

Cheryl O'Brien Selected To Serve As New Principal

WESTFIELD — Cheryl O'Brien has been unanimously approved by the Westfield Board of Education as the new principal of Edison Intermediate School, effective July 1.

Having served as assistant principal of Roosevelt Intermediate School since 1994, she brings current experience in staff supervision, curriculum design, standardized testing, and student support to her new position.

Mrs. O'Brien, who has 18 years experience with intermediate school students and parents, recently volunteered her time to join Westfield community members to look for ways to bring improvements to the school district.

She was active in the development of Westfield's Strategic Plan, having served as chairperson of the action committee which addressed the development of high expectations for students of all levels of ability.

Westfield Superintendent of Schools, Dr. William J. Foley noted, "Cheryl O'Brien's proven administrative skills, strong curriculum background, sensitivity to students, and familiarity of district and community goals will be an asset to our important intermediate school efforts."

Prior to coming to Westfield, Mrs. O'Brien was acting vice principal of the Crockett Middle School in Hamilton, and coordinator of the Hamilton Township Adult High School.

She also has administrative experience as a teacher trainer, having designed and implemented teacher training curricula for the Lesotho Teaching Center/UNESCO in Southern Africa.

Her teaching career began in New Delhi, India, where she taught Language Arts to grades 7 through 12. She taught English as a Second Language at the Highstown High School, followed by 11 years in the Crockett and Reynolds Middle Schools in Hamilton, as a Language Arts teacher.

Mrs. O'Brien holds a Masters of Education Degree from Rutgers University, a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Wisconsin, and principal/supervisor certifications in both New Jersey and

New York.

Upon accepting the position of principal at Edison Intermediate School, Mrs. O'Brien said, "I'm thrilled and excited at the opportunity to work with a wonderful staff and great students. It's been my ambition for several years to have the opportunity to work at Edison because I know it's a place where exciting things can happen. I'm really looking forward to working with the Edison community in the coming years and being part of the dynamic future that I know is in store at Edison."

Assisting Dr. Foley in finding a replacement for former Edison Intermediate School principal Dennis Murphy were these Advisory Committee members: Barbara Ball, department supervisor for Edison and Roosevelt Intermediate Schools; Edison staff: Kerri Hecker, Robert Hild, Judy Hutchinson, Robert Sanders, Claudia Watkins, and Gloria White-James; Edison parents: Sheri Cognetti, Susan Mackay, Candy Steller, Peter Torricollo, and Joanne Walsh; Assistant Superintendent Janie Edmonds; and Director of Human Resources David Tuller.

Committee to Light Candles for Graduates

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Chemical Dependency Committee will light the Caring Candles tomorrow, Friday, June 25, which is the night of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School's graduation.

For approximately 10 years, the committee has lit the Caring Candles to remind graduating seniors that the two communities are proud of them, and to wish them a happy graduation and a safe, drug- and alcohol-free night and life.

As in the past, the candles will be arranged in front of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, as well as the Scotch Plains and Fanwood municipal buildings.

'Taxpayers Protection Act' Awaits Governor's Signature

TRENTON - State Senate President Donald T. DiFrancesco's proposal to index the level of municipal aid to the level of inflation to combat rising property taxes received final legislative approval June 14 after passage in the General Assembly.

The bill now heads to the Governor's desk.

Senator DiFrancesco (R-22nd District), resident of Scotch Plains, sponsored the "Property Taxpayers' Protection Act" (Senate Bill No. 10) along with Senator Norman M. Robertson (R-34th District) to give local officials guaranteed annual increases in state funding which would be earmarked exclusively for property tax relief.

"Local officials have the arduous task of balancing their town's budget while keeping the pocketbooks of property taxpayers in mind," said Senator DiFrancesco. "It's a fact that each year, inflation affects those budgetary decisions, and this legislation will ensure that when inflation rises, so does the amount of state aid."

When enacted, the new law would provide an inflation index for the Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Aid program beginning July,

1999 and for the Energy Tax Reform Aid program in 2003.

It is the same index used to determine the municipal cap, namely the Implicit Price Deflator for State and Local Government Purchases of Goods and Services, a Senate spokeswoman explained.

