

Miller Prunty Named Interim DWC Executive Director

WESTFIELD — Following a special executive session of the Board of the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) on August 26, Kathleen Miller Prunty has been named interim executive director, effective September 3, for a term of six months.

She replaces longtime executive director Sherry Cronin who left July 31 in what was announced as an agreed mutual separation. The hiring of Ms. Prunty was announced by Patricia Hanigan, DWC board chair, in a press release dated August 29.

"I'm thrilled to bring Kathleen's visionary leadership to the DWC," Ms. Hanigan said. "She is a seasoned professional who oversaw the widely recognized transformation of Cranford's thriving downtown. Her vast experience will be a tremendous asset to our DWC board members and staff, our downtown property owners and merchants, and by extension, all Westfield residents."

Ms. Hanigan stated that, in addition to overseeing the daily operations of the DWC, Ms. Miller Prunty will also be charged with re-evaluating the structure and overall strategic vision of the organization, and will lead the search for a permanent executive director.

Ms. Miller Prunty served as the director of business and economic development and Special Improvement District (SID) in Cranford Township from 1997 to 2018, where she oversaw downtown economic re-



Kathleen Miller Prunty

talization and transit-oriented development projects generating close to \$90 million of private investment. Her business recruitment initiative resulted in an average vacancy rate of 3 percent for more than 10 years, according to the DWC press release. Under her leadership, Cranford received the Best Downtown Award in 2018, and she was named the Union County Economic Development Director of the Year in 2014.

Ms. Miller Prunty has served three terms as the president of Downtown New Jersey, and has been a board member since 2000. In addition, she is a key organizer of the Raritan Valley Line Mayors' Alliance.

"We are so fortunate to have Kathleen lend her vast expertise at this important inflection point for our Downtown," Mayor Shelley Brindle said. "Her many accomplishments in Cranford are visible, proven, and innovative. During her tenure with us, we will look to her to shepherd the Master Plan recommendations for Downtown Westfield into a new strategic vision that will accelerate its transformation."

Ms. Miller Prunty is also a Democratic candidate this November for the Cranford Township Committee.

"I look forward to working with the Downtown Westfield Corporation Board, Mayor Shelley Brindle and the business and property owners to develop a progressive, forward-thinking plan for the downtown business district."

"Westfield is a wonderful community, and like so many other towns, it is brimming with potential and opportunities that can generate enthusiasm for businesses and residents," Ms. Miller Prunty said. "Downtowns are the heart and soul of a community and often the most recognizable face of a town. There is so much talent and energy in Westfield that I expect will find its way to the downtown."



HELPING KIDS GET FIT...Middle school students had the opportunity to Get Fit With Fanwood's Finest Instructors in August. The one-week program was held at the John Stamler Police Academy in Scotch Plains. Pictured, from left to right, are: Sergeant Marc Gottlick and Officers Kathy Case, Tim Green, Dan Piccola, Dan Kranz and Elliott Bernard.



Middle Schoolers Get Fit With Fanwood's Finest

SCOTCH PLAINS — The whistle sounds and 40 t-shirted young people sprint across the blacktop at the Stamler Police Academy in Scotch Plains as six instructors urge them on. But these aren't police recruits. They are middle school students who signed up for a one-week program of fitness and fun created by the Fanwood Police Department.

Get Fit With Fanwood's Finest was the idea of Chief Richard Trigo and his administrative assistant Dianne Howarth, with the help of a \$2,000 grant from the First Responders Children's Foundation and donations from the Union County Prosecutor's Office.

"We wanted to get the kids out of the house," Chief Trigo said. "So, we said let's do something where we workout with the kids. I approached some of our officers assigned to the Union County Emergency Response Team about what daily workouts they go through with their training. I said I'd like to incorporate that into something for the kids. And the officers just took off with it."

The two-hour gathering is not the rigorous, boot-camp-like routine that actually occurs at the police academy, but an informal and relaxed set of basic exercises mixed with field games, tug-of-war and relay races.

"We can make workouts enjoyable," said Officer Elliott Bernard, one of the instructors. "It doesn't have to be just push-ups, sit-ups and running for hours at a time."

The five-morning program is free, thanks to the grant. In addition to being an end-of-summer activity, it allows police officers to reach out to children in a non-official capacity, an investment in future relationships.

