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## Public Has Reason to Celebrate As Attitudes About Drugs Change

By Senator Donald T. DiFrancesco

As the season of good tidings and family celebrations begins, there is news that the families of our state and nation can celebrate — and accept as a challenge for the new year.

As a member of the Executive Board of the Partnership For A Drug-Free New Jersey (PDFNJ), I was pleased by the findings of a study recently released by the Partnership For A Drug-Free America. The Partnership For A Drug-Free America works with New Jersey Partnership on the national level.

This study indicates that young people's attitudes about illegal drugs are changing — and changing for the better.

The 12<sup>th</sup> annual Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, which monitors the opinions of young people from across the United States about drugs, shows that more young people don't think that drugs — or those who use them — are "cool." The number of teens who said, "Kids who are really cool don't use drugs," increased from 35 percent to 40 percent over the past year. The number who agreed with the statement "in my school, marijuana users are popular," dropped from 17 to 10 percent.

Changes in attitudes slowly lead to changes in outcomes. The same survey shows that uses of illegal drugs such as marijuana, inhalants, methamphetamines, LSD, cocaine and crack have all dropped slightly.

I firmly believe that this progress is a result of support for successful prevention efforts from every segment of our community.

I am proud of PDFNJ's work with the media to communicate effective anti-drug messages to young people. Since 1992, New Jersey newspapers, radio and television outlets have donated more than \$30 million in advertising for the PDFNJ's public service announcements that effectively "unsell" drugs to our kids.

The kids surveyed in the Partnership study can cite specific ads, and more than a third of survey respondents say that these ads make them less likely to try drugs.

Schools, governments, law enforcement, not-for-profit agencies, community volunteers, and business leaders are doing great work to educate young people of our state.

From D.A.R.E. Programs to the Governor's Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse's municipal alliances across our state, the number of organizations fighting drugs is a measure of the commitment of New Jerseyans to drug-free communities.

However, the family is still the cornerstone of prevention efforts. In the Partnership study, 30 percent of young people say that they "learn a lot about the risks of drugs" from their parents or grandparents — more than from their friends, more than from the streets. That is why the Partnership for a Drug Free New Jersey sponsors "15 Minute Child Checks" — community-based seminars to help parents learn methods for talking with their kids about drugs.

We are rightfully proud of these efforts. But there is so much more to do.

In the Partnership study, more than 54 percent of teenagers say that they have been offered drugs — 30 percent say they have been offered drugs in school. While drug use may have moderated it is still far, far too high.

The greatest weapon we have to fight drugs in New Jersey is information and we must arm our young people with the facts and skills they need to survive and thrive.

The Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey provides great resources for par-

ents, educators, and the community-at-large that can be obtained by calling (201) 798-7171.

Every day that a child is drug free is a great day for our state and nation. But every day that children are exposed to drugs and lies about them is a day we must work to tell our kids the truth about drugs and help them resist temptation. As 1999 draws to a close, let's recommit our energies to fighting this good fight for the future of our children and the future of our state.

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State Senate President Donald T. DiFrancesco is a member of the executive board of Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey. He wrote this column about the group's efforts to teach children about the dangers of drugs and challenges for the future.



## TAKE MY WORD FOR IT

Now that we have managed to solve this problem, it is time to put our hand to the task of describing the origin of the word, manager. The Latin word manus "hand," which the Italians fashioned into meneggiare "control by hand, to train horses," is the source. The Italian word maneggio, "a horse riding school," ultimately developed into the English/French word manage.

We hope you were not bridled by this etymology. We certainly would not "horse around" with such an important word, especially a word used to describe someone as important as a female manager of a bank of any other entity.

## FROM THE DESK OF MAYOR CONNELLY Mayor Connelly's Last 18 Years Packed Full of Varied, Memorable Experiences

— MAYOR OF FANWOOD —

By MARYANNE S. CONNELLY

On December 31, 1999, I will conclude my mayoral term and 18 years of involvement on boards and commissions of the Borough of Fanwood. I am moving on and running for the United States Congress.

I made a conscious decision not to run for Mayor again because I could not tell the people of Fanwood that I would be around for four more years when I knew I would be in the Congressional race. It was a difficult decision, but the right one for me and for the people of Fanwood.

My local involvement started with the belief that "you have no right to complain unless you are willing to do something about it." I faced a land development problem and challenged the Fanwood Planning Board application.

As a result I was asked to become a Planning Board member and a member of the borough's Environmental Commission and eventually ran for the Fanwood Council. This chapter in my life has been one of learning, service and challenges and the conviction that "you can do anything in life if you set your mind to it."

