

Community Mourns Loss of WHS Principal Derrick Nelson

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Westfield High School (WHS) Principal Derrick E. Nelson, 44, died Sunday night, the school district reported Monday. Although the cause of death was not revealed, the school's newspaper, *Hi's Eye*, did an interview with Dr. Nelson in February about him becoming a bone marrow donor for a teenager from France who he never met.

The website nj.com reported Tuesday that the procedure was done at Hackensack University Hospital in Bergen County. Dr. Nelson's father told nj.com that his son had been in a month-long coma from which he never

recovered.

Parents and students were notified on February 22 that Dr. Nelson was dealing with a medical issue and would be absent for at least a few weeks.

The WHS community was notified Monday afternoon of Dr. Nelson's passing, according to a letter to parents released to *The Westfield Leader* Monday afternoon.

"Dr. Nelson touched us all with his kindness, compassion, integrity, and endlessly positive attitude. We hold him and his family in our hearts as we grieve this loss together and I know you join me in granting his family the privacy they have requested," said

Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan in her letter.

"As a committed educator, he understood that he was a role model at all times. He knew he was a role model to students, the staff, and for his colleagues, and he never forgot that. He had a strong moral compass, perhaps the strongest moral compass that I have ever experienced," Superintendent Dolan said during a press conference with a half dozen or more reporters Tuesday at the district's administrative offices.

The superintendent said counseling was available for students starting on Tuesday.

In speaking with the Westfield Public School community, Superintendent Dolan said, "Many had stories of how he helped them as they dealt with an illness. Others recalled his infectious laugh or his commitment to the students."

"Many of us are struggling with this loss, but are committed to continuing Derrick's legacy," Superintendent Dolan said.

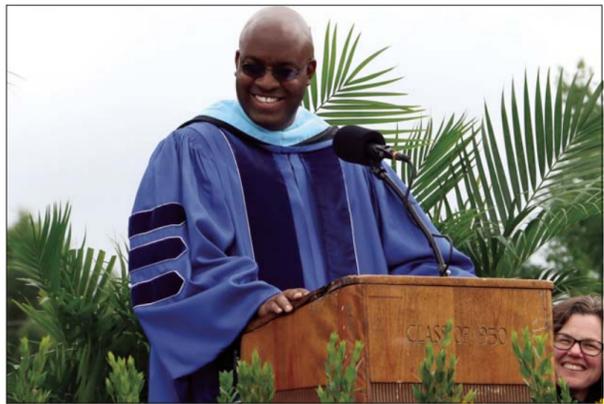
Mayor Shelley Brindle released the following statement on Instagram on Monday:

"My family was devastated to hear the news of the passing of Westfield High School principal Dr. Derrick Nelson. This is a tremendous loss for our community, and I know that our children, and we as parents, will struggle with coming to terms with this over the coming days and weeks." Mayor Brindle said, "He was a man of immense character and kindness, and his legacy will live on in the generations of students whose lives he touched."

"I have been in touch with Dr. Dolan and offered whatever assistance the town can provide during this very difficult and sad time. I know you all join me in offering our deepest sympathy and prayers to Dr. Nelson's family, friends, students, co-workers, and all who were lucky to have known him," Mayor Brindle said.

Several elected officials released

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Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader
REMEMBERING DERRICK NELSON...Westfield High School (WHS) Principal Derrick Nelson addresses graduates at the WHS 2018 commencement. Dr. Nelson passed away on Sunday.

Utility to Begin Replacing Natural Gas Lines in Town

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — Elizabethtown Gas will begin replacing natural gas lines throughout Cranford in the upcoming year, stated Elizabethtown Gas Company engineering director Michael Scacifero at Monday's township committee meeting.

The vintage gas lines operation total 87 miles underneath Cranford's streets. Mr. Scacifero said Elizabethtown would "like to start a dialogue" including the township engineer to assure the project is completed with respect to township ordinances and with efficiency for residents.

"Utility projects (without coordination to one another) "make us (committee members) look pretty stupid," stated Township Commissioner Thomas Hannen to Elizabethtown representatives. Mr. Hannen described the residents angst towards road projects coupled with a "recently paved road being re-dug up" for multiple-utility projects over a couple years span.

Mr. Hannen said Cranford residents pay for a majority of "milling and paving projects." He said sometimes a

utility company will only repave "half the road.

"It just isn't going to cut it," Mr. Hannen said.

Elizabethtown will honor Cranford "moratorium ordinances," ordinances that require utility companies to fully repave a road dug up for utility work in its entirety, stated Mr. Scacifero.

Roads not in the moratorium are repaved "just" in the area where the road was compromised for the utility project, Mr. Hannen noted.

"We want to coordinate the project in a comprehensive manner with both the township committee and other utility projects in town," said Mr. Scacifero.

