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## CF Introduces School Resource Officer, Project ALERT

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — The Cranford schools will see a new face in the halls this year, a school resource officer. Detective Matthew Nazzaro was selected as the school resource officer. He will split his time between all the schools in the community during school hours.

“We feel to tie the community together even tighter than we are, that it is important we have this position to solidify that relationship between the police and the kids, the police and the administrators and the schools, the town and the police, the town and the board of ed.” Cranford Police Chief James Wozniak told *The Westfield Leader*. “Matt was chosen as a school resource officer because he has great communications skills. He was born and raised in town.”

Det. Nazzaro has completed weeks of training, and received a school resource officer certification, and is also up-to-date- on juvenile law, Chief Wozniak said.

“Today’s school environment puts additional emphasis on school safety and securing our school buildings. But in Cranford, between the police and the school, we like to partner together so students recognize our police as a friend and as a resource and can go to them in all sorts of situations.” Superintendent of Schools Gayle Carrick told *The Leader*.

The objective of the resource officer has a proactive outlook, rather than a reactive one, Det. Nazzaro said. He will be a mentor to the students who can go to him with any issues they may want to discuss. As part of this mentoring approach, he will forego the police uniform, badge and hat, and wear a polo shirt with the Cranford police logo. He will still be armed, as required for his job as a police officer.

“What we are trying to do is break down a barrier...an approachable person that works for the police department that acts as a mentor and can connect with kids in a positive manner. Sometimes the uniform becomes the barrier,” Det. Nazzaro said.

As an example of breaking down barriers between the police and students, Chief Wozniak told of the arrest

of a group of kids, one of which was arrested for possession of marijuana. “By the time all the kids went home, one of the kids was in with us and saying, ‘I am ruining my life. I have been smoking pot for a year and it’s ruining my life. Can you help me?’ It poses the question: if we had a school resource officer in place already would this kid have been able to come to our school resource officer and vent the issues...we can’t let kids like that fall through the gap...We [school resource officer] are like an early warning system... We are here to help,” Chief Wozniak said.

Substance abuse awareness is also one way the police department is partnering with the schools. “Cranford is not immune to the substance abuse issues. Nationwide it is an epidemic, specifically heroin,” Det. Nazzaro said. “It’s harder to be a kid today. We were not exposed to what kids are today —social media, internal pressures, external pressures, following social norms that may be misguided.”

A new substance abuse program, Project ALERT, will replace the D.A.R.E. program, and begin in the sixth grade, with 11, 45-minute classroom sessions, with a booster program in the eighth grade. “It addresses the pro-drug mindset. Why is the kid saying yes? We always said, ‘Say no.’ Why are they saying yes?” Chief Wozniak said.

Project ALERT will be a springboard to the substance abuse programs in place at the high school, Det. Nazzaro said. “By the time they get through 12th grade they have the foundation of knowledge to protect themselves and be responsible adults,” Det. Nazzaro said.

The school resource officer will also be on the school’s crisis committee, Superintendent Carrick said. He will supervise the monthly school safety and security drills, and make recommendations for improvement in school security. He supports the schools’ work with “stranger danger” awareness, bicycle pedestrian safety, career day and make general presentations on school and Internet safety and other topics, Superintendent Carrick said. “He is also a liaison for residency and truancy issues,” she said.

## Garwood Council

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main. Without any widening of the Orchard Brook, Mr. Guarriello said, Garwood is prohibited from enlarging the Garwood Brook culverts along South Avenue and under the NJ Transit rail line, which is what he said caused the flooding on Spruce.

“What Mayor Kalnins indicated to me was originally they had about 15 to 20 holdouts when they were attempting to obtain right-of-ways back a number of years ago,” Mayor Quattrocchi said. “He indicated to me that at this time, they are down to about eight or nine as a result of the flooding that has taken place in Cranford over the past couple of years. One resident actually lost a swimming pool.”

A report by the engineers, Maser Consulting, headquartered in Red Bank, will be reviewed by the Cranford Township Council at its next meeting on Monday, September 8, Mayor Quattrocchi said.