As Police Commissioner for nine years, I dealt with public safety issues such as community policing, gun safety, rescue squad calls and fire safety. As the negotiator for Fanwood's settlement with the Council on Affordable Housing, I improved my negotiating skills and expanded my knowledge of planning, land development and engineering.

As the Mayor for four years, I have had

some unique experiences that I will never forget. The ritual of tribute and farewell performed by Chief Roy Crazy Horse for the historic Fanwood Oak, which had to be removed during the first year of my term. The natural disasters we faced, starting with the record 24-inch snowfall in 1996, our very own tornado in 1998 and the nor'easters in 1997. I have been with our public works force, riding with them in snow storms and disasters. The work they do is critical to our borough.

Meetings, meetings and more meetings — over 1,000 in the past 13 years! Would I do it again? Absolutely. The opportunity to serve and make a difference in the lives of the people in my community was worth every minute. Every face and every phone call, every compliment and every complaint, every employee and every volunteer was worth it. The lives I've touched and those that have touched me. I consider myself blessed.

Thank you for the opportunity. It is a privilege to serve and I hope to build upon my experiences by being elected to the U.S. Congress.

Everyone has something to give. Take advantage of the opportunities and get involved. You can make a difference.

As we close 1999 and move into the new millennium, I wish all of you a healthy and happy New Year!

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Editor's Note: Maryanne S. Connelly has been Mayor of Fanwood for the last four years and is expected to formally announce her candidacy for U.S. Congress in January.

## Suggestions for Making Your Home Safe for Holidays

By JOYCE STRENOVIC

The holidays are coming, and people are planning trips to visit far away family. While you're heading off to a holiday dinner or a family reunion, burglars may be planning a visit to this year's hot destination: your neighborhood.

Apart from digging a moat and fortifying the walls, what can you do to deter break-ins at your castle? Take precautions by preparing for your home's security as thoroughly as you plan the details of your trip. Here are some tips to follow when leaving your home unoccupied:

1. Make your house look lived-in. This overriding strategy can be accomplished in various ways, the easiest being to ask a friend or relative to house sit. If this isn't possible, read on.
2. Keep pets at home. They're more comfortable, and they act as a built-in deterrent, especially if your dog has a big bark. Hire a dog walker or cat sitter to come by every day to feed, water and walk or let out your pets.
3. Leave blinds and curtains positioned where you would normally have them. Refrain from the temptation to close up the house so passersby can't see inside.
4. Use timers on lights, a television and a radio throughout the house. These inexpensive devices build on the illusion that someone's home.
5. Do not change the greeting on your answering machine. If possible, call in for messages and erase or save them. A caller hearing a pause followed by a long series of beeps (indicating unheard messages) will assume you're away.
6. Cancel mail and newspaper deliveries or have a trusted neighbor or friend collect them daily.
7. Ask someone to move an ungaraged vehicle occasionally, especially if you'll be away more than a few days.
8. Keep up your lawn. Continue the gardening service or ask someone to cut the grass. Offer to reciprocate with a neighbor.
9. Arrange for snow removal. Keep the

walks, driveway and vehicle snow-free as when you're home.

10. Hide garbage cans. This may seem odd, but think about it. When people are home, they produce garbage. Empty garbage cans advertise your absence.

11. Do not leave an itinerary or marked-up calendar hanging conspicuously on the refrigerator or anywhere else within a stranger's view.

12. Never hide a key outside under the mat. Burglars know that trick, too.

13. Tell a trusted neighbor your plans and leave an itinerary so you can be reached. Consider giving this same neighbor a spare key and the access code to your home alarm in case it accidentally goes off.

14. Test your home alarm system. After a break-in is not the time to discover the system is malfunctioning.

15. Some police departments have a home check in which an officer will periodically check on a deserted house. Police departments feel that it's not in your best interest because having a police officer at an empty home can tip burglars off. Consider this option carefully before you sign up for such a program.

16. List all valuables with serial numbers, dates of purchase and prices. Keep the list in a secure place. It's a good idea to update the list periodically.

17. Store jewelry or furs outside your home. Leave jewelry in a safe-deposit box, and arrange for a local fur salon or dry cleaner to store the furs.

18. Check that all doors and windows have been locked. Obvious, but worth adding to your list.

The holidays should be filled with happy memories, relaxation and fun, free from everyday stresses. Taking the time to prepare your home for your absence will help safeguard against any unwanted company dropping in while you're away.

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Joyce Strenovic is with Prudential New Jersey Realty in Westfield.

## Scotch Plains GOP May be Gleeful Now, But the Road Ahead Could be Rocky

Republicans in Scotch Plains are understandably gleeful over their election victory last month, which returned them to control of the Township Council. After a 10-month hiatus, they can now choose one of their own as mayor next year.

