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CHAPTER ADVISOR CALLS COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE 'PHENOMENAL'

DECA Boroughwide Survey Results Discussed During Special Presentation

By SUZETTE F. STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

Members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA Chapter presented the results last week of a community-wide survey conducted by the marketing students in cooperation with the Fanwood Community Assessment Committee.

The survey was mailed in December to every Fanwood household — 2700 in all — to tap residents' opinions regarding communication with local government officials and agencies, as well as their feelings about the downtown. A total of 512 respondents, or 19 percent of those who received questionnaires, answered the survey.

During a special presentation on February 2, sophomores Andrew Elko, James McClintock and Anthony Gicas, accompanied by DECA advisor Donald Cababe, reviewed the results of the survey for a gathering of about 20 in the meeting room of the United National Bank in Fanwood.

Those in attendance included Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly and members of the Assessment Committee, which last year targeted four areas the group felt were essential to the borough's successful transition into the new millennium.

Thirty-five volunteers were subsequently recruited by the committee to develop improvement strategies dealing with each of these areas, which included communication, the downtown, long-range planning and volunteerism.

Proposals developed by these "ac-

tion groups" were presented to Fanwood's governing body at its December 2 agenda meeting. Among the concepts put forth by the communications group was the DECA survey, which was done as an internship-type project at no charge to the borough.

The survey, prepared by DECA with input from the Assessment Committee, will be presented by the award-winning chapter at its upcoming annual statewide competition.

As outlined in a handout which was distributed during last week's presentation, the goals of the survey were to determine how local residents obtain their information regarding borough events and activities, and to identify their concerns for borough officials and the business community.

It was also designed to foster a "feeling of pride" in Fanwood by affording residents the opportunity for involvement and input in matters affecting their hometown, the document stated.

In addition to the survey results, the handout also contained DECA's recommendations — including long-term, short-term and ongoing projects — for improving communications and the public's relationship with the business district.

Members of the Assessment Committee subgroups had voiced support for some of these same concepts during their recent appearance before the Mayor and council.

Demographic data showed that among those surveyed, 68 percent have children enrolled in school.

Sixty-nine percent of the adults are employed, while another 21 percent are retired.

It was also revealed that 63 percent of the respondents have lived in the community for six years or less, which the DECA report stated was indicative of a mobile society with an apparent "constant influx of new residents."

Eighty-three percent of Fanwood residents surveyed have cable television access. Of this group, 23 percent responded that they tune in to Fanwood's Channel 35 often, 58 percent said seldom, and 19 percent answered never.

Forty percent of survey respondents said they would like to see greater coverage of community activities; 24 percent favored business

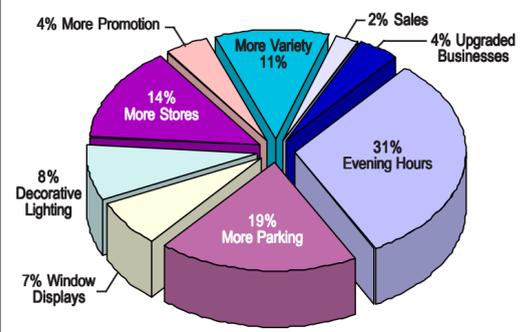
profiles, and 14 percent proposed that citizen profiles be aired.

Due to an error in the questionnaire, which incorrectly listed school district coverage as one of TV 35's program options, 20 percent said they felt the channel should include more school news. School activities are broadcast on Channel 34.

Of the four local newspapers which cover the area, *The Suburban News* and *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* were ranked first and second, respectively, by survey respondents for sources of local news.

Fifty-two percent of those who responded said they use the local newspapers to find out about borough news, 35 percent said shopping information, and 13 percent noted other reasons.

What would influence you to shop more frequently in Fanwood?



SURVEY FINDINGS...This is one of several charts included in a report prepared by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA, containing the results of a community-wide survey the marketing students group recently conducted to gauge public opinion about communication between residents and local government, as well as their feelings about the downtown.