Regardless, Mr. Guarriello said he felt any effort to widen the Orchard Brook, which runs from North Avenue to the Rahway River, would require new approval from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

“I have the feeling that [the original] application is going to be dead,” Mr. Guarriello said. “And they’re going to have to reapply, meeting 2014 standards, not 2000 standards.”

Councilman Bill Nierstedt forwarded a resolution for Borough Attorney Bob Renaud to review seeking Cranford’s help in resolving the issue, which could be presented publicly at the Garwood Council’s next meeting.

The issue was one of only a handful of items discussed at the relatively brief council session.

The council also heard from Athletic Field Complex project committee representative Lou Petruzzelli who said that while all drywall installation has been completed on the field house, several issues remain at the \$2.3-million recreation site.

Two doors, one interior and one exterior, still have not arrived but are expected by the end of next week.

However, the biggest problems that remain include ponding on the center of the basketball court, which will need to be resurfaced with asphalt to fill in the low area, and a similar water issue in center field of the Little League Baseball field. The cause of that has



TRE FAMIGLIE...Three Westfield families met at the Piazza del Fico in Rome, Italy and shared news in *The Westfield Leader* with each other. Pictured, back row, from left to right, are: Nathan Hefner, Scott Hefner, Erik Sandstedt, Jack Sandstedt, Thomas Colicchio and Tom Colicchio; middle row, Hilary Hefner, Nicole Sandstedt and MaryLou Colicchio. The two girls in the front are Ava Hefner, left, and Megan Sandstedt.

## Road Paving

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for Central Avenue.

The town is also in the midst of installing new synthetic turf at Houlihan and Sid Faye Fields near St. Helen’s Church. Mr. Gildea said the old turf has been removed and the new turf will be placed once it arrives.

“That (project) hopefully will be wrapped up in a few weeks,” Mr. Gildea said, noting the turf has a life of 10 to 12 years. The current turf field is nine years old. The field, which is lighted, is utilized by Westfield’s lacrosse and soccer leagues.

The \$744,000 cost for the new turf, he said, is being partially offset by a Kids’ Recreation Trust Grant from Union County and user fees collected by Westfield. Both together total \$276,000.

Mr. Gildea said the next big project on the horizon is the dredging of the pond at Mindowaskin Park. The town has hired a consultant to come up with pricing estimates for the project. The pond has not been dredged since the 1980s. He said the project will likely be included in the 2015-2016 capital program.

He said the town recently partnered with the New Jersey Audubon Society and the United States Department of Wildlife to help ready the park in advance of its 100th

anniversary in 2018.

“The goal is to have a lot of refurbishing work including the dredging of the pond completed by 2018 so we can have a 100-year anniversary party/ribbon cutting to celebrate the park and obviously look forward to the next 100 years,” Mr. Gildea said.

Mayor Andrew Skibitsky said he has been working with the Audubon Society “to get more proper native-American species (plantings) of New Jersey around the pond that should be there that are bee and bird friendly, (and) pollinator friendly.”

He also said structure work will be completed so the water flows better to reduce spillover. “It’s going to be exciting when it’s done. It’s going to be very nice,” the Mayor said. “Ponds have to be dredged or they eventually become swamps. And we are not far from that right now.”

Mr. Gildea said disposal of dredged materials is the most expensive part of dredging. “It’s not going to be a small ticket item I’m sure,” he said.

He said the town will be seeking grants to offset the cost of the dredging. He said some of the after-dredging costs will be supported by donations by local and state organizations.

Residents can follow the progress of the paving projects on Twitter, Nixle, Facebook and the town’s website.

## Anna Judd

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ness necessary to complete a journey like this,” she said.

Ms. Judd said planning and organizing the run was a year-long effort. She is an artist, which she had subsidized with waitressing until it became too difficult to juggle with the preparations. Fortunately, the day after she quit waitressing, she sold one of her original oil paintings for \$5,000 and was then able to sustain herself to fully concentrate on training and securing sponsorships for the run.

