

Watts Foundation Gives Mountainside Community Bus

By GINA LEVINE-LEVY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — Mayor Robert Vigilanti accepted the keys to the borough's new "community bus" in front of a packed house at Tuesday night's borough council meeting.

The handicapped-accessible bus is the "first of many benefits" donated by the Watts Mountainside Community Foundation, according to the mayor.

The foundation began with an endowment left by long-time borough residents, Blanche and George Watts. "In their hearts, Mountainside was their child," Mayor Vigilanti said. He said the vehicle would aide borough residents confined to a wheelchair.

In other business, the council passed multiple resolutions, including one to purchase a 2007 Dodge Durango police vehicle for \$20,569. The sport utility vehicle (SUV) will replace a retired police cruiser.

Another resolution authorized a \$15,000 agreement with Garden State Fireworks for the July 4 fireworks.

The borough will pay half of that amount. The borough Fire Company and Police Athletic League (PAL) will each pay one-fourth of the cost.

The governing body approved a resolution to appoint Councilman Robert Messler as representative to the Union County Transportation Advisory Board.

Another resolution awarded the contract for the "installation of lights at Deerfield (School) baseball field" to Quality Electrical Construction Company in West Keansburg for \$107,425.

The council also adopted three ordinances. The first issues \$180,000 to resurface the final section of Central Avenue. The state Department of Transportation (DOT) will match that amount through a grant.

"This will make 100 percent of Central Avenue complete," the mayor said, adding the project was done in five increments to allow for grant funding.

The second ordinance appropriated funds for the aforementioned police vehicle.

The third ordinance amends "types of vital statistics records" available at a cost of \$15 per record. The ordinance adds the category of "domestic partnership."

The council introduced a bond ordinance that would "authorize improvements to recreation facilities and purchase of recreation equipment" in the amount of \$127,500.

The council recognized multiple residents at Tuesday's meeting.

A resolution of commendation recognized Brian Kinney and Jo Vargo for their "commitment and dedication" to the Cub Scouts. Mr. Kinney is a former den leader and cubmaster since 1999. Ms. Vargo has been a den leader since 1999 and community chairman since 2001.

Ms. Vargo said, "Just the little thanks I get from a scout here and there is the reason why I do it."

Mr. Kinney thanked the scouts' parents, saying the organization "wouldn't work" without them.

Two residents received the Mabel Young Good Neighbor Award. Award recipient Mary Greeley was recognized for her nearly 20-year commitment to the Girl Scouts, for which she serves as town coordinator.

The mother of five was also acknowledged for organizing educational events in Mountainside and singing at the borough's annual tree-lighting ceremony.

Ted Weeks, a resident of 50 years, received the award for years of community service, including his position on the family selection committee for Habitat for Humanity.

Mr. Weeks has also served as county committee representative; co-chairman of the Parent-Teacher Association fair, a driver for the community's elderly and a member of the borough's Centennial Celebration committee.

Both recipients' names have been added to a placard that hangs in borough hall. This is the 25th year the award has been given.

Mayor Vigilanti acknowledged the full house at the meeting, saying, "What you've been seeing this evening is exactly what makes Mountainside Mountainside."

The council holds meetings the second and third Tuesdays of each month at 8 p.m. in borough hall.



BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS...Last Tuesday, Mayor Andy Skibitsky honors the Westfield/Mountainside Chapter of the American Red Cross for 90 years of service. Pictured with the mayor is Maureen Kaufman, executive director of the Westfield/Mountainside Chapter. The Red Cross will hold a blood drive at its Elm Street location on Wednesday, April 4, from 3 to 8 p.m.

Garwood BOE Silent On Size of Tax Increase

By KATHY MARQUES
Specially written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — The board of education did not discuss its 2007-2008 budget at Tuesday night's meeting, but at last week's council meeting, Councilwoman Kathleen Villaggio, council liaison to the school board, spoke with *The Westfield Leader* about it.