"We're not in uniform, we're not in that patrol car," said Sergeant Marc Gottlick. "We're out here. We're running relay races with them, giving high-fives and fist-bumps. They're getting to know us a little more individually."

"All the officers in Fanwood are approachable," added Ms. Howarth. "Now the kids see it. So, if they ever have a problem, they're not going to be afraid to come to the police department or reach out to one of the police officers."

In the last event of the day, a tug-of-war pitting the six officers against a group of kids, the kids won.

"You see what you accomplished when you work together?" Chief Trigo told the students afterwards. "Great job, everyone!"

DWI Penalties Revised Under New State Law

TRENTON — Legislation sponsored by Senator Nicholas Scutari (D-22nd, Linden), which will revise penalties for drunk driving and expand the use of ignition interlock devices (IID), has been signed into law by Governor Phil Murphy.

An IID is a device that detects alcohol from breath samples it takes from the driver. If alcohol is detected, the vehicle's engine will not start.

"Drunk driving is a serious issue in New Jersey," Senator Scutari said. "Having been a prosecutor for 16 years, my experience is that the use of ignition interlocks is the best way to safe guard our roads, while also allowing minor offenders to continue their employment."

Under the law, first time offenders with a BAC of 0.08 percent to 0.10 percent will be required to have an IID installed in their vehicle for three months. An offender with a BAC of 0.10 percent to 0.15 percent will be required to have an IID installed in their vehicle for seven to 12 months. Any first time offender who has a BAC above 0.15 percent will have their license suspended for four to six months and have an IID installed during and after the suspension for nine to 15 months.

Under the legislation, offenders that do not own, lease or operate a vehicle will be required to attest to this in court and their license will be suspended for a period of time equal to the IID installation period.

Lord & Taylor Chain Sold To Online Rental Entity

WESTFIELD — The future of Lord & Taylor in Westfield is likely to be a major discussion topic moving forward following last week's announcement that the retail giant was sold by parent company Canada-based Hudson Bay Company for \$75 million to Le Tote, Inc., an online fashion rental subscription service.

Le Tote "will also continue to own the real estate and leases associated with the remaining 38 Lord & Taylor stores," according to a report by CNN Business.

The Westfield store, located at 601-613 North Avenue, is owned by Trumbull, Conn.-based LT Westfield LLC. Taxes on the 5.42-acre property are \$499,444, according to tax records. Reportedly, Le Tote "has agreed to pay \$58 million in annual rent on the Lord & Taylor stores that are leased for 'at least' the next three years," according to news reports.

Westfield Mayor Shelley Brindle released the following statement on

the Lord & Taylor sale. "You may have read [last week's] announcement that Lord & Taylor has been purchased by Le Tote, an online clothing rental service targeting millennials. This is a forward looking combination of old retail and the new digital economy, and this acquisition bodes well for Westfield."

"As I have mentioned previously, I am in close frequent contact with executives at Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), the parent company of Lord & Taylor, including their Chairman Richard Baker, to ensure that Westfield has a seat at the table as future plans for the site unfold. It's important to note that HBC will continue to own the six acres of property, including the Lord & Taylor building."

"I'm pleased that Le Tote will continue to operate under the Lord & Taylor brand for at least two years, enabling us to continue our ongoing dialogue with HBC, who I'm confident will prove to be transformative investors in our town," Mayor Brindle said.

Police Make Arrest In Overnight Burglaries

CRANFORD — Police detectives arrested a Union County man on burglary and theft charges on Friday, stemming from several overnight residential burglaries.

George Brown, 61, of Elizabeth, was arrested after police responded to numerous investigations on Severin Court and Burchfield Avenue in the early morning hours, according to a Cranford Police Department press release.

In one of the occurrences, the victim observed forcible entry to his residence and several items missing, which prompted him to contact the Cranford Police.

The investigation was led by Cranford Police Detective Derek Farbanec, who developed Brown as a suspect while reviewing surveillance

footage at a neighboring residence. Detectives Robert Jordan, Michael Dubitsky, and Farbanec were able to locate and apprehend Brown in Newark without incident. Brown has had prior contacts with detectives, which ultimately led to his identification, according to the release.

Detectives are continuing with the investigation in an attempt to recover the victim's property and determine Brown's involvement in additional cases.

