

# Mr. Augustine Supports Bills For Victims of Hurricane

By ALAN M. AUGUSTINE  
Alan M. Augustine of Scotch Plains has served in the New Jersey State Assembly since 1992.

Since being elected to serve District 22, I have diligently tried to respond to the needs of my constituents as well as to the concerns of citizens statewide.

During Hurricane Floyd, hundreds of homes and businesses were completely destroyed, and families were devastated. Two days after the hurricane hit our towns, I was in Cranford and saw firsthand the severe damage that was wrought. Many other towns in my district were effected, too.

As a result, I am co-sponsoring legislation, introduced by my colleague, Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger, which provides \$6.5 million in flood relief for Cranford. In addition, I support the Senate bill which will provide \$50 million in state aid for the victims of Hurricane Floyd.

This bill includes \$5 million to help municipalities that suffered flood damage, and \$20 million for those who were impacted by the summer drought.

Sensitive to the needs of the terminally ill, I was instrumental in obtaining a matching \$360,000 state grant for the Center For Hope Hospice. The funds will be used to acquire approximately six acres of land in Union County on which a new hospice will be built.

To be a non-institutional, home-like residence, the hospice will provide terminally ill patients with a place where they can die in peace and dignity.

Concerned about health workers, many of whom live and work in District 22, I introduced legislation, called the "Needlestick Bill." This legislation will help significantly reduce the 24,000 accidental needlestick injuries suffered each year by health care workers in New Jersey.

It takes but a second for a needlestick to occur, but if the needle has contaminated blood, it can take years to recover. Even death can occur. My bill requires health care facilities, within one year, to replace

conventional needles with safer alternatives that have been cleared or approved by the Federal Drug Administration.

The bill passed both houses of the Legislature in June and is awaiting the Governor's signature.

Responding to the request by mayors in District 22 towns for help with the impending "Y2K" problems, I co-sponsored legislation that provides municipalities and counties with a cap exception for expenses related to diagnosing and correcting Year 2000 computer problems.

These computer failures could be costly and disruptive to vital municipal and county operations, so local governments need to ensure services continue to function. The bill would also enable a municipality to adopt special emergency appropriations for Y2K computer problems.

Another bill I co-sponsored, which was signed into law last month, will appropriate \$20 million from the 1996 Dredging Bond Act to find the most efficient means by which to decontaminate material dredged from the Port of New York and New Jersey.

The funds will be utilized to test cleaning processes — such as sediment washing, mineralization or thermal destruction — in order that dredged material can be transformed into a marketable product.

If properly cleaned and decontaminated, dredged materials can be re-used in a variety of ways, possibly to fill underground storage tanks, for example.

Other legislation I have sponsored which directly impacts on citizens statewide includes: the Identity Theft Act which establishes a criminal penalty for assuming another's identity for fraudulent purposes; the Parking Ticket Bill, which gives towns three years to collect fines or resolve disputes on unpaid parking tickets; and the Driver Distraction and Highway Safety Task Force Bill.

Through this measure, a Task Force will assess the risks that drivers incur while their attention is diverted by cellular phones and other distractions.



Alan M. Augustine

# From the Desk of the Westfield Mayor

## Who is Responsible for Local Government and Community?

By THOMAS C. JARDIM

Thomas C. Jardim was elected Mayor of Westfield in 1996 and re-elected in 1998.

In less than 2,000 hours, we will be making a much-heralded leap into a new millennium. We enter this millennium as a community in a basically sound state, although certainly not perfect.

As we enter this new year and this new century, we should be asking ourselves, what kind of community do we want to be? What more can we do to strengthen the institutions that bring us together? What more can we do to insure that every resident of this town shares in the spirit of community and benefits from that spirit in their lives?

Westfield in 1999 is certainly not the same community it was in 1899 or 1799. Of course, some of the town's history would appall us. In the 1700s and well into the 1800s, most families in Westfield were slave-owners.

But if we can look past that fact, for most of its first 200 years, Westfield was the type of town Thomas Jefferson had envisioned for America: mainly populated by farm folk who lived by tilling the soil and trading in its products.

Strength of community was a necessity in those days. There was no organized fire department prior to 1875, so when there was a fire, everyone in town grabbed a bucket and pitched in. Neighbors all helped one another: apple pickings, hog-killings, barn-raising, sheep shearings. All the farmers in the town participated.

This is obviously not the Westfield we know today. Nowadays, pressures on our time and other factors have led to an expectation that our government will do all of what needs to be done. That does not seem to be an unrea-

sonable expectation, especially given the high amount of taxes we all pay. But it is an expectation that has not been met in the past and is, in fact, doomed to fail. It is doomed to fail for many reasons, but primary among these is that government was never intended to be a panacea for all of societies ills.