"The board is requesting an adjustment to the base tax levy in the amount of \$120,000 for increases in special-education costs over \$40,000 per student; and \$242,250 for increases in tuition for our send/receive relationship (with the Clark Board of Education for Arthur L. Johnson High School). The proposed budget represents a 38-point tax increase. On a house assessed at \$100,000, it amounts to an increase of \$188 for the remainder of 2007 and \$188 for the first six months of 2008, totaling \$376 for the entire fiscal budgeting school year."

A tax point equals \$18,200 in Garwood, for a total proposed school tax increase of \$691,600.

At Tuesday's meeting, BOE member Gary Maher spoke about a recommendation in which the BOE would use store mats, valued at \$1,575, owned by the borough. The mats would be placed on the gym walls to protect students; recreational committees could also use them.

Since the borough owns the mats and the BOE would be able to use and store them, board members questioned who would pay for the mats' wear and tear or damage. They agreed they need further clarification before voting on the recommendation.

Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC) liaison Linda Koenig said, "Hillcrest Academy will not be relocating to St. Anne in Garwood. Instead, Hillcrest will be going to 571 Lamberts Mill Road in Westfield. That building can hold at least 400 students."

The school will be shared with UCESC's Westlake School and Beadlestown High School. Real estate developer James Ward has purchased St. Anne's School and had considered leasing it to a government agency, but now wants to build age-restricted housing on the property.

The Parent and Teachers Association (PTA) will hold a clothing drive on Saturday, March 31.

An eighth-grade class trip to Gettysburg, Lancaster and Philadelphia, Pa., will be held May 31 to June 1.

The March 2 "Read Across America" day, sponsored by the National Education Association, was well received, Superintendent of Schools William Murphy said.

"Students and teachers enjoyed reading throughout the day. I was even dressed as Dr. Seuss, and nu-

Nat'l Newspaper Website Quotes Leader Reporter

SCOTCH PLAINS — *USA Today's* "On Deadline" weblog quoted *Westfield Leader* and *Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* reporter Nordette Adams on March 19 regarding a video that has sparked national political debate.

Under breaking news, the paper's website referred to Ms. Adams's "Confessions of a Jersey Goddess" weblog post about the renegade political Internet video ad at YouTube.com called "Hillary 1984."

The video appears to promote Presidential candidate Barack Obama, bashes Hillary Clinton and has received more than 350,000 views since being posted in early March. Its creator remains anonymous.

"I was surprised to be quoted with two experts," said Ms. Adams. "I think of myself as a highly opinionated writer, which is why I blog."

The YouTube video alters Apple computer's 1984 famous Super Bowl commercial and paints Hillary Clinton as a Big Brother-type figure from George Orwell's novel "1984." It ends with an advertisement for Mr. Obama's website. Mr. Obama's campaign denies any connection to the video.

Ms. Adams said she believes *USA Today* quoted her post because she was one of few bloggers early on who explained why she didn't think Obama supporters produced the unofficial political ad, and she backed up her thoughts with references. Mega-technology websites like CNET.com and iTwire.com also quoted the reporter because her post discussed how the Internet impacts political messaging.

Read Ms. Adams's weblog at jerseygoddess.blogspot.com.

merous students and even teachers were stunned," he said.

Education Foundation of Garwood liaison Lisa Marano said a staff appreciation dinner/dance would be held on April 26 at The Westwood on North Avenue. The foundation will award former Garwood resident and Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police Joseph "Rick" Fuentes with a "People Making a Difference" award. Tickets are \$40. For more information, call (908) 789-0331, ext. 1450.

Westfield Town Council

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

doesn't need to have increases that are commensurate with full-time non-aligned town employees."

Mr. Haas told *The Leader*, "I don't think that an industry would treat professional that way. We should look at them and see if a raise is appropriate. To just automatically give them what we're giving the non-aligned people just doesn't make sense to me."

In other business, Town Administrator Jim Gildea said his Scotch Plains counterpart, Township Manager Tom Atkins, has "requested separately for potential lease of space at our conservation center to perform half of their gumball program in the spring and their leaf program in the fall." The township's interest in the Lamberts Mill Road site arose after Scotch Plains lost the use of Jerseyland Park. Scotch Plains has set a mid-April deadline to move forward with the plan.

Mr. Gildea noted that Westfield has space to accommodate the request.

