

The Westfield Leader THE SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD
 — Established 1890 —
 Legal Newspaper for the Town of Westfield,
 Boroughs of Mountainside and Garwood
 And the County of Union, N.J.

Members of:
 New Jersey Press Association • National Newspaper Association • Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce
 Scotch Plains Business & Professional Association • Fanwood Business & Professional Association

Periodicals - Postage Paid at Rahway, New Jersey
 P.O. Box 250 • 251 North Avenue, West
 Westfield, N.J. 07091
 Tele: (908) 232-4407 • E-mail: editor@goleader.com • Web: www.goleader.com • Fax: (908) 232-0473

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the offices of the newspapers at
 P. O. Box 250, Westfield, New Jersey 07091

Published every Thursday by Watchung Communications, Inc.

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE
 One-year - \$33 • Two-year - \$62 • Three-year - \$90

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Letters to the Editor

WF-BOE Panel Welcomes Community Input on Lighted Turf Field

On behalf of the Facilities Committee of the Westfield Board of Education, I would like to thank the residents surrounding Westfield High School (WHS) for coming to the community meeting on July 10. The purpose of the meeting was to provide the residents with an update on the September 24 bond referendum, which includes a lighted turf field at WHS, as well as to answer as many questions as we could.

Joining the Facilities Committee, Superintendent Margaret Dolan, and Athletic Supervisor Sandy Mamary, were experts on field design, synthetic turf and lighting who provided explanations of the plan and answered technical questions. The facilities committee will continue to meet throughout the summer and discuss topics that were raised at the meeting. As with the traffic/parking plan around WHS that we are undertaking with the Town Council, we continue to welcome community input on plans for the bond which includes the turf field and roof replacements on our schools. Information is available on our website, www.westfieldnj12.org.

Jane Clancy
 Westfield BOE Facilities Chair

ABCDICTIONOPQRSTDECEPTIONUVWXYZ



Diction Deception

Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions - only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly - good guess. If you get two - well-read individual. If you get three - word expert. If you get all four - You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.

Answers to last week's arcane words.

1. Senescent - Growing old
2. Sepicolous - Growing in hedges
3. Amygdaline - Resembling almonds
4. Sitology - The study of foods, nutrition, etc.

GUTTATE

1. Spotted, as with drops
2. Rotund, obese
3. Capable of being torn apart or disunited
4. To puncture; pierce

SEPELITION

1. A formation of new flesh in a wound; a cicatrix
2. Separation; division
3. Burial; interment
4. A heated debate or dispute

THILL

1. To saturate; soak
2. A shaft to which a horse is hitched to a wagon
3. To mix; mingle
4. Untidy or dirty

DIRDUM

1. A warlike lump or node
2. A fight or contest for mastery
3. A song of lamentation; a dirge
4. A loud outcry of blame or rebuke

Lawsuits and Legal Fees Costing Union County Taxpayers Big \$\$\$

The Union County Board of Chose Freeholders tonight are expected to finalize a quarter-of-a-million settlement with Stephen McGuire, an investigator in the Union County Prosecutor's Office (UCPO) who also happens to head PBA Local 250, representing investigators in the UCPO. On top of the settlement are legal fees to the tune of \$110,000. All this expense because the investigator sent out an e-mail following his union's victory in a court decision forcing the county to continue reimbursing officers for fuel for their county vehicles between home and work and vice versa.

The UCPO viewed the e-mail as insubordination against senior management and suspended the investigator for five days. He sued and apparently has won a handsome settlement. So this case cost the county taxpayers \$360,000. But this is not the only case before the county.

Five years ago a former county employee, Robert Travisano, sued for \$5 million claiming he was forced to retire and that he was subjected to "adverse treatment based upon unlawful discriminatory reasons." He sued for age discrimination based on age and a physical disability. A superior court judge dismissed the suit and now Mr. Travisano is appealing. To date, the case has cost the county taxpayers over \$300,000 in legal expenses.

And this week it was learned that three teachers have filed a notice of claim to sue for a collective \$2.4 million after they were laid off by the county from their jobs at the juvenile detention center in Linden. How much will this end up costing county taxpayers? And how many more laid off workers - there were some 260 workers let go this year - will follow these three unhappy ex-county employees?

But the biggest waste of money of lawsuits in recent years was that of discrimination lawsuits filed in 2005 regarding two candidates to head the Weights and Measure Division. In the end, Maria Todaro of Westfield was awarded \$500,000 after she claimed she did not get the job because she was a Republican after the job went to Michael Florio, son of Democratic Union Mayor Michael Florio. Also, Joseph Freitas was awarded \$150,000 to settle an age-discrimination lawsuit he brought for the same job. That's \$650,000 without including legal expenses, which also was in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In addition, legal representation of the county in negotiations with employee unions during the recent layoffs is costing the county taxpayers another

\$170,000.

