



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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(908) 232-4407 press@goleader.com

SEVENTY FIVE CENTS



2012-04-05: ON YOUR MARK...Runners dart across the starting line at the St. Bart's second annual Pot of Gold 5K race held Saturday morning in Scotch Plains.



2012-03-29: SMILES...Fanwood Administrator Eleanor McGovern is congratulated by Mayor Colleen Mahr on being honored at the Union County 20th Annual Women of Excellence Awards Dinner on March 23 in Garwood.



2012-03-08: AMERICAN HERO...Anthony "Tony the Vet" LoBue marched through Scotch Plains, where he grew up, on Tuesday carrying an American flag, hoping to draw attention to the sacrifice and needs of veterans on his 100-mile trek from Allentown, Pa. to Grand Central Station in New York City. He is pictured with Scotch Plains Mayor Nancy Malool in front of the town's September 11th Memorial.

2012 Year In Review: January Through May

JANUARY

Westfield

A New Year's tradition, the 30th annual Hangover Run at Tamaques Park, hosted by the Cranford-based Central Jersey Road Runners Club, had a record number of runners on January 1. More than 1,000 runners from the region participated, with the lead runner crossing the finish line in just over 15 minutes.

At the Westfield council's reorganization meeting, Mayor Andy Skibitsky recounted the many challenges faced by the town during 2011, from a blizzard and various multi-alarm fires to a hurricane and an earthquake. He said these events tested the town's mettle, and the public's patience, as everyone encountered inconveniences.

During the meeting, re-elected council members were sworn in to their new terms; Second Ward Councilwoman JoAnn Neylan and Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Foerst took turns swearing in each other. Appellate Judge Douglas Fasciale administered the oath to First Ward Councilman Frank Arena, and Third Ward Councilman Mark LoGrippe was sworn in by his predecessor, Mark Ciarrocca, now a Superior Court judge on the Union County bench.

After seven candidates were publicly interviewed, Gretchan Ohlig was appointed as the newest member of the board of education in early January, filling a seat left vacant by the resignation of Julia Walker in November 2011.

A six-alarm fire destroyed Clyne & Murphy Caterers and five other businesses located in a strip of one-level storefronts near the Westfield traffic circle on the town's south side. In addition to Clyne & Murphy, the two buildings involved were home to The Sound Station, Figaro's Hair Styling, Rocky the Taylor, Cobblers Bench Shoe Repair and Unmasked, a collectibles and comic book store. The buildings wrapped around the corner of South and Westfield Avenues. Authorities ruled out arson as a cause of the blaze, which fire officials traced to the dining room of the catering business.

Public safety became the focus at a town council meeting after the fire

and a fatal pedestrian accident on North Avenue, which claimed the life of Patricia Currie.

Later in the month, Washington Elementary School was the site of a good old-fashioned hoedown, as parents square-danced in blue jeans and checked shirts to "Turkey in the Straw" during Roadsters and Jokers, the school's 65th annual show.

Garwood

The borough council voted 4 to 2 to freeze longevity benefits for non-bargaining-unit employees. Councilman Victor DeFilippo and Councilwoman Sara Todisco dissented. Last year, the council put forth the same vote, and subsequently Mayor Patricia Quattrocchi vetoed the council vote to approve freezing longevity benefits.

Under the measure, the borough would no longer provide longevity benefits to any present or future non-bargaining-unit employee. Longevity benefits activate when a borough employee has been employed for five years.

The Garwood Board of Education approved a five-year lease agreement with the Westfield Area "Y" to lease Washington School. Superintendent of Schools Teresa Quigley said the "Y" would offer daycare, preschool, a fitness center, yoga, before- and after-school care, senior programs and youth programming. The lease is effective through February 28, 2017.

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved funding for the Westfield Senior Housing Corporation (WSHC) to build a 72-unit apartment complex for people age 62 and over on the former St. Anne's School property in Garwood.

Cranford

Cranford officials said they would seek to have the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) hold a public hearing on an application filed by a Birchwood Avenue developer so that township residents could voice their opposition to the proposed development of several hundred housing units.

