



RECOGNIZED FOR SERVICE...Rep. Mike Ferguson presents Neha Limaye of Westfield with the Congressional Award Bronze Medal during a ceremony in his Warren congressional office.

## Westfield Student Presented With Congressional Medal

WESTFIELD - Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-7th), presented Neha Limaye of Westfield with a Congressional Youth Service Award in recognition of her extensive volunteer activities throughout Union County.

Mr. Ferguson presented Neha, 17, with the Congressional Award Bronze Medal, Congress' highest honor for youth service. To earn the award, young people must set and achieve personally challenging goals in public service, personal development and physical fitness.

Neha is a senior at Westfield High School and the daughter of Anjali and Pradeep Limaye.

"Neha is a sharp and dedicated young person who is deserving of this honor," Mr. Ferguson said. "She sets a positive example for other young

people, and I'm proud of Neha and impressed by her accomplishments."

"This award is my biggest achievement to date, having spent more than two and a half years working toward it," Neha said after receiving the award. "The process of earning the award has helped me become more mature and has taught me to strive for goals that I once thought were unreachable."

To earn the award, Neha accumulated more than 150 hours of community service at Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside and worked at a Westfield pediatrician's office greeting patients and giving eyesight and hearing tests. Additionally, she worked at the Westfield Adult School, making phone calls to students and entering registrations.



A DEAR OLD IRISH MELODY...The Entertainment Department of the Woman's Club of Westfield practices for a St. Patrick's Day sing-along, which was held at the Masonic Lodge in Westfield. The singing will ring out following a general club meeting during the social segment that includes tea and sandwiches. For more information, contact Woman's Club of Westfield, P.O. Box 2428, Westfield, NJ 07091.

See it all on the web in color...  
[www.goleader.com](http://www.goleader.com)

## THE STUDENT VIEW

The weekly column written by local high school students

### What Turns Young Voters Away From the Booths?

By KATE MCGEE

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

With talk of the 2008 Presidential election already filling our news, it is hard to not think about who to vote for in the next election. Who can salvage the war in Iraq? Who can unify partisan divisions across the country?

As one who will be able to vote for the first time in 2008, this question is on my mind every time I read the newspaper and flip on the news. Although no one particularly attracts my eye at the moment, we still have a year and much can change.

Yet one thing that increasingly worries me as a young voter is the lack of participation from America's youth in the voting process and a lack of interest in the political system.

According to civicyouth.org, in the 2004 election, about 47 percent of Americans ages 18 to 24 voted for president. While that number did increase from a dismal 36 percent the 2000 election, it still is extremely low. What is turning young voters away from the booths?

When trying to discuss politics with other teens, many dismiss the subject saying, "It doesn't affect me." "It's boring," or "I don't care about politics." Statements like these frustrate me for a few reasons.

First off, politics do affect us, even at a young age. For instance, teens who have jobs that pay minimum wage may not know that the House just passed a bill to raise that minimum wage to \$7.25 in the next two years.

Also, the Iraq War has affected us tremendously. For new drivers, gas prices have eaten a hole in our wallets. Experts say the leap in prices is due to the invasion of Iraq, where the violence has lessened the amount of oil production in the country.

Additionally, the cost of the Iraq War so far has been about \$409,000,000,000. Guess who's going to be paying for that? We are.

When teenagers complain that politics are boring, I don't blame them. I'd rather watch an episode of "Grey's Anatomy," hang out with friends or go shopping. But to me, my future isn't boring.

To be aware of politics doesn't mean having to sit down and read the entire U.S. Patriot Act cover to cover (our own Senators didn't even do that). It simply means that one should know what is going on.

What is the latest proposal for the war in Iraq? Who is Nancy Pelosi? Who is thinking of running for election in 2008? When teenagers say that politics don't interest them, I understand.

But as our generation grows older, it's not about being interested. It's about knowing what is going on in your country, and what will affect you as a young American citizen.

Yet the worst thing a young adult can say is that his or her vote doesn't

count. As an American, you have been given a gift. Many people across the world aren't fortunate enough to possess the right to vote, and when people who are fortunate enough to vote abuse that right, it's shameful.