Government was, of course, never intended to provide spiritual fulfillment; it was not invented as a better way of raising children. These things we know are for the church and for families.

But how is it that only government is looked at to clean graffiti off of buildings? Why is it that when we see trash in downtown Westfield or, we walk by, shake our heads and increase our resentment toward government?

Why do we "not want to get involved" when there is a domestic dispute in our neighborhood? Whose responsibility is it, anyway?

Many observers of government are convinced that, in the 21st century, a different model of government will emerge. It's a model that cannot be called "new" as it is one upon which this country was founded. Call it "communitarianism," call it the "era of big citizenship."

Whatever its name, it is a model premised upon the ideal that improving the quality of life for all citizens requires that all of our institutions — government, families, churches, community groups and social service agencies — create partnerships and attack these problems together.

As we enter a new century, it is my goal to bring all of the institutions in Westfield together to formulate strategies for strengthening the partnerships among the institutions in our community. By doing so, we will together take responsibility for defining what kind of community we want to be in the 21st century.



Thomas C. Jardim

# From the Desk of the Scotch Plains Mayor, Directly-Elected Mayor, Open Space: Your Choice

By GERI M. SAMUEL

Geri M. Samuel was elected to a four-year term on the Scotch Plains Township Council in November 1998. Her council colleagues appointed Ms. Samuel as Mayor for 1999.

On Tuesday, November 2, aside from selecting the candidate of your choice, there will be two important questions for Scotch Plains voters to consider. I would like to address those questions.

First, I would like to talk about the open space referendum. During the course of this year, the Recreation Commission approached the Township Council asking that they introduce an ordinance to implement an open space referendum. Why? We have been in desperate need of more recreation facilities for approximately 30 years.

After listening to the concerns of the Recreation Commission, the council on August 17, unanimously passed an ordinance to put an open space referendum on the ballot.

What will this referendum mean to the homeowner? There will be a two cent tax which will be set aside exclusively for the acquisition, development, administration and maintenance of open space for recreational purposes and land preservation.

That means that for every \$100,000 of assessed value, the homeowner will pay \$20 per year. The average assessed home in Scotch Plains is \$116,000, bringing the cost per year to \$23.20 per year.

The open space referendum automatically sunsets after 10 years and would again require the introduction and passage of an ordinance to reestablish another fund.

The monies from the fund can only be used for the purposes stated in the Referendum; they cannot be diverted for any other purpose. There also must be an independent audit every year to determine if the funds have been used in accordance with the terms of the ordinance.

The council was happy to be able to pass this ordinance. It is now up to you, the voters, to let us know what your wishes are regarding recreation in this community. We need your input to help us make our decisions for the future.

The second referendum — the directly elected mayor referendum — was introduced by the Democratic majority. It is an issue that was very evident to us during our last campaign.

This referendum would allow the people of Scotch Plains, not three members of the Township Council, to directly choose who will be their next mayor for a four-year term.

The referendum does not increase the duties or responsibilities of the mayor. Passage of The referendum would not increase the powers of the mayor. What passage of the referendum does, is allow a mayor, to continue relationships he or she has formed outside of the community during their term of office, such as with the freeholders and state government to bring more grant dollars into Scotch Plains, to continue those relationships for the betterment of the community.

This referendum gives the mayor the same term as the council. For a new mayor or even a mayor reassuming that position, it gives them the time to not only come up to speed, but along with the members of the Township Council, to set long-term goals which they can have a chance of achieving.

While many will say the system is not broken so don't fix it, not every mayor has the same goals from year to year. This will allow the township government to focus on a long-term plan and keep the same focus for a fixed period of time.

On November 2, you are being asked to choose a candidate for Township Council. These two questions on the ballot are equally as important. Please consider them carefully. It is one of the times that you have a direct say in what your government will or will not do.



Geri M. Samuel

# From the Desk of Superintendent Choye Scotch Plains-Fanwood Schools Focus On Facilities to Assist District's Enrollment Boom

By CAROL B. CHOYE

Dr. Carol B. Choye has been Superintendent of schools of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District since 1993.

It goes without saying that the primary focus of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools is always to help our students reach their full potential and strive for their personal best.

The entire community is committed to maintaining a high level of expectation for every child we serve and continuously improving the quality of teaching to expand student learning.

But this year, the district must finally face the critical issue of facilities use to accommodate our increasing student enrollments.

