

## Scotch Plains Honors Volunteers During 29th Mayor's Gala

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – The 29th annual Scotch Plains Mayor's Charity Gala was held at the Shackamaxon Country Club on Friday evening. Every year Scotch Plains residents and friends join together to honor volunteers, raise money for those in need, and enjoy an evening filled with laughter, drinks and great food.

Dr. Jim Checchio received the Male-Volunteer-of-The-Year award, Kelly Price was honored as the Female-Volunteer-of-The-Year, with the organization of the year being Patrick's Downtown Race to Sum-

mer. Scotch Plains youth Kyle Brainard, Max Lebrun and Weston Fischer were recognized for their commitment to teaching the other disabled youth how to play basketball.

The evening fundraises \$10,000 to \$15,000 on average, which is donated to various charities serving those in need, stated Mayor Alexander Smith, touting the event's positive impact.

The mayor said Dr. Checchio is a lifelong Scotch Plains resident who has dedicated "countless hours of volunteer work to the township every year."

"It began with my parents. Give

back they always taught us to give back," said Dr. Checchio during his acceptance speech.

Dr. Checchio is a Historical Society of Scotch Plains and Fanwood member who has "spearheaded many projects," Mayor Smith said. He said Dr. Checchio's projects have "dramatically improved" the exterior grounds of the Osborn Cannonball House Museum. Dr. Checchio is a Boy Scout Troop 104 volunteer, overseeing the grape arbor refurbishment project at the museum.

He has assisted with his son Luke's Eagle Scout project, which includes restoring Tempe Bridge at the Frazee House Park. Dr. Checchio is a member of the Frazee Foundation and Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary and also is a member of the Historical Documentation, Historical Preservation, and Preserve the Shady Rest committees.

"Jim has been a strong supporter and tireless volunteer in efforts to restore the (Frazee) House," Mayor Smith said.

As the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Alumni Association's vice-president, Dr. Checchio has "worked to keep the Scotch Plains bond strong," stated Mayor Smith. Currently, Dr. Checchio serves on the Scotch Plains Planning Board, having served previously on the zoning board.

As a First United Methodist Church member, Dr. Checchio participates in the bell choir with his children, Luke and Cara.

"I feel like many different groups in town have come together to honor these terrific individuals. This night shows a community spirit. I was born here and lived here all my life," said Dr. Checchio's aunt, 92-year Scotch Plains resident Marie DiFrancesco.

Ms. Price is an active member of

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## Freeholders, Dept. Heads To Get Raises in 2020

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

COUNTY – The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders introduced an ordinance last week to give themselves and department directors raises effective January 1, 2020.

The freeholder chair's salary will go from \$35,034 to \$35,734; the vice-chairman from \$33,922 to \$34,600, and the six remaining freeholders from \$32,810 to \$33,466.

County Manager Ed Oatman's salary will increase from \$173,648 to \$182,330. He has been manager since March 1, 2018 when he replaced Al Faella, who retired. Mr. Oatman was paid \$169,000 when he was hired.

Other salaries are as follows: County Counsel, from \$173,648 to \$179,996; Director of Economic Development/Deputy County Manager, from \$157,396 to \$160,543; Director of Finance/County Treasurer and CCFO, from \$153,551 to \$156,622; Director of Engineering, Public Works and Facilities, from \$150,151 to \$153,154; Director of Administrative Services, from \$139,224 to \$142,272; Director of Public Safety, from \$139,483 to \$142,272; Director of Human Services, from \$136,658 to \$139,391; Director of Parks and Recreation, from \$137,051 to \$139,792; and Director of Corrections, from \$133,000 to \$135,660.

The second reading and adoption vote are scheduled for Thursday, December 19.

In other business, the board approved a \$70,000 settlement in litigation brought by Valerie Donofrio against the county dealing with an employment issue for "failure to accommodate" under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) as well as allegations of a hostile work environment, County Counsel Robert



A SCOTCH PLAINS TRADITION...The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club was well represented at the 29th annual Scotch Plains Mayor's Gala on Friday at the Shackamaxon Country Club. Courtesy of Sean Conklin

## Pat DiNizio Home Is Planned for Teardown and Subdivision

By FRED T. ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – The planning board on Monday gave its approval for a developer to raze an existing single-family house, subdivide the lot into two conforming lots and then build two new houses.