It wasn't even 100 years ago that women didn't even enjoy the right to vote, yet in the 2004 election, only 53 percent of women 18 to 24 cast their vote. When will we stop taking our freedoms for granted?

Our country was created on the basis of freedom, and the youngest generation of Americans voters — the future — doesn't even see the importance in that privilege. When will our generation wake up, cast their vote and exercise their ability to change the country? Because sooner or later, we will be in charge, and will we even know what to do?

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

### WHS Student Receives A National Honor

WESTFIELD - The National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS) announced that Westfield High School student Alex Leone from Westfield has been selected for membership.

The society recognizes the top scholars in the nation and invites only those students who have achieved superior academic excellence.

### SPFHS to Hold

#### Its 30th Anniversary

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Class of 1977 will have its 30-year reunion this year.

For more information, contact SPFHS77@yahoo.com.

### St. Peter's Students

#### Earn Academic Honors

AREA - Seven area residents were among the 288 students at Saint Peter's Preparatory School in Jersey City, who earned academic honors for outstanding achievement for the second marking period. The students, listed with their hometown and graduation years, are:

#### Scotch Plains

Honorable Mention - Daniel Convery, 2008  
Honorable Mention - Kevin Handsman, 2009

#### Westfield

First Honors - Eamon Hartnett, 2008  
First Honors - Matthew Mullman, 2009  
Second Honors - Philip Reynolds, 2009  
Honorable Mention - Sean Finn, 2009  
Honorable Mention - Joseph Tressitt, 2007

First honors are awarded for a 90-percent average or above in all courses, second honors are for 85 percent or higher and honorable mentions are for 85 percent with no course grade below 80 percent.



THE MONTESSORI METHOD...Westfield Mayor Andy Skibitsky establishes the month of March as "Montessori Education Month." Above, pictured at the Westfield campus of Christopher Academy, are children, from left to right, Alexander Joseph, Nicholas Chermak, Sydney Butler, Jack Degnan, Kaitlyn Lynch and Fiona Gillen. Pictured with the mayor, from left to right, are Nicole Murphy, teacher, and Elsie Powell, director.

## WF, SP Mayors Establish Montessori Educ. Month

AREA - In February, at a Scotch Plains Council meeting and again at the Westfield Christopher Academy, educators, council members and parents joined together to recognize the centennial anniversary of the Montessori Method and to honor Christopher Academy - New Jersey's oldest Montessori school.

Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks and Westfield Mayor Andy Skibitsky established the month of March as "Montessori Education Month." The Montessori Method is now modeled in more than 5,000 schools in the United States.

Extended teacher preparation, carefully designed classroom materials and a highly individualized curriculum support the active, focused classrooms exemplifying the Montessori Method.

Christopher Academy serves almost 200 children from two-and-a-half through first grade between its Westfield and Scotch Plains campuses.

"We're proud to call this community home," said Amelia McTamany, Head of School at Christopher Acad-

emy for more than 30 years. "And we're equally proud to have been here for generations."

The school, which will celebrate its 45th anniversary next year, regularly welcomes the children of its own graduates into the program.

"This year alone, 15 children enrolled have parents who attended our program themselves, and two of our staff were themselves students here."

Christopher Academy offers school year pre-school programs for part-time, part-week and full-week enrollment and both half- and full-day summer programs at both of its locations.

More information about the school, its programs or the Montessori Method can be located at christopheracademy.com or by calling the school offices in Westfield at (908) 233-7447 or (908) 322-4652 in Scotch Plains.

More Education  
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YOUNG AUTHORS' TEA...Students in Mary Dura's first grade class at Wilson Elementary School in Westfield observed Women's History Month in March by reading biographies of notable women from around the world. Additionally, the students chose a special woman from their own extended families to write their biography. At the completion of this project, both the young writers and their special guests were feted to a Young Authors' Tea. Pictured are Julia Kuhn and her great-aunt Jane Bernick at the authors' tea.

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