The current system is setup that the outside law firms reap the benefits regardless of the outcomes of litigation and sometimes the individuals who filed these often-frivolous suits receive a nice payday. The taxpayers though are always the losers.

We're not singling out the county. This happens at all levels of government, especially when one hears governing bodies going into executive session, behind closed doors with lawyers in toe and without the public having any say or knowledge in how thousands of their dollars are being spent. Some have referred to this system as "Lottery of the Realm." Taxpayers are getting hammered from all directions. Isn't it time to put an end to it?

The lawyers and judges are in charge. Will they support change? Who will? In civil suits, regardless of the outcome or how frivolous, the judge always rules that the lawyers from both sides get paid (and this comes from you, the taxpayer). You also pay the judges and their staff.

We are a nation of laws - a good thing, we believe - but this "Civil Suit Sweepstakes" must be pared down.

How about shifting civil law to criminal law? Which reminds us, where is Jon Corzine now? Shouldn't he be sharing a bunk with Bernie Madoff?

Some Might Call This Theft

The Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) released a report Tuesday, which uncovered widespread improper participation in the state pension system. There are 565 municipalities and 597 school districts in the state - of these over 1,000 entities, 58 were surveyed for pension abuse - 57 failed. The OSC's abuse investigation identified 176 attorneys, 21 engineers, four health care professionals and one auditor. The 202 abusers could cost the state \$1.9 million annually in pension benefits.

Assembly Republican Budget Officer Declan O'Scanlon said municipalities must do their part in identifying and stopping the abuse of taxpayer dollars so government at all levels can reduce costs while maintaining services.

"The findings in OSC's investigation are very troubling," stated Asm. O'Scanlon "The Legislature worked very hard last year to reform the state's pension system in an effort to lift a suffocating burden from the shoulders of property taxpayers and save the system so our workers can count on receiving the pensions they are due. The results of this investigation show local officials need to step up to the plate. Reducing costs at all levels of government is the responsibility of all parties involved. It requires a unified, concerted effort."

Two towns in our area were tested for abuse - and failed - Westfield and Fanwood - Name the individuals?

Why Was Writer Not Grateful and Satisfied With Florence?

Fred T. Rossi's article about the charm and ambience of Florence was well written and a pleasure to read. That lovely Tuscan city does indeed, as Mr. Rossi states, entice one to return.

With all of the beauty and magnificence of the Uffizi and Accademia collections and the wonder of Michelangelo's "David" made available for the viewing and admiration of gallery visitors, why was the au-

thor of this piece not grateful and satisfied? Why was it necessary for him to "sneak a few photographs - despite repeated and sharp admonishments that photos were not permitted." It seems that the author feels some special entitlement not available to others.

Apparently the "ugly American" lives - and still travels.

Paul Harbaugh
 Mountainside

Small Businesses in SP Will Be Hurt By Five-Day Mail Delivery

As a small business owner in Scotch Plains, I rely on six-day mail delivery. It has been part of the way I do business for as long as I have been in business. I do not want to see a cut-back to five-day delivery, and I have heard that the Postmaster General has an idea of eventually cutting back service to four days a week. What happens when there is a holiday on a Monday and there is no Saturday delivery? I will now receive mail on Friday and then have to wait until the following Tuesday for my mail? This will hurt all of us, not only the small business owner.

The Postal Service has to pay for future retiree health benefits for employees that are not even born yet. What is the logic behind this mandate? Let's not forget that when the price of gas goes up, we do not pay more for postage. If Congress decides to destroy our Postal Service by passing a bill HR 2309, we the people will pay for it with higher rates and less service. When one of my customers sends me a check for my services, I would like to receive it in a timely manner, not wait as the mail sits in a Post Office or processing plant.

The bottom line with the Postal Service is that while everyone is hearing about how they are struggling, they are not the only organization

struggling today during a recession. But if the USPS starts to layoff employees, cut service, stop door-to-door delivery and close on Saturdays, that will not fix the problem and I believe it will just make things worse for our community and will impact our economy in a negative way.

The Scotch Plains Post Office is a place where people go to buy stamps, send packages, apply for a Passport, and we need our Postal Service to remain as is, without service cuts to the public. Many employees are veterans and deserve a secure job after serving in the military to protect our country. Reducing Postal jobs now and in the future will not be fair to our veterans and will only add to the high unemployment rate.

While I am a resident of Scotch Plains, I know that six days a week I will receive mail delivery to my door, without having to walk down to the corner to a centralized mailbox to pick up my mail. The idea of taking away this service is a reason for the American people to wonder where we are headed when even our senior citizens are overlooked and forgotten. We deserve better, let's save the Postal Service, not close it down!

