

## Adult School Offers 'Great Decisions' Series

WESTFIELD - The Great Decisions discussion series of the Foreign Policy Association is coming once again to Westfield as part of the course offerings of the Westfield Adult School.

Co-sponsored by the Westfield Memorial Library and the Westfield Area League of Women Voters, it is the oldest and largest grass-roots world affairs educational program in the United States.

The meetings are held Mondays from 7 to 8:45 p.m. at the Westfield Memorial Library, located at 550 East Broad Street. The dates and speakers have been set as follows:

March 5 - "Climate Change," by Robert Kerwin, retired from AT&T Bell Labs. "How much are human practices contributing to substantial and irreversible changes to the environment? What effect are changes to the climate in different areas of the planet? What response can the international community adopt to lessen the impact of dramatic climate change?"

March 12 - "Central Asia," by retired Professor John Frankenstein of Columbia University and the U.S. Foreign Service. "Rich in energy supplies and strategically located, the five countries of Central Asia attract attention from the Middle East, China, Russia and the United States. How will international competition for

### County to Receive Rebate for Energy

ELIZABETH - Freeholder Chairwoman Bette Jane Kowalski announced today Union County has been awarded a \$52,150 rebate from the Board of Public Utilities for its participation in the SmartStart Buildings Program.

The SmartStart Buildings rebate is for lighting improvements at Rumlens Specialized Hospital in Berkeley Heights and the Ralph Orsiccio Correctional Facility in Elizabeth.

Board of Public Utilities Commissioner Joseph Fioraliso will present the check at the regular meeting of the Union County Freeholders on Thursday, February 15 at 7 p.m.

New Jersey SmartStart Buildings is part of a \$27.8 million program sponsored by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities in partnership with New Jersey's gas and electric utilities.



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energy supplies affect each country? What are U.S. interests in the region?"

March 26 - "South Africa" - Professor John Hirsch, Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, former Consul General, Johannesburg; former U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone. "South Africa is the most developed country in Africa and has been an active leader on the continent, yet is still struggling with major issues in the post-Apartheid era. What are the political challenges facing South Africa? What impact is the AIDS epidemic playing on South Africa's economy and society?"

April 16 - "Mexico" - Professor Francisco Perez-Gonzalez, Columbia University Graduate School of Business; former Staff Economist Mexican Council of Economic Advisors. "The results of Mexico's presidential election were nearly too close to call, how will this result affect the new Mexican administration's policies? Can Felipe Calderon successfully reform Mexico's policies on energy, trade and border security and strengthen relations with the United States?"

April 30 - "Children" - Professor Rebecca Davis, Rutgers University Graduate School of Social Work. Study on vulnerable children in Armenia, Bosnia, Azerbaijan, Romania and Russia. "Ensuring the safety and proper development of children is the stated goal of the global community, yet in some countries, children are exposed to unsafe labor practices, human trafficking, and participation in combat. What role do private donors, governments and international organizations play in ensuring health care, education and safety for the world's children?"

May 7 - "Middle East" - Professor S. Azmat Hassan of the Seton Hall University Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations and former Ambassador of Pakistan to Malaysia, Syria and Morocco; Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York; Secretary of Middle East Divisions in Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pakistan. "Although the U.S. will remain closely engaged in Iraq during the next year, other factors have emerged to challenge stability in the region. Iran's nuclear program, the outcome of the conflict in Lebanon, and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations will all play a key role. How will these issues shape the Middle East?"

The topics and dates to be assigned are "War Crimes" and "Migration" on March 19 and April 9.

For information, call (908) 233-1035 or the Westfield Adult School, (908) 232-4050. Visit the websites westfieldnj.com/adultschool, fpa.org and greatdecisions.org.

## Letters to the Editor

### U.S. Donates More Than 1,000 Times Any Country to Aid Tsunami Victims

If you missed it, *Parade Magazine* ran a brief article last Sunday regarding the aid, which was promised to the mostly Muslim countries, which were affected by the tsunami devastation. The following are the results (in \$millions) per U.N. records obtained by the BBC:

China promised \$301 million but gave \$1 million; France promised \$79 million but gave \$1 million; Spain promised \$60 million but gave less than \$1 million; Kuwait promised \$10 million but gave nothing; United States promised \$406 million but gave \$103 million.