A Facilities and Enrollment Task Force worked throughout the 1998-1999 school year and developed a report which the Board of Education received in June. It outlines the history of this issue and various options which have been considered since 1985 when the "baby boom echo" first began causing a reversal of enrollment declines.

It describes other factors which have had a significant impact on student enrollments and the use of facilities, such as post-Mt. Laurel home construction in the township and borough, changes in special education requirements and programs, and the impact of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).

To date, as enrollments have increased, particularly on the south side of Scotch Plains, small numbers of students have been redistricted, elementary classrooms have been reclaimed by converting administrative offices to classrooms, modular classrooms have been added at three elementary schools, and small instructional spaces, dual-use instructional spaces, and such strategies as "art on a cart" and "mobile music" have been used.

But it is clear that we can no longer use such "quick fixes" to address the problem and that some major deci-

sions will have to be made to find a long-term solution.

While the Facilities and Enrollment Task Force made no specific recommendations on possible solutions, they considered options which included everything from grade reorganization, relocating fifth grades to the middle schools, converting Terrill Middle School to a sixth (kindergarten-sixth grade) elementary building, removing the Administrative Offices from Evergreen Elementary School, building a new elementary school, or more additions to current facilities.

Renting additional space in local buildings is also a possibility.

To help gather information, which will be critical for their decision making on this issue, the Board of Education has already taken steps to have a facilities evaluation done by The Thomas Group, professional plan-

ners, and to develop a community survey which will be mailed to all residents in Scotch Plains and Fanwood in late October.

The board has also developed a list of standards which will guide their long-range facilities decisions which includes ensuring equity in the delivery of programs among schools of the same grade levels, maintaining racial balance, emphasizing instructional over non-instructional expenditures, striving to maintain current guidelines for academic class sizes, providing space for potential program improvements and appropriate accommodations for special needs students, and providing flexibility to meet future unforeseen needs. The board must also consider the tax impact of any decisions they make.

The decisions ahead will not be easy. Changes of this type are full of emotion and anxiety for those who are affected. But the board and I are committed to keeping the community and staff well informed, to hearing their opinions and suggestions, and making decisions that serve the best interests of all concerned.



Dr. Carol B. Choye



# From the Desk of Superintendent Foley

## Technology's Quiet Revolution Transforms Westfield Schools

By WILLIAM J. FOLEY

Dr. William J. Foley has served as Superintendent of the Westfield Public Schools since 1996.

I visited a group of elementary teachers recently, all actively working with a new piece of software. Their task was to plan the colonization of a planet and tap its resources. To complete the activity they had to examine historical, political, economic and scientific data that was critical to the decision.

These fourth grade teachers were addressing the topic of the exploration and colonization of the United States in a new and exciting way.

Terms like mercantilism, charters, and proprietary rights, typically listed as terms to remember in a fourth grade textbook, now became concepts to implement as they planned a colony.

There is a quiet revolution taking place in Westfield schools, which is transforming how we learn and communicate. The Parent-Teacher Council's Educational Studies report on "Technology in the Curricula," presented to the board in September, described some of these changes.

Technology has redefined literacy, where students must become information managers capable of retrieving, analyzing and presenting knowledge. The report notes that a shift has taken place from students being taught in a lecturing environment to students becoming independent learners. The teacher's role is changing from "expert" to "collaborator"

or "guide." The Educational Studies report is appropriately concerned that Westfield has not fully executed its technology plan.

Fortunately, with the support of the community for both school budgets and the bond, the plan is becoming a reality. Westfield High School is being completely networked and the remaining schools will be completed this year.

Writing labs have been initiated for the intermediate schools and now each fourth and fifth grade classroom has five workstations, a printer and large display monitor. In the last three years, hundreds of hours of staff training have taken place as computers are added to the classroom.

Aside from instruction, technology has opened a whole new way for parents to communicate with the schools. Teachers and administrators now have e-mail addresses, and schools have established Web sites.

If your children attend the Westfield Public Schools, check the school's Web site at www.westfieldnj.com/boe as well as the home page for the Board of Education. We have been able to provide immediate updates on construction projects by posting bulletins on these home pages.

What about student achievement? Has the investment in technology paid dividends in higher test scores? The honest answer is: I don't know. Consider, however, what our students are facing as they make the transition to college.

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Dr. William J. Foley

As a small community newspaper we depend upon each and every member of the communities we serve to help us publish the news that directly affects and chronicles your life. Whether it is the results of the local football game, the announcement of your daughter's wedding, the passing of a dear friend or a picture of your child's 3rd grade class, we provide your family with the news that, when all is done and said, really matters. But we can't do a thing without the help of others:

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