

MS Council Celebrates Teen NJ's Philanthropy

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

MOUNTAINSIDE –Miss Teen New Jersey Galaxy 2006 Gabrielle Apigo, a Mountainside resident, received a resolution of commendation at the opening of Mountainside's council meeting on March 21.

In his address, Mayor Robert Vigilanti said, "our youth is our future, and we have been truly blessed in Mountainside to have so many fine young people." The mayor told audience members that Gabrielle, a freshman at Farleigh Dickinson University, was "a talented and compassionate teen who's dedicated her time and efforts to spread awareness of Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva (FOP)." The rare genetic disorder causes bone to form in muscles, tendons, ligaments and other connective tissues in children.

Resident Gary Whyte said Mountainside was active in spreading awareness and helping to raise funds for the disorder by hosting the fifth-annual comedy night fundraiser at the Elks lodge earlier this month. He said Councilman Robert Messler was among those to receive humanitarian awards at this year's event.

In other business, the borough's governing body unanimously passed a resolution to enter into a contract

with Michael Disko and Associates, an engineering firm, to map borough catch basins and storm drains as mandated by the state.

The multi-year project would run the borough in excess of a \$500,000 by the end of its completion in five or six years, Mayor Vigilanti said. The next part of the project is the filtering of all of the borough's storm sewer water.

The council approved an ordinance to amend a previous 2003 salary range ordinance for municipal employees. The salary range for a borough construction official, assistant building inspector, assistant zoning official and shade tree support person will now range from \$10,000 to \$60,000 per year. Wages for part-time plumbing, building and electrical inspectors will now range between \$25 and \$50 per hour.

Before adjourning the meeting, Mayor Vigilanti noted that the April edition of *NJ Monthly* magazine rated Mountainside number 14 out of 100 top towns in the state to reside. New Providence was the only other Union County town to make the list. "This is quite an achievement for our little community."

The borough council will hold a work session meeting on Tuesday, March 11 at 8 p.m. at borough hall.

Electronics and Tires To be Collected on April 8

NEW PROVIDENCE – The County of Union will sponsor a recycling event for electronics and automobile tires on Saturday, April 8, so Union County residents can get rid of unwanted tires, computers and other electronic equipment in an environmentally proper manner. The collection will take place from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Lucent Technologies, located at 600 Mountain Avenue in New Providence.

All county residents are eligible to participate at no cost.

Electronic equipment that will be accepted on April 8 includes computer monitors, hard drives, modems, keyboards, CPU's, mice, printers, scanners, speakers, televisions, VCR's, fax machines, telephones and circuit boards.

All residents need to do is drive to the site with their unwanted electronic equipment and as many as eight automobile tires without rims. Workers at the site will unload the vehicles. Pre-registration is not required for this special Saturday collection.

Refrigerators, washers and dryers, microwaves and air conditioners will not be accepted.

A complete list of the materials that will be accepted is available at the Union County Environmental Services website www.ucnj.org/oem.

The electronics collection and tire recycling will be held rain or shine, for county residents only and not for businesses. Proof of Union County residency is required.

An alternate drop-off program for electronics equipment is available every Monday between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. at the Newtech Recycling Facility, located at 111 Chimney Rock Road, Building No. 2, in Bridgewater.

For more information, call the Union County Bureau of Environmental Services Hotline at (908) 654-9889.

Bramnick Named 'Super Attorney'

WESTFIELD – *New Jersey Monthly* Magazine has named Westfield attorney and state Assemblyman Jon Bramnick "Super Lawyer" for 2006. He is a certified trial attorney and former president of the Richard J. Hughes Inn of Court. He began his career 28 years ago as trial attorney in the South Bronx.



WEB SITED...On a cold winter's day, Wilson Elementary School children wait outside of the Montclair State University before going inside to see a live production of "Charlotte's Web." From left to right are Joseph Johnston, Brendan Curry and Ben Herbst.

Scientists, Naturalists Sought For Bio-Blitz at Ashbrook

SCOTCH PLAINS – Scientists and skilled specialists, assisted by community volunteers, will fan out across the Ash Brook Reservation and throughout portions of the adjacent Ash Brook Golf Course in Scotch Plains over a 24-hour period on Friday and Saturday, June 23 to 24, to conduct the area's second-ever Bio-Blitz.

Scientists and lay people interested in volunteering for the event are requested to call Liz Crawford at the Union County Department of Parks, Recreation and Facilities at (908) 527-4032 to register. A bio-blitz is an intensive effort to find and identify as many living plants and animals possible in a given area – in this case the 460-acre park. The idea is to obtain an ecological "snapshot" of the area. Last year, the first-ever-in-New Jersey urban Bio-Blitz 2005 was held in Lenape Park.

Ash Brook Reservation area boasts unique, semi-pristine habitat, including pinelands-like, upland vegetation as well as hardwood swamps, three major streams and several ponds. Some of the species scientists expect to find include: ground pines, sphagnum, star and club mosses, lichens, bayberry, wintergreen, hawks, great blue herons, fox, deer, owls, song birds and many others.

The Lenape Park Blitz resulted in 660 species sampled or sited and identified with the help of over 100 scientists, field experts and volunteers. Teams of specialists helped with matters on fungi, plants, insects, fish, reptiles and amphibians, birds and mammals. A brochure describing the event last year and the results can be obtained by calling (908) 527-4032.