When asked their primary source of information about borough businesses, 48 percent answered newspapers, while another 5 percent said mailings. Fifteen percent said they received business news through their

neighbors. The remainder of respondents listed a variety of other sources. Of those surveyed, only 25 percent said they did not have access to the Internet, while 86 percent believed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Teacher Files Suit Against BOE, Administrators, Charging Job Discrimination For Union Role

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN
Specially Written for The Times

A Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) teacher has filed suit in Superior Court against the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education, former SPFHS Principal Dr. Terry K. Riegel, supervisor Michael Krause and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carol B. Choye.

In his complaint, Theodore Wurster of Fanwood alleges he was discriminated against as a teacher as a result

of his high-profile union activities in the district. He became an employee of the district in 1990.

The complaint reads, as a teacher of Honors Chemistry and Physics, Mr. Wurster "consistently received excellent reviews and was a highly-regarded member of the faculty."

He claims circumstances changed when he was elected President of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association (SPFEA) and "became very active in negotiating collective

bargaining agreements and in resolving grievances."

According to his attorney, Paul Weiner, Mr. Wurster concluded a one-year term as SPFEA President last June.

The complaint alleges that Mr. Wurster was given a "false and unfounded evaluation" and "assigned to teach lower level classes, including three periods of remedial chemistry...in essence, demoted and assigned less meaningful work."

It goes on to state, "As part of its scheme to demote plaintiff, defendant Board of Education replaced plaintiff with a far less experienced, female teacher..."

The complaint specifically charges Dr. Riegel with changing Mr. Wurster's schedule "to teach classes for six continuous periods, with no break."

In responding to the complaint,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



David B. Corbin for The Times

HALTING THE NATION'S LONGEST WINNING STREAK... Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School swimmers, from left to right, Jeff Wagner, Chris Swenson, Dave Russ, Pistol Karelus and Charlie Rowe stand in front of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times* office and display their trophy for winning the Union County Swimming Championship. The entire Raider team put it all together to defeat the Westfield High School boys who previously held the nation's longest winning streak of 42 straight victories. See story beginning on Page 15 of the Sports Section.

LaGrande Park Building is Eyed For Use by Fanwood Seniors' Club

By SUZETTE F. STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

Members of the Fanwood Borough Council agreed last Wednesday to consider funding in their 1999 capital budget to expand the existing building at LaGrande Park for greater use as a multi-purpose facility.

If approved, the renovated building would become the new home base of the Fanwood Senior Citizens Club, which has been meeting for more than 15 years at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Scotch Plains.

Attilio (Art) Badala, former President and current Tour Director of the club, appealed to officials during the council's agenda session to support the project, which calls for the existing LaGrande Park building to be enlarged by 1,500 square feet.

The three-year-old building is

owned by the borough and used by the Fanwood Recreation Commission for its art classes and to store equipment, according to commission member Patricia Plante.

However, there is presently not a

its own.

The modified building would be able to accommodate 100 people in the main area. Mr. Badala said that with an expanded facility, he hoped to be able to get even more seniors



GETTING A CONSENSUS...Borough officials and others recently toured local park buildings to determine which would be most suited for expanded use as a multi-purpose facility. Governing body members will now consider allocating funds in their capital budget to enlarge the LaGrande Park building for meetings of the Fanwood Senior Citizens Club and other uses. Pictured, left to right, are: Michael Diasse, Police Chief Robert Carboy, Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly, Attilio (Art) Badala, Richard Berry, Borough Engineer Richard Marsden, Director of Public Works Raymond Manfra and Council President William E. Populus, Jr.

lot of space available in the multi-purpose area of the building due to storage needs, Mrs. Plante acknowledged.

Mr. Badala confirmed that the Fanwood Senior Citizens currently number nearly 90 members, about 60 of whom are Fanwood residents. Another 20 percent of the group is from Scotch Plains, with several more from Westfield and Plainfield, he noted.

