



FALL INTO THE 'GAP'...At the Junior League of Elizabeth-Plainfield's (JLEP) eighth annual Literary Luncheon, Westfield residents Kimberly Benou, JLEP president, left, and Michele Moore, chair of Literary Luncheon Committee, right, sit with author of "Big Stone Gap" Adriana Trigiani, who holds up a junior league cookbook that she had every guest sign.

JLEP Holds Eighth Annual Literary Luncheon

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SUMMIT - The Junior League of Elizabeth-Plainfield (JLEP) recently held its eighth annual Literary Luncheon at the Grand Summit Hotel in Summit.

Adriana Trigiani, best-selling author of the "Big Stone Gap" series, served as mistress of ceremonies. Authors Sally Keehn, Caroline Preston, Jill Davis and Jane O'Connor were featured speakers. Ms. Trigiani, whom JLEP members have named an "honorary member" because of her many appearances at their Literary Lunches over the years, entertained the audience with her capricious sense of humor.

In a flamboyant style well-known to JLEP members, Ms. Trigiani addressed topics of universal interest to women, including motherhood, marriage, cooking and bad-hair days.

In addition to her "Big Stone Gap" series, Ms. Trigiani is the author of "Lucia, Lucia," "The Queen of the Big Time," "Rococo" and "Cooking with My Sisters." Many of her books have appeared on *The New York Times* Best Sellers List.

"This is truly the best event in the country," said Ms. Trigiani.

Each of the featured authors took to the podium in turn to speak briefly about their lives and work as writers.

Ms. Keehn, who lives in Pennsylvania and writes primarily for young adults, is the author of the recently published, "Maggie Gabbard and the Quest for the Buried Moon." Another recent book, "Gnat Stokes and the Foggy Bottom Swamp Queen," is part of the New York Public Library's "100 Titles for Reading and Sharing."

Ms. Preston's literary career developed from her years as a manuscript

librarian at the Houghton Library at Harvard University and the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Mass. She is the author of "Jackie by Josie," a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year, and "Lucy Crocker 2.0."

Ms. Davis, who currently lives in New York City, has written for newspapers, theatre and television. She received five Emmy nominations for "The Late Show with David Letterman." Ms. Davis is the author of "Ask Again Later," and "Girls' Poker Night."

Ms. O'Connor, who also lives in New York City, is the author of several books for children, among them "Fancy Nancy" and "Posh Puppy."

JLEP partners with several community-based social service organizations to bring assistance to those in need.

In 2006, JLEP members volunteered more than 2,500 hours to help Union County's most vulnerable citizens.

According to Westfield resident Kimberly Benou, JLEP president for 2006-07, the proceeds from this year's Literary Luncheon will go directly to support the JLEP's charitable work assisting women and children in crisis in Union County.

"We are just delighted with the success of this year's event," she said, adding that it is so gratifying to enjoy such widespread support and generosity from the community, local businesses and corporations, as well as dedicated volunteers."

Founded in the early 1920s as two separate entities, the present day JLEP was formed in 1976 when the Junior League of Elizabeth and Cranford merged with the Junior League of Plainfield.

For additional information about the JLEP, call (908) 709-1177 or log onto jlep.org.

HOME & GARDEN TRENDS



Covering All the Bases (and Cushions, Too)

By CHRISTIE STORMS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

I hesitate to put the words "cover" and "furniture" in the same sentence, as it conjures up images of my great-aunt's sofa completely encased in clear (and downright uncomfortable) plastic.

The worst was the horrible crinkly noise made when reaching for your beverage (served in a plain cup since the good china was also being preserved in case the Queen of England visited).

Fortunately, today there are alternate (and more attractive) ways to enhance and protect your furniture. Both formal and informal coverings are available, and you can also decide whether you just want to add temporary pizzazz or seek a more permanent aesthetic solution.

So have no fear...these are definitely not your grandmother's (or my great-aunt's) slipcovers.

The least expensive and most basic slipcover is ready-made. It is often one over-sized piece of fabric specially cut and sewn so that it fastens to your furniture via Velcro, zippers or adjustable fabric ties in hidden places. This often lends a relaxed and casual look to the space.

These slipcovers are particularly kid and pet-friendly as they can hide old stains or damage as well as protect the furniture from new ones. They're easily removed and most are machine washable.