It was certainly an unusual and tragic series of events that caused the Democratic Party's 3-2 Council majority — and one it expected to retain or even enlarge through 2002 — to, instead, be reversed. The death in May of Democrat Franklin P. Donatelli set the stage for the special election on November 2. And public discontent over the large property tax increase — supported and approved by Council Democrats just prior to Mr. Donatelli's passing — handed the GOP the most potent ammunition a political party could hope for.

It's tough to survive an unpopular tax hike; just ask Jim Florio, for one.

But before Scotch Plains Republicans think their return to power will just be a briefly interrupted continuation of their 20-year rule, they should keep in mind that 2000 will be different in several respects.

For one, unlike the 10-year period from 1989 to 1998, Republicans won't have a unanimous, 5-0 council majority in which all members are singing from the same sheet.

Instead, Mayor-to-be Martin Marks will have to contend with two Democrats — outgoing Mayor Geri M. Samuel and Tarquin Jay Bromley. Neither of them were exactly shy this year in defending various matters of contention, including the tax increase, the Democrats' 1998 election campaign tactics and the manner (a hurried one, according to the GOP) in which the direct mayoral election referendum was approved by the Council this summer.

No one should expect Mrs. Samuel and Mr. Bromley, despite their minority role, to sit by politely next year. The Republicans, similarly outnumbered this year, certainly didn't.

Instead, the Democrats — after taking partisan and public poundings this year on the tax issue, the mayor's style and a few other matters — are likely to be on the lookout next year for any issues they can holler about.

The initial big test for Mayor Marks — and the

Democrats' first big target — will likely be the 2000 municipal budget and, specifically, the local tax levy that will be proposed. The GOP protested loudly this year's initial six-point proposal and the ultimately-approved five percent hike backed by the Democrats and the top professionals at Township Hall. Instead, Mr. Marks and his fellow Republican, William F. McClintock, strongly backed a zero tax increase, and favored using what they termed a record \$3.05 million surplus to negate the need for new taxes.

But what will Mayor Marks do if next year's windfall is lower? What if the professional staff in Scotch Plains again recommends a significant tax increase? Whatever the Republicans end up putting forth, the Democrats are sure to protest. A zero tax proposal would, no doubt, bring cries of "fiscally irresponsible!" from the Democrats, echoing their sentiments earlier this year. And a tax increase of any significance would probably lead to jeers of derision and hoots of "what goes around, comes around" from the Democrats.

There was no compromising on taxes among the two parties this year and it's hard to see how next year will be any different, given the open wounds left from last spring.

The other issue hanging over the Council in 2000 will be the township's first mayoral election. Several members of the council probably would like the honor of being Scotch Plains' first elected Mayor, and the jockeying for position will begin almost immediately.

The mayoral campaign could color a good deal of what is said, what is proposed, what is approved and what is accomplished. Decisions will also have to be made fairly quickly, especially by the Republicans, about who is running for Mayor and who is running for re-election to the council next November. Councilmen Marks and McClintock's terms expire in 2000, and one of their seats will be converted into the elected mayor's seat on the council.

While we certainly wish next year's council well and hope that partisan rancor and disagreements are kept to a minimum, Mr. Marks faces some tough roads as he prepares to serve as the first mayor of the millennium and the last mayor of Scotch Plains not directly elected by Township voters.

## Letters to the Editor

### Reader Suggests Open Public Debate On Issue of Fluoridation of Water

Before sanctioning the proposed fluoridation of our water supply, the public needs to be properly informed that there are possible health risks as well as the purported benefits.

One recently voiced concern is that fluoride has been associated with an increase in children's blood lead levels. This research was performed at Dartmouth College and published in the September issue of the International Journal of Environmental Studies.

High lead levels in children is associated with numerous serious health consequences, including learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder

(ADD), hyperactivity, lower IQ, and other neurological problems. Do we really want to prevent cavities so bad that we are willing to put them at a higher risk for these serious problems?

The same authors have also found, in another study, higher rates of violent crime and substance abuse in fluoridated communities.

Rather than the typical rhetoric extolling the virtues of fluoride, we need a free and open debate on the issue, where all sides of the issue can be heard.

Cory Mermer  
Westfield

### Fanwood Couple Extends Thanks For Help During Son's Recent Illness

Our youngest son, Ryan, suffered a catastrophic illness on October 30 and eventually needed to be hospitalized out of state. He is now home, and we want to express our gratitude to those who helped and continue to help us during this difficult time.

We have been overwhelmed by support from our family and friends. You took time out of your lives to help us care for Ryan, and enable us to provide a sense of normalcy for our other children. Your gifts of love, prayers, phone calls, cards and meals gave us the strength to stay positive and work towards our son's recovery.