Club members convene at All Saints' on the second and fourth Mondays of each month. In addition to meetings with guest speakers, activities include luncheons, bingo, trips to Atlantic City and elsewhere, as well as special events such as twice yearly picnics.

The group voluntarily pays the parish \$50 a month for use of the church building. Mr. Badala said that while All Saints' has always "welcomed us with open arms," the club ideally needs a meeting place of

involved with the club, and possibly increase its activity offerings.

The revamped structure would be equipped with a kitchen area and increased storage space where electronic equipment and the like could be kept secure, Mr. Badala noted. It could also better accommodate rentals for parties, meetings or other purposes, he confirmed.

Council President William E. Populus, Jr., who chairs the Administration and Finance Committee and serves as governing body Liaison to the Fanwood Senior Citizens, said the projected cost of expanding the LaGrande building was between \$225,000 and \$250,000.

The building was tapped for expanded use as a multi-purpose facility earlier this month after a group of elected officials and others toured both that structure and the one at Forest Road Park, to determine which one was better suited for the project.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Township Residents Air Views on Problems At Intersection of Rahway and Raritan

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times

Scotch Plains residents offered the Township Council an array of viewpoints and opinions Tuesday night about solutions to traffic and safety problems at the intersection of Raritan and Rahway Roads.

What Republican Councilman Martin Marks referred to as "a troubled intersection" has seen the number of reported traffic accidents double in recent years — from six in 1996 to 13 in 1997, with 12 occurring last year.

Mayor Geri M. Samuel said the main cause of accidents was the failure of drivers to obey stop signs when making right turns. It was also noted that the accidents which took place between 1994 and 1998 occurred throughout the day, not just during the morning and evening rush hours.

The council, out of concern over the number of accidents at the intersection, as well as other traffic issues there, had requested that area residents share their views with officials.

Besides accidents, officials sought to address the length of time drivers on Rahway Road must wait before crossing or turning onto Raritan Road, and the frequency of cars speeding on Raritan Road.

Most of the nine residents who spoke opposed the idea of placing a traffic light at the intersection. Township Manager Thomas E. Atkins said the cost of installing a traffic light, which would need state approval, would be \$150,000 to \$200,000.

Those opposed to a light said it would create additional problems, especially for residents living near the intersection, in terms of traffic backing up in front of their driveways.

"It's hard enough now getting out of the driveway," one resident told the council. A traffic light would increase the difficulty, she said.

But another resident said he felt "people will stop more for a light than for a sign."

Besides the idea of a regular traffic light, other ideas floated at the meet-

ing included a flashing light to slow approaching traffic on Raritan Road and to ensure that full stops are made by drivers on Rahway Road.

One resident blamed reckless driv-

ers for the problems at the intersection, saying that "until people learn to drive carefully and abide by the speed limit, you're always going to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



William A. Burke for The Times

MILLENNIUM COUNTDOWN... Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly, center, and members of the Fanny Wood Day Committee gather at South and Martine Avenues on Sunday to kick off the last leg of a fundraiser for the planned purchase of the Millennium Clock. Three-quarters of the funds needed have already been raised through Fanny Wood Day proceeds, and an appeal is being made to area residents and businesses for an additional \$5,000. Joining the Mayor, pictured left to right, are: Jeff and Helen Ling and Pam and Peter Sayles.

INDEX

Editorial Page 4 Obituary Page 12 Social Page 6
Mountainside Page 2 Religious Page 13 Sports Page 15

DECA Presents Findings Of Borough-Wide Survey

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that an Internet web site for the borough would either be a great asset or at least of some value to the community.

In addition, 63 percent said their household has email capability, and 48 percent said they would be interested in receiving email from the borough if the technology were in place.

A great majority of respondents - 80 percent - stated that they supported the idea of having residents receive a quarterly newsletter to keep them up to date on borough events.

Fifty-five percent said they never have a problem getting information from the borough, and another 44 percent said they seldom experience difficulty. Only 1 percent of respondents said they frequently have difficulty.

