



HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED (June 1)...Active and retired servicemen and women march in Westfield's annual Memorial Day parade; **CLASS OF 2006** (June 8)...Members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School senior class spell out their graduating year at the school's annual Senior Day; **HILLCREST** (June 22)...Hillcrest Academy South is located at Lincoln School on Westfield Avenue in Westfield, with Kehler Stadium visible in the background. The Westfield Board of Education opted to not renew the lease of Lincoln School to Hillcrest, operated by the Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC). The State Education Commission gave the UCESC until the end of the 2007 school year to vacate the building; **THE KID IN THE HAT** (March 9)...Children at Tamaques Elementary School in Westfield dress up in Dr. Seuss hats as part of the school's second-annual Read-a-Thon.

Lancaster Ltd. Closes; Choye and Petix Retire; Freeholders Scrap Ponderosa Plan; SP and Cops Settle Reverse Discrimination Lawsuit

JANUARY Westfield

The year kicked off with United States Attorney Christopher Christie swearing in Mayor Andy Skibitsky. The mayor emphasized the importance of communicating with him through his Saturday office hours, controlling development, improving traffic and pedestrian safety, along with promoting continued observation of town hot spots. Town council members were sworn in as well. Judges John Toriello, John Boyle, Douglas Fasciale and William Wertheimer swore in First Ward Councilman Sal Caruana, Second Ward Councilwoman Vicki Kimmins, Third Ward Councilman David Haas and Fourth Ward Councilman Tom Bigosinski.

At its first meeting of the year, the board of education began discussing selling the Elm Street administrative building and moving the staff to Lincoln School on Westfield Avenue, as well as holding Kindergarten and preschool classes there.

The town council stated its intention to repeal the redevelopment distinction for parking lots one and eight.

Sal Caruana: "Basically, what we did was have a specific project and strategy in mind and knowing the end game, did a redevelopment strategy to accomplish this result (parking deck). Now what we've done is open the door...to some risk in these areas by living with the designation. We have opened the door to a fast track for some other council for some other use to gain a leg up on utilization on those two areas."

The Union County Prosecutor's Office began investigating an altercation that allegedly occurred between former Westfield Police Chief Bernard Tracy and town Police Officer Gregory Kasko. The incident allegedly occurred during the evening of January 4 at police headquarters.

The Woman's Club of Westfield marked its 110th anniversary.

Workmen began preparing for the installation of traffic lights at the intersection on East Broad Street with Central and Mountain Avenues.

A three-alarm fire caused moderate damage to the medical offices of Dr. John Tabachnick on Westfield

Avenue and extensive structural damage to apartments on the second and third floors.

Scotch Plains

Randolph Brause, who has served as the public defender for the past six years, was appointed town prosecutor and Thomas Russo was appointed public defender. Alice Agran and Ken Greenman were reappointed to the planning board for four-year terms and Ken Anderson and James Fawcett were reappointed to the zoning board of adjustment for four-year terms.

The state Department of Transportation (DOT) awarded a \$175,000 grant that will be used for roadway improvements to East Second Street.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education (BOE) decided to scrap the standardized assessment test, TerraNova, currently used for students in grades five through seven, and replace them with a test that complies with the new 2005-2006 interim assessments ordered by the state — the New Jersey Proficiency Assessment of State Standards (NJPASS).

Fanwood

Bruce Walsh and Joan Wheeler were sworn in as new members of the borough council. They were each presented with a plaque from Assemblywoman Linda Stender, a Fanwood resident and former mayor. Councilwoman Donna Dolce was named the council president. With the addition of Mr. Walsh and Ms. Wheeler, Fanwood Democrats took a 7-0 majority. Mayor Colleen Mahr appointed Laura DiFabrizio as borough prosecutor and Kelly Waters as borough public defender.

Garwood

The borough's BOE reported on the final stages of the Lincoln School expansion and renovation project, announcing their hope that the project would be completed by spring.

The borough council adopted a local ordinance prohibiting registered

sex offenders from residing or loitering within 2,500 feet of any school, park, playground, recreation area, day care facility or school bus stop.

Mountainside

Councilman Keith Turner was sworn in for a new term. He has been a councilman for 16 years. Assemblyman Jon Bramnick swore in Councilman Paul Mirabelli to his new term. Mr. Mirabelli was named council president for 2006, his 10th year as a councilman.

The BOE passed a motion to charge \$175 per month for each preschool student who is "non-disabled." Previously, the pre-school program for three and four-year-olds, was free by state mandate.

Chief School Administrator Richard O'Malley explained that the cost of running the public preschool is "substantial" — upwards of \$100,000 per year.

Regional

Al Mirabella of Fanwood and Bette Jane Kowalski of Cranford were named chairman and vice-chairwoman, respectively, of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi and Freeholders Angel Estrada, Rick Proctor and Nancy Ward were sworn in to new terms.

Mr. Mirabella's initiatives include enhancing the county's website, creation of a virtual online library linked to the county website and creation of a standing freeholder committee on inter-governmental relations.

Al Faella was named acting director of the Union County Economic Development Department, replacing James Daley, who resigned.

The Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA) commissioners considered a proposal from United Water to privatize the utility's operations.

The county announced a hiring freeze throughout the county budget process.

Former Union County Manager Ann Baran, the first woman to serve in that capacity, died of breast cancer.

County Manager George Devanney unveiled a \$413-million executive budget that is \$23 million or 5.9 percent over 2005. The proposed \$228.3 million tax levy would hike county taxes in 19 of the 21 towns in the county.

Freeholder Dan Sullivan was elected chairman of the North Jersey Transportation Authority's Board of Trustees.