They're also an inexpensive way to update and change your rooms with the seasons. Try a deep tone to better integrate your furniture with winter holiday décor or crisp whites to lighten and brighten the room for the summer.

A step-up in the readymade variety are the newer stretch-to-fit designs most readily available online. Choose a shade and size closest to your existing furniture and then simply stretch and pull the cover over it as the name implies. This provides a more tailored look with a bit of contemporary flair, especially in the easy-care micro-suede fabrics.

The one caveat is that readymade slipcovers are designed for the most basic types of chair construction. For example, if yours has t-shaped cushions and set-back arms, a basic slipcover can be used but wasn't specifically designed for that and may not hang properly.

However, you can resolve such issues and/or further tailor your slipcovers by ordering one for the base of the chair and a separate piece fitted for the cushion(s).

An added bonus is the cushions can be removed (and flipped, depending on the style you choose) without undressing the entire sofa or chair.

Custom slipcovers provide even more design options. Not only are they specifically tailored to your pieces, but you can add welting and decorative trims to "pipe" the cushions or traditional skirting from the base of the chair to the floor.

You can also try mixing up solids and prints for a lively look. For example, select a checked fabric for the base slipcover and a mix of floral patterns for the cushions and throw pillows.

Those who like to entertain can unite all their dining chairs with slipcovers. This works especially well if you're "borrowing" mismatched chairs from other rooms to provide additional seating.

Coordinate these easily removable slipcovers (also available either custom or readymade) with your table linens and change them as often as you'd like.

If you seek to dress up the dining chairs without obscuring them entirely, consider sheer fabrics or slipcovers that only veil the chair backs as opposed to the floor-length variety. You can additionally embellish them with bows, trims or even a monogram letter applique.

In the bedroom, consider a slipcover to dramatically change your headboard. You can wrap existing wood with soft batting and then add a slipcover for an upholstered feel. Decorative or self-fabric buttons can further enhance the look. Transform the pillows with coordinating shams-style slipcovers.

Even objects that aren't often associated with slipcovers can benefit from them. Try dressing up an old metal file cabinet or even a lampshade.

Too bad my great-aunt didn't live to see how far slipcovers have come. With so many stylish options, she would have been sure to impress the Queen had she ever shown up.

Do you have a home or garden question or topic you'd like to see covered in this column? Send your inquiries to cstorms@goleader.com.

Junior Musical Club To Hold Auditions

WESTFIELD - The Junior Musical Club of Westfield will hold auditions for membership on Tuesday, May 29, at the First Baptist Church, located at 170 Elm Street in Westfield.

Youngsters in grades 8 to 12, who study music, are invited to apply for membership.

The audition will require two pieces to be performed from memory - one from the periods up to and including the Beethoven era and the other from the Romantic or Modern periods.

If accompaniment is needed, the performer should provide it.

To audition, please call Alexandra Jenkins at (908) 789-0661.

Take a Hike and Learn Bird-Watching Basics

MOUNTAINSIDE - The County of Union will offer a guided bird-watching hike for adults, ages 18 and older, in the scenic 2,060-acre Watchung Reservation on Saturday, May 26, from 9 to 11 a.m.

In the spring, the Deserted Village in the Watchung Reservation is a desired Union County bird-watching location.

Those attending can join a Trailside park naturalist to explore this area and witness the variety of spring migrant birds. The public can look and listen for yellow warblers, scarlet tanagers, blue-gray gnatcatchers and many more. People in attendance should bring binoculars and a bird guide.

Pre-registration is required. The fee is \$10 for residents of Union County and \$15 for out-of-county participants. This walk will depart from the parking lot of the Deserted Village. Call Trailside for directions.

For additional information on this workshop or for a complete brochure of Trailside's adult workshops and other events, call (908) 789-3670 or visit ucnj.org/trailside.

Trailside is located at 452 New Providence Road in Mountainside.



Adelie penguin group crowds on melting summer ice floe, Possession Island, Ross Sea, Antarctica

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RUSSELL - GLOBAL WARMING

energy sources to power residences. These alternatives are available through The CleanPower Choice Program (njcleanpower.com); information about this program is enclosed within residents' monthly electric bills.

At the conclusion of the thought-provoking global warming presentation, Ms. Kowalski spoke a bit about Union County's efforts to develop programs that will help the environment.