Fifty-two of those who answered the survey felt that local businesses do not do enough to promote their products and services, while 39 percent believed they did.

When asked which activities they would like to see the planned Fanwood Business and Professional Association involved in, respondents were almost evenly split among half a dozen proposals.

Their answers included a business newsletter; 19 percent; joint promotional efforts and joint community activities, 18 percent each; sidewalk sales, 15 percent; street sales, 14 percent, and group sales and advertising, 13 percent. Three percent of respondents offered other suggestions.

Sixty-five percent of respondents said these activities would influence them to shop more frequently in Fanwood, while another 24 percent said they were not sure. Eleven percent said the supplemental activities or services would not be a factor in whether they increased their patronage of downtown stores.

When asked, however, what would prompt them to shop more frequently in Fanwood, 31 percent replied that they would like to see stores have evening hours, 19 percent said expanded parking, 14 percent said more stores, and 11 percent said more variety.

Smaller percentages listed decorative lighting, window displays, more promotions, upgraded businesses and sales.

Sixty-nine percent of those surveyed said they favored more retail stores in the downtown, and 77 percent remarked that additional retail stores would influence them to patronize their local business district more often.

In its recommendations based on the survey findings, DECA encouraged the borough to develop an effective Internet web page which would not only promote the benefits of living in Fanwood but also inform residents of how they can communicate with borough officials and agencies.

Also proposed by the marketing students were a borough email address to which residents could direct their questions and concerns. As a long-range proposal, DECA also urged officials to investigate technology which would enable government members and agencies to correspond with all residents.

In its follow-up recommendations based on the survey results, DECA stated that officials "should try to determine why there is so much movement out of Fanwood by assigning a committee or task force to look at demographic trend(s)" during the year 2000.

"The borough should specifically look at the growth of the senior population, especially with baby boomers soon to retire. More or different services may be needed," the DECA evaluation continued.

They stated a quarterly borough newsletter "should be the first order of business for the borough," and also recommended the appointment of a special committee or task force to investigate how Channel 35's programming may be enhanced.

Concerning the downtown, DECA urged that a study be done of parking availability on the Borough Hall side of Martine Avenue. The chapter also supported additional amenities for the business district, as well as a cleanup and beautification initiative in the rear area of stores along Martine.

DECA students further recommended that the Assessment Committee and the governing body encourage new businesses to come to Fanwood when commercial space is available.

They also expressed support for business promotions, a business newsletter and a special Fanwood Credit Card as ways of boosting the downtown economy.

Mr. Cababe called the response to the DECA survey "phenomenal," noting the typical response rate for mailings is estimated at only 3 to 5 percent.

In its report, the chapter concluded the substantial number of participants made for "a good representative sampling which accurately reflects the entire Borough of Fanwood."

Mayor Connelly remarked the day after the presentation that the DECA students "did an excellent job in identifying the major themes and making recommendations that could be implemented. It was an extremely professional report."

Teacher Files Suit Against Board and Administrators

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Board Attorney Casper Boehm stated, "The board denies each and every allegation."

He did add, "There is no such animal as remedial chemistry. These students go on to college with this course."

The complaint also states that, through a letter to the board, Mr. Weiner had voiced his client's intent to raise "issues dealing with budgetary concerns" with the state attorney general.

Mr. Weiner confirmed that those



SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS...John's Meat Market, located on Park Avenue in Scotch Plains, donated their time and cooked food for the 165 homeless at the Convent Methodist Church in Plainfield. Pictured, left to right, are: John LoSavio and the Reverend Frederick Wilk.

Township Residents Voice Concerns Over Intersection

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

have a problem."

While a number of speakers advocated lowering the speed limit on Raritan Road to 25 miles per hour, Dr. Marks pointed out that the state would have to approve any adjustment in the speed limit.

Other possible solutions aired at the meeting included improving visibility at that corner by cutting back shrubbery and moving a resident's fence away from the street, and also making drivers on Raritan Road more aware that they are approaching a dangerous intersection.

