



MUMS THE WORD...Families of Jefferson Elementary School in Westfield plant mums and weed and mulch school grounds to prepare for winter. Westfield Lumber provided mulch. Mary Beyert and Ellen Cronin worked six hours to prepare the grounds.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Presents Keynote at Kean U.

By MEGHAN GILL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

UNION — Environmental advocate, law professor and radio announcer Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. presented the keynote address at Kean University for the Technology Transfer Goes Green Conference on November 17.

Speaking to a rapt audience of students, faculty, environmental experts and politicians at the Wilkins Theatre, Mr. Kennedy was introduced by Dr. Dawood Farahi, president of the university.

Dr. Farahi said, "As a leader who selflessly and tirelessly fought for the environment, "(Mr. Kennedy) was named Time magazine's 'Healer of the Planet,'" he added.

"I am so happy to see so many of my political friends. Cory Booker, thank you for the energy you put in to solve people's problems," Mr. Kennedy said.

He then spoke about the impact of environmental preservation has on humanity, saying "the worst thing we can do is make the environment a partisan issue...I am not criticizing President Bush because he is a Republican and I am a Democrat. I am critical because he has done many wicked things (to the environment)." Mr. Kennedy blamed the press for not making environmental advocacy a priority, saying, "we have an indolent and negative press, who have let down the people."

He talked about how he has spoken in "blue states and red states" and learned

that "80 percent of Republicans are Democrats and don't even know it."

He then said that "polluters are in charge of the agencies who are supposed to protect public lands."

He spoke about Riverkeeper, "an advocacy group that monitors the Hudson River ecosystem and challenges polluters, using both legal and grassroots campaigns," according to its website. Mr. Kennedy is vice-chairman of the board of directors for this group.

He told the audience that an affiliated organization, Waterkeeper, offers a mercury level test for people concerned about the dangers of mercury.

He said that fish are unsafe to eat in 19 states, including New Jersey, due to a reversal of the regulation of coal burning power plants.

"We are living in a science fiction nightmare, here in New Jersey, because somebody gave money to a politician," he said.

As "emissaries of the next generation," Mr. Kennedy said, "the future whispers, and the present shouts."

He said that "good environmental policy is identical to good economic policy" and "the investment in the environment is an investment in infrastructure."

He concluded by saying that in a true free-market economy, people cannot make themselves rich without making their neighbor rich. "Polluter fat-cats with subsidies are cheating the free-market economy," he said.



Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

WF's Fietkiewicz Named F&M Marshall Scholar

WESTFIELD — Thirteen first-year students at Franklin and Marshall College have been named Marshall Scholars.

One student is Kristina Fietkiewicz, a graduate of Westfield High School and the daughter of Jane and John Fietkiewicz of Westfield.

The John Marshall Scholar Program recognizes highly motivated students who have demonstrated a passion for learning, an intense interest in probing specific areas of study and superior academic achievement. Marshall Scholars are chosen from Franklin and Marshall's freshman applicants each year, and competition for this award is highly selective.

Marshall scholars receive a \$12,500 annual merit scholarship, a Macintosh

computer, the special opportunity to apply for Marshall research grants, performance studies or public service abroad or in the United States, invitation to a number of trips, luncheons with faculty and other special events throughout each year — each of which enhances a student's ability to engage in personal academic pursuits.

In the past, Marshall Scholars have traveled to England and Ireland to study folk ballads in Celtic cultures, Australia to research aboriginal rock and New York to research how a literary work becomes a Broadway musical. Marshall Scholar research has ranged from examining the effect of insulin on protein synthesis in chickens to working with the most advanced form of nuclear magnetic resonance.



LEARNING TO HELP...Westfield girls and the Sundance School of North Plainfield raise money for Kangole Girls' Secondary School in Uganda, Africa.

GLI Girls Team Up For Uganda Charity

WESTFIELD — The Roosevelt Intermediate School of Westfield's Chapter of Girls Learn International (GLI) and the Sundance School of North Plainfield have teamed up to raise money for the Kangole Girls' Secondary School in Uganda, Africa.