Brown was charged with 3rd degree burglary, two counts of attempted burglary, 3rd degree theft, 4th degree criminal trespass, and criminal mischief a disorderly persons offense. Brown was remanded to the Union County jail pending a detention hearing.

Raritan Coalition to Hold Public Meeting on Sept. 16

CRANFORD — Commuters, area residents, business owners, elected officials, community groups and other stakeholders can help advocate for mass transit improvements by attending a free public meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, September 16 at the Cranford Community Center, 220 Walnut Avenue in Cranford. The meeting is hosted by the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition, which includes representatives from four counties along NJ Transit's Raritan Valley Line, with a total population of 1.7 million.

The Regional Plan Association, a non-profit public policy agency that examines various issues, will present information from their report, "A Preventable Crisis, The Economic and Human Costs of a Hudson River Rail Tunnel Shutdown." The report details the economic and quality-of-life impact that any extended closures of the rapidly deteriorating 108-year-old Hudson River train tunnels would have on the regional economy, including Union County.

All are welcome to attend the free event. The Cranford Community Center is ADA accessible and free parking is located on site.

"A preventable crisis is brewing under the Hudson River in the form of aging, outdated rail tunnels that are urgently in need of repair, making it all the more imperative to secure funding for a new tunnel," said Union County Freeholder Chair and RVRC Trustee Bette Jane Kowalski of Cranford. "By joining our voices together we can more effectively communicate our concerns and advocate for action, both at the state and federal level."

Union County has eight NJ Transit train stations on the Raritan Valley Line, which has been beleaguered by delays and cancellations, as do three other member counties of the RVRC—Hunterdon Middlesex, and Somerset.

The evening will also include information on various other transit-related issues.

The Gateway project has been described as the largest and most economically significant infrastructure project currently under planning in the U.S. Consisting of a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River and

related work, Gateway will have a direct impact on New Jersey and New York City, as well as the entire metro area and northeastern U.S.

The Gateway improvements are located in the heart of the Northeast Corridor, the most heavily used passenger train line in the country. It accounts for 20 percent of the nation's gross domestic product. An estimated 10 percent of U.S. GDP depends on transit between New York and New Jersey alone.

The Northeast Corridor carries more than 800,000 passengers in 2,000 trains daily across eight states and Washington, D.C. In 2016, Amtrak reported that implementation of the full Gateway project could generate \$3.87 worth of economic benefits for every \$1 spent.

The Raritan Valley Line carries 23,500 passengers daily, making it NJ Transit's third most-used rail line. Though thousands of riders use it for their daily commute to Penn Station in New York City, the Raritan Valley Line employs diesel locomotives that are not permitted the Hudson River tunnels. As a result, riders are forced to disembark in Newark each time and wait for an electric train.

The Coalition launched almost 20 years ago with the aim of achieving a one-seat ride into New York, with membership including representatives from Union, Somerset, Middlesex and Hunterdon Counties, along with a Mayors Alliance and state officials.

The effort achieved partial success in 2014, when NJ Transit acquired dual-mode locomotives that could travel through the tunnels. However, the one-seat opportunity never expanded beyond a limited, off-peak trial. It was suspended in 2018 as NJ Transit focused on other priorities.

The Coalition can be reached on email at info@raritanvalleyrail.com. For additional information visit online at raritanvalleyrail.com, follow on Facebook at facebook.com/raritanvalleyrail, or follow on Twitter at twitter.com/rvcoalition.

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County to Sponsor 'Bootcamp' for Vets

COUNTY — The Union County Freeholder Board has announced that the "Bootcamp to the Boardroom" entrepreneurial training program is open to veterans. "Bootcamp to the Boardroom" is a 2019 initiative of the Union County Freeholder Chair Bette Jane Kowalski.

Organized by the Union County Economic Development Committee (UCEDC), "Bootcamp to the Boardroom" will run for six consecutive Tuesdays from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. starting on Tuesday, September 10. The program will be held at the UCEDC offices, located at 75 Chestnut Street in Cranford. The entrepreneurial six-week training course includes information on understanding credit and personal finance statements as well as preparing business and marketing plans along with other useful skills.

Participants are required to register for the "Bootcamp to the Boardroom" program. For more information or to register, contact Veteran Service Officer Janna Williams at (908) 527-4918 or jwilliams@ucnj.org.

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