One of her favorite aspects of the cross-country experience has been meeting and connecting with both veterans and civilians along the way. She celebrated her 30th birthday July 31 by jumping out of a plane with a wounded warrior.

But the trip has not been without challenges. The RV accompanying her broke down and was also involved in a fatal multi-car collision. Plus, pushing her body to run 3,400 miles over four months has resulted in a lot of pain and exhaustion. She said this was particularly evident between Texas and Georgia where she ran in 95-degree heat with 95 percent humidity.

However, Ms. Judd said she had personally made a promise to Mike Irwin, the founder of Team RWB, not to give up.

“I tell PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) victims it’s not okay to quit,” she said. “I’m practicing what I preach.”

She praised her friend and professional photographer, who goes by the name Robot, for her amazing support as she accompanied Ms. Judd and kept her spirits up through every aspect of the sometimes grueling journey.

Robot joked that they had been “expecting a lot of concrete” when they reached New Jersey and were pleasantly surprised by some of the state’s beautiful landscapes and views.

Ms. Judd also expressed gratitude for the support of her boyfriend, Matt Miller, who often drove the RV during her journey.

Three days after the interview with *The Times*, Ms. Judd successfully completed her nationwide marathon, arriving at One World Trade Center in New York City to the cheers of family and friends who had traveled to greet her.

Ms. Angel and other local Team RWB

members ran alongside Ms. Judd as she traversed the George Washington Bridge to Central Park to her final destination at the 9/11 Memorial.

“Team RWB was extremely excited, proud and grateful to join Anna on her final days,” Ms. Angel said. “Anna’s an inspiration to what we’re all about.”

Ms. Judd plans to write a book about her journey, and Robot will produce a documentary about the experience.

Those wishing to join or donate to the Team RWB charitable organization can visit their website at teamrwb.org. Ms. Angel’s local chapter can be found at facebook.com/TeamRWB-NJ.

## WF BOE

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High School - Maureen Mazzarese and Paul Valenzano; Roosevelt Intermediate School - Kim Schumacher; Edison Intermediate School - Kerri Webster; Franklin Elementary School - Lynn Slomczewski; Jefferson Elementary School - Jaime LaRosa; McKinley Elementary School - Marybeth Herits; Tamaques Elementary School - Theresa Paster; Washington Elementary School - Noelle McCarthy; Wilson Elementary School - Frank Uvegas and Lincoln School - Frank Santora.

Business Administrator Dana Sullivan reported that all repairs have been completed to the schools.

In other business, the board approved the acceptance of the following gifts: \$15,418 from the Wilson School PTO for the purchase of a laptop cart; \$1,756 from the Washington School PTO for the *Scholastic News* and *Time For Kids*; \$2,354 from the Washington School PTO for the purchase of an auditory sound system and eight printers; \$22,688 from the Tamaques School PTO for the purchase of a laptop cart and \$100 from Kenneth MacRitchie to the Roosevelt Intermediate School for the Ian MacRitchie Technology Award and the Walton Buriss Music Award.

The board also approved the amount \$309,191 to be taken out of the capital reserve fund for security improvements at all of the district schools and \$20,400 to be taken out of the capital reserve fund for architectural fees for security.



Courtesy of David Chango

SNOW IN JULY...David and Antoinette Chango of Fanwood enjoy *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* in the snow at an elevation of 11,000 feet along Bear Tooth Pass through the Rocky Mountains. The mountain pass crosses back and forth between the Montana and Wyoming border several times. The trip was part of the family’s cross country drive in July that included stops in Cleveland, Chicago, the Black Hills of South Dakota and San Francisco.

## Back to School

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military service in Kuwait is Westfield High School Assistant Principal Derrick Nelson. Mr. Nelson is a member of the United States Army Reserves.

While the typical summer painting and repairs projects were completed, contractors are putting the finishing touches on the last of the roof replacements as part of a \$13.6-million bond referendum approved by voters in 2012. Roofs were replaced this summer at Franklin, Jefferson, McKinley, Tamaques and Wilson Elementary Schools; Lincoln School, the district’s early childhood learning center; Kehler Stadium and the Board of Education Administration Building. The roofs at Westfield High School (WHS) and Edison and Roosevelt Intermediate Schools were done last summer.

