

Arts & Entertainment

With 'Papa's' Help, WF's Paul Vernick Becomes Youngest Poet

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — Westfield has a new honor to add to its many distinctions. It is home to the youngest published poet in the United States. In fact, six-year-old Paul Vernick may very well be the youngest published poet in the world.

His poems appear alongside those of his grandfather, Dr. Harris "Cole" Vernick, in their recently released anthology, "Paul and Papa- Innocence and Emotions: Poems for the Generations."

Currently retired from his Westfield medical practice, Dr. Vernick has been writing poetry for most of his life. His primary poetic concentration is Japanese poetry, especially the Tanka and Haibun.

When Paul told his grandfather that he, too, wanted to write a poem, Dr. Vernick quickly wrote down the words as Paul dictated them to him.

That was almost two years ago, and little did either poet know at the time that what they had embarked upon was a collaboration that would result in a book.

Dr. Vernick does not edit of Paul's poems, as the young poet dictates them to him. However, he does suggest a poetic form for each poem.

The poems of "Paul and Papa" run the gamut of subjects and accompanying emotions. Many of Dr. Vernick's poems — the "emotion" of the book — tell brief stories of his patients: A girl stricken with a virus, and a decorated soldier languishing in a Veterans Administration hospital are but two. Dr. Vernick's contributions to the book also include entire chapters of haiku, as well as an informative introduction to Japanese poetry.

The poems of young Paul, written in free verse style, represent the "innocence" part of the anthology. Paul enjoys writing about nature and sports,



PAPA BEAR...Dr. Harris "Papa" Vernick and grandson, Paul, enjoy a summer's day on the beach. The two collaborated on a book of poems, in which Paul took a stab at writing a few on his own, making him the youngest published poet.

and when asked how he creates a poem, he said simply: "I get rhyming words in my head."

"He's our little star," said Dr. Vernick. "I was absolutely amazed at what he was writing."

Paul thinks he might like to look into a career as a writer when he is older, but admits he is also torn between that, and playing on a baseball team.

To further the art of writing poetry, Dr. Vernick has set up the Cole Foundation for the Arts, an organization that recognizes poets worldwide.

In the meantime, Paul and "Papa" continue to work together, and are currently writing a second volume of poetry, which they hope will be released this summer.

"Paul and Papa — Innocence and Emotions: Poems for the Generations" is published by Authorhouse. The publisher has a website

www.authorhouse.com, and their phone number is 800-839-8640. A portion of each book purchased benefits the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International and National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Traveling Exhibit Preserves Holocaust Survivors' Message

By KEREN SCHULTZ
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

PLAINFIELD — With Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom Ha Shoah) approaching on Tuesday, April 25, "Survival of the Human Spirit: Triumph over Adversity," a traveling exhibit featuring a display of 29 New Jersey Holocaust survivors' assorted plights and portraits, couldn't be better timed in its launch this past Sunday.

For those who have been touched by survivors and those who don't necessarily know personal accounts, this exhibit brings the plight and courage of survivors to our very backyard in New Jersey and accessible to all.

The exhibit, created by the Center for Holocaust Studies at Brookdale Community College, opened with refreshments and a presentation at the Plainfield Library to a group that included some of the survivors themselves, volunteers, students and the general public.

Three walls of the Anne Louise

Davis Room are lined with panels reflecting the faces of survivors encouraging visitors to listen to their unimaginable ordeal and to recount their stories to future generations. The striking exhibit makes the statement that, within a vibrant community, survivors with diverse stories of torture, humiliation and hunger survived their plights from Auschwitz, the S.S. St. Louis (part of the Hamburg-America Line (Hapag)) and the Kindertransport to New Jersey with humility and a desire to use their experience for the betterment of the world for generations to come.

"The Holocaust did not change our world enough," said Dr. Seymour "Sy" Siegler, co-founder and co-director of the Center for Holocaust Studies during the opening ceremony. "We have in one way or another to make (the Survivors') stories part of our conscience. Our top priority is to direct our voices and actions to the coming generations—we must try to change the world for them, because we haven't changed our world enough."

The exhibit stems from a multiphase project embarked in an effort to preserve Holocaust survivors' stories and message for coming generations. In the project's first phase, New Jersey survivors provided a 500-word essay recalling a focal experience in their Holocaust lives including a message by which they want to be remembered. These essays were compiled into a book published by the Center for Holocaust Studies entitled, "To Tomorrow's Children." The exhibit is the project's second phase and draws from 29 of the survivors' stories.

"These are unpleasant memories," said survivor Gerald Blumenthal. "When you get older, you get more sentimental — it's painful each time



Ela Shah "Melting Pot" (2003) mix media on wood, size 84"x18"x8"

India. She then traveled around the world, and settled in the United States, where she received a Masters of Arts degree in sculpture from Montclair State University.

The work exhibited in "The Power of Faith" is fraught with symbolism. For example, in her "At the Click of a Mouse," a gold and silver leaf on burnt wood, religion is positioned alongside the ultimate symbol of modernity — the computer. Other works include puzzles, ladders and

collapsing towers.

Icons of pop culture, such as Big Bird and Spider Man, often appear in Ms. Shah's works. "Melting Pot" is one work in which Big Bird appears. Chaos and reality play tug-of-war from a woman's perspective in this seven-foot high mixed media on wood.