Zoe Greenburg, a former Sundance School student, is now treasurer of her GLI chapter. She and Claire Dorwart, whose mother, Sara Miller, is a teacher at Sundance, approached Sundance founders Ginny and Jeff Tobey with the idea of working together.

According to Zoe, the goal of the GLI is to provide human rights education to young women currently in middle school and high school across the globe. "We foster global communication and cross cultural understanding. We encourage young women to become advocates for positive and social change. We raise money to help girls in less fortunate situations with financial support and educational supplies," Zoe said.

Last year, the Roosevelt chapter raised \$700, which was used to buy a photocopy machine for the Kangole Secondary School.

This year, sales of CDs with songs about peace that the children are learning to sing have raised over \$1,000.

To make a donation, or to learn more about the Sundance School, call (908) 561-5055 or visit www.sundanceschool.net.

UC Announces Scholarship Award

SCOTCH PLAINS — Union Catholic High School in Scotch Plains and the Knights of Columbus Summit Council 783 have announced that Robert Magella of Carteret has been named the 2006 recipient of the Eldon M. Hammeke Scholarship.

Established in 1998, the scholarship is dedicated to the memory of Eldon M. Hammeke, a member of Summit Council 783 since 1967. The \$1,000 scholarship is awarded every year to an entering freshman, who retains the scholarship for all four years of attendance at Union Catholic High School.

Grand Knight Paul Vikan, Financial Secretary John O'Brien and Grace Hammeke presented the award to Robert on November 14.

Education Matters

A Time to Step Up to the Plate

By DR. TED KOZLIK
Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
ANDREA LO
Supervisor Special Services K-8

Beleagued by property, income and sales taxes, our educational system is once again facing an environment that pits the needs of students in regular education programs against students requiring special education and support services to achieve a meaningful education.

One of the current proposals under consideration by the legislature calls for the creation of foundation aid rather than categorical aid, which we are now receiving from the state to offset our special education costs. Although what we are currently receiving is less than sufficient, the new proposal can potentially further reduce financial aid to the Westfield Public Schools.

Fortunately or not, special education programs and support services now range in breath and scope for our children from providing custodial/residential care to those who are one step away from attending an Ivy university or any college of choice.

Try to place yourself "in the shoes" of any parent of a child with an overt or hidden disability. It is not an easy walk. Virtually all parents and their children have a dream, hope and vision for the future. Parents with severe or mildly disabled children also have a vision, dream and aspirations for their sons and daughters.

The onset of a disabling condition may be known since birth, or it may occur in elementary, middle and/or high school years. The statistics are staggering: in New Jersey alone, more than 16.8 percent of our student population requires special education and support services. The same holds true for our students who will attend the proposed Early Childhood Learning Center at Lincoln School.

Conceptually, the Early Childhood Learning Center, a key proposal in the upcoming bond referendum of January 23, presents a magnificent opportunity for all students. It creates

a meaningful opportunity for our preschool and self-contained kindergarten pupils to be in an environment with more appropriate-aged peers. Support personnel would have the opportunity to provide pull-out services and in-class support services to buttress the learning and achievement for all students.

The physical layout of the school will be designed for young students. The preschoolers will be included in age appropriate assembly programs. There will be a playground with developmentally appropriate equipment and physical education will be provided in the gymnasium.

For the past several years, Westfield's preschool disabled program has been housed at the Edison Intermediate School, where there have been limited opportunities for mainstreaming with near-aged peers.

The Early Childhood Learning Center will provide an arrangement that will allow the special education teachers to collaborate and plan with regular, early childhood education teachers, speech language specialists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and specialists on a consistent basis.

This will also help when the time comes to transition special education students into the regular education program.

In all of this, there are significant short-term and continual cost saving/benefits to the district in relation to out-of-district tuition, transportation and support services expenditures.

It is anticipated that the district would realize cost savings in excess of \$200,000 yearly. Let us move forward to advance the learning, achievement and equity interests for all our children in the Early Childhood Learning Center at Lincoln School.