This could be achieved, it was proposed, by heavily striping the lanes or ribbing the road surface so that cars traveling too fast would vibrate slightly as a warning to slow down.

Mayor Samuel said the council will weigh all options before discussing any ultimate solutions to the problem.

Separately, the governing body approved a resolution urging NJ Transit to conduct a feasibility study of putting into place same-platform transfers at Newark's Penn Station rather than forcing riders to move to a different platform to board a connecting train into New York.

This, said Democratic Councilman

Tarquin Jay Bromley, would serve as a temporary solution until the longer-term goal of a no-transfer, one-seat ride into New York is accomplished.

The Council also honored 30 students from Terrill Middle School for their performances in this past season's production of *A Christmas Carol* at the Theater at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Another 30 students from Terrill School were honored for being chosen to sing at Governor Christine Todd Whitman's annual staff Christmas party at the Governor's Mansion in December.

The students also performed two songs for the council.

Mayor Samuel said that 14 entrance signs welcoming people into Scotch Plains had been refurbished, and invited local businesses interested in sponsoring the signs to call Ray Pardon, President of the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association, at (908) 322-7388.

The Mayor also appointed Pamela Boright and Gene Leporiere to the Environmental Commission.

LaGrande Park Building Eyed For Seniors' Club

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The group included Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly, Councilman Populus, Police Chief Robert Carbo, Borough Engineer Richard Marsden, Public Works Director Raymond Manfra and Mr. Badala.

Also on hand during the tour were local architects Michael Dasse, who is preparing a conceptual drawing for the proposed expansion, and Richard Berry, who is serving as a consultant, as well as Fanwood Recreation Commission Chairman Fred Leahy.

Councilwoman Karen M. Schurtz was among those who expressed support last week for giving the Fanwood Senior Citizens a home of their own in the borough, noting that seniors represent 21 percent of Fanwood's population.

Besides being taxpayers, she said, many have also served the borough as members of volunteer committees or boards.



A WEEK FOR DECA...Fanwood Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly, third from left, and Scotch Plains Mayor Geri Samuel, second from right, are pictured with Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA students, left to right, senior Peter Koblikska, Freshman David Baumwoll and senior Thomas Gentile, after signing a proclamation declaring the week of Monday through Sunday, February 8 to 14, as DECA Week in Fanwood and Scotch Plains. The proclamation is in recognition of the community achievements that the award winning Chapter has been sponsoring throughout the year. Much of DECA's efforts are designed to help the needy. Food and toy drives, a Thanksgiving Day Dinner, the Adopt-a-Family Program, monthly visits to Ashbrook Nursing Home, parties for homeless and needy children are just part of DECA's agenda of activities during the year.



SAWDUST TO NAILS...The Cub Scouts of Den 9 Pack 98 in Scotch Plains recently visited Home Depot to learn about tools and how to build. This outing was meant to help them fulfill the Sawdust to Nails achievement. The boys completed the wooden wagon pictured below. They each received a Kid's Workshop Certificate of Achievement. Pictured, left to right, are: Brian Pesin, Justin Berger, Danny Wright and Michael Alleman.

FANWOOD POLICE BLOTTER

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

The owner of a local laundromat reported finding \$10 worth of slugs in one of his machines, according to police.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5

An attempted break-in was reported at a private home in the 200 block of King Street. A rear storm window was broken and a screen was cut, but access to the interior of the home was not gained, authorities said.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8

A Terrill Road establishment reported the theft of half a gallon of rum valued at \$22. The two suspects fled in a dark Mercedes Benz, according to police.

SCOTCH PLAINS POLICE BLOTTER

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

A Front Street resident reported the theft of stereo equipment from the dashboard of his disabled vehicle, which had been parked on the street. The theft occurred during the past week.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5

Three video games were reported stolen from a Westfield Avenue video store. The games were rented using fraudulent account information and were not returned.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Police received a report that a box of cigars was shoplifted from a Park Avenue store. The suspect, described as a black male and approximately 45 years old, fled in a white Chrysler.

