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Letters to the Editor

We Are Outraged At Loss of George Floyd's Life In Minneapolis

We, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield, are outraged at the loss of George Floyd's life in Minneapolis and condemn the action and inaction of the police who were a part of it. We are similarly outraged at the death of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia and the actions of the posse/lynch mob that resulted in his death. Through the medium of the smart phone we are all witnesses to what actually occurred - we have all seen these killings and we will not "un-see" them. To be direct, we encourage all members of our community - white, black, brown, Asian, Latino - to remember what they have seen in these videos, recognize that it is racism, and demand justice for the victims. We encourage you to become actively involved in dismantling systemic racism and to SAY THEIR NAMES: George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery, as well as Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor, Philando

Castile, Sandra Bland... Normally, we would host an event at our MLK monument to address this spate of racially motivated killings. Due to COVID-19 concerns we will not do that this week as we cannot in good conscience put people's health at risk. Rather, we encourage everyone to visit our monument on the South Avenue circle on their own time and at a social distance to reflect and pay tribute to the people we have lost through race-based violence.

The Dr. King Association of Westfield is a non-partisan organization that is not affiliated with any political party and we welcome everyone to join with us in our efforts to further social justice. If you are interested in joining our association, please email us at MLKWestfield@gmail.com.

Elizabeth A. Wolf, President
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 Association of Westfield

ABCD EFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Diction Deception

Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions - only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly - good guess. If you get two - well-read individual. If you get three - word expert. If you get all four - You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.

Answers to last week's arcane words.

1. Poltroon - Cowardly; contemptible
2. Telesitic - Pertaining to the final end or purpose
3. Glutton - The act of swallowing
4. Mactation - The killing of anything offered as a sacrifice

PANEGYRIS

1. In biology, the cessation of natural selection in generation
2. A public meeting or festival
3. Unmanageable; uncontrollable
4. Capable of doing any kind of work; universally skilled

ZYTHUM

1. A malt beverage brewed by the ancient Egyptians
2. Any poison derived from a decaying tissue
3. A nerve cell connected with other nerve cells
4. A kind of biscuit which is baked and then sliced and toasted

GNOFF

1. A miser
2. To banish or ostracize
3. To disregard or consider unimportant
4. A sneeze or grunt

CRAPULENCE

1. Uselessness; of little or no value
2. State of exhaustion; worn out
3. Sickness caused by overindulgence in food or drink
4. Untidiness; filth

We Must Speak Out on Injustice

George Floyd was murdered. He was murdered by the very people who took an oath to "serve and protect." Almost as evil and disgusting as the officer who had his knee on George Floyd's neck, are the three other officers who seemingly stood by and did nothing, or helped restrain him, as he lay dying.

For decades we've talked about the "silent majority," the large swath of America that fails to speak out or offer an opinion. It is past time for that silent majority to speak up and stand with the black community.

It is heartening to watch and read about so many police chiefs and sheriffs across the country, including here in our towns, break the "blue line" and stand with those calling for justice for George Floyd. It is long past time for the brotherhood to take a back seat to what is right and what is just.

Over the years we have seen and heard things in our local towns that make us cringe. There were rumors of bad cops, racism, sexism, and racial profiling for

many years. Over the past 20 years we have seen lawsuits in several of our towns that brought some of these allegations to light. It is our belief that local officials have worked hard to ensure that our departments are full of officers we can all be proud of. We have seen nothing but true community service from our local law enforcement, especially during this pandemic, and they have proven themselves to be the heroes this world so desperately needs.

George Floyd has been taken from his family and friends. A life has been taken, and for his loved ones, their lives will never be the same. Nothing can change what has happened, but let this be the turning point for our nation. Let this root out the small percentage of evil in our law enforcement ranks. Let our voices be heard that we stand together against hate, discrimination and injustice. Let it bring equality to our country.

"What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor, but the silence of the bystander," Elie Wiesel.

Westfield Police Chief Responds to The Death of George Floyd

I write this today with a heavy heart, not only as chief of the Westfield Police Department, but as a father of three young children, as a dedicated public servant, and as a broken-hearted American citizen.