FEBRUARY Westfield

After 45 years in Westfield, Lancaster Ltd. closed its doors. David Sutter, who owned the store for 20 years, announced his retirement. Chico's clothing store became the new tenant after relocating from East Broad Street.

Westfield Town Administrator Jim Gildea implemented disciplinary actions against suspended Westfield Police Detective Sandra Chambers after she was found guilty on five of seven

charges following a disciplinary hearing. Detective Chambers was charged with trying to have a ticket voided for her son and for lying during an internal investigation by the Westfield Police Department. The official charges against her were false swearing, official misconduct, neglect of duty, striking a summons from the record, conduct unbecoming an employee and attempt to use authority to control or modify another employee's action. Detective Chambers was offered, and accepted, her job back starting February 21.

Edward Trancinna retired after serving as the Westfield Blue Devils football coach for 19 years. He continues to serve as athletic director.

Authorities continued their investigation into the theft of the collection money from St. Helen's Roman Catholic Church, totaling some \$17,000 to \$20,000. It is believed the theft occurred on January 22.

After 26 years as Westfield High School's principal, Robert Petix announced his retirement effective June 30. "The school is in good shape; I don't think there's any unfinished business that I'll hand over to my successor," he said. "The major reason I'm leaving is because I'm older. I'm 63 years old and people say there'll come a time when you don't want to be here anymore. My enthusiasm not only has not waned; it's gotten greater, greater than ever."

Town Parking Director John Morgan tendered his resignation to Westfield Police Chief John Parizeau and Mr. Gildea. Mr. Morgan accepted a job offer from an international parking-systems company.

Scotch Plains

Director of public property Walter DiNizo retired after 20 years of public works service and more than 13 years as director of public property in Scotch Plains. "I will miss the wonderful people" in the department, he told *The Leader/Times* on his final day at the office. He called the two dozen public works employees "great" and "talented" people who helped him, he said, "make Scotch Plains a better place to live."

Nearly 300 teachers from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district turned out for a "Unity Rally" at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, picketing along Westfield Road as they rallied for a new contract. The previous contract expired on June 30, 2005.

On February 13, the planning board meeting to discuss Union County's intention to lease the former Sevell property on Cooper Road so that it could be turned into a Green Meadows Children's Farm was halted due to lack of capacity for the crowd. Residents later took their opposition to a county freeholders' meeting, who scratched the plan in favor of soccer fields, announced later in the year.

The BOE chose to reinstate the freshman soccer program at SPFH.

Fanwood

Fanwood resident Raj Mukherji, 21, was indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of impersonating a U.S. Defense Intelligence agent, fraud in connection with unauthorized use and possession of false identification documents and lying to the FBI when

questioned about the source of those credentials. Mr. Mukherji was previously indicted by a state grand jury in November of 2005 on charges of stalking two women, witness tampering, burglary and contempt of court.

Mountainside

After 16 years of service to Mountainside, Borough Clerk Judy Osty announced her retirement effective March 31. She was replaced by Martha De Jesus.

Garwood

The borough's new Chief of Police, William Legg, was sworn in by Mayor Dennis McCarthy. Chief Legg replaces outgoing Chief Dennis Lesak, who announced his retirement after 28 years of service with the department.

Regional

The county freeholders approved a plan to add twilight golfing tee-times at the county's four public golf courses.

Berkeley Heights was named one of finalists for the new location of the New York Jets' training camp. Florham Park eventually was chosen as the team's new home as of 2008.

The freeholders proposed privatizing the county's golf courses and eliminating the county's portion of the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Program.

The Bush administration approved a deal to turn over terminal operations of six United States ports to Dubai Ports World, as state-owned company in the United Arab Emirates. After heavy opposition the deal, Dubai sold its American operations to American International Group's asset management division, Global Investment Group.

MARCH Westfield

The Downtown Westfield Corporation's (DWC) downtown improvement plan includes work on the South Avenue station square, Central Avenue corridor, integration of parking lot improvements, pedestrian walkways, new street lighting fixtures, brick pavers, new trees protected by iron fencing and a downtown sidewalk replacement plan. Representing the town council on the



William Legg

DWC, First Ward Councilman Sal Caruana said, "The finance committee is going to recommend that the council adopt the first phase of the improvement plan on a 50/50 basis. The financing goal for phase two should be a three-way partnership between the town, the DWC and the grants."

The town council's finance committee faced \$1.3 million in mandated and fixed costs, as well as lower revenue projections. In addition, the town would not learn of state aid figures until after Governor Jon Corzine's budget address on March 12. "There are four or five big areas that are big negative effects in 2006," Town Administrator Jim Gildea said.

Allison O'Hara, president of the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce (WACC), officially announced her plans to resign effective April 28. Ms. O'Hara said her husband had received a job transfer that would relocate their family to Colorado.

The BOE adopted a tentative 2006-2007 school budget of \$79,491,415 on March 14. The proposed school

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Gregory Kasko



STANDING BUT QUIET (May 18)...The cell tower at Fire Station Number Two in Scotch Plains looks ready to go.



Courtesy of Westfield Fire Department

ASSISTING MOTORIST (March 2)...Westfield firefighters work to free a trapped motorist from a Jeep Cherokee after the vehicle overturned following an accident at Westfield Avenue and Washington Street. The driver was taken to University Hospital in Newark.



WE WANT A CONTRACT (February 9)...More than 300 members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association (SPFEA) demonstrate for a new contract outside Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School last Wednesday afternoon. Representatives of the board of education and the SPFEA met with a fact finder on March 9 in an effort to reach a settlement.



Fred T. Rossi for *The Westfield Leader and The Times*

WHO NEEDS A FORT? (February 26)...A weekend snowstorm led to school cancellations and gave area children (and adults) a chance to enjoy the snow buildup.

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