Through the efforts of Dr. Sylvio Codella and Kean University, a

website listing the results can be viewed at www.kean.edu/~scodella/BioBlitz05/BlitzHome.html.

The county parks department and the Rahway River Association in partnership with many environmental organizations are sponsoring this year's event. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), Trailside Nature & Science Center, Kean and Rutgers Universities, the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, the United States Department of Agriculture, New Jersey Audubon, Friends of Lenape Park and National Biodiversity Parks Inc. will participate in Bio-Blitz 2006.

The "blitz" will start in the park at 6 p.m. on Friday, June 23 with workers on hand throughout the night. Volunteers will work in shifts throughout Saturday until 6 p.m. No experience is necessary but skilled specialists for all disciplines are sought. Pre-Blitz site visits are a must for team leaders and other specialists. (Dates and locations for these will be announced.)

A Bio-Blitz Central tent will be located near the Union County Vocational-Technical School and at the Union County Police Academy and parking lots off Raritan Road. The tent will house exhibits featuring examples of live animals and plants sampled from within the park. In addition, many opportunities for public involvement will be offered through workshops and walks, including: bird walks, evening owl prowls, frog slogs, fish sampling and plant walks. People of all ages are invited and encouraged to take part in this unique effort.

For more information, contact Dennis Miranda, executive director of the Rahway River Association, at (732) 340-0882.

Freeholders Receive Grant For Bike Path Master Plan

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ELIZABETH – The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders is expected to approve a resolution tonight to accept a \$120,000 grant from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority to fund a countywide bicycle path master plan. The county will provide \$30,000 to the project.

The freeholders announced the plan last September, which will lead to an integrated bikeway system. The master plan will enable Union County to participate in the East Coast Greenway, a belt of bicycle pathways stretching 2,950 miles from Key West, Fla. to Calais, Me. The Union County section would connect with Middlesex County in the south and Essex County in the north. The county has some 170 miles of existing bike paths.

The Union County portion includes Elizabeth River Park, Kawameeh Park, Galloping Hill Park, Black Brook Park, Lenape Park, Nomahegan Park and Rahway River Park.

The board is also set to enter into an agreement tonight with the Union County Improvement Authority to fund a county animal shelter. The shelter will be located at the Houdaille Quarry in Springfield. Of the 21 municipalities in the county, only Elizabeth and Linden provide their own services. The other towns contract out for the service. Associated Humane Societies in Newark is the main provider in the region.

At Thursday's agenda meeting, officials also discussed a proposed inter-local agreement between the county and Cranford for construction of the \$10 million Cranford flood-control project along the Rahway River.

The agreement provides \$800,000 for the first two phases of the project.

Frank Dann, director of Engineering and Public Works, said the project has taken several years to become a reality due to easements and land acquisitions that were needed by the township, which is the lead agency in the project. "They (Cranford) had a lot of internal issues."

"It's taken that long to get this project off the ground," Mr. Dann said.

Responding to a question from Freeholder Dan Sullivan, Mr. Dann said he expected construction to begin this year.

The board is also supporting a request by the Green Brook Flood Control Commission seeking \$30 million from the U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers in the fiscal year 2007 federal budget. The money will be used to design and construct flood control measures in the Green Brook Sub-

Basin. Several freeholders questioned a resolution authorizing the hiring of Dr. Doug Miller Meade of Belle Meade to provide forensic neuropathology consultation when the county's medical examiner needs assistance in determining the cause of death in difficult autopsies. Dr. Miller will be paid a \$100 increase per case from last year for an estimated 15 cases at \$400 per case, for a total contract of up to \$8,000. Department of Public Safety Director Harold Gibson said the price is "not inconsistent" with other offices that run this type of service.

Board members are set to grant permission for Springfield to hang a banner across Mountain Avenue at North Trivett Avenue from May 2 through May 6 to promote the annual St. James the Apostle Roman Catholic Church festival.

A resolution is expected to be on tonight's regular meeting agenda approving the closure of South Springfield Avenue from Mountain Avenue to Shunpike Road from 5 to 10:30 p.m. weekends during the festival and on Saturday, May 6 from 1:30 to 10:30 p.m.

At the conclusion of Thursday's meeting, Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella said Berkeley Heights and county officials were to have attended a presentation by the township at Giants Stadium to woo the New York Jets to relocate their practice facility to the Connell corporate campus in the township.

The township is among the five finalists, which include the former Exxon Headquarters in Florham Park, a warehouse and adjoining recreational facility in Jersey City, a site owned by East Orange Waterworks in Milburn, and the former Curtiss-Wright Factory in Wood-Ridge in Bergen County.

"Berkeley Heights and Union County are the best place for them," Freeholder Mirabella said.

The Jets are relocating their practice facility from Hofstra University on Long Island, which was home to the team for 30 years. The new facility is part of the new stadium deal for the Jets and Giants.

Freeholder Mirabella announced that he is sponsoring a resolution urging the state education commissioner to reinstate funding to adult high schools throughout the state.

"That we hope will come to fruition and that funding will be restored," he said.

Aid to the Union County Vocational-Technical School in Scotch Plains under Governor Jon Corzine's budget will drop \$36,620 this year to \$3,275,392.

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