While there is a price tag, there is a nobility and sense of pride to do what is "right for kids" while positively impacting learning and experiences for generations to come.

Lions and Tiny Tim Fund Team to Aid Local Student

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains Lions Club and the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Tiny Tim Fund recently joined forces to help a visually impaired high school student keep up with her studies through a

larges things on the blackboard, slide projectors and textbooks and puts the information directly onto a laptop computer. The lecture notes and texts can thus be stored in an enlarged readable form for studying and preparing for examinations.

During a joint dinner meeting of the Scotch Plains Lions Club and the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Tiny Tim Fund, and Lorraine Chaillet, left, of the Tiny Tim Fund watch as Jaclyn Petrow demonstrates the CCTV system she received through the local organizations' efforts.

While Lions Clubs address a variety of needs in their communities, their particular focus is on helping the blind and visually impaired.

Barbara Anilo, the president of the Scotch Plains Lions Club, also is president of the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Tiny Tim Fund. A non-profit corporation, it operates exclusively for the charitable purpose of providing financial assistance for medically needy

children. One of its biggest fundraisers is caroling during the holiday season.

The two organizations began working together to buy Jaclyn a portable CCTV system. It is equipped with a camera with a zoom lens that en-



SPECIAL BOND...Barbara Anilo, right, president of the Scotch Plains Lions Club and the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Tiny Tim Fund, and Lorraine Chaillet, left, of the Tiny Tim Fund watch as Jaclyn Petrow demonstrates the CCTV system she received through the local organizations' efforts.

There are more than 1.4 million members active in more than 43,000 Lions Clubs worldwide. For more information on the Scotch Plains Lions Club or if interested in attending a meeting, please call Ms. Anilo at (908) 322-4472.

Kean Univ. Receives \$2MM Ruth Horowitz Estate Gift

UNION — Kean University and the Alumni Association received a \$2 million donation from the estate of Ruth Rhoda Socol Horowitz.

Foundation President Doug Nelson said, "Throughout her distinguished life, the late Mrs. Horowitz cherished Kean University. She was always delighted to trumpet everything that her alma mater (then known as Newark Normal School) brought her — a

Pober Inducted Into Business Honor Society

FANWOOD — Scott Joseph Pober, the son of Alan and Celeste Pober of Fanwood, was recently inducted into Beta Gamma Sigma at James Madison University. Scott is pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in accounting.

Beta Gamma Sigma, the honor society for AACSB-accredited business programs, encourages and honors academic achievement in the study of business and personal and professional excellence in the practice of business, according to Michael Busing, faculty advisor.

Potential members are invited based on high scholastic achievement in business subjects. To be eligible for membership in Beta Gamma Sigma, the academic ranking of those being considered must place them in the upper 7 percent of the junior class, upper 10 percent of the senior class or upper 20 percent of the graduating master's class, according to Mr. Busing.



MOTIONSENSORS...Franklin Elementary School students were recently treated to a unique "Poetry in Motion" experience performed by David Zucker from Young Audiences of New Jersey and sponsored by the PTO Cultural Arts Committee. Mr. Zucker brought poems to life using assorted props from an old steamer trunk and combining acting, mime and other humorous theatrics to engage the audience. Poems by Edgar Allan Poe, James Whitcomb Riley and Lewis Carroll were among the works presented. Above, Mr. Zucker performs with props from his trunk of tricks.

THE STUDENT VIEW

The weekly column written by local high school students

Overachieving Students Crack Under Pressures

By KATE MCGEE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Since I began writing for The Westfield Leader, I feel as if the "Student View" has simply been a place for me to vent to the world my frustrations with society, especially regarding college, SATs, etc.

Well, after finishing Alexandra Robbins' "The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids," I feel it is only necessary that I once again voice my opposition to the direction which the American educational system has gone and its effects upon students, their parents and society in general.

On December 15, I, along with a large number of high school seniors who applied to college Early Decision or Early Action, will learn which colleges selected them into their class of 2011.