Twenty-eight million American individuals gave \$2.78 billion.

Please note that Americans gave almost

1,000 times the amount given by the rest of the world, or at least the countries mentioned in the article. And the gratitude we receive from the people in the Muslim world is a bushel basket full of extreme hatred for our compassion and generosity.

By the way, why aren't these results on the front page of every newspaper in the world as well as major TV stations, especially in America? But that would make us look too good compared to the rest of the world, I suppose; and we can't afford that to happen under the current administration, now can we?

Joe Kistler  
Fanwood

### Publisher's Note on OPRA: Do Taxpayers Really Want to Know?

The Town of Westfield is responsive to requests for public information, and it follows the rules set by the Open Public Records Act (OPRA).

Sometimes this newspaper does not receive everything requested, as exclusions exist in OPRA - such as those dealing with personnel records. Sometimes, there is a difference of opinion as to whether exclusions rightfully apply.

At other times, government bodies ignore or delay responses to OPRA requests. Such is the case with the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education. Last August 2006, an OPRA request was made by this newspaper for a copy of the teachers contract concluded at that time. It is now February 2007 and the request has yet to be complied with.

We routinely call to check on the status, awaiting the latest reason for not complying. Most recently, the head of the teachers' union wrote us that they were not finished with the wording. We believe the teachers union and the BOE should take more serious heed to the OPRA law.

On the legal settlement between 17-year veteran police officer Greg Kasko, the Town of Westfield et al, much of the detail is being held confidential. We have been promised a letter from the town regarding our OPRA request on the matter to advise us what may and may not be provided. The letter has been under review by town attorneys and the response has been delayed. Understandable, the issue is complex.

Public hearings have been held for more than a year now regarding police disciplinary proceedings against Mr. Kasko. All the while, Officer Kasko had lodged a "whistle blower" suit in federal court against the town, town administrator Jim Gildea and former police chief Bernard Tracy.

All that we can report is that a confidential agreement has been reached whereby officer Kasko will "retire" at the end of the year and the town agreed to pay him an undisclosed amount of money and benefits for dropping the federal whistle blower lawsuit.

Does the taxpaying public really want to know what happened and how much it will cost them? If officer Kasko is guilty of something, then what is it? If not, shouldn't he be exonerated? Is there any

## Educator McAneny to Retell Tales of Union's Liberty Hall

WESTFIELD - Liberty Hall Museum educator Neil McAneny will retell tales of ghosts and redcoats with drawn bayonets at the Westfield Historical Society meeting on February 23 at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. McAneny will retell these and tales like them at the meeting, which is open to the public and will take place in the Community Room of Westfield's Municipal Building, located at 425 East Broad Street. After the program, light refreshments will be served.

In addition to receiving a coupon to Liberty Hall Museum, attendees will have the chance to win an 11-inch, scalloped-edged, reproduction blue and white Chinese export porcelain bowl from the museum's gift shop.

Liberty Hall Museum chronicles more than 200 years of New Jersey and U.S. history. It was the home of William Livingston, the first elected governor of New Jersey and a signer of the Constitution. It houses extensive collections of antique furniture, ceramics, textiles, toys and tools owned by seven generations of the Livingston/Kean families.

In 2005, Liberty Hall added the firehouse to the museum's complex. It houses a 1928 American LaFrance Pumper, a 1927 Seagrave Pumper and an extensive display of fire helmets, uniforms, bells, tools, documents and photographs. Liberty

Hall's 23 landscaped acres contain a formal English garden, a fruit orchard and some of the oldest trees in the state.

Liberty Hall Museum is located at 1003 Morris Avenue in Union, directly across from Kean University. It is open to the public Wednesdays through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m., April through December.

For more information about upcoming Liberty Hall events or for reservations, call (908) 527-0400 or visit libertyhallnj.org.

### Bramnick to Be Guest Speaker at Dinner

WESTFIELD - Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (LD-21) will be the guest speaker at the 2007 Annual Dinner of the Westfield YMCA's Black Achievers Program.

The initiative's agenda features a mentoring program that seeks to introduce African American boys and girls to role models and expose them to the many opportunities offered to them by the world around. In its ninth year, the program has approximately 76 students from the Westfield area enrolled this year.

The event, sponsored by the Connell Company, will be held on May 4, at L'Affair in Mountainside.

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