The Union County Renewable Energy Program brought solar power to more than two dozen public build-

ings throughout the county, including rooftop installations at the Cranford Library and Cranford Community Center.

The year's first partisan flare-up occurred when, at the township committee's first formal meeting of 2012, Democratic Commissioner Ed O'Malley called for the resignation of newly named Township Attorney Phil Morin for what Mr. O'Malley said was a conflict of interest related to the appointment.

Scotch Plains

Mayor Nancy Malool said she supports - and urged her township council colleagues to do likewise - a study to look into the positives and negatives of a full consolidation between Scotch Plains and Fanwood. The mayor said that after more than three years of efforts to merge various municipal departments and services, "nothing has really happened."

Later in the month, the township council passed a resolution expressing support for consolidating services with Fanwood and initiating a study commission to look into the pros and cons of an outright merger between the two towns.

"What's the harm in looking at it?" asked Mayor Malool.

Fanwood

Mayor Colleen Mahr and Councilman Russell Huegel were sworn in to new terms of office during the borough's reorganization meeting, while Councilman Kevin Boris began his first term. Mayor Mahr entered her third four-year term, while Mr. Huegel began his second term. As Democrats, Mr. Huegel's and Mr. Boris' victory in the General Election ensured that the six-person council remained evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans for at least one more year. Mayor Mahr, also a Democrat, holds the deciding vote on propositions put before the council in the event of a split vote.

Later in the month, Mayor Mahr and the borough council unanimously approved a resolution that "renews the commitment" of the governing body to pursue a shared Fanwood-Scotch Plains police department. Mayor Mahr said a shared police department represents "what we see as our best opportunity for property-

tax relief in 2012."

Regarding downtown redevelopment, Mayor Mahr urged the planning board at its reorganization meeting to think in terms of mixed-use zoning and planning and to continue to support a retail, business and residential zone in the revitalization of Fanwood's downtown.

County

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders welcomed new Freeholder Vernell Wright of Union and named Freeholder Alexander Mirabella of Fanwood as chairman and Freeholder Linda Carter of Plainfield as vice-chairwoman for 2012 during the board's annual reorganization meeting. Freeholder Wright, a retired school principal from Union, replaced Nancy Ward of Westfield, who opted not to seek a third term.

Freeholder Chris Hudak, who was appointed to the board in December 2010 to replace Rick Proctor, who was elected Rahway mayor in 2010, was sworn in for a full three-year term. Freeholder Angel Estrada, who was first elected to the board in 1999, took the oath for a fifth term.

Region

State lawmakers of both political parties fondly remembered state Assembly Minority Leader Alex DeCrose, 75, the Republican leader of the lower house, after the long-time lawmaker died suddenly in January.

Mr. DeCrose died on January 9 after collapsing in a bathroom inside the Statehouse, just moments after the 214th Legislature held its final voting session. Mr. DeCrose, a Parsippany resident, had served as Republican leader since 2003 and had been in the Assembly since 1989 representing the 26th district, which covers Morris County.

Later in the month, Assembly Republicans elected Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (R-21) of Westfield as their new leader.

FEBRUARY

Westfield

In early February, members of the Westfield Board of Education unanimously voted to move the school board election to November. This action was taken just weeks after



2012-01-23: THE FUTURE...The Scotch Plains Township Council met on Tuesday night to reorganize the governing body and discuss the upcoming year. Pictured, left to right, are: Union County Republican Chairman Phil Morin, Councilman William Vastine, Mayor Nancy Malool and former Governor Donald DiFrancesco.



2012-02-02: STUDENT DELEGATES...Over 100 Student Delegates recommended by the faculty of Park and Terrill Middle Schools and St. Bartholomew's Academy (grades 5-8), participated in Leadership Training Conference 100 last Saturday. The conference develops and promotes leadership skills.



2012-03-29: SAVE OUR JOBS...One of the 280 Union County employees who have received layoff notices pleads with the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders last Thursday to reconsider their decision.

PAGE INDEX

Table with 2 columns: Page Number and Page Title. Includes categories like Regional, Editorial, Police, Community, Obituary, Education, Sports, Real Estate, Classifieds, and A&E.



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