

## Letters to the Editor

### Westfield Was Home To Great Independent Music Stores

In 1992 Nirvana's Kurt Cobain appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine, famously wearing a T-shirt bearing the phrase "Corporate Magazines Still Suck." Corporate music stores do, too, and the closing of the Westfield Sam Goody store is a fitting end to a store that the area never needed in the first place.

When the Sam Goody music store came along more than a decade ago, Westfield was home to some great independent music stores. Each had its own distinct atmosphere, but all had these qualities in common: The staffs were knowledgeable, the prices were reasonable and the music selections were eclectic. There was no need for an additional music store in the area, and certainly not a store which offered higher prices and less choice than the others.

Of course, any store backed by a huge corporation can lose money for years while forcing smaller independent stores out of business, and I suspect this was part of the Sam Goody (failed) business plan. The arrival of Sam Goody seemed to sound a sure death-knell for the future of independently-owned music stores in downtown Westfield. In fact, all but one, Sound Station on South Avenue, soon succumbed.

Earlier this year, Musicland, the corporation operating Sam Goody stores, filed for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code and announced over 300 store closings, including the Westfield

location. Now that the damage of squeezing out most downtown independent music stores is done, Sam Goody shamefully retreats from Westfield, as well as from malls and main streets across the country.

These comments are not intended against the employees who worked at the Sam Goody store, and I sympathize with anyone suffering a negative economic impact related to the store closing. But because Sam Goody damaged a previously thriving independent music store scene in Westfield, I celebrate the demise of the Sam Goody business. I wish Sound Station - and future independent music stores in our area - a long and prosperous future.

Bob Demmel  
Scotch Plains

### Plan Is Needed to End County Government

Running for public office has its ups and downs, the upside being change. Many of us in Union County have been discontented with the escalating taxes, not only with our proper communities but also the dollar value we pay to the county with nothing tangible to show for it!

In my hometown of Westfield, approximately 65 percent of the budget funds the local schools, 20 percent funds county taxes - yes, do the math! Surprise, 15 percent, that's all that's left to provide the residents of this community with basic services. Plus there's garbage pickup and the Ecology Center - you are on your own!

That is why I am running for county freeholder. I hear it over and over again, get rid of the county government, one extra layer of bureaucracy, and we will be in the money!! Yes, Frank Arena, just not so quick. First you need to place the right people in those positions to make it happen via a plan, real business practices.

You can't do away with county government with a flick of the switch. "Monster Government" took a long time to evolve and will take a long time to bring it to its knees.

Let's bring back the time when officials were proud to serve the citizens who voted them in.

Diane Barabas  
Candidate for County Freeholder

### Reading is Good For You



KEEPING EYE ON THE PARK...The Westfield Police Department is monitoring Mindowaskin Park through live and video monitoring devices.

## WF United Way to Hold Annual Meeting on May 8

WESTFIELD — Members will be elected to serve on the Board of Trustees of the Westfield United Way at the organization's annual meeting and awards presentation, to be held Monday, May 8, at 7 p.m. in the community room of the municipal building.

The names placed in nomination to be newly elected are Stephen Cordes, John H. Schmidt, Jr. and Susan Schwarz. Nominated for re-election are Rich Bagger, Scott Bond, Scott Cassie, David Foltz, Matt Forstenhauser, Claude Fusco, Mary Illes, Susan Jacobson, Steve Petrucci, John Ripberger and Paul Zoidis.

Board President Carolyn Fleder will conduct the business meeting and report on the accomplishments of the fund last year, the election of trustees and any other business that may come before the meeting.

Awards will be presented to outstanding volunteers, and an entertainment program will include the presentation of the colors by the Scouts. Refreshments will be served during the social hour following the meeting.

All contributors to the Westfield United Way are members of the corporation and are entitled to a vote at the meeting. The session will also mark the election of next year's officers. The slate includes Scott Cassie, president; David Foltz, first vice president; Paul Zoidis, second vice president; Wendy Cozzi, secretary, and Claude Fusco, treasurer.

These include Forest, LaGrande, Carriage House Parks, Borough Hall, the Fanwood Public Library and municipal parking areas, as well as the area around the railroad tracks. NJ Transit will provide two flagmen for security for those assigned to this area.

The Lions Club will pick-up litter along Fanwood's stretch of South Avenue as part of the Adopt-a-Highway program. For information, call (908) 322-7404.



