

SPFHS Alumnus Raises Awareness With DWI Video

By CASSIE LO
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood

FANWOOD – Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) students and members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood community gathered on June 1 for the premiere showing of "The Last Sound You May Ever Hear," a movie created by SPFHS students to promote drunk driving awareness. Liz Knodel-Gordon, SPFHS substance abuse coordinator and Fanwood Police Sergeant Thomas Jedic introduced the video by showing a brief interview with the film's manuscript author, SPFHS alum Nick Bruno. Mr. Bruno was unable to attend the premiere because he is enlisted in the military and is at training camp before being deployed to Iraq, but he said a few words about the film on the video.

"You can have a good time, but you have to be responsible," Mr. Bruno said. As an EMT in Fanwood, Mr. Bruno has seen the effects of driving while intoxicated first-hand, which is what drove him to write the script.

The video opens with six high school students sitting around a table celebrating their graduation. From there, the students are shown in another party scene and then hop into a car driven by a student who is clearly intoxicated. The most dramatic scene in the video is when the driver of the vehicle is shown in a crashed car with blood on his face.

Real Fanwood emergency medical

technicians (EMTs), police officers and firefighters depict a scene in which they attempt to rescue the student, who is pronounced dead after being pried out of the car. The EMTs administer resuscitation in the back of an ambulance before covering him with a white sheet.

The film concludes with "the grim statistics" about alcohol, which are listed and read aloud by cast members while scenes from a graveyard are shown.

"It was so beautifully done," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carol Choye. "We've had some serious accidents lately in the community...I think it is really important to show it."

"The kids were awesome to work with – they did all the work," said Sergeant Jedic, who made a brief cameo in the film.

After the video presentation, Sergeant Jedic and Ms. Knodel-Gordon led an exercise with the Fatal Vision Goggle Kit, which distorts vision to simulate how alcohol and drugs affect brain and motor skills. The kit was recently donated to the Fanwood Police Department by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Kiwanis Club.

The 23-minute film has already gained interest in other school districts. Ms. Knodel-Gordon said that the Chatham school district has requested a copy. It will be shown on TV35 throughout the summer and it is being written into the 11th grade health curriculum at SPFHS for next year.



Courtesy of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority
TRAFFIC FIX...NJ Turnpike officials announced Monday a \$4 million improvement project for the Clark traffic circle off exit 135 of the Garden State Parkway. The project includes widening Parkway exit ramps and installing traffic signals.

NJ Turnpike Unveils \$4 Mil. Plan for Clark Traffic Circle

CLARK – New Jersey Turnpike officials announced Monday a \$4 million improvement project to reconfigure exit 135 on the Garden State Parkway to eliminate persistent exiting delays caused at the Clark circle.

The planned improvements include the realignment and widening of existing northbound and southbound Garden State Parkway ramps at exit 135 to provide better sight distance, as well as the construction of two new connector roads. The connector roads will allow traffic to utilize four planned traffic signals at the intersections of Central Avenue and the Garden State Parkway Ramps.

"As a result, all traffic will be coordinated by signals, rather than waiting for motorists to yield to one another, which currently results in extensive delays for the more than 60,000 vehicles that use the exit 135/Clark Circle traffic pattern each day," according to a statement released by Turnpike officials.

"This is one of the absolute worst traffic patterns facing drivers in this area," said Michael Lapolla, a Westfield resident and Executive Director of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. "When we're finished the daily traffic delays should virtually disappear, as will the Clark circle as it currently exists."

OPRA Fax Line Working Again

ELIZABETH — The County of Union has announced that the fax telephone line for Open Public Records Act (OPRA) is back in service. Requests should be faxed to (908) 558-0915.

Bio-Blitz Offers Programs About Ash Brook Wildlife

SCOTCH PLAINS – A "Bio-Blitz" scheduled for the evening of Friday, June 23 and all day Saturday, June 24 will offer programs that include an introduction to the "language" of birds, glimpses of tracks left by wildlife and identification of plants that flourished when Native Americans still roamed the area that is now the Ash Brook Reservation in Scotch Plains.