Mayor Andy Skibitsky said, "They haven't gotten back to us on the hold-harmless agreement for their citizens using the conservation center...I don't think we should spend much time on that until they agree to that concept. If they do, then we give it to the public works committee for an evaluation. We'd be remiss if we didn't at least look into a shared-services program."

Mr. Caruana, the liaison to the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC), relayed a "very strong opinion" made by resident and business owner Joe Spector at Monday's DWC meeting.

Jury Finds Plf. Man Guilty Of Eluding WF, MS Police

AREA — A 62-year-old Plainfield man faces up to 30 years in prison after a jury found him guilty last Wednesday of eluding the police, possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose, two counts of aggravated assault and two counts of simple assault.

The jury returned the verdict on March 13 against Adewale Idowu of Plainfield after a four-day trial in State Superior Court Judge James Heimlich's courtroom at the Union County Courthouse in which Idowu refused the assistance of counsel and represented himself at trial, according to the Union County Prosecutor's Office.

The West Front Street resident led police on a chase that started and ended in Westfield on January 27, 2006.

According to Union County assistant prosecutor Jillian Reyes, who tried the case, Westfield police officer Jason Rodger was on patrol at about 1 p.m. at the intersection of West South Avenue and Crossway Place in Westfield when he witnessed a brown Mercedes-Benz narrowly avoid causing an accident. Rodger followed the car as it abruptly turned right onto Crossway Place and continued following the car as the driver ran a series of red lights and stop signs.

"Officer Rodger activated his lights and siren and attempted to get the driver to pull over," Ms. Reyes said. "Mr. Idowu, who was driving the car, refused to stop and continued toward Scotch Plains. Along the way he narrowly missed a Fed-Ex truck at the intersection of Crestwood and Morse Avenue after running another stop sign."

According to the prosecutor's office, Officer Rodger continued the pursuit and saw Idowu driving down the middle of Ascot Road at over 50 miles per hour and heading north until, after more turns and missed stop signs, he drove down the wrong side of Westfield Road, nearly colliding with oncoming traffic.

The race down Westfield Road continued past the Brunner Elementary School, where Idowu again crossed the double yellow lines and drove on the wrong side of the road, forcing oncoming traffic onto the shoulder, authorities said.

Ms. Reyes said Officer Rodger

POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Monday, March 12, Craig A. Coulter, 19, of Berkeley Heights was arrested at Westfield police headquarters on a traffic warrant issued by the Berkeley Heights Municipal Court. He was released after posting \$275 bail.

Monday, March 12, Damon Ross, 34, of Roselle was arrested at the Plainfield Police Department on three traffic warrants issued by the Westfield Municipal Court, with a total of \$530 bail, which he posted. Ross also posted \$50 bail on a traffic warrant issued by the Cranford Municipal Court. He was released after posting all bail.

Monday, March 12, after conducting a random license plate check, William Ravaoli, 3rd, 29, of Mountainside was arrested at Mountain and Kimball Avenues on three contempt-of-court traffic warrants from Westfield. He was released after posting a total of \$165 bail.

Tuesday, March 13, Ryan D. Loughman, 30, of Wall was arrested at Westfield police headquarters for alleged violation of a restraining order, terroristic threats and public communication of obscenity. He later was released on \$450 cash bail.

Tuesday, March 13, Kimberly Sorrentino, 45, of Westfield was arrested at Westfield police headquarters on an outstanding traffic warrant issued by North Plainfield. She was released after posting \$750 bail.

Wednesday, March 14, Ricardo G. Porras, 24, of Elizabeth was arrested at Elizabeth police headquarters on a contempt-of-court traffic warrant that was issued by the Westfield Municipal Court. Porras was transported to Westfield police headquarters, processed and held on \$500 bail.

He also was processed on another contempt-of-court traffic warrant issued by the Newark Municipal Court and held on an additional \$500 bail. Porras was committed

to the Union County jail on default of bail.

Wednesday, March 14, Jerold W. Ireland, Jr., 18, of Scotch Plains was arrested during a motor vehicle stop at South Avenue and Crossway Place for contempt of court on a traffic warrant issued by East Windsor. He was released after posting \$394 bail.