The district has received \$2.7 million in state funding to offset the cost of the project to local taxpayers.

Superintendent Dolan said the district is “on target” to have the roofs completed by the opening of the school year.

When asked if the district will look to solar to power its buildings, Ms. Dolan responded, “That is going to be investigated, but we have to see what the market is and whether it does make sense.” She said new installations with the roofs will reduce energy costs during both hot and cold weather.

Other improvements completed over the summer included replacement of ceiling and floor tiles, resurfacing of gymnasium floors, and new boilers installed. A total of 902,000 feet of classrooms, hallways and stairwells in 10 schools have been readied by school custodians with painting, repairing and replacement of floor and ceiling tiles.

In addition, the district is working with the Westfield Boosters on a project to renovate athlete locker rooms at Kehler Stadium for the first time in decades. The school board has committed \$10,000 towards the project this year; the Boosters have estimated the total cost at \$95,000. The Boosters will also fund part of the project.

The Superintendent said the district this year will complete the first phase of security upgrades in all the schools. Westfield received a state grant for 40 percent of the cost of the security improvements. A second phase of upgrades will follow.

Jeff Johnson is returning for a second year as the district’s school resource officer. The superintendent said Mr. Johnson, a Westfield police officer

and WHS graduate, serves on the district’s emergency preparedness committee.

“He is mainly located at the high school, but he also helps out in other schools,” Ms. Dolan said.

Mr. Johnson has toured school buildings with staff to identify areas in need of improvement. He has also helped with guidelines on security drills conducted monthly at all schools throughout the year and monitors the drills. “That’s a great help,” the superintendent said.

“He really does serve as a resource for all our schools,” the superintendent said. She said Mr. Johnson also presents lessons in classrooms “that might touch on legal issues” such as driver’s education and health classes.

The superintendent said over 40 curricula have been revised and approved by the board of education. “And they touch on every academic area from elementary through high school,” she said.

She said a Mandarin (Chinese) 3 class has been added this year with revisions made to some of the other world language offerings. Ms. Dolan said the district will work with the Millburn School District in revising Westfield’s science curriculum for the elementary grades. The district held its second STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Camp this summer for 200 students, a 33-percent increase over last year. Westfield partnered with Kean University this year. Two week-long camps were held with students spending the final day of camp at the Kean STEM Center in Union.

“(Students) participated in demonstrations and a variety of labs there and got a better sense what the future can bring for them in the areas of STEM and we think we’ve piqued the interest of a few more scientists, a few more engineers, a few more people who will be involved in technology and math,” Ms. Dolan said. She said Kean has applied for a federal grant and Westfield “hopes to continue to work with them on STEM issues,” she said.

In the area of technology, the district has replaced all of its network switches to support faster access points, WiFi access points in all classrooms at the high schools have been upgraded, and professional development in the area of technology was provided for 65 teachers at all levels over the summer.

The district also updated its website in April, which includes Twitter and Facebook. “We did that to enhance our communications with parents,” she said.

The superintendent said the district has now digitalized paperwork that parents have to fill out. “So all of the updating will take place through our student databases,” she said. Parents will now be able to log-in online through district’s parent portal by using any device such as tablets or smart phones.

The district’s website system, Edline, allows teachers to post lesson plans for students who are out sick, etc. The new Learning Management System replaced the previous provider, SchoolCenter. Other features include an updated calendar, new design for ease of use, a new staff directory, and teacher and group pages, according to a district press release.

“It’s a powerful system. We’re looking forward to it because we think it’s really going to help education,” Ms. Dolan told *The Leader*.



Photo courtesy of Maria Constantinou

BEACH READING...The Constantinou family traveled to Aruba and brought along *The Westfield Leader*. Pictured, from left to right, are: Trey, Allie and Gillian Constantinou at the Aruba Lighthouse.