



READY...AIM...An honor guard comprised of Union County Sheriff's Officers and Corrections Officers fire a salute on the steps of the Union County Courthouse in Elizabeth during Union County's annual remembrance ceremony honoring prisoners of war and those missing in action (POW/MIA). National POW/MIA Recognition Day is observed each year on the third Friday of September.

Local Developer Claims Westfield Is 'Publically Scrutinizing' Him

By TED RITTER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Six local builders came out to Tuesday night's regular town council meeting, during which one of them, Ralph Rapuano Jr., took issue with "statements put against me that were completely wrong" at the governing body's agenda meeting earlier this month.

During the September 11 agenda meeting, a resident complained about a demolition site on Boulevard being redeveloped by Mr. Rapuano's firm, Elegant Homes, which he runs with his father.

The resident, claiming Mr. Rapuano's firm is a "repeat offender,"

had pointed to a gate left open, construction materials left on the sidewalk and other issues at the job site.

At Tuesday night's meeting, Mr. Rapuano read multiple letters of reference and support from whom he said were "satisfied" clients, and he said he complies with local construction ordinances.

"I am getting publicly scrutinized for upholding our town's Master Plan," he said, noting that he is "quick to respond" to any questions or complaints about his projects.

Mr. Rapuano said he would like there to be "more of a dialogue [between builders and the town and residents] so we have an understanding

of what's taking place and the realities, not just perceptions."

Councilman Thomas Bigosinski responded that concerns the resident raised at the meeting were discussed in "an honest and forthright way."

"If you don't want us to talk about building-code violations...then don't commit these violations in the first place," Mr. Bigosinski said.

Councilman Mark Ciarrocca said securely fencing off residential construction sites is a key safety issue in town.

"These sites need to be closed and

County Dems Focus on Open Space, Shared Services

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

COUNTY — Union County Freeholder Dan Sullivan and Freeholder Chairman Bette Jane Kowalski are pointing to open-space acquisitions and shared-services initiatives in their bid for re-election. Plainfield City Council President Rayland Van Blake joins them on the Democratic freeholder ticket.

Mr. Van Blake, now in his fifth year on the Plainfield council, said he ran against the political "machine" at the time in the city in 2002 but now is "very much entrenched" in the local Democratic organization and is "looking forward to contributing as part of the county-wide team." He has said if elected, he would resign from city council.

Mr. Sullivan, the chairman of the board's open-space committee, said the freeholders' goal when the program began in 2001 was to preserve 100 acres over the course of the 20-year life of the Union County Open Space, Recreation and Historic Trust Fund. With a half-million residents and just 100 square miles, Union County is the second most densely populated county after Hudson County in the state, Mr. Sullivan said.

"I think what we found, once we started making purchases, was that more land became available. More people were interested in working with the county in preserving open space," he said.

Mr. Sullivan said the acquisitions of county parkland include Phil Rizzuto Park on the Union/Elizabeth border and Esposito Park in Clark, which will open within the month. The county has acquired or nears the purchase of a total of 185 acres in Clark.

Ms. Kowalski said the land in Clark runs along the Rahway River Parkway — "so that's intentional that we are looking to buy land that's along the river."

She said the county is also hooked up to the East Coast Greenway, a continuous bike trail being created from Maine to Florida.

"People are going to be able to walk through Union County or bike through and stay on green space," she said.

Mr. Sullivan said the open space has also made the county "eligible for millions of dollars over the last seven years or so that has defrayed the cost of some of the acquisitions that have been made."



SPRUCIN' UP...Painters work assiduously to meet the schedule for the reopening, planned for next week, of the renovated restaurant and bar at 16 Prospect Street in Westfield. In addition to a complete renovation, owners Tim and Chris Boyle are changing the name of their restaurant to 16 Prospect from its former moniker, Northside Trattoria.

MS Students Prove Beyond Proficient in School Testing

By EBONY MCQUEEN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — Tuesday night's borough board-of-education meeting gave a precise breakdown of where Mountainside students rank in comparison to other districts.

Borough Chief School Administrator Richard O' Malley presented a power-point presentation of the 2006-2007 school year's test results. The presentation broke down all test scores for children in kindergarten through grade 8; Mountainside is a K-8 district. Its teenagers attend Governor Livingston High School in Berkeley Heights.

"We want to make sure our students are prepared when they go to Governor Livingston High School," Mr. O' Malley said.

The BOE's top goal last year for Beechwood School, a pre-kindergarten to second-grade school, was for 85 percent of students to score a two or higher in science on a teacher-developed performance assessment and rubric.

Students met that goal — 97 percent of them scored a two or higher.

Goal two required 85 percent of both grades 1 and 2 to score a four or higher in writing. This goal was also achieved. Benchmark data proved that 87 percent of first graders and 86 percent of second graders were able to demonstrate proficiency, officials said.

WF BOE Appoints Acting District Administrators, Announces Goals

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The board of education at its meeting Tuesday night announced two new appointments reflecting expanded responsibilities for district administrators.

Anita O'Neal replaces Margaret Dolan, who is now superintendent of schools, as the new interim assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at an annual salary of \$130,000; Heather Rocco is interim supervisor for kindergarten to grade 12 language arts at a salary of \$93,000.

These new positions are part of the district's goals for 2007-2008 to "assess the effectiveness of the current administrative structure and strengthen the systems for recruiting, hiring, training, developing and retaining administering staff," officials said.

The board approved about 10 other appointments and personnel compensation at the meeting.