The reservation, a Union County park, and a portion of the adjacent Ash Brook Golf Course, also a county facility, will be the site of the county's second Bio-Blitz, a 24-hour effort to catalog whatever plant and animal life can be found in the area – and thus get a snapshot of its biodiversity.

Another purpose of the Bio-Blitz is to give the public an understanding of the unspoiled habitat that remains, even in a region as densely populated as Union County. Last year, when New Jersey's first-ever public Bio-Blitz was held at Lenape Park, a Union County park with meadows, forests, ponds and rivers, experts identified some 660 different species. Though this year's site has different terrain – extensive wetlands, ponds and streams as well as hardwood swamp and forest – the study of flora and fauna is again being led by scientists and field experts assisted by volunteers.

For the general public, there will be programs designed to appeal to both adults and children, including nature walks, talks and exhibits throughout the day. Nocturnal creatures will be the focus of the initial programs on the evening of June 23, when a "frog slog" and an "owl prow" and bird walk will be held.

Throughout the following day, there will be a variety of programs and exhibits for children and adults.

The Friends of Lenape Park will lead beginner bird walks; the Children of the Earth Foundation of Tom Brown's outdoor education school, the Asbury based-Tracker Inc., will present programs on "Tracking and Nature Awareness;" a team from the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife will collect and identify fish from streams in the reservation; and John Goldman of National Biodiversity Parks Inc. will set out scent stations of sand and tuna-scented cotton balls where visitors will be able to see tracks left by any animals attracted to the site. Historic background of the area also will be included in the program.

Frank Thorne of Scotch Plains is scheduled to appear in period cos-

tume to present a talk about the Revolutionary War Battle of the Short Hills. There also will be a talk presented by Jeffrey Grob, landscape architect and member of Union County Parks Advisory Board, on what the former Union County Park Commission envisioned for the Union County park system and Ash Brook Reservation in the 1920s.

Children will have an opportunity to win prizes in a variety of contests, and refreshments will be on sale throughout the day on June 24. A complete schedule of programs will be available soon.

Volunteers are still being sought by the Union County Department of Parks, Recreation and Facilities. To participate or to receive a brochure and schedule of events, call: (908) 527-4032. For information about the Rahway River Association, call Dennis Miranda, executive director at (732) 340-0882. Results of last year's BioBlitz can be found at kean.edu/~scodella/BioBlitz05/BioBlitzResults05.pdf.

WF Attorney Invited to Join Legal Council

WESTFIELD – Donald Vanarelli, of the Law Office of Donald Vanarelli in Westfield has joined the Council of Advanced Practitioners (CAP) of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA).

CAP is an invitation only council, providing member benefits to NAELA's advanced practitioners. NAELA members who are invited to join the CAP must either be certified as an elder law attorney by the National Elder Law Foundation or be a NAELA Fellow. In addition, the individual must have high professional and ethical ratings by the Martindale-Hubbell Bar Registry, and have been a member of NAELA for 10 years.

Mr. Vanarelli represents older or disabled persons and their representatives in financing long-term medical care, nursing home issues, qualifying for Medicare, Medicaid and other public benefits, estate planning, probate and guardianship proceedings.

In addition to being a certified elder law attorney, Mr. Vanarelli is approved as a mediator in civil, equity and probate litigation.

Mr. Vanarelli is a graduate of Montclair State College and Rutgers Law School. He was a Peace Corps volunteer in Kathmandu, Nepal.



GO JETS!...Matt Higgins of the New York Jets signs a check for \$10,000 to Berkeley Heights that will fund construction of a children's water park in the township. Berkeley Heights was a finalist in the Jets' search to relocate their corporate headquarters and practice fields. Looking on, left to right, are: Deputy Mayor Elaine Perna, Committeeman Joseph Bruno, State Assemblyman Jon Brannick, Mayor David Cohen, Union County Freeholder Chairman Al Mirabella, County Manager George Devaney, and Shane Connell of The Connell Company.

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