



Y2K BABY...Garwood Mayor Dennis McCarthy poses with resident Victoria Napolitano, 7, the first Garwood baby to be born on New Year's Day in 2000.

Mountainside Schools Rank High in State Test Rankings

By GINA LEVINE-LEVY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE—Mountainside students rank among the top in the state and county in multiple key categories, according to recently released state testing rankings.

Board of Education President John Perrin announced the results at Tuesday night's board meeting.

Among all "I" district schools in the state, the borough ranked number one in fourth-grade math.

Mountainside also ranked first in Union County in multiple categories, including eighth-grade Language Arts Literacy (LAL), eighth-grade Advanced Proficiency (AP) Math, eighth-grade Science and eighth-grade AP Science.

The district ranked in the top 10 percent of the state in more than half of the tested subject areas.

Chief School Administrator (CSA), Richard O'Malley said the results are a "significant accomplishment," not only in county rankings but statewide.

"We are producing some high achieving students," he said. "We want to continue down that path."

As a follow-up to last week's special BOE meeting regarding the CORE Proposals bills which have been proposed in the state legislature, Mr. Perrin said the representatives of Legislative District 21 (LD-21) informed him that the bills were not revisited when the New Jersey Legislature reconvened on Monday.

One bill (S-10/A-4) proposes a countywide "super" superintendent with local veto powers. A second (S-7/A-8) would introduce a pilot program for a countywide administration.

While Mr. Perrin thanked those residents who attended last week's meeting, attended by Republicans Senator Tom Kean, Jr. and Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (both LD-21), he added, "be advised these things don't just go away."

"Mountainside loves its public education system," Mr. Perrin said later in the meeting. He added, "For that (system) to be stripped away" by the proposed legislation would be negative for the district.

The BOE passed several motions, including one which "opposes any attempt to force school districts to consolidate but would support attempts to consolidate purchasing services."

"There's a multitude of ways that we share costs and services," said BOE Vice President MaryBeth Schauberg. "We are an efficient district," she said, adding that Mountainside would be "the first ones to get slapped" if countywide districts are implemented through the state legislature.

The BOE also passed a motion recognizing January as "School Board Recognition Month."

The New Jersey School Boards Association and the National School Boards Association designate this time so that "all residents might acknowledge the contributions made by our local school board members" who volunteer their time.

Mrs. Schauberg said a similar motion was passed last year to "acknowledge our existence."

As part of a larger Secure Our Schools grant given by the Department of Justice, the BOE approved the use of \$2,500 towards allowing the Mountainside Police Department (MPD) remote access to cameras inside Beechwood and Deerfield schools.

The MPD obtained the federal grant in 2005 on behalf of the Mountainside school district.

In other business, the BOE appointed a new eighth-grade science teacher, Amy Lefanto, to replace Wendy Milligan, whose termination is effective February 9.

"We look forward to her arriving and getting started," said Mr. O'Malley. He said Ms. Lefanto comes

Patterson Calls GW Mayor, Borough Council 'Thugs'

By KATHY MARQUES
Specially written for the Westfield Leader

GARWOOD—A night that ended with a resident calling the mayor and borough council "thugs" and "criminals" concerning the timing of a letter sent about St. Anne's School began with an update on the North Avenue Mews project.

Borough Attorney Robert Renaud opened the first council session of the year Tuesday night by stating that he will meet with developers of the Mews next week to go over documents.

"I have been meeting with them bi-monthly, and they have been cooperative in regards to keeping up with needed paperwork," Mr. Renaud said.

In other matters, Councilman Walter Tucker, chairman of the Public Health and Safety Committee, spoke about newly appointed patrolman Officer David Perrotta.

Mr. Tucker noted that the officer is "adjusting well to the department and is on his way to completing his training."

Mr. Tucker spoke about the new Home Safety Inspection Program, which allows residents to have a home-safety evaluation conducted by a member of the police department. The officer would make recommendations on how to make the home safer.