Assuming a 2 percent inflation rate, the program will distribute about \$15 million statewide in direct property tax relief in its first year. By 2003, the program will distribute about \$77 million statewide.

"After gaining feedback on the issue from local elected officials from around the state, it became even more evident to me that New Jersey's municipal aid program must be inflation adjusted," said Senator DiFrancesco, who toured the state last January to meet with municipal leaders.

"I am very pleased that the Assembly followed the Senate's lead and moved the bill quickly through the legislative process."

"By enacting this bill, we will be removing the uncertainty municipalities face when crafting their budgets, and protecting taxpayers from the tax hikes caused by inevitability of inflation," he said.

T-Shaped Intersection Could Replace Circle

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

opposing the elimination of the circle.

"The circle has been a concern of mayors and council people and residents of Westfield for many years now," admitted Mayor Thomas C. Jardim at the June 16 meeting, which was attended by members of the Westfield Historical Society and the WHPC.

Gary Toth, Manager of the D.O.T. Office of Project Development within the Division of Preliminary Engineering, noted that the accident rate around the circle is four or five times the state-wide average.

The state's goal is to develop a project that will address traffic congestion, the historical park land features in the area, as well as improvements aimed at pedestrian safety, officials said.

In an effort to ensure the tastefulness of the project, Mr. Toth said the D.O.T. would utilize a design specialist to minimize any potential negative impacts caused by the roadway improvements.

"Unfortunately we don't think there is anything we can do to get traffic through the area more efficiently" than the T-shaped intersection plan, Mr. Toth told the council.

In fact, Yosry Bekhiet, Principal Engineer with DOT's Bureau of Project Scope Development, noted that one option of utilizing signs around the circle to alert motorists who has the right-of-way, would not provide the level of service desired at the intersection.

Officials noted that driver confusion approaching the intersection causes traffic delays at peak hours due to the roadway's current design.

"Driver expectancy is key to the science of traffic engineering," Mr. Toth told reporters following the meeting.

He indicated that if the town decides to keep the intersection as it is currently constructed, the D.O.T. would be willing to walk away from the project.

But Mr. Bekhiet said in order to make the area less confusing and more efficient for motorists, a controlled intersection is needed.

"No we haven't decided anything yet, but this (T-shaped intersection) is what we are looking at," Mr. Bekhiet noted.

He noted that during peak rush hours as well as during a few weekend time periods, the intersection reaches congestion levels that are the highest in terms of D.O.T. standards.

Traffic flow is reported on a scale of A to F with F being the worst. State officials said they want to improve the intersection to a level "C" peak time service at the intersection. The circle is currently an "F" on the scale during peak use hours.

In creating a signalized intersection, the circle would be replaced with a T-shaped plan that includes turning lanes in both directions on South Avenue and East Broad Street. Lanes would also be designated for

through traffic.

Under the current plan, part of the island around the monument would be shaved off to create a turning lane.

In terms of pedestrians, Second Ward Councilman Matthew P. Albano asked if consideration had been given to train commuters crossing the intersection near the monument.

Mr. Toth said pedestrian safety will be addressed as part of the project.

Mr. Bekhiet said a further coordination between the town and D.O.T. will help address traffic and safety concerns at the existing circle.

In response to a question from Third Ward Councilman Neil F. Sullivan, Jr. regarding the traffic light synchronization, Mr. Bekhiet said any change in this regard would be based on the latest traffic counts.

"We try to get the best improvements we can without destroying the town," Mr. Toth told the council.

Snehal Patel, a D.O.T. Project Manager, explained that the design phases of the project leading up to construction would take between 24 and 36 months to complete due to the historic nature of the project as well as the acquisition of land in order to widen the existing roadways.

In terms of pedestrian safety issues regarding the circle project, Mayor Jardim suggested that the project be studied by state consultant Frederic R. Harris, Inc. which is currently conducting a bicycle and pedestrian needs assessment study for the town.

Scotch Plains Democrats Reelect Dr. Walter Boright as Chairman

SCOTCH PLAINS — Members of the Scotch Plains Democratic Municipal Committee met recently and unanimously reelected Dr. Walter E. Boright as the Democratic Municipal Chairman for the two-year period of 1999-2001.