Thursday, March 15, Tyfees Hamler, 21, of Newark was arrested on the 400 block of East Broad Street on a no-bail warrant issued by State Superior Court and on a \$500 Newark traffic warrant. He was committed on default of bail to the Union County jail.

Friday, March 16, George Pacheco, 55, of Manasquan was arrested at Westfield police headquarters on a contempt of court warrant issued by Ocean Township. He was being held in lieu of \$500 bail.

Friday, March 16, Anthony Mazzilli, 18, of Mountainside was arrested on an active traffic warrant issued by Mountainside during a motor vehicle stop at South Avenue and Elmer Street. He was released after posting \$650 bail.

Friday, March 16, Callie Meserole, 18, of Westfield was arrested and charged with shoplifting at a business in the 600 block of North Avenue, West. She was released on her own recognizance.

Friday, March 16, Joseph Kabutu, 32, of Fords was arrested at the Somerset County jail on an active Westfield traffic warrant. He was held in lieu of \$250 bail.

Saturday, March 17, an eatery on the 1100 block of West South Avenue was forcibly entered during the overnight hours, police said. Entry was gained through the front door, which was locked at the time the incident occurred, police said. Approximately \$2,000 was reported missing.

Sunday, March 18, Brian Dempsey, 27, of Plainfield was arrested at South Avenue and Boulevard for allegedly driving while intoxicated. He was released to a responsible individual.

Mountainside

Tuesday, March 13, Warren L. Toney, 41, of Newark was arrested at the Monmouth County jail for an outstanding warrant in the amount of \$999.

Wednesday, March 14, Mario L. Rosa, 36, of Wayne was arrested by the New Jersey State Police on an outstanding Mountainside warrant. He was also charged with outstanding warrants out of Morristown and Bernardsville.

Thursday, March 15, Jeffrey M. Padovano, 29, of Springfield was arrested after a motor vehicle stop for speeding and charged with driving with a suspended license.

Thursday, March 15, a resident of Friar Lane reported that someone obtained her credit card information and paid college tuition with it. Police said it is unknown how the card information was obtained.

Saturday, March 17, Natasha C. McCall, 26, of Irvington was arrested following a motor vehicle stop for a loud muffler and charged with driving with a suspended license. She was also charged with an active warrant out of Maplewood in the amount of \$229.

Monday, March 19, Greg L. Rollins, 44, of Plainfield was arrested after a motor vehicle stop for failure to maintain a lane, which revealed he was driving with a suspended license.

Scotch Plains

Monday, March 12, Preston McCloud, 22, of Roselle was arrested for theft after he left a Route 22 gas station without paying. According to police, the attendant was able to identify the vehicle and McCloud was later apprehended.

Tuesday, March 13, a resident of Westfield Avenue reported someone entered his vehicle and removed his briefcase.

Wednesday, March 14, a Plainfield Avenue business owner reported that someone damaged his vehicle while it was parked in his driveway.

Thursday, March 15, a resident of Union Avenue reported that someone broke the rear wiper off his vehicle while it was parked in the driveway.

Friday, March 16, a Manitoway Way resident reported that he made a purchase on eBay using his credit card. According to police, when the victim went to pick up the item, there was a lien on it and he was unable to take it. The seller fraudulently represented the item he was selling, which was valued at \$4,000, police said.

Friday, March 16, a driver traveling on Route 22 reported that another driver cut him off and proceeded to get out of his vehicle and throw a brick at the victim's windshield, causing damage. It is unknown why the suspect caused the damage, police said.

Fanwood

Tuesday, March 13, Kamil S. Matthews, 21, of Orange was arrested for an outstanding Mountainside warrant after a motor vehicle stop on North Avenue.

Wednesday, March 14, Carla Harris, 36, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with shoplifting at a South Avenue grocery store. According to police, a store employee notified authorities when the suspect was seen leaving the store with \$100 worth of shrimp without paying. Harris fled in a vehicle, but was later apprehended, police said.

Wednesday, March 14, Veronica K. Asuta, 28, of Franklin Park was arrested for an outstanding Greenbrook warrant after a motor vehicle stop.