Tom Straniero, owner
 Greenskeepers Landscaping
 Scotch Plains

Disagreeing With Pelosi, Conservative Christian Promotes the Rich

In response to Mickey O'Brien's question in last week's *Westfield Leader*, "What does Nancy Pelosi call the 48 percent who don't pay income taxes?" - I'd guess she'd call them the poor, and a few of the very, very rich who have really creative tax accountants. Based on recent news reports, Mitt Romney doesn't yet qualify for the latter group, but it sounds like he's working hard to join it.

So who are the 48 percent? When you Google "48 percent tax," you find that almost a third of them (31 percent) are households with annual incomes under \$10,000, 61 percent are under \$20k, and 87 percent are under \$40k. There's another way to view these "free-riders," as Mr. O'Brien seems to think of them. According to the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, the current

'poverty threshold' for a household is annual income a little over \$22,000. Interestingly, the official definition of 'poverty' hasn't been updated since 1964, before such modern near-necessities as cell phones, personal computers, and the Internet even existed. It also assumes that a typical household spends a third of its income on food, which is now generally conceded to be unrealistic.

Several recent proposals indicate that a more current definition would raise the threshold to more like \$29,000. It strikes me as very ironic (and sad) that so many 'conservatives,' many of whom consider themselves to be Christians, are so intent on improving things for the rich at the expense of the less fortunate among us.

Bruce Phillips
 Westfield

When Will the Court Report Be Issued On Alleged Theft By UC Employees?

In April 2012 the Union County Watchdog Association filed suit in Superior Court seeking records pertaining to an investigation involving alleged theft by county employee(s) including Freeholder Scanlon's son.

Exactly one month ago, on June 15, 2012, oral arguments were heard by state Superior Court Judge Regina Caufield in Union County who said she'd rule the following week. She hasn't ruled yet and there has been no word on the county's on-going investigation. During court proceedings, Caufield ordered the county to release an updated Vaughn Index which the county released on June 20.

A Vaughn Index is a document that agencies prepare in FOIA (public records) litigation to justify each withholding of information under a FOIA exemption.

The county has released two Vaughn Indexes to date, the first one was released only after our attorney demanded it, the second one was ordered released by Judge Caufield; the county argued against releasing it.

Although the index isn't specific about who, what, when and where the dates the records were created are

pretty damning.

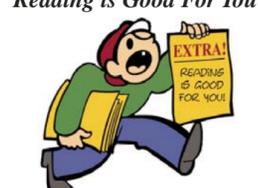
The first Index shows that an investigation began on January 31 and on February 6 a Miranda form was created, which means someone was advised of their constitutional rights. The index ends on February 8, 2012.

The second Index, which was ordered released by Judge Caufield on June 15, picks up on April 19 and ends on June 18 (there were no records created between February 8 and April 19.) The UCWA filed their lawsuit on April 12.

By comparison, *The Star-Ledger* reported that an ex-Clinton cop was sentenced to five years for selling police gear on eBay. The investigation began in June 2011 and the officer was arrested and charged just one month later. Hunterdon County Prosecutor Anthony Kearns, 3rd said in a news release: "The investigation originated when members of the police department reported to their supervisors that Patrolman Cohen was selling police issued equipment on the Internet.... This officer violated the public trust and was held accountable."

Tina Renna
 Cranford

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Letters to the Editor

Thanks to Community For Support Of Second Share NJ 5K Walk/Run

I was truly amazed to see such overwhelming community support for the NJ Sharing Network Foundation's second annual Share NJ 5K Walk/Run on June 10. Thousands flooded the streets of New Providence that day, including donor families and transplant recipients, to remember those who gave, honor those who received and offer hope to those who continue to wait for the "gift of life."

Blue skies and warm weather provided an ideal backdrop for every walker, runner, civic group and corporate partner that joined us that day. Together, we showed how much we care about those touched by organ donation and transplantation.

I was also deeply moved by the philanthropic generosity displayed at the Share NJ 5K. The event has already raised a record-breaking \$560,000, and we're still receiving contributions, moving us closer to our goal of \$625,000. The NJ Sharing Network Foundation is committed to supporting the work of NJ Sharing Network and to increasing the number of lives saved through education, research, public awareness and donor family support about the life-saving benefits of organ donation and transplantation.

On behalf of NJ Sharing Network and its Foundation, I thank all those who supported this year's Share NJ 5K and joined us to honor and remember those touched by the miracle of organ donation and transplantation.

Joe Roth
 President and CEO
 NJ Sharing Network



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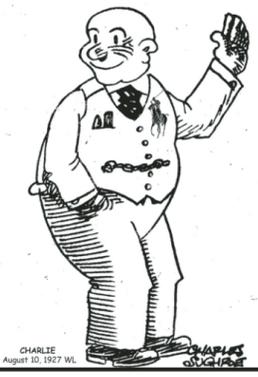
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LD-21 includes Westfield, Mountainside, Garwood, Summit and Cranford.
 LD-22 includes Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Plainfield, Clark and Linden.

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