Dr. Boright has served as Democratic Chairman since 1981. He and his wife, Pamela, a former Scotch Plains Councilwoman, have been local residents for nearly 30 years. They have been active in government, politics, community and charitable endeavors all of their adult lives.

Also unanimously elected were the following officers: First Vice Chairman, Richard Samuel; Second Vice Chairman, Joyce Festa; Third Vice Chairman, Samuel Manigault; Fourth Vice Chairman, Ellen Baron; Secretary, Peggy Hoff; Treasurer, Deborah Littman, and Assistant Treasurer/Sergeant at Arms, Phillip Wiener.

Named as quadrant captains were Charles Richard Green, Josephine Curry, Elaine Chinoy and Carol Koransky.

Mayor Geri M. Samuel congratulated the newly-elected officers. Deputy Mayor Tarquin Bromley and

Town to Pick Up Bus Tab For Special Needs Program

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

you take away the heart of the program."

She pointed out that there are few other summer day camp options available for the children who attend the town's program. Westfield, in fact, is the only community in the area that she has found offers such a program.

To qualify for the program, a child must receive special education services from the Westfield school district. All of the children are mobile and many have mild cognitive problems, Mrs. Mitchell said.

Programming revolves around outdoor recreation, indoor activities and field trips.

Mrs. Mitchell said she has tried other programs and although other camps have worked with her to try to create an inclusive experience for her daughter, her child is happier with Westfield's summer program.

"She is so much more relaxed," she said. "She doesn't have to keep up. You couldn't see a happier kid at the end of the day."

Likewise, Susan Campbell of Central Avenue has a daughter who attended the program last summer.

"This program was a wonderful experience," she said. "It is a structured environment where counselors are qualified dealing with special needs and social disorders."

When she received the letter from Mr. Burrell, Ms. Campbell said she panicked and called Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside to inquire about its summer programs, only to find that everything was filled.

Mrs. Mitchell said that when she

first got the letter, she called Mr. Burrell about the changes, but was not satisfied with his answers. She then called Town Council members and found out that the decision to enact the changes had been made "unilaterally."

Besides dropping busing, asking parents to pick up their children at noon for lunch, and decreasing pool days from three to two, the location of the program was changed from Tamaques Elementary School to Wilson Elementary School. This change was made due to construction being done at Tamaques.

Parents, Mrs. Mitchell said, had no objections to the new location, and were mainly concerned about the other programming changes.

Contacted by *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*, Mr. Burrell declined to comment, saying he was too busy to discuss the matter at this time.

But in a memo to the Town Council, Mr. Burrell explained the reason the bus service was to be eliminated was because the program director and bus driver, Beverly Levitt, decided she could no longer handle both positions. She told Mr. Burrell that she wanted to concentrate on the running of the summer program, the memo stated.

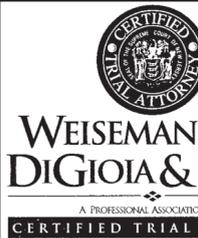
The memo also said that staff had discussed bringing the summer program "more in line" with the town's other recreation programs. The other summer playground programs require parents to pick up their children at noon for lunch, which is why the summer program for special needs participants also was changed, Mr. Burrell maintained in his memo.

Recreation Commission Chairman Seymour Koslowsky said busing was an issue regarding the program's lunch hour.

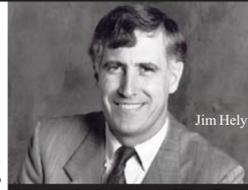
After talking with several council members, Mrs. Mitchell appeared before the Recreation Commission about parents' concerns regarding the program changes. The Commission immediately reinstated the lunch hour, but commissioners said there was no money for the bus and that they would have to talk to the town administrator.

Mr. Burrell then talked to Mr. Gottko, who said that the town would find the money to pay for the bus driver.

Mrs. Mitchell said that as a result of her talk with the Recreation Commission, she has suggested that a special group be set up within the Commission to discuss programming for the children of Westfield who have special needs. She also said that she would like to discuss the possibility of year-round programs for Westfield's special needs children.



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