According to Ms. Shah, her works "have layers of personal, as well as societal, meaning and they address various political, religious, social or cultural issues created by globalization."

Ms. Shah has been widely exhibited in several surrounding states, as well as in her home country of India. She is the recipient of numerous awards, among them the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the Dodge Foundation and the National Association of Women Artists in New York.

"I am thrilled to be back in our beautiful new gallery space and I am extremely pleased to be opening the new space with sculpture and prints by the very talented Ela Shah," said Valeri Larko, Tomasulo Gallery director and curator.

"The Power of Faith" will be at the Tomasulo Gallery of the Kenneth MacKay Library until Thursday, April 27. The library is located on the Cranford campus of Union County College at 1033 Springfield Avenue, Cranford. Attended gallery hours are from 1 to 4 p.m. on Mondays through Thursdays and on Saturdays. Evening hours are from 6 to 9 p.m. on Tuesdays through Thursdays. For more information, call (908) 709-7155.

Check It Out In Color:
www.goleader.com



Ela Shah's "Watch Out America" (2004) mix media on wood, size 48"x16"x11"

The Theater Project

Travels Road To Mecca

CRANFORD. — *The Road To Mecca*, a drama by Athol Fugard, opens at The Theater Project, Union County College's Professional Theater Company, on Thursday, April 20, at 8 p.m.

The Road to Mecca is inspired by the life of the late South African artist Helen Martins, whose home today is a museum for her highly unusual sculptures.

In the play, Miss Helen has alienated her rigid religious community by leaving the church and creating a sculpture garden of bizarre figures all facing "Mecca." Now in her late 60s, Helen is being pressured to leave her home and enter a residence for elderly women.

Eye sight failing and hands not as sure as they had been, Helen is torn between Marius, the town's minister who sees an opportunity to reclaim a lost soul by moving Helen into the home, and Elsa, a young friend and confidante, who challenges Helen to maintain her independence. The play deals forcefully and poetically with cross-generational friendships, the issues of aging and the place of artists in society.

The Road to Mecca plays April 20 through May 7, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 8 p.m., and Sundays at 3 p.m. General admission is \$20. On Thursdays, tickets are \$12. One Sunday only, April 23, is Senior Sunday when all senior citizen tickets are \$12. Student tickets are always \$10.

For reservations, which are recommended, call (908) 659-5189.

SP Library Presents

Music-Lover Program

SCOTCH PLAINS — Scotch Plains public library will present a program for music lovers — "A History of Broadway Musicals" on Thursday, April 20 at 7 p.m. Harry "Skip" Unger will present this musical program.

The evening will take a look at the musical "Great White Way" from a slightly humorous point of view. Mr. Unger will also play and sing some Broadway's best along with some of his old songs.

A Scotch Plains resident, Mr. Unger, majored in music at Dartmouth and graduated "cum diploma." He plays piano locally at restaurants, senior citizens complexes and nursing homes.

The presentation runs about an hour. Scotch Plains Public Library is located at 1927 Bartle Avenue, a block away from Park Avenue. For more information and directions, call (908) 322-5007.

Trader Joe's—Westfield's Best Kept Secret is 'In'

By LINDA B. CONDRILLO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — Almost any time of day, any day of the week, one is hard pressed to find a parking space in the lot at Trader Joe's. *The Westfield Leader and the Scotch Plains Fanwood Times* met up with some of the savvy shoppers exiting the store to find out what, exactly, it is that makes this place so popular.

Aside from the Charles Shaw wine,

also known as "two buck Chuck" regularly seen carted out by the caseload, virtually everyone told the newspaper they shop at Trader Joe's for the diverse selection of natural and organic foods at reasonable prices.

Howie Cohen of Cranford and Christine Zardecki of Highland Park agreed. According to Ms. Zardecki, Trader Joe's is the only place she can find a particular unadulterated brand

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Westfield Symphony Orchestra

STARS OF TOMORROW

BETHOVEN—Choral Fantasy
featuring Westfield High School Concert Choir

HANDEL—Royal Fireworks Music
featuring Westfield High School Chamber Orchestra

NJMTA Concerto Competition Winners

KODALY—Dances of Galanta

SATURDAY APRIL 22, 2006 at 8pm
Westfield High School
550 Dorian Road
FOR TICKETS: call 232-9400
or email wso@westfieldsymphony.org

DAVID WROE
Music Director

WESTFIELD FOUNDATION

WESTFIELD Symphony ORCHESTRA

WWW.WESTFIELDSYMPHONY.ORG

What's Hopping?

EASTER FLOWER HEADQUARTERS

It's time to bring the family out to the Williams' Great Easter Egg Hunt, this Saturday at 2 pm. There will be over 4000 eggs filled with toys. There is no charge for the Hunt. Special Guest appearance by the Easter Bunny. The Egg Hunt is only for Children 10 and under. Please arrive at least 30 minutes early since the Hunt starts at exactly 2pm.

While your here, why not choose an Easter flower or three? We have hundreds of pots of clematis, calla lilies, freesia, tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, Easter lilies, hydrangea, martha washington geraniums and about 307 other things in bloom.

WILLIAMS NURSERY & The Gift House

www.williams-nursery.com
524 Springfield Ave
Westfield • 908-232-4076

Arrive at least 30 minutes early

Rain or Shine