Ms. Dolan said the district's goal requires some time to analyze and is important because administrators are few due to a large amount of baby boomers retiring at the same time.

Since 1998, Ms. O'Neal has supervised special services for grades 9 through 12 at Westfield High School. Her career began in 1968 in the now-defunct Union County regional-high-school system as a teacher/learning consultant. As part of her new duties, she has already begun reviewing the curriculum, which is assessed every five years. She and board member Alice Hunnicutt are working on the project together.

As a component of the curriculum, the board approved two elementary social-studies textbooks, *The New Jersey Adventure* by Anthony DeCondo and *The United States: Making a Nation* by Michael Berson,

Tyrone Howard and Cinthia Salinas. Ms. Rocco's appointment expands her role as chairman of the English Department of Westfield High School, a position she has held since 2003. Previously she taught English at WHS

for security and emergency preparedness, including emergency communications strategies.

The BOE approved state-mandated policy amendments for first reading. The policy regarding prohibiting harassment, intimidation and bullying is reflected to include off-school grounds of cyber-bullying — bullying via e-mail, blogs, mobile phones or other electronic devices.

Board member Gary McReedy questioned whether off-ground bullying should also include physical off-ground bullying.

A district policy to report violence and vandalism will now include alcohol and other drug abuse, officials said.

The board agreed to change wording related to WHS TV to omit "36" from its previous title of WHS TV-36, so as not to confuse it with an actual channel number.

The board also approved a change in its policy regarding school-sponsored publications. The change now clarifies it as "all media," to include Internet and television in addition to printed materials.

The BOE approved the submission of an application to the federal No Child Left Behind grant for fiscal year 2008 totaling \$339,410, down from last year, according to Ms. Dolan.



Heather Rocco, Margaret Dolan and Anita O'Neal

and New Hyde Park Memorial High School in New York.

Other board goals include: providing adequate space for students at all grade levels for the start of school in September 2008, a multi-year goal to demonstrate a shared commitment to energy conservation among all staff members and students and to communicate this commitment to the community, assess and communicate the effectiveness of new and existing district initiatives and update measures

and municipal-budget annual increases, she said local governments "are struggling here in New Jersey."

The candidate said school aid "has remained flat for the last six years, which has hurt schools because they've had to make up for the inflation through property taxes."

"The problem is that by addressing the school formula there are going to be towns that are going to have an advantage and there are going to be towns that are going to suffer," she said.

"We really haven't had a [school aid] formula since 1994. We need one that addresses where all the towns are at now," she said, adding that the state needs to find a solution for Abbott school districts "and to make sure they thrive and [a funding system] that's equitable for everyone."

She said, "property values are tied to your educational system, and so one hand feeds the other."

Ms. Genovese said she would support or introduce legislation to enable school districts to maintain surpluses instead of being required to spend almost their entire budgets per current

School Aid Formula, Stem Cells Top Issues for Genovese

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

AREA — She faces an uphill battle against Tom Kean, Jr. of Westfield in the race for District 21's State Senate seat, but Gina Genovese of Long Hill is no stranger to battles.

She was ranked 150th in the world in women's tennis back in the early 1980s, and later, in the world of politics, she became the first Democratic mayor in the history of Long Hill Township in Morris County after being selected by a 3-2 Republican-controlled governing body in 2006.

In an exclusive interview with *The Westfield Leader* last Monday, Ms. Genovese said she is a former 30-year member of Nomahegan Swim Club in Westfield, "so I do know a lot of people from Westfield, and I feel this is a home for me."

Ms. Genovese bought her own tennis club in Berkeley Heights in 1986 and has been a tennis coach and teacher for 25 years.

"It was about five years ago that I started to get more involved in politics," she said. "The issue for me was the Iraq War."

After being defeated in a 2003 run for the Long Hill Township Council, Ms. Genovese won a seat on the governing body the following year.

"I just realized that with my municipal experience and my business experience, I felt that running for the State Senate would be a good choice for me. It's one of the better decisions that I have made," she said. "My business is in Berkeley Heights, so I know a lot of the people in the district and I am very familiar with it."

Ms. Genovese said the state legislature must come up with a new formula to calculate school aid and develop revenues to pay off a state debt currently estimated at more than \$33.7 billion.

Noting that the legislature has put a

4-percent cap on school district and municipal-budget annual increases, she said local governments "are struggling here in New Jersey."

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FREEHOLDER FEST...Westfield Leader Arts & Entertainment editor Mike Pollack, second from left, shows the Democratic freeholder candidates Leader-made posters depicting Chuck Berry's performance at Union County's MusicFest two weeks ago. The candidates, from left to right, freeholder Dan Sullivan, freeholder chairman Bette Jane Kowalski and Plainfield City Councilman Rayland Van Blake, sat down for an exclusive interview with *The Leader* last Friday. Watch the full interview at goleader.com/video and read up on the candidates at goleader.com/07/election.

WF Hosts Annual FestiFall This Sunday
By SUZETTE F. STALKER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Autumnal festivals will welcome the season in Westfield and Fanwood this Sunday, September 30, offering visitors a potpourri of food, music, arts and crafts, vendor wares and activities rain or shine.

Beginning at 10 a.m., the 18th annual FestiFall celebration, sponsored by the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, will fill the streets of Westfield's downtown until 5 p.m. "We're getting better and better,"



LATE START...Due to construction inside the halls of Governor Livingston High School, students in grades 9 through 12 from Mountainside and Berkeley Heights enjoyed an extra week of summer vacation. School began on September 10.

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