Sergeant Michael Wilson, Police Officer Douglas Stoffer and dispatcher John Drone created the program, Mr. Tucker said. The Garwood PBA (No. 117) also donated high-efficiency light bulbs to seniors in order to alleviate the cost of leaving a conventional light bulb on at night, dispatcher Drone told *The Westfield Leader* Wednesday morning.

"highly recommended."

The BOE said it is waiting to begin negotiations with the Mountainside Education Association (MEA) for a successor contract. The current three-year contract expires June 30.

The MEA negotiates contract terms and conditions on behalf of most district employees.

Mr. Perrin said the BOE is "chomping at the bit" to get started on negotiations, adding that the BOE first notified the MEA in November that discussions should commence.

"We have reached out several times" to the MEA, he said. He encouraged residents to offer their input on negotiations. Residents can reach Mr. O'Malley at (908) 232-3232 or e-mail romalley@mountainside.schools.org.

The next BOE meeting is Tuesday, January 23, at 7:30 p.m. at the Beechwood School Media Center.

Metal Detectors Considered For Mountainside Court

By JESSICA E. JASKULA
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE—The borough council on Tuesday night will officially appoint Jill Goode as chief finance officer effective January 1 and Dianne Marus as part-time supervisor of accounts effective February 1. Both employees will work in the borough's finance department.

In other news at Tuesday's agenda session, the mayor and council received a request from Recreation Director Frank Masella to honor Mountainside players who received the Inter-County Youth Soccer League's "Keep it Positive" Good Sportsmanship Award. These players include Mountainside residents Nicholas Gordin, Lee Sport, Kimberly Osjea and non-resident Max Menaker.

Also received was a raffle application for an on premise 50/50 draw raffle from the Center for Hope Hospice & Palliative Care.

The governing body will renew a contract for health services with the Westfield Regional Board of Health in the amount of \$32,334, an increase of \$708 over last year.

Late 2006 municipal budget transfers were announced in the amount of \$12,878, dating from the last council meeting to December 31, 2006. In an amendment to the 2007 temporary budget, \$900 will go towards the salary of the public defender, \$250 towards zoning and \$8,000 towards other insurance.

As recommended by the State Supreme Court, the mayor and council discussed the need for two metal detectors in the municipal building. The metal detectors would primarily be used on municipal court days, Thursday mornings at 9 a.m. and the last Wednesday of every month at 5 p.m. Signs would be posted warning those entering that they may be subjected to a full search. Each metal detector would cost \$3,000 and would be the same as machines used in the county courthouse.

Another bond ordinance, not to exceed \$3,000,000, will be introduced for the costs of various road improvements in the borough.

Mayor Vigilanti made a proclamation making March 2007 "Youth Art Month."

Detective Chambers Lawsuit

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"Are you aware of that?" Mr. Abdallah asked. "She wouldn't comply, she wouldn't submit."

"That's absurd," Mr. Tracy responded at that time.

The detective also charged that another detective, Lisa Perrotta (who testified in Detective Chambers' disciplinary hearing), had a summons improperly voided, but did not face departmental charges as Detective Chambers did. She al-

leged that former parking services director John Morgan and special officer Jonathan Pierce both "failed to follow procedure," but were not disciplined or terminated, respectively.

"In late 2005, in a further attempt to portray Detective Chambers in a negative light, Chief Tracy falsely stated to others that Detective Chambers was a lesbian," the lawsuit alleges.

Detective Chambers seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages, counsel fees and court costs, in addition to a trial by jury.

Town Administrator Jim Gildea said although Detective Chambers had previously "threatened" to file legal action against the town, this is the first lawsuit she has filed in court.

"It's been turned over to our insurance (representative) to determine eligibility for coverage," he said, noting that Westfield is a member of the Suburban Municipal Joint Insurance Fund, which would review the case and assign an attorney.

Detective Chambers deferred all comments to her attorney, Eric Pennington of Newark. Mr. Pennington was unavailable when contacted for comment on Friday and Tuesday.