The theft of a bicycle from the municipal lot behind Park Avenue was reported.



CONGRATULATIONS...Union County Freeholder Linda d. Stender, a former Mayor of Fanwood, recently complimented Bruce Walsh for his years of service to the people of Fanwood. Mr. Walsh retired from elective office at the end of 1998, after serving for nine years on the Fanwood Borough Council. He remains active in the community as a member of the Fanwood Memorial Library Board of Trustees.

Epilepsy Foundation Seeks 'Winning Kid' Poster Child

The Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey, a local affiliate of the national Epilepsy Foundation, is looking for a child between the ages of 5 and 9 to represent the local Foundation as its "Winning Kid" Poster Child.

The winning candidate will also be entered in the Foundation's National "Winning Kid" Contest.

Eric Joice, Executive Director of the Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey, noted that any boy or girl between the ages of 5 and 9 is eligible if he or she has a seizure disorder.

Each year a "Winning Kid" is chosen to represent the 300,000 American children who have epilepsy.

Many children with epilepsy are living normal lives with the help of medication which controls seizures. Other children struggle with frequent

seizures despite treatment. All children with epilepsy need public acceptance and understanding to fulfill their potential and be happy.

About 50 to 60 percent of those with epilepsy have good control of their seizures. Another 20 to 25 percent attain partial control, and the remainder are hoping that research will one day produce a therapy that will work for them.

"The name of the youngster selected to represent the Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey for this year will be announced by March 15," said Mr. Joice.

To obtain an entry blank for the contest, please call Linda Kirk at (732) 974-1144, or write to the Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey at 2150 Route 35, Suite 207C, Sea Girt, 08750.

Delta Airlines' Surcharge Called Unfair to Customers

The American Automobile Association (AAA) has stated that the \$1 surcharge imposed by Delta Airlines each way on domestic airline tickets which are not sold through Delta's Internet web site is unfair to customers and restricts their airline travel purchase choices.

"The airline industry made billions last year and just completed the second best fourth quarter ever," stated Bob Housley, Vice President of Travel Services for the AAA New Jersey Automobile Club in Florham Park.

"It surprises us that Delta would feel the need to penalize customers for rising distribution costs," he added.

"AAA is concerned that a new surcharge will set a precedent in ratcheting up costs to air travelers on a regular basis, in addition to normal airfare increases," stated Mr. Housley.

"Even if an airline offers a discount to those buying through the Internet, the airline would be introducing a whole new negative, two-tiered pricing system," he continued.

Although overall costs to airlines may have risen, jet fuel costs have dropped significantly in the last year, according to AAA officials.

In addition, the number of passengers and the resulting profits are rising faster than costs, and have for several years. The greatest negative impact to airlines' profitability has come from foreign markets, and not domestic dis-

tribution channels, the officials maintained.

"We trust that other airlines won't join Delta in this effort, and that the consumer recognizes the importance and value of using travel agents to get the lowest fare and receive high quality service," Mr. Housley noted.

"Travel agents represent the consumer's best source for information, service and low fares, not just the lowest fares on a particular carrier's site," he concluded.

Council Meeting To be Broadcast Live on TV-35

Channel 35, the local cable access channel for The Borough of Fanwood, will telecast tonight's meeting of the Mayor and Borough Council live from the Council chambers. The meeting will begin at 8 p.m.



TERRILL VOLUNTEERS...Eighth grade student volunteers from Terrill Middle School in Scotch Plains recently visited Genesis ElderCare Nursing Home in Plainfield. The nursing home patients were entertained with songs and dance. Many of the students were chorus members who reenacted their Holiday Concert for the patients.

ARE YOU IGNORING A WARNING SIGN?

SNORING

Snoring may be a symptom of sleep apnea, a potentially life-threatening sleep disorder linked to high blood pressure, stroke and heart attack. If you think you or someone you love may be at risk, call for an appointment today.

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