Thursday, March 15, Robert M. Jacob, 39, of Montague was arrested on Terrill Road for outstanding warrants out of Newton after a field investigation.

Residents Report Property Damage

By SUZETTE F. STALKER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — More than half a dozen incidents of property damage were reported to police on March 17, involving homes on Boulevard and Summit Avenue in Westfield.

Sergeant Scott Rodger of the Westfield Police Department confirmed to *The Westfield Leader* Tuesday that six of the incidents took place in the 600 block of Boulevard, while one was reported on the 600 block of Summit Avenue.

All of the incidents of apparent criminal mischief occurred during the overnight hours and were reported to police between 8:45 and 9:25 a.m. last Saturday, Sgt. Rodger said.

Homeowners on Boulevard reported damage to a mailbox, the glass to a rear storm door, two porch lights and multiple light poles. In the incident on Summit Avenue, the homeowner reported a ladder to a swing set located in the rear yard of his property was damaged.

WF Divers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in Clark and remains active on its board.

Westfield Mayor Andy Skibitsky described the events as a "tragic accident." He said, "three young men lost their lives. Our hearts and prayers go out to their families. Westfield residents will be there to help them get through the difficult times ahead."

The wake for Mr. Walsweer will be held at Higgins and Bonner Echo Lake Funeral Home, located at 582 Springfield Avenue in Westfield, today, March 22, from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. The Memorial Mass for him will be held tomorrow, March 23, at 10 a.m. at St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church on North Avenue in Garwood. Burial will be at Fairview Cemetery in Westfield.

Visitation for Mr. Stanley will be held tomorrow at Higgins & Bonner from 7 to 9 p.m. A service will be held at the funeral home on Saturday at 10 a.m., with the burial following at 11:15 a.m. at Fairview Cemetery.



A GOOD NEIGHBOR...Mabel Young Good Neighbor Award recipient Mary Greeley celebrates with Mayor Robert Vigilanti, right, husband Robert, left, and children, MaryCate and Robert.

DWC Board Meeting

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The board also approved a maximum signage grant for Rita's Italian Ice, which will be located at 107 Quimby Street. The storefront will have a sandblasted sign and canvas retractable awning.

The grant will cover a portion of the \$6,500 cost. Blair Delmonico, the former tenant of that location, had received approval for a façade grant that was never used.

The third façade grant was for Gaucho's Brazilian Grill. The restaurant, to open at 615 South Avenue West, is "making a sizeable investment," Mrs. Cronin said.

Plans, estimated to cost about \$15,000, include new doors, signs, an awning and a replacement window.

Mr. Verdic said the larger grant for improvements should go to the property owner, rather than the tenant, because some changes are permanent.

Town Council liaison Sal Caruana suggested capping grants to prevent property owners from requesting matching grants.

Mr. Spector said future tenants should not be "precluded from taking that kind of grant." Mr. Spector said this property came with multiple "negatives" because of its size and the amount of work needed.

Mrs. Cronin announced Lucky Brand Jeans would open at 254 East Broad Street, the former location of Haagen Dazs and The Town Book

Store.

In other business, the executive director said a new image campaign will "put a real focus on retail" in town. The slogan includes the catchphrase "service, style and so much more." The campaign ad features an image of a businesswoman holding a coffee cup and walking downtown.

Mrs. Cronin said design plans are progressing for streetscape development on South Avenue. The DWC will apply for a state grant to cover part of the cost.

Mr. Caruana said the DWC would have to lay out "phase two" of the South Avenue project to see "how it fits the town's timeline."

During open discussion by citizens, WeCare member Jacqueline Brevard said she "commends" the DWC's effort to improve South Avenue.

Mr. Gildea said the town is streamlining the permit-parking process by "merging" lists of permit holders from all lots. He said one list would help "better" manage the parking situation.

Mr. Gildea said 22 open permit spots were recently filled, but that there is a four-year waiting list.

Mr. Spector asked Mr. Gildea if a sewer-replacement plan is being developed for downtown. The town administrator said "it is in the works," but it is slow going because of phase planning required by the state.