Resident Bruce Paterson, during public comment, said he had heard from several residents that they were "threatened" by council members if they didn't remove his election sign from their lawns. Mr. Paterson lost to Mayor Dennis McCarthy in November.

Mr. Paterson also said he heard from someone that a butcher shop owner was told by a government official to not circulate his "TREE" newsletter.

While speaking at the podium, Mayor McCarthy's wife, Debbie, addressed Mr. Paterson, saying that she used to go to the butcher shop, but did not any longer. She denied telling anyone not to distribute his newsletter.

"I don't tell anyone who to vote for," she said. "I don't tell anyone where to shop. I chose to stop shopping there for personal reasons; it had nothing to do with politics. It's my personal choice to shop where I want, and had nothing to do with the election."

Mr. Paterson also questioned the mayor on sending a letter out to constituents a few weeks before election time about residents' concerns regarding James Ward and the St. Anne's School proposal.

He said, "You (Mayor McCarthy) sent the letter out on government (council) letterhead, but it read like it was all about you, that you were the one who was going to try to address the concerns of the residents. I am concerned with the timing of the letter—weeks before the election—and don't agree with your tactics."

Mr. Paterson called the mayor and council "thugs" and "criminals," adding, "New Jersey is the laughingstock of the country, and there are problems that need to be fixed that aren't."

The mayor responded that the timing of the letter had nothing to do with the election.

"I would've sent the letter to the residents in September or October," he responded. "I was letting the residents know that I am aware of their concerns. It's not my fault (that) the timing of the Mews development and issues (were) around election time. I had nothing to do with that."

In other news, Mr. Tucker, chairman of the library committee, spoke about Toddler Story Time, which is being held by the Garwood Free Public Library on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. It began yesterday and will run for eight weeks. He also spoke about how circulation increased.

"It was 11,267 for 2006, exceeding the goal of 10,000. This figure was reached with just eight months of actual operation of the library," he said.

Councilman Charles Lombardo, chairman of the streets and roads committee, said the Department of Public Works would collect Christmas trees every Wednesday during the month of January.

Mr. Tucker mentioned that former resident Tom Perotta and his movie *Little Children* has been nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture-Drama.

Mr. Perotta is the author of "Little Children," "Joe College," "Election," "The Wishbones" and "Bad Haircut." The finance committee will meet next month to work on the 2007 budget, said re-appointed Councilwoman Kathleen Villaggio, chairwoman of the finance committee.

In other business, Mr. Paterson, a member of the celebrations committee, mentioned the winners of the Holiday House decorating contest. First place went to 249 Fourth Avenue, second place to 315 Hickory Avenue, third place to 205 Third Avenue and an honorable mention to 231 Spruce Avenue.

WF Council

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was normally never open in the winter. It would close during January, February and March, and open full time between Thursdays and Sundays in April.

Starting last year, the center remained open for a few days each month to provide an opportunity to dispose of trees. "Last week, with the warm weather and people wanting to get rid of trees, we had a banner day at the conservation center and a banner day with trees around the gate and still trees in Tamaques Park," he said.

Because higher temperatures are expected for this weekend, he said the town would open the conservation center on Saturday, January 13, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., in addition to its scheduled opening for January 20.

The facility will also be open on two Saturdays in both February and March and will open for a full season on April 6.

Thefts

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extent of the law," he said. "As a Catholic, my prayer is that the individuals involved in this assault on our community of faith come to understand the hurtfulness of these actions, find forgiveness and find the help, grace or path to be at personal peace."

"On the eve of Dr. King's celebration," he added, "we are reminded that each of us is a partner in the fight against prejudice."

POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Sunday, December 31, after being arrested on a shoplifting charge at a North Avenue store, Rowland Adeyemo, 22, of Scotch Plains was held on open warrants from Newark, for \$300, and Belmar, for \$800, until he posted bail.

