will be left standing in the end? — there is little suspense.

Instead, there is absurdity compounded upon ludicrousness as the tormented victims stay true to their unflattering stereotypes. Particularly droll is Gregg Henry as Jack MacReady, the frat boy mayor. His incessantly foulmouthed commentary even in the face of vanquishment relates a witty honesty about the inanity of curse words.

Truth being beauty and all that, Elizabeth Banks's heroine maintains her iconic perfection. So does Mr. Fillion's lovelorn lawman. Despite what looks like certain death, or worse, both are hard put to complain. It's part and parcel of the acerbic social commentary that threads through the more obvious insanity.

Especially cynical is Starla's dogmatic devotion to a marriage that was an acknowledged mistake from the start. Grant has bloated to Jabba the Hutt proportions and absorbed half the town's population into what becomes one communal mind, yet Sheriff Parley still isn't sure if he has a chance at finally winning his true love. That is, if they survive.

It's all pretty nutty, and that's ostensibly the movie's primary calling card. We wonder what outlandish improbity might be next. The stream of guilty thrills remains curiously diverting as long as filmmaker Gunn can keep topping his last bit of shock and schlock. Alas, the outrage quotient flatlines somewhere around the film's three-quarter mark.

Less successful is Gunn's homage to fright flicks in general. Intentionally or not, almost every new horror film evokes the DNA of those old favorites that have inspired it. Thus the lampoon is already built-in. To further parody those clichés really takes some doing. In this regard, *Slither* winds up chasing its own slimy tail.

Slither, rated R, is a Universal Pictures release directed by James Gunn and stars Elizabeth Banks, Nathan Fillion and Gregg Henry. Running time: 95 minutes.

Presbyterian Church Plans Salute to Women Artists

WESTFIELD - "A Celebration of the Women Artists of the Church," featuring the talents of 18 women in the congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Westfield, will take place on Wednesday, April 19, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the church's Assembly Hall.

Realizing the church had so many women willing to share their abilities, the board of Presbyterian Women felt compelled to showcase the artists' work. A "wineless" wine and cheese reception will allow guests to mingle, view the artwork and visit with the artists. Several of the women have been featured in local newspapers and other media.

The speakers' portion of the evening will begin at 7:30 p.m., with several of the artists briefly discussing the inspiration and artistic beginnings of their works.

Featured artists will include Jane Annis, Lisa Black-Polak, Rosemary Boehm, Cherie Fritz, Edith Hjorth, Karen Johnsen, Martha Kieczkowski, Janna Peterson, Jean Robinson, Alice Rogerson, Nancy

Roff, Margo Seaman, Eleanor Smith, Peggy Smith, Jean Sweet, Vicki Williams, Nancy Werber and Lois Wight.

Their artwork includes watercolor and oil painting; Rosemaling (Norwegian folk art painting on wood); stained glass panels; pottery; sculpture; quilts; original character dolls; beading; dollhouse furniture and exquisitely designed needlework in several forms. Some pieces may be for sale through the artists.

Some of the artists have previously donated work featured at the Presbyterian Women's Silver Snowflake boutique. An afghan, created by the Knits and Purls knitting group at the church, will be a silent auction piece for anyone interested. However, the event will not be a fundraiser, but rather a salute to the artists, according to the organizers.

The public is invited to attend and there is no admission charge. Located on the corner of Mountain Avenue and Broad Street, the church offers ample free parking in the lot behind the church. Entry to Assembly Hall is through the doors from the parking lot.

Ceramic Artist to Be Featured at Potters' Guild

MOUNTAINSIDE -The Potters' Guild of New Jersey will host a show of functional and sculptural ceramics at the Community Presbyterian Church, 1459 Deerpath, Mountainside, on Saturday, April 22 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, April 23 from noon to 5 p.m. Admission to the show is free.

Montville resident Judith (Lerner) Taylor, former soloist with American Ballet Theater, will present her line of decorative and functional pottery, named *EarthDances*. Ms. Taylor's ceramic art has been featured in several galleries in Northern New Jersey, and she is currently the president of the Potters' Guild of New Jersey, which has drawn hundreds of New Jersey residents to its semi-annual exhibits in Mountainside for over two decades.

Movement remains a fundamental element throughout her ceramic repertoire, both in the dimensions of her

wheel-thrown pieces as well as in the designs and colors of her glaze-work. For more information on her ceramic artwork, visit her website at www.earthdancespottery.com.

On exhibit and available for sale will be a selection of vases, wall pieces, pitchers, teapots, platters, casseroles, raku and pit-fired vessels in varying colors and styles, ceramic jewelry, sculptures and decorative objects of art. Approximately 25 potters will exhibit their work, including DeBorah Goletz, who will be demonstrating clay throwing on the wheel, and Barbara Donatucci, who will be demonstrating clay hand-building techniques, throughout the two days. The show is the place to find a gift for any occasion, or simply to enjoy the demonstrations and view ceramic creations by local and regional artists.

For more information about the guild, or to join, visit the website at <http://www.Pottersguildnj.org>.



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