



Kate Browne for The Westfield Leader and The Times

**TOP TEACHERS...**The Mountainside Board of Education last week presented four teachers with the Governor's Teacher Recognition award. The award was established in 1985 for the purpose of acknowledging teachers who exhibit outstanding performance. This year's recipients are Kathleen Goldbeck, a special-education teacher; Kristin Trentham, a PEAK teacher; Carmine Ann Casolaro, a paraprofessional at the Beechwood Elementary School, and Linda Lombardo, the school secretary at Deerfield Elementary School.

## DWC Discusses Atlantic Health, Farmers' Market

By DOMINIC A. LAGANO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — During its board of directors' meeting on Monday, the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC), the management entity of the Special Improvement District (SID), discussed news regarding Atlantic Health System in addition to a significant change to the Farmers' Market that is sponsored annually by the Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce (GWACC).

"The Morgan Stanley space, over on Central Avenue, it's a large space about 8,000 square feet, has been rented to Atlantic Health," DWC Executive Director Sherry Cronin said. "It means more people working and visiting downtown. Since the leases were just negotiated, we are looking forward to learning more about how the town and the DWC can support them in their business model. Thus far we understand that it will have a focus on women's health issues."

Atlantic Health System is a non-profit healthcare company that manages hospitals and other healthcare facilities in New Jersey including Overlook Medical Center in Summit.

"They described it to me as a unit focusing on women's health," Mayor Shelley Brindle said. "OB-GYN and family medicine, not an urgent care type of place."

As the lease was just finalized, the DWC did not provide an estimate for when Atlantic Health will open.

During the liaisons' report portion of the meeting, GWACC Executive Director Gene Jannotti spoke about a significant change to the Farmers' Market, which is held on Saturdays from June through October.

"We're very pleased the town gave us the okay to move from the south-side train station parking lot to the north side," Mr. Jannotti said. "We've laid out a new

plan because of this, and we already have 21 vendors who are interested in participating."

By moving the market to the north-side parking lot, the organizers hope to increase visibility, foot traffic and customers as the south side location is isolated from most of the pedestrians downtown.

"Given the desire by many residents and visitors to improve the market's vendors and popularity, the GWACC worked with the mayor and council to move it to the north side this year," Ms. Cronin said.

She said Mr. Jannotti has reported that the change in location already has increased the number and quality of vendors when the market opens in June.

Some discussion ensued regarding the move's potential impact on downtown parking and street traffic, with Mayor Brindle stating if issues arise the situation would be reassessed.

During his liaison report, Town Administrator Jim Gildea said the DWC budget proposal for 2018 was in the process of being approved.

"Tomorrow night (Tuesday, March 27) we will have our budget introduction, the municipal budget and the DWC budget," Mr. Gildea said. "We have a four-week window so the public can comment and ask questions."

The Westfield Town Council incorporates the DWC budget into its own for state approval. According to Ms. Cronin, the operating DWC budget is \$416,000 this year versus \$409,000 for the last six years reflective of some slight increases in operating costs and increased promotional expenses. After review, council members will vote on the final budget on Tuesday, April 24, for formal adoption.

The DWC's next board of directors meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 23, at 7:30 p.m. The DWC office is located at 105 Elm Street on the basement level.

## Freeholders Award Grants For 'Level The Playing Field'

COUNTY — The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders has announced the awarding of "Level the Playing Field" grants to all 21 municipalities in the county. Level The Playing Field is a new grant program designed to help every municipality provide inclusive playgrounds to children with disabilities.

Letters to all 21 municipalities announcing the availability of Level the Playing Field funding were mailed last fall, and all 21 responded. A total of \$500,000 in Level the Playing Field awards was funded through the Union County Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund. The following amounts were awarded to each municipality:

Berkeley Heights, \$25,470; Clark, \$25,470; Cranford, \$25,470; Elizabeth, \$25,470; Fanwood, \$15,000; Garwood, \$25,470; Hillside, \$20,000; Kenilworth, \$25,470; Linden, \$25,470; Mountainside, \$25,470; New Providence, \$25,470; Plainfield, \$25,470; Rahway, \$25,470; Roselle, \$25,470; Roselle Park, \$25,470; Scotch Plains, \$25,470; Springfield, \$25,470; Summit, \$25,470; Union, \$17,010; Westfield, \$15,000, and Winfield Park, \$25,470.

Last fall the Freeholder Board broke ground on Union County's first all-inclusive Sensory Trail. The new 0.3 mile loop in the Watchung Reservation includes a Braille trail with rope guides and nature-themed play structures, designed to be enjoyed by all ages and abilities.

Other Union County programs for people with disabilities include the Sensory Friendly Theatre series sponsored by the Freeholder Board at the Union County Performing Arts Center, and programs at the county's Ulrich Swimming Pool, Watching Stables and Trailside Nature and Science Center.

The Freeholder Board also provides funding for special events such as annual fishing derbies, an ice skating social, summer carnival and barn dance, as well as programs for popular activities including golf, karate, yoga and volleyball.

UCHEART stands for "Empowering, Advocating for, Reaching and Teaching others." In addition to the new Level the Playing field grant program, UCHEART includes creation of the first Office for People with Special Needs in New Jersey. The new office is charged with improving recreational and social opportunities, reaching out to community groups and other stakeholders, and identifying new opportunities for engaging people with special needs.

More information about the Office for People with Special Needs is available on the county website, ucnj.org.

### Did You Know?

Union County held 15 mobile shredding events in 2017. A total of 6,800 residents participated resulting in the recycling of over 289,000 pounds of confidential documents.