All have worked diligently for the past four years, taking the toughest AP and honors courses, cramming as many extracurriculars under their belts, taking multiple SAT practice courses, and more, just to receive that one letter of acceptance. In "The Overachievers," Robbins infiltrates the cutthroat educational culture that has taken over American society by following high school students as they slowly crack under the pressures of college applications, sports, extracurriculars, parents and friends.

Robbins addresses the hype which American society has placed upon being accepted into the top colleges in the nation, and through startling statistics and facts questions the future of American society if these methods are to continue.

Today, the ideal student must get straight A's, be a varsity athlete, obtain a leadership position in every club of which he or she is a member, volunteer everywhere, while simultaneously managing a wild social life.

Although these students are accepted to some of the top schools in the nation, Harvard, Stanford, Dartmouth, Penn and Duke, to name a few, the high school years have become four years of torture, producing stressed out, sleep deprived, socially inept teenagers.

Robbins addresses many factors that have contributed to our society's intense focus upon education, namely involving the rising standards of colleges, an increase in students competing for the highest averages and the parents who add pressure upon their children.

Today, there is an insurmountable pressure to attend Ivy League schools and colleges comparable to their reputation. Parents feel the need to begin as early as possible, enrolling their toddlers in private pre-schools with intensive application processes.

Toddlers who are unfocused or shy are usually denied. Yet, honestly, how many toddlers are there who are truly focused on the task at hand? Earlier and earlier, children are losing their childhoods and are being corralled into intensive schooling instead of

enjoying their youth.

When students finally reach high school, they are instantly met with the pressures of high GPA's, honors courses, PSAT's, sports and other extracurriculars. As students reach junior and senior year, they become sleep deprived, functioning solely upon energy drinks like Red Bull to get them through the day.

Robbins reported that while teenagers need an average of nine-and-a-half hours of sleep per night, many get six or fewer. In order to stay awake, these teens begin abusing prescription drugs to remain focused. The ADD medication, Adderall, is considered an "academic steroid."

Robbins reported, "The drugs enhance wakefulness, delay time to fatigue when someone's doing a difficult task and increase ability to stay on things. The drug allows them to learn more."

Students also are so cutthroat to receive A's that they do anything to get 100 percent, even cheat. The atmosphere has become so focused on getting A's that students are less focused on genuinely learning.

While the pressures of colleges, rigorous high school courses and student competition are major factors, parents place a significant amount of pressure on their child to succeed in everything so that they will be accepted into the best college.

"Throughout 'The Overachievers,' many of the students that Robbins interviewed were often annoyed or embarrassed by parents who "name dropped" universities or bragged about their own kid's SAT scores. They constantly complained of parents who ask the infamous questions, "Where are you applying?" "Where are you going to school?" "What are your SAT scores?"

Parents, as well as students, place so much emphasis on the name of a college rather than the education their child will be receiving. Although Robbins calls this book "The Secret Lives of Driven Kids," are these kids really driven for the right reasons? Or are they just driven by their parents who want them to go to a "name brand" college so they can flaunt their intellect to the rest of society?

Although Robbins points out the negative aspects of the college process and how it has affected our society, America's education system does not have to remain in such disarray.

Even Robbins leaves suggestions at the end of her book, advocating for delaying high school start times, dropping class rank, limiting APs and even reinstating recess.

For while the college process is a stressful one, as seniors, we can still be hopeful that we'll end up where we are meant to be, whether it is a reach, target or safety school. Our focus should be finding our own niche in society, rather than beating out our classmates for the top spot. Because in the end, it's all about being happy.

Kate, from Cranford, is a senior at Mount Saint Mary Academy.



PELLET PREPARATION...To play the prey/predator game during their class trip to the Kateri Environmental Center in Wickatuck, third and fifth graders at the Wardlaw-Hartridge School in Edison dissected owl pellets to discover what an owl eats. The students found bones and fur in their pellets. Pictured, above, is Gregory Schwartz of Westfield.