Spring Garden Fair, Plant Sale By Master Gardeners Sets Record

MOUNTAINSIDE—This year's Spring Garden Fair and Plant Sale, hosted in May by the Master Gardeners of Union County at the Trailside Nature and Science Center in Mountainside, was the best attended fair to date, according to officials.

A record 1,700 fair visitors turned out to attend lectures on plant care, composting and other garden-related topics and to participate in demonstrations and children's crafts.

"The focus of the fair is to raise public awareness of the Master Gardener Program," said Rhea Alper, Co-Chairwoman of the fair.

"We do this through lectures and displays featuring horticultural topics and the various services provided by Master Gardener volunteers year round," she said.

Pamella Schwierk, President of the Master Gardeners of Union County, explained that, other services provided by Master Gardeners include horticultural therapy programs for the elderly, children and youth at risk; a speakers' bureau; community beautification and gardening with children. In addition, Master Gardeners maintain an experimental garden at Trailside.

The Master Gardener Hotline, open year-round, answers around 3,000 calls annually. Volunteers help the public with questions ranging from lawn care and azaleas, to racoons and deer tick identification.

To have your gardening questions answered, call the Hotline at (908) 654-9852. During the growing season, the Hotline is open daily weekdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

During the winter months, it is staffed Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

For questions and more information on the program, please call (908) 654-9854.

A MASTER TIP…Union County Master Gardener, Renate Gordon of Mountainside, right, explains how to take care of herbs to a visitor at the 10th Annual Spring Garden Fair and Plant Sale held recently at the Trailside Nature and Science Center in Mountainside.

Rotary Club of Westfield Inducts New Officers

WESTFIELD – Outgoing President of the Rotary Club of Westfield, Stan Kaslusky, passed the gavel to newly-elected President, Dr. William Bonsall, during the group's meeting June 22.

The incoming slate of officers, in addition to Dr. Bonsall, are as follows: Dr. William J. Foley, Vice President; Mr. Kaslusky, President of the Westfield Rotary Foundation; Dr. Michael Hart, Treasurer; Darryl Walker, Secretary; Glenn Kalinowski, Sergeant at Arms; Bill Henderson, Publicity; and the Directors Jane Sentivan, Carl Peer, Dr. Ken Ciarrocca and Debbie Schmidt.

Dr. Hart commented on the success of the Rotary Club under Mr. Kaslusky's direction last year. The club had a positive net growth of 11 members, the highest in the Rotary District of five counties in central New Jersey, he said.

There were four successful fundraisers: the Humanitarian Dinner; Joker; Happy Bucks and Pancake Day. The results of these fundraisers allowed the club to give out $10,000 to charity, and $100,000 in scholarships, the most ever in the history of the club.

A variety of club projects also helped both the local and the international community: Pedals for Progress; First Night Westfield; Hunger Project; Thailand Project; Rotary Youth Leadership Awards; Interact Club at the High School; Golf Outing; Philhower Award and Youth in Business Day.

Participation was given during the following district functions: District Assembly; District Conference; Leadership Training; Vocational Assembly; International Convention; Eat, Drink & Share; and the Intercity Meeting.

The club achieved the Rotary International Presidential Citation, which requires that everyone in the club work together to meet certain goals.

Dr. Hart presented a past president's pin with a mounted diamond to Mr. Kaslusky as a token of esteem from the Board of Directors.

A Paul Harris Fellow Award was also presented to Mr. Kaslusky. The award is named after the founder of Rotary, Paul Harris, a Chicago lawyer who started the service club with three business associates in 1905.

"We have the honor and pleasure of recognizing Stan Kaslusky as he becomes a Paul Harris Fellow today," said Dr. Hart as he presented the award. A gift of $1,000 has been made to the Rotary Foundation in Mr. Kaslusky's name.

The Rotary Foundation funds projects and runs a variety of programs.

CHANGING OF THE GAVEL…The Rotary Club of Westfield marks the end of each year on June 30. The change of gavel ceremony was observed at the June 22 regular luncheon meeting of the group. After a successful year, outgoing club President Stanley A. Kaslusky, pictured at left, handed over the gavel to incoming President Dr. William B. Bonsall. Assistant District Governor Marsha Carldon, center, of the Mountainside Rotary Club was a guest at the meeting.

KEEPING CLEAN…Westfield Councilman Gregory S. McDermott and Town Engineer Kenneth B. Marsh recently helped to launch the Downtown Westfield "Blue Machine" sidewalk cleaner on its inaugural run. The Blue Machine is a joint venture of the Downtown Westfield Corporation and the Town of Westfield. Pictured, left to right, are: Mike Skubish, Councilman McDermott, Donney Clark and Tom McCaskill of the Public Works Department, and Mr. Marsh.