Mayor Patrick Giblin said Elizabethtown publicly addressing the township committee and "having reached out" to the township engineer is "a start to coordinating" the projects "in an effective manner."

Mr. Scacifero said Cranford's engineering department will keep Elizabethtown updated to which roads are in moratorium, which roads other utility companies will need to access,

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Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader
GOING ON 30...The Optimist Club of Westfield is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. Mayor Shelley Brindle gives a proclamation Tuesday to members of the Optimist Club in recognition of the not-for-profit service organization's 30 years in serving youth and families of the local community through service projects, community activities, grants, support for needy families and academic programs, competitions and awards.

750 Walnut Rezoning Does Not Meet Master Plan Goals

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — In the continuation of the application to rezone 750 Walnut Avenue from commercial to residential, Business Administrator for the Cranford Schools, Robert Carfagno, said currently that the eight Cranford school buildings are "full."

"They are at capacity," Mr. Carfagno said. Currently, class sizes throughout the schools, range from 20 to 25 students per classroom, he said. The board of education has set a maximum class size of 25 students, he said. Additionally, classes in the schools are "sharing spaces," he said.

"We cannot handle space-wise either projection," referring to the school board's consultant Ross Haber's projection and the Hartz Mountain consultant's projections for school-aged children who would be living at the proposed apartments. Also, the school's budget wouldn't allow for the extra staff, technology and supplies.

"It wouldn't fit in the 2 percent (state) cap," Mr. Carfagno said of the costs associated with the influx of additional students. So, what the schools would end up seeing is larger class sizes, which could be in excess of 30 students in the elementary level and in excess of 40 students in higher grades, Mr. Carfagno said.

The increase of students would affect the "café-torium" where children eat lunch and have gym and other activities. He said the lunch space is at capacity.

He said the current statutory requirements does not allow the school board to budget for an increase of students that may happen, rather only



Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader
FIT KIDS...The Westfield Area Y sponsored the 10th Annual United Healthcare Health Bee Tuesday night, April 9, at the Westfield Y's Bauer Branch. Seven local middle schools competed in a quiz-show style competition about health and fitness.

Residents Continue Fights Against PSEG 69kV Lines, Cell Tower

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — There was a packed town council chambers Tuesday as residents came up to the microphone to voice their opinions and concerns regarding the PSE&G high-voltage line project, as well as residents who are banned together to fight against the monopole cell tower that is to be erected by Verizon Wireless on the Union County College (UCC) campus in Cranford, which borders Westfield.

PSE&G is working to connect substations in various municipalities with a 69,000-volt line, a high-voltage line that would be erected on to 65-foot poles. Residents are concerned about the health effects

associated with the high-voltage power and the carcinogen used in the wood poles, given that the route proposed would run in front of daycare facilities, multi-family apartment buildings, residential homes, and businesses.

There also was some back and forth between the council questioning when information was received about the project. One resident, James Foerst, a former councilman, said it was nine days ago that the residents had been made aware of this project. Mayor Shelley Brindle said she first heard from PSE&G at the end of January, and they were to attend an official council meeting but PSE&G cancelled it.

Councilmen Doug Stokes and Frank Arena and Councilwoman Jo Ann Neylan all said that they want PSE&G to build the lines underground and forego an above-ground line. PSE&G has stated that the underground option is cost prohibitive and could cost seven times more than above-ground lines.

"There is a public benefit to have fortified infrastructure, Mayor Brindle said. "I'm always looking for the best optimal outcome for everybody," she stated.

David Krieger, of Shackamaxon Drive, said PSE&G has provided no specifics about why it needs to go ahead with the project and said the vast majority of outages are a

result of downed transmission lines. Other towns have paid to put the wires underground, he said, and he urged the council to use the surplus to do so.

Drew Matus, a resident of Scotch Plains Avenue, said the town should look into a contract it has had with PSE&G that goes back to 1892 that could give the town legal weight and a voice as to whether or not these lines are installed. He said the town won a case against PSE&G after in 1909 PSE&G installed transmission lines, and the mayor said to take them down; later the town won in a case that went to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mayor Brindle later said the town council would not be able to vote for or against this project in a council meeting, but would rather vote to decide if it litigates the matter.

Other residents had similar concerns regarding a cell tower that is to be erected at UCC. Tricia Brown, of Gallows Hill Road, that is adjacent to the campus, said she had "grave concerns" over the tower, which would be near Washington School in Westfield and Brookside Place School in Cranford, as well as adjoining neighborhoods.

More than 1,000 signatures have been garnered for a petition against the tower, she said, citing concerns related to health, environment, prop-

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Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader
GO BC...The Boston College team marches in Saturday's Mountainside Youth Baseball opening day parade.

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