Sunday, December 31, Pete Septynski, 45, of Westfield was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated after being stopped for a motor vehicle violation at West Broad Street and Rahway Avenue. He later was released to a responsible individual.

Tuesday, January 2, a general contractor renovating a residence on the 60 block of Nomahegan Drive reported the theft of several pieces of equipment from the premises, including a table saw, a hammer drill, a compound miter saw and a circular saw. The total value of the missing property is \$1,077. There were no signs of forced entry into the residence.

Tuesday, January 2, a resident of the 10 block of Tudor Oval reported the theft of two iPods from within her home. The missing property is valued at \$300. There were no signs of forced entry into the residence.

Wednesday, January 3, Daniel Campos, 21, of Roselle was arrested at South Avenue/Crossway Place on two outstanding motor vehicle warrants issued by Watching. He was released after posting a total of \$380 bail.

Thursday, January 4, a resident of the 400 block of Highland Avenue reported that someone damaged his garage by attempting to set it on fire.

Thursday, January 4, a resident of the 700 block of Austin Street reported the theft of a Nokia camera and a Motorola cellular telephone from the pocket of a jacket left unattended during a school choral concert. The missing property is valued at approximately \$550.

Saturday, January 6, Gary A. Healey, 41, of Westfield was arrested on Mountain Avenue on an outstanding criminal warrant issued by Garwood. He was released after posting \$560 cash bail.

Sunday, January 7, Hagen A. Lewis, 37, of Plainfield posted \$100 bail at Westfield police headquarters on a traffic warrant issued by the Westfield Municipal Court.

Scotch Plains

Thursday, January 4, a student at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School reported the theft of her iPod from her locker.

Friday, January 5, a resident of Fanwood reported that, while she was at her gym, her cellular telephone was re-

moved from her locker. The value of the telephone was \$235.

Saturday, January 6, a student at the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools reported the theft of his book bag from his locker. The bag contained several hundred dollars in cash, police said.

Saturday, January 6, one or more unidentified individuals sprayed graffiti on a building on Route 22. The damage was valued at approximately \$150.

Sunday, January 7, a resident of Country Club Lane reported being the victim of criminal mischief. According to police, the tires on his motor vehicle were slashed while the vehicle was parked in the driveway. The tires were valued at approximately \$200, police said.

Fanwood

Wednesday, January 3, Erika K. McFarlane, 34, of Cranford was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue, which revealed an outstanding Clifton warrant. She posted bail and was released.

Friday, January 5, Preston I. Fulford, 34, of Stewartville was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on North Avenue on outstanding warrants out of Trenton and Stewartville. While being taken into custody, the suspect allegedly resisted arrest and assaulted two police officers, police said. He subsequently was charged with two counts of assault and resisting arrest. Bail was set at \$40,000.

Friday, January 5, Efrain Mendoza, 32, of Elizabeth was arrested following a field investigation on an outstanding New Brunswick warrant. According to police, the suspect also was linked to a hit-and-run accident. The suspect posted bail and was released.

Tuesday, January 9, Claudia Morales-Morin, 28, of Union was arrested on an outstanding Westfield warrant following a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road. She posted bail and was released, police said.

Tuesday, January 9, Jose O. Cintron, 24, of Newark was arrested on an outstanding Newark warrant after a motor vehicle stop on Martine Avenue. He also was charged with providing police with false information, authorities said. Cintron posted the \$500 bail and was released, police said.

Wednesday, January 10, Melody C. Mendez, 21, of Linden was taken into police headquarters on suspicion of driving while intoxicated after a motor vehicle stop. She subsequently was charged with careless driving, police said. She was released to a responsible adult.

Westfield School Bond

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Ms. Korecky said centralizing kindergarten classes is "not a revolutionary idea."

Pointing to other communities that have adopted the early childhood learning center model, she said, "Summit, for example, is in the process of establishing centralized kindergartens to free up space for elementary classrooms and also because it has been found to be a good educational program to have all kindergartens under one roof, with teachers able to collaborate and share resources."