She said that Union County's Economic Development Department has been meeting with alternative transportation advocates to develop a plan for a bikeway throughout the county. Known as the Bicycle Master Plan

Project, the goal of the project is to create safer bicycle routes for all county residents.

Last week, the freeholders held a "Business to Business" seminar at Kean University entitled "Recycling for Revenue," where experts discussed economically sound methods of recycling for local businesses.

"The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders knows that recycling is not only good for the environment - it's also good for business," Ms. Kowalski said. "We are committed to environmental protection, and we have ongoing efforts in all our departments," she said.



FINE ARTS...Items such as this oil painting by Robin Grace and this polychrome necklace by Lynn Manning will be on display and sold at the 20th-annual Spring Fine Art and Crafts at Nomahegan Park show, which will take place on Saturday and Sunday, June 2 to 3, in Cranford across from Union County College Fine Art and Crafts Show at Nomahegan Park between June 2 and 3.

Nomahegan Park Hosts Show to Delight the Senses

CRANFORD - The 20th-annual Spring Fine Art and Crafts at Nomahegan Park show will take place on Saturday and Sunday, June 2 to 3, in Cranford across from Union County College.

The show will feature many new artists and crafters from throughout the northeast and beyond, displaying and selling their American-made, handcrafted work.

This free to the public show will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., rain or shine. Family entertainment will be presented both days. The Rory Daniels Band will be performing from noon to 4 p.m. on both days.

The show is co-sponsored by the

Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Union County Department of Parks and Recreation, and Janet and Howard Rose of Rose Squared Productions, Inc.

The Spring Fine Art and Crafts at Nomahegan Park Show will feature fine art, jewelry, photography, weaving, pottery, wood, fiber, leather, stained glass and much more. The show will be accented with live music and a variety of ethnic foods.

Nomahegan Park is located on Springfield Avenue in Cranford. Parking is free across the street at the County College. For further information, call (908) 874-5247 or visit rosesquared.com.



THE WAITING IS OVER...Troupe of Friends actors Ken Bigelow, left, and Joe Penczak, right, rehearse a scene from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The Westfield Department of Recreation in sponsoring two free performances, Saturday, May 26, and Sunday, May 27, at 4 p.m. at Memorial Pool field.

WF Recreation Department Sponsors *Waiting for Godot*

WESTFIELD - Troupe of Friends, Inc., a local non-profit company dedicated to bringing free plays to Westfield, is in rehearsal for its second production of outdoor theater under the sponsorship of The Westfield Recreation Department.

The absurdist play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett is currently scheduled for two free performances on Saturday and Sunday, May 26 and 27, at 4 p.m. at Westfield Memorial Park, outside the pool complex.

Waiting for Godot has entertained audiences as diverse as children, prisoners and university students, and is accepted as one of the classics of the 20th-century stage.

Joseph Penczak directs and performs in the play, with Westfield resi-

dents Daniel Bigelow, Ken Bigelow, Fred Cruz and Charlie Mulrooney rounding out the cast.

When first introduced, *Waiting for Godot* was a groundbreaking play in the world of theater, combining slapstick comedy with themes of poverty, companionship and despair. Today, it is commonly referred to as a "tragic-comedy."

Admission is free, and the play will be performed under the summer sky on Saturday and Sunday of Memorial Day weekend at 4 p.m.

Audience members are encouraged to bring picnic baskets, blankets and chairs. In case of inclement weather, the play will be performed indoors at the Westfield Municipal Building's Community Room on East Broad Street.

Arts Assoc. Plans Trip To Brooklyn Museum

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Scotch Plains and Fanwood Arts Association's spring bus trip will take place on Wednesday, June 6, to the Brooklyn Museum of Art to see the "Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and the American Landscape exhibit." Kindred Spirits is the first retrospective in more than three decades to be devoted to the career of Mr. Durand, an important 19th-century American artist.

The bus will depart from the Scotch Plains Municipal Building Parking Lot at 8:30 a.m. and return around 4:30 p.m. The cost of the trip is \$38, which includes the bus and admission to the museum. Not included is the entrance fee to the Botanical Gardens. Reservations must be made by Wednesday, May 30.

For reservations and further information, call Anne Gibbons at (908) 232-2631.

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