I am extremely proud to be a police officer, and am honored to be entrusted with the safety of others. To me, the badge is a symbol of trust, and of honor and integrity.

The role of a police officer is NOT to exert power, to show force, or to cause pain.

The role of a police officer is to help, to protect, to show compassion, to teach, and to love.

The killing of George Floyd, at the hands of police officers, demonstrated a callous disregard for human life. It should not have happened. His life was needlessly lost at the hands of people who were supposed to protect him.

The Westfield Police Department condemns the actions of those who contributed to the loss of his life. That is not what police work is. That is not what humanity is.

We mourn with his family, and with the rest of America, for the loss of his life. However, we must take this moment, learn from it, and become a more inclusive community.

I want you all to know the Westfield Police Department has been taking, and continues to take, significant measures to ensure the absolute professionalism of its police officers and their conduct at all times.

From the implementation of body-worn cameras, which are assigned to each and every one of our uniformed officers and field supervisors, to mandated implicit bias training, to the on-going review, revision and re-issuance of every single one of our standard operating pro-

cedures with the assistance of a professional outside law enforcement consultant, to the continuance of a robust professional standards unit to investigate any and all complaints of officer misconduct, there has been and will be no rest in our department.

In addition, I look forward to being involved with Mayor Brindley's newly formed Human Relations Advisory Committee to actively listen and participate in fostering an environment of inclusivity, mutual understanding, and respect within the Westfield community.

As the chief of police, my job is to ensure the Westfield Police Department always gives you its very best. You deserve that, you are worthy of that, and nothing short of it will ever be accepted.

In recognition of George Floyd's death, and the deaths of other people of color lost to police brutality, we stand with you.

In recognition of the strength of peaceful protest and advocacy for change, we stand with you.

In recognition of the grace to cause peace and healing for our divided country, we stand with you.

In recognition of the significant work left to do in our community and our country, and in wanting to be an active part of the solution, we stand with you.

And in pledge to honor, protect, and serve the wonderful citizens of this town, regardless of a person's race, creed, nationality, or gender, we stand before you.

I am always available for your questions and to hear your concerns. I am, as ever, here to serve you, and to protect you and this great town.

Be well, be safe, and be strong.

Chris Battiloro
 Westfield Police Chief

Scotch Plains, Fanwood Police Chiefs Respond to Actions of Minneapolis Officer

We are writing this statement to the residents of Scotch Plains and Fanwood to announce our official condemnation of the actions of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin and the other officers who stood by and watched while Chauvin knelt on Mr. George Floyd's neck until he lost consciousness and ultimately died. We have watched that video from multiple angles, and cannot find one single justification for why any individual, in handcuffs, not resisting, is put in the prone position with an officer kneeling with his full weight on his neck, for over nine minutes! Neither of us have ever been part of, been witness too, nor given approval for any kind of training that would authorize a tactic such as this to be used by any of our officers. We fully agree with the arrest and charges that were put on Derek Chauvin, and anticipate that the other officers who stood by and did nothing to offer assistance to Mr. Floyd, will also find themselves being charged, as they should be.

The members of the Scotch Plains and Fanwood Police Departments have made many strides in an effort to build a trusting relationship between the residents and visitors to our towns. We, along with every other police department in Union County, under the direction of the Union County Prosecutor's Office, have implemented a body-worn camera program where all of our patrol officers and other officers who are in contact with the public must wear a body-worn camera and record all encounters with members of the public. For every incident that involves a use of force, the video and reports are reviewed by the platoon commander and then by the division commander to make sure that the proper use of force was used and that no more force than

that which was necessary was used. We also have our commanding officers randomly review videos for every one of the officers that serve in their command.

We have used this to make sure that the commanding officers know what their officers are doing on a daily basis and also use several of the videos as training tools if we find an officer doing something contrary to the accepted practices of either of our departments. This program offers even more transparency between our officers and the members of the public that we serve. All of the officers in New Jersey also must have use of force, biased incident, and racially influenced policing training on an annual basis. Over the last three years, pair and impartial policing was implemented and all officers in Union County have had to participate in this training to make sure that policing is done on an even and fair basis for all. We both meet with the members of the Ministerium on a monthly basis to keep open lines of communication at all times with the leaders of the Houses of Worship in our communities as well as other township leaders. We also meet with the group Social Justice Matters in an effort to improve the race relations between members of our communities and members of our police departments. We have improved upon our community policing efforts by implementing the Cops and Kids program where officers from both Scotch Plains and Fanwood and the school children from both communities get to interact on a fun level and build relationships that last a lifetime with our officers.