## Union County News

### We Should Be Proud to Serve

By Alexander Mirabella, Chairman  
Board of Chosen Freeholders

When the subject of jury duty comes up, it's not surprising that comparisons to the dentist's office soon follow. But having recently completed jury service, I would like to say a few things about that.

It is no small feat to sit on a jury. For many people, it is simply impossible. Many people have onerous family or work obligations, and their absence would visit great stress on their dependents. Many others have ailments or disabilities that prevent them from serving.

For the rest of us, jury duty is an interruption. Schedules have to be juggled, family care arrangements have to be made. Often it goes beyond a minor inconvenience.

Still, the change in routine can bring opportunities. In my case, jury duty was a chance to develop new friendships and to enjoy the camaraderie of good people engaged in a civic activity that elevated us all. But it goes much deeper than that. Jury duty is an opportunity to stand in for those who cannot serve. It's an opportunity for each of us to stand up for democracy. Every juror can be profoundly proud of that.

To establish a democratic government in America, our predecessors fought an eight-year war. Ordinary citizens threw off the yoke of a powerful king. Many gave up their homes, jobs and families. Many gave their lives. Today, jurors still hold that sacrifice in trust.

Every day, in courtrooms across the country, juries uphold the core principals

of our Constitution. In juries, ordinary citizens take on the responsibility for dispensing justice. There can be no democracy without the right to be heard by a jury of one's peers.

Juries keep the words of our Declaration of Independence as strong today as they were 230 years ago. By stepping into the jury box, each juror represents the principal of equality. You don't need special skills, wealth or prestige to participate in a jury. If you are a U.S. citizen, over 18 and able to read and understand English, you are just as qualified to consider the weightiest matters of law as the person sitting next to you.

As communities grow and change, juries also play a key role in holding the civil fabric together. On a jury, you meet people from all backgrounds, faiths and walks of life. You take a solemn oath to uphold the law, and you work together as a team to fulfill that oath. All the other things that make us different are secondary.

Sadly, some people face no barrier to service, but nevertheless find ways to shun the call. Instead of embracing the opportunity to perform an essential role in our democracy, they run from it.

Perhaps they do not feel up to the job. Perhaps they do not feel capable or qualified. But this should not be a concern.

The fact is we are all qualified to participate in our government. That is exactly what the American Revolution established. And that is every juror's proud legacy for the next generation.

## Warren Rorden to Speak About Real Estate History

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Historical Society will learn about "Real Estate in Westfield, Yesterday and Today, How Things Have Changed" from realtor Warren Rorden at its First Wednesday Luncheon at noon on May 3 at B.G. Fields Restaurant, located at 560 Springfield Avenue in Westfield.

Mr. Rorden will discuss how real estate has developed over the years; mistakes people make when selling a home; why buyers move to Westfield; whether prices are too high and how to ready a house for the market.

Mr. Rorden entered the real estate business in 1958, became a broker in 1960 and in 1971, with his wife, Virginia, started Rorden Realty in Westfield. They operated the busi-

ness for 27 years before selling it to ERA Burgdorff in 1998.

A past president of the Westfield Board of Realtors and the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, he has been active with many other local organizations over the years as well.

He and his wife are longtime members of the Westfield Historical Society. Mrs. Rorden is a member of the society's Board of Trustees and its Executive Committee, where she is Membership Committee Chairwoman.

A society telephone committee will contact regular luncheon attendees to verify their reservations. Space permitting, others also may attend. Interested persons are asked to call (908) 233-2930 by noon on Monday, May 1.

### Public Invited to Plant Wildflower Seeds

FANWOOD — On Saturday, May 6, the general public is invited to help the Fanwood Environmental Commission plant wildflower seed. Work will take two hours, beginning at 2 p.m. The rain date is June 7.

Participants should bring metal "T"-shaped rakes and dress appropriately, as the ground will be muddy. Assistance for this project was received from Union County's Division of Golf Operations for spaying for weeds and from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education for spreading lime and fertilizer.

Blooming of the flowers is expected in June. Different types of flowers will appear through the summer and into the fall. The public is not to pick the flowers.

Any group that would like to help place wood chips on the trails is asked to call Dean Talcott at (908) 322-6577.

Brown signs with white lettering will guide participants from the intersections of LaGrande and Martine Avenues or Terrill Road and Cray Terrace.

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