The two-and-a-half-story house at 2027 Westfield Avenue, directly across from St. Bartholomew the Apostle Parish, was the home for many years of rock musician Pat DiNizio, the leader of The Smithereens who died two years ago. It's where he hosted annual Memorial

Day weekend backyard concerts for fans and where he spent many hours in the mid-2000s practicing for his tryout to play minor league baseball.

William Hollows, a professional engineer and planner, told the board on Monday that the house, which was built in 1880, is in "disrepair" and "probably an eyesore to the neighborhood." The newly-drawn lot at the corner of Westfield Avenue and Montague Avenue will be 6,939 square feet in size while the interior lot will measure 6,158 square feet. Both of the houses to be built will face Montague Avenue, with attached two-car garages.

Board Vice-Chairman Jeffrey Strauss expressed some concern about cars backing out onto Montague Avenue, which he described as a bust

street. Mr. Hollows said the properties would be designed to offer ample sightlines for people entering Montague Avenue from Westfield Avenue, as well as traveling on Montague Avenue towards the intersection. He also noted that the corner lot's driveway will be placed as far as possible from the intersection.

Board member Richard Fortunato raised some concerns about the corner house and how its side wall facing Westfield Avenue will appear. Attorney Stephen Hehl said steps would be taken to make that side wall more aesthetically pleasing, and board member Paulette Coronato suggested including shutters on the windows facing Westfield Avenue, as well as some plantings.

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CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAY IN STYLE...The Township of Scotch Plains hosted its annual holiday celebration and Christmas tree-lighting ceremony on Sunday at the Alan Augustine Village Green on Park Avenue. Hundreds of residents attended the event, which featured free horse-drawn carriage rides around the downtown area, pony rides, a petting zoo, visits with Santa, hot cider, cookie decorating, face painting, music and more. Ken Zieler for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

## Town Approves Deer Hunt To Commence in January

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD – The town approved on Tuesday a deer hunt to take place on town property come the new year. In a majority vote, with Councilwoman Jo Ann Neylan and Councilman Doug Stokes voting against, the town will have Union County begin a deer-management program with crossbow hunters to kill white-tailed deer in Brightwood Park and at the wooded area of the Conservation Center during January and February.

The area around Grandview Avenue that was originally proposed two weeks ago was removed from the list due to "issues" the county had seen with hunting there. The town had approached the county about a deer hunt after residents complained about deer on their property, as well as vehicular accidents in-

volving deer, Councilman David Contract said.

Residents, including those from Scotch Plains who live adjacent to the conservation center, came out to the town council meeting to voice their opposition to the hunt, with most having concerns that the town property abuts residential property. Resident Jim Block said he finds the bow hunt "cruel" to the deer.

Tina Jacobs, who lives adjacent to the Conservation Center, said, "You are putting people at risk and in harm's way." She said the deer would flee onto her property after being shot with the arrow.

Julia Collins, a resident of Clark who lives near the Grandview Avenue area, said that bow hunters are not "held accountable" for the razors of the arrows should they fall to the ground, nor the cleanup of the

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THANK YOU, ELEANOR MCGOVERN...Union County Freeholder Chair Bette Jane Kowalski of Cranford, left, and Vice-Chairman Alexander Mirabella of Fanwood present a resolution to Eleanor McGovern commending her for her 35 years of service to the residents of Fanwood upon her retirement as the borough's business administrator and borough clerk. Courtesy of Jim Lowney/County of Union

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Sports -- Depth in Lineup Could Benefit Cougar Matmen; Blue Devil Lady Cagers Return Bulk of Team; Cougar Cagers Look to Turn Close Losses to Wins; Raiders Return Experienced Group of Wrestlers; Raiders Battled Consistency; Finish 12-8-3 in Boys Soccer.



A SEASON OF GIVING...The Township of Scotch Plains hosted its annual holiday celebration and tree-lighting ceremony on Sunday at the Alan Augustine Village Green. The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Chapter of UNICO, an Italian-American service organization manned a booth at the event and served up cannoli desserts. UNICO serves the community and contributes to charitable, cultural and educational organizations and projects. Paul Lachenauer for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

We are planning our Hanukkah and Christmas Edition for Thursday, December 19th.

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