Optimist Club Announces Success of BASH '99

WESTFIELD – A total of 250 students, or 86 percent of Westfield High School seniors, attended BASH '99, an all-night, drug- and alcohol-free event on graduation night at Ricochet Racquet Club in South Plainfield.

The evening was co-sponsored by the Optimist Club of Westfield, the Westfield High School Parent-Teacher Organization and the Westfield Recreation Commission.

Support was also provided by the Westfield Board of Education, parents, teachers, local businesses, clubs, professionals, corporations, sponsors and the senior class.

Senior Julie Elmuccio won the grand prize at BASH '99 – a Gateway desktop computer valued at $1,500.

"As project chairman and on behalf of the co-sponsors, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of those individuals who supported or worked on BASH '99. We can all be proud of the response of our community to this worthy undertaking for the Class of '99 and future seniors at WHS. Westfield is a special place to live and the success of BASH '99 is testimony to the positive spirit that exists in this community," stated Don Pray, Project Chairman of BASH '99 for the Optimist Club.

AWARDED AT THE BASH…A total of 250 Westfield High School seniors attended BASH '99, an all-night, drug- and alcohol-free event on graduation night at Ricochet Racquet Club in South Plainfield. Students received massages, had manicures, participated in a sumo wrestling match and enjoyed other activities. Senior Julie Elmuccio is congratulated by BASH '99 Project Chairman Don Pray for winning a Gateway desktop computer valued at $1,500.

Letters to the Editor

Mountainside Residents Must Take Hard Look at Comcast Agreement

The Mountainside Borough Council plans at its July meeting to approve a 15-year extension of Comcast Cablevision's non-exclusive franchise to provide cable television services in Mountainside.

The agreement would take effect next October and would require Comcast to provide a number of valuable free services to residents, especially for our school, library and community access Channel 35.

However, these immediate benefits should be weighed against the borough's commitment to ask for nothing more from Comcast until 2014. A lot can happen to technology and to Mountainside in those 15 years.

I urge Mountainside residents to learn more about the franchise terms. If you have questions or concerns, go to the council's July meeting and be sure to voice them before the council members vote.

The mayor and council members discussed the terms of this important proposed agreement at their June public meeting, but only a handful of residents was there to listen. It would be nice if the governing body circulated a written statement summarizing the main terms. Lacking an official version, here is mine:

Comcast is to provide Mountainside with its own full-time community-access channel; no more alternate-day service. Deerfield School and Governor Livingston High School are to be linked directly to this system.

Equipment valued at $10,000, training in its use and $2,500 for buying additional equipment are to be contributed to the system. Comcast would provide free Internet access to Deerfield and the franchise fee of 2 percent of its revenue, which currently brings the borough about $14,200.

Comcast would "make every effort to deploy new or advanced technology and/or services in the borough," but the agreement gives the borough no specific leverage to use to this end. The agreement notes that Comcast recently upgraded its systems but says nothing specific about future upgrading.

After five years, the governing body could review Comcast's compliance with the agreement and take some action if it finds that the company hasn't "substantially complied" with the terms. There's no provision for such reviews during the following 10 years.

However, company representatives could be called to appear at a public hearing at least once a year to discuss cable-TV matters, presumably including residents' complaints about services.

My concern is that electronic and other technologies are changing rapidly and that Mountainside itself is likely to change considerably over 15 years. How will we make sure that our general cable-TV services and also our Channel 35 will keep pace with improving technology? And, for example, what would be the effect on Channel 35 if the school population exploded and we had to re-open Beechwood School? Or if, for some unforeseen reason, we no longer sent our students to Governor Livingston?

Governing body members say that because that is a non-exclusive agreement, we can rely on competition to keep Comcast on its toes. But what are the chances that another cable-TV company would enter the tiny Mountainside market?

The expenses of improving and expanding Channel 35 could be paid out of the annual franchise fee, which may be expected to grow. But is that the governing body's intention?

I hope Mountainside residents will consider these questions and seek answers at the council's July meeting.

Scott R. Schmedel
Mountainside

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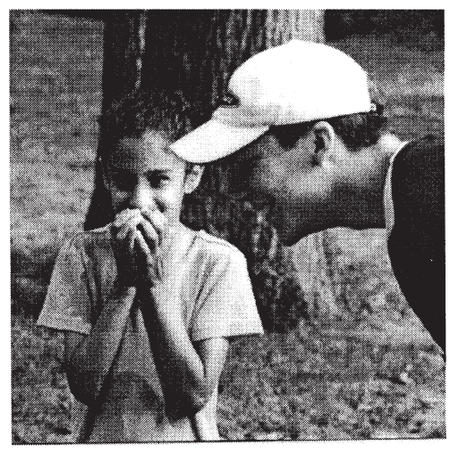

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