To Doctors Haymond and Flanzman, and the staff of Westfield Pediatrics, we can't thank you enough for your efforts on behalf of our son and our family. Your compassion and dedication mean more than you know.

We also want to thank Nancy Bantz and the staff of Westminster Preschool, and the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Newcomers Club. It is a privilege to belong to a community of such wonderful, giving people. We are amazed by your generosity. Thank you all.

Donna and Jamie Tannenbaum  
Fanwood

### Erratum

A front-page story in the December 9 issue of *The Westfield Leader* incorrectly reported the vote by the Westfield Recreation Commission on acceptance of the recommendations of a subcommittee's report for changes to the Memorial Park and Pool expansion proposal.

The story reported the tally was 5-4 when it was actually a unanimous 9-0 vote. The commission did vote 5-4 for acceptance of a three-meter diving board included in the pool expansion plans.

The conceptual report will be redrawn and submitted to the commission in January by Kinsey and Associates, the architectural firm completing the work. If the commission approves the final document, the plans will be submitted to the Town Council for action.

### Resident Says Town Officials Should Further Their Study on Fluoridation

According to a recent article ("Health Board Recommends Fluoridating Town's Water", *Westfield Leader*, December 9, 1999), the Westfield Regional Board of Health unanimously passed a resolution recommending that the Mayor and Town Council pursue fluoridation of the town's water supply. While this recommendation is surely well-intentioned, I believe it is seriously misguided.

Mayor Jardim's October 27 letter, which is referenced in the article, succinctly states the standard argument in favor of fluoridation. The mayor states that "fluoridation of the water supply assists in preventing dental cavities in children." Although he acknowledges that some people are concerned about adding fluoride to the water supply, he concludes that "we feel that the benefits of fluoridation outweigh the remote health risks."

Had I been aware of the public hearing re: this issue I would have attended. Since that was not the case, I would like to take this opportunity to raise a few points that I believe would be of interest to both the people of Westfield and to anyone involved in the decision-making process re: the addition of fluoride to our drinking water:

- The fluoride being added to drinking water is an industrial waste product of the aluminum and fertilizer industries and is used in the production of rat poison and insecticide.
- In the 1920's and 1930's, as the amount of fluoride pollution increased due to industrial growth, industry needed to find a convenient way in which to dispose of large amounts of fluoride.
- In the 1930's, an industry scientist named Gerald J. Cox conducted research and announced that fluoride was safe in low doses and could prevent cavities in children. In 1939, Cox proposed that the U.S. should add fluoride to its water supplies. It is interesting to note that Cox's research was funded by Alcoa, which was threatened by fluoride damage claims.

Public support for fluoridation was achieved only after a massive government public relations campaign headed by public relations pioneer Edward L. Bernays.

While it is often noted by proponents of fluoridation that communities with fluoridated water have experienced drops in dental decay, it must also be noted that there are communities without fluoridated water that have ex-

perienced equal drops. These are not isolated examples and are backed up by decades of research conducted throughout the world by major health organizations, universities and governments.

Even assuming fluoride is safe at the recommended levels of between .7 and 1.2 parts per million, adding controlled levels to the water supply does not ensure that everyone will consume "safe" amounts of fluoride. Different people with different lifestyles and health problems are likely to consume different amounts of water.

Fluoride is not only found in drinking water. It is found in many places, including bottled drinks, canned food and toothpaste. Further, cooking food which contains fluoride in water that also contains fluoride dramatically increases a food's fluoride content. It should be noted that fluoride is also an ingredient in pesticides.

Unsafe levels of fluoride consumption have been linked to skeletal and dental fluorosis, bone fractures, fluoride poisoning, genetic damage and cancer.

It is ironic that although children are purported to be the primary beneficiaries of fluoridation, they are precisely the segment of the population that is likely to incur the greatest harm. Any parent of a young child can attest to the devotion a child often displays towards a particular food or brand of fruit juice, consuming it day after day. In addition, children are far more likely than adults to swallow toothpaste, further elevating the levels of fluoride they consume.

We are already consuming irradiated, pesticide-laden vegetables, steroid-laden meats and genetically engineered foods (currently the FDA does not require foods to be labeled as such). It is often argued that in small enough quantities, there is no real threat from these substances. Even if this were true, I believe one would be well advised to consider the cumulative effects of introducing these toxins into our food supply.

Given the existing situation, the prospect of compounding this problem further by intentionally adding fluoride to our drinking water seems absurd.

I would ask that the Mayor, the Town Council and Board of Health consider all available information on fluoridation, along with public input, before pursuing this effort further.

Carl Scariati  
Westfield