We also have a very strong LEAD program, (that took the place of D.A.R.E.), to keep building on the positive relationships between the young members of our communities and our

officers. These, along with several other programs and activities that our officers have participated in over the last several years, are a great foundation for a very strong relationship that we have built with the members of our communities. We hope that the horrific actions taken by Derek Chauvin and the other Minneapolis officers do not destroy the relationship that has taken us years to build. We feel that we have to let the justice system take its course and that ultimately justice will be served to the Floyd family and to all who have felt betrayed and let down by incidents such as these.

We are asking all of the residents of Scotch Plains and Fanwood to not let the strong relationship that we have built over several years to be destroyed by the completely horrific and inexcusable actions of Minneapolis police officer Chauvin and the other officers who stood by and watched without having the common human decency, not to mention the official duty to act, to come to the aid of Mr. George Floyd and save his life, which they and all law enforcement officers have taken an oath to do. We truly understand the pain that many members of our communities feel after bearing witness to the horrible way that Mr. George Floyd's life was taken from him. We, and the members of the Scotch Plains and Fanwood Police Departments, completely and whole heartedly condemn the actions of Derek Chauvin and the other officers who stood by and did nothing. We welcome the opportunity to meet with the public to continue to foster relationships between the police and public we serve.

Scotch Plains Police Chief Theodore D. Conley
Fanwood Police Chief Richard Trigo

Kindness Is A Core Principle of The Mental Health Council

This week the Westfield Mental Health Council discusses kindness in our ongoing Mental Health Awareness Month series. Kindness can be as satisfying as a slice of cake. Practicing this key ingredient is the best way to be offered CAKE in return. The other CAKE "ingredients" are Compassion, Acceptance and Empathy, the building blocks of a stigma-free community.

The Cambridge English Dictionary describes kindness as "the quality of being generous, helpful, and caring about other people, or an act showing this quality." Recent examples in my home include a late night, warm cookie delivery from a friend for our sons in the midst of final exams, the Mindak family offering to paint the CAKE logo on a pallet for our council, and a handwritten greeting from a senior neighbor delivered to our home. Kind people state that offering kindness becomes habitual.

Self-acceptance includes being kind to oneself. Kindness to others demonstrates the realization that we are part of humanity. During this time when we have to wear masks to just go to the doctor, we can remember to look at each other in the eye, say hello and greet each other, so we do not feel so isolated or alone. We

can still be kind to ourselves and others, even if we have to wear that mask.

A trail of goodwill usually begins when one has been offered the qualities that generate positive feelings of being cared for. Kindness is essential in resetting emotions during this time of worry, fear, and restrictions. Best of all, the desire to be kind is contagious!

Paying it forward starts a chain of kindness. Recall that warm feeling when receiving something good and unexpected - perhaps a free coffee from the person ahead in line ahead, or a call from someone headed to the store asking if something is needed. Gratitude is shared when describing this surprise act to family or friend. The chain is reinforced, and an act of kindness is likely to be passed on to another person as a recognition or memory of that good feeling.

More on the CAKE initiative and additional mental health resources are located at www.westfieldnj.gov/mentalhealth. Please feel free to send your CAKE-filled thoughts and recognitions to cake@westfieldnj.gov.

Dominique Trott
 Sub-Committee Member
 Westfield Mental Health Council

FREELANCERS WANTED

Strong, detail-oriented writers with professional demeanor needed to cover local government meetings. Must be able to meet deadlines, know how to write a lead, and take an active interest in their beats in order to develop news stories. Please email resume and clips to: editor@goleader.com

Letters to the Editor

The Deadline is Monday 9 AM for publication on the coming Thursday. The size limit is 200-500 words.

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