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**ESSAY WINNERS...**The Mountainside Borough Council last week acknowledged Deerfield Elementary School students Hannah Tao, Rachel Bataille and Sarah Luckenbach, who placed first, second and third, respectively, in the Veterans of Foreign Wars' Patriot Pen Essay competition. The theme for this year's contest was "America's Gift to My Generation." This is the first time all three winners in Union County were from Mountainside.

## Community Access OK'd To Expand On-Site Training

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

CRANFORD — The board of adjustment Monday night unanimously approved Community Access Unlimited Inc. to designate administrative office space to expand on-site training and educational services at 70 Myrtle Avenue. Community Access Unlimited is a non-profit providing "comprehensive support services for people with disabilities and their families." The application was an amendment to a prior site-plan approval on July 13, 2015.

Board member David Salomon in closing comments stated that Community Access Unlimited does great work for the community. "There is not a family not touched (by the organization)," Mr. Salomon said.

Board member Kevin Illing said it was a "great project" when the application was initially approved in 2015.

The applicant's attorney, Stephen Hehl, said the applicant is seeking to utilize an additional 4,000 square feet of the building with no alterations to the structure's exterior.

"The only change reflected is in the parking requirements," said Thomas J. Quinn, the applicant's engineer.

Mr. Quinn said in the 2015 approved application 105 parking stalls were proposed. In the current application 92 parking stalls are proposed. Mr. Quinn said the projected parking demand will be for roughly 80 vehicles.

Retired Cranford Police Officer Patrick Fay said he sought employment with Community Access Unlimited upon retirement, noting the positive impact the non-profit has on building community and making families feel comfortable.

"No negative impact to the community," said Mr. Fay in describing possible downsides to an application approval by the board.

Resident Rita LaBrutto said she has been asking the township committee since 2013 "to certify affordable-housing credits" through negotiations with Community Access Unlimited Inc. Ms. LaBrutto said Community Access owns sites on Johnson Avenue and Glenwood Road with three residential properties totaling 13 bedrooms. She said because the bedrooms assist disabled individuals or are "group homes for developmentally-disabled residents" the affordable-housing credits equate to two credits for one bedroom. Ms. LaBrutto said 13 bedrooms would equate to a realized 26 extra affordable units or "credits" for Cranford.

To develop 26 affordable units would translate to a 180 total unit development in town, Ms. LaBrutto said.

"That's a whole development or a very dense development number," Ms. LaBrutto said. Ms. LaBrutto said she would rather see organizations bettering the community be bolstered or negotiated with instead of another high-density housing negotiation.

Ms. LaBrutto said she is in favor of the applicant, but her comments were not directed towards the board to vote yes or no on this specific application. Ms. LaBrutto said she was advocating for specific township committee and board of adjustment actions moving forward regarding affordable-housing impacts on the community.

Applicant Florin Traistaru was unanimously approved for a use variance to convert a principal permitted-use space (retail) at 115 Miln Street for a dentist office (conditional use) on the first floor in a zone where such a use is not permitted.

Mr. Traistaru said the basement is connected to the first floor and will be used for storage. The first floor does not exceed 1,000 feet with only nine square feet set aside for storage in the basement. The township ordinance states that the business cannot exceed 1,000 square feet on the first floor without a variance needed within the zone, stated Zoning Officer Ronald Johnson.

Mr. Johnson said when initially discussing with the applicant he was not sure how much of the basement would be utilized and in what function to the dental practice. Mr. Johnson said with 932 square feet being utilized on the first floor, including the basement into the business square footage, calculations would put the business square footage above the 1,000-square-foot threshold, thus requiring a variance.

Board member Robert Bovasso said he would be "comfortable" with an approval based on a conditional agreement that the basement would be used for storage only and not for additional practice space.

Mr. Traistaru said he would agree to such terms.

### MVC Facilities will be Closed on Good Friday

TRENTON — New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) customers are advised that all MVC facilities, including agencies, driver testing sites and inspection stations, will be closed for Good Friday on March 30. All facilities will be open for regular operating hours as of Saturday, March 31.

## PA Raising Airport Workers To \$19 Per Hour By 2023

REGION — Last Thursday afternoon the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey voted to raise wages to \$19 by 2023 for the 40,000 airport New York and New Jersey baggage handlers, security officers, wheelchair agents, terminal and airplane cleaners and other airport workers at JFK, LaGuardia and Newark airports.

For New Jersey airport workers the new wage policy will give them an \$8.45 raise and parity pay with New York airport workers. It will also result in real gains for the New York airport workers themselves, who have been making \$13 an hour, according to the 32BJ of the Service Employees International Union. "This is an unprecedented win for 40,000 contracted airport workers in an ongoing campaign led by thousands of cabin and terminal cleaners, wheelchair attendants, baggage handlers, security and other contracted service workers who have won \$15 an hour and the union lifting families and communities in both New York and New Jersey. They are part of a national movement of workers across this nation that are rising to demand their fair share and turn low-wage contracted jobs into family-sustaining jobs. New York and New Jersey airport workers have led the way and shown that when we work together in unity, we can win," said 32BJ

President Héctor Figueroa. In the last few years, airport workers held marches, rallies, and strikes and even got arrested on Martin Luther King Day to demand their rights. They won MLK Day as a paid holiday and were able to get the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to raise their wages from \$7.25 an hour to \$10.20.

### Bramnick Questions Funding Source for Murphy's Tech Hub

TRENTON — Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21st, Westfield) issued the following statement in response to Governor Phil Murphy's plan to create a tech hub project in New Brunswick:

"Building a tech hub is a good idea on paper, but Governor Murphy needs to tell us upfront how he plans to pay for it. Placing the cost on taxpayers would be counterproductive and should not be an option. The governor has been critical of the EDA (Economic Development Agency) and has called for an audit. It doesn't make sense that he wants the agency to now take on a new, huge project. We need answers before proceeding."

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