"We visited such a center in Berkeley Heights several weeks ago," she said. She also mentioned Marlboro and Springfield—two other communities that have centralized kindergartens.

Opponents say that redistricting students at Edison and Roosevelt Intermediate Schools could solve the problem of school overcrowding at Roosevelt.

In a letter to *The Leader* published January 4, resident Julie Tarr asks, "Are we making our kindergartners bear the burden and disruption of redistricting instead of taking more practical steps to alleviate overcrowding at Roosevelt Intermediate School by redistricting this age group?"

Ms. Korecky said, "We can't redistrict until we get the kindergartners out of Edison," but added that Westfield public schools already have plans for involuntary redistricting in 2008 if voluntary plans do not work.

Independent of the bond, the Citizens Advisory Committee on Enrollment (CACE) suggested two methods to encourage involuntary redistricting.

The first plan became instituted in September 2006 and affects bussing. Currently, all students between elementary and eighth grades can be bussed to schools if their homes are at least two miles away. At Roosevelt, some students entering sixth grade who fit that eligibility were not offered bussing; however, the district did tender bussing to Edison.

A second plan to take effect in September 2007 would offer Magnet-like classes at Edison, including two sessions of Technology/Robotics. Mandarin Chinese has been dropped because of a lack of interest.

"If the magnet program does not work, then redistricting from Roosevelt to Edison will take place regardless of the bond (outcome)," Ms. Korecky said.

Mr. Foley said, "There's a substantial imbalance in enrollment (between the two schools)...Next year, the entering sixth grade for Roosevelt will be 280 kids (average class size of 28). Edison will have 230 (average class size of 23).

In a letter to the editor published on December 21 ("Math In Westfield School Bond Debate; Reader Asks for One Good Reason"), Westfield resident Ken Sumner asked, "Why spend \$3 million to solve the problem the school has now (overcrowding), before it is redistricted (presumably to the correct capacity)?"

"The bond will move pre-school handicapped children out of Edison," Mr. Foley said. "If passed, they will be out of Edison, and that means there's plenty of capacity. That's why we don't need to add classrooms (at Roosevelt). We're proposing renovations for Roosevelt. Under current capacity, there is sufficient space at Edison."

The bond proposal would funnel \$3.2 million to Roosevelt Intermediate School renovations. A presentation posted to the Westfield Public Schools website states that Roosevelt's main building is 80 years old, and the facility needs updated corridors and stairwells, its breezeway enclosed for security's sake and a larger cafeteria.

"A small cafeteria at Roosevelt (700 square feet smaller than Edison) limits lunch to less than 20 minutes," according to the presentation. Furthermore, the presentation says the "small library at Roosevelt (below state standards) can only accommodate one class at a time." Thus, bond money would also be used to expand the school's library.

The smallest expenditure in the bond proposal is \$200,000 to update windows at Edison Intermediate School, which is located on Westfield's south side, to energy-efficient modern windows. The comparatively small expenditure has prompted some bond critics to ask why Westfield's south side parents should support the bond.

According to the school officials, the bond debt would mean that Westfield property taxes would increase approximately \$80 on homes assessed at \$200,000. Mr. Foley said it would cost homeowners about "four cents per \$100 of assessed home value."

Judy Hoffman, who lives on Westfield's south side and who is also president of the Westfield Parent-Teacher Council said, "As a community, we have to stand together and make sure all the schools are well-maintained. It's one community."

Multiple known individuals have submitted concerns about the bond proposal, and though they did not wish to be named for this story, they have allowed their comments to be posted anonymously on *The Leader* website at goleader.com/thebuzz.

Michael Pollack contributed to this story.



NEW TERM...Assemblyman Neil Cohen (LD-20, Roselle) swears in Union County Freeholder Al Mirabella of Fanwood for his fourth term on the county freeholder board at the freeholders' reorganization meeting on Sunday.

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