

# Echo LEADER

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SPRINGFIELD, N.J., VOL. 72 NO. 26

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2001

TWO SECT

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07206-1527

## Public to decide athletic referendum on Tuesday

By Mark Hrywna  
Regional Editor

A \$3.4-million bond referendum will be presented to Springfield voters again on Tuesday that would fund various upgrades and improvements to the school district's athletic fields. The project includes work at county-owned Meisel Avenue Park which has been used by Jonathan Dayton High School athletic teams for many years.

Union County is providing approximately \$325,000 toward the project while the state plans to contribute \$675,000, leaving the remaining \$2.4 million to be raised by a five-year bond that would add approximately \$84 to the average property tax bill for the life of the bond.

Voters rejected an identical referendum on Dec. 12 by a margin of only 10 votes, about 597 votes against and 587 for. That day, a power outage affected much of the township and caused all 12 voting districts to be consolidated at two polling stations.

About \$2.1 million of the \$3.4-million bond referendum is estimated to be spent at Meisel Field; \$435,000 at the fields in front of the high school on Mountain Avenue;

\$372,000 on fields between Edward V. Walton School on Mountain Avenue and Thelma L. Sandmeier School on South Springfield Avenue; \$311,000 on the soccer fields behind

Dayton high school, and \$178,000 on the fields behind Florence M. Gaudineer School on South Springfield Avenue.

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## Referendum polling places

Polls for Tuesday's special school board referendum on the \$3.4-million athletic field renovations will be open Tuesday from 2 to 9 p.m. All of the following polling places are handicap-accessible:

- Districts 1, 4: Presbyterian Parish House, Church Mall, lower level off parking lot.
- Districts 2, 3: Sarah Bailey Civic Center, 30 Church Mall.
- Districts 5, 6: James Caldwell School, Caldwell Place, gym.
- Districts 7, 8, 9: Florence Gaudineer School, South Springfield Avenue, gym.
- Districts 10, 13, 14: Edward V. Walton School Mountain Avenue, gym.
- Districts 11, 12: Thelma Sandmeier School, South Springfield Avenue, gym.

For more information about your polling place location call the Union County Board of Elections at (908) 527-4123.

## Community Presbyterian dates back to borough's farmland

By Joan M. Devlin  
Staff Writer

Editor's note: This is the sixth part in a series highlighting various houses of worship in Mountainside and Springfield.

Set back on a hill on Deer Path in Mountainside, the simple yet beautiful Community Presbyterian Church has been there about as long as its neighbors.

"All the surrounding homes were built in the early 1950s, when Mountainside came into being," said the pastor, The Rev. Christopher Belden, "and the Presbyterian congregation was formed in 1954; the church was built in 1956. For two years, the original members used a room at Deerfield School for worship. Mountainside is a relatively new community, as prior to 1950 everything was farmland."

The minister has been at Community Presbyterian for the past 14 years, and is well-versed in the history of the area, which he has grown to love. The church is part of the Presbytery of Elizabeth and back in the '50s, it was part of the largest Protestant denomination. That has changed now: "We are about 10th or 11th now," said Belden, "as there was a decline nationwide in church membership after that; now, however, the pendulum is swinging back."

The parish is L-shaped, as the fellowship hall, or Christian education building as Belden calls it, connects with the sanctuary, and is virtually as large inside as the sanctuary itself. This was added to the church in 1960, and is in full use for all church events including Sunday School classes.

The church currently has 350 members. "We have been taking in new members every year, but we also lose members; usually older members move away. The homes are all very large, and when children grow up and move out, it can be too much to care for, and so that may account for the changes," said the pastor.

The good news is that just like Mountainside itself, most of the members tend to fall into the young to middle age category and are families with growing children. The minister has two teenage sons himself.

Inside the sanctuary, which is brick on the outside and wood frame on the inside, the only adornment is a huge Celtic cross; a tradition for Presbyterians. The cross is at the altar, and behind it is a long floor-to-ceiling curtain which artfully conceals their wonderful pipe organ.

"Our pipe organ is an Aeolian-Skinner, a famous manufacturer, and was one of the last ones built in America. It was installed in the early

1960s. It was a whole lot of money contributed by the people, so we could buy it," the pastor said. "The sound is tremendous."

Music is a large part of the worship as in all Protestant churches, and Belden is very happy with his choir director, a Russian emigre, Lyudmila Syrochkina. "She is an excellent musician and organist and inspires us." Besides the regular choir, the church has a bell choir which sits in the balcony.

The minister's last parish was the Christ United Presbyterian in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., where he served six years. Prior to that, he was assistant pastor at First Presbyterian, Clarion, Pa. Belden has a doctorate in theology from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

How does he like his 24/7 job? "I would not change it, but one of the things that took me by surprise at first was how much I had to deal with death and dying in my first congregation, which was primarily elderly. We are trained for this, however." Belden also has a master's degree in social work, so he is prepared for many aspects of human life, all of which he has encountered in his ministry.

When asked about the future, he said, "I see the church as a strong force in future times."

## Borough incumbents to seek re-election

By Joan M. Devlin  
Staff Writer

At least two incumbents on the Mountainside Board of Education find it necessary to seek another term because the district is in the middle of plans to expand schools to address increasing enrollment. With a 4 p.m. deadline on Monday to file nominating petitions to run in the April 17 Board of Education election, no one officially filed has as of presstime, however, board President Patricia Taeschler and Richard Kress plan to seek re-election. Incumbent Sally Rivieccio could not be reached for comment.

Three of the seven seats on the board are up, all three-year terms. "I have served nine years," Taeschler said, "and at this time, I plan on running again; I am very dedicated to

the children and we are working so hard on the expansions now." She also thought all incumbents would be running again.

"We all have until the 26th of February to come forward, and it sometimes happens that people procrastinate and file at the last minute," Taeschler said.

"I will probably run again," Kress said when reached Tuesday afternoon. "It is pretty hard to walk away from all that is going on now, with the bond issue and the renovations."

The board will present a \$6.8-million bond referendum on March 27 that would provide funds to reopen the Beechwood School on Woodacres Drive as well as expand the Deerfield School on Central Avenue.

## Annual Highlander auction Friday



Preparing for the Governor Livingston Band Parents Organization's Highlander Auction on Friday are, from left, Richard Mansfield, Richard Klumb and Daria Szkwarko. The non-bid auction, which will benefit the award-winning Highlander Band, will be at the high school, 175 Watchung Blvd., Berkeley Heights. Doors will open at 7 p.m. and the auction will begin at 8 p.m. Admission is \$5 per person, which includes a block of tickets, a \$2.50 value, and a complimentary beverage and dessert. For more information call (908) 464-3100.

## County and township in negotiations

By Mark Hrywna  
Regional Editor

The Board of Chosen Freeholders last week agreed to negotiate with Springfield "for the exchange of certain properties owned by the county and the township and dedicated to Green Acres purposes." What the properties will entail precisely is what county and township officials will determine.

In a proposed trade of parkland, Springfield is expected to receive about nine acres that surround Jonathan Dayton High School on Mountain Avenue, including Wabeno Avenue Park, while the county would get more than 11 acres adjacent to four acres the county already owns at the Union-Springfield border on Morris Avenue.

County Manager Michael Lapolla stressed that the swap would not include land where a former chemical dye plant was housed, which has raised concerns about the potential for contaminated soil at Meisel Avenue Park. The property the town would get extends only from the high school to fields that abut the dormant Rahway Valley rail line.

"This is just the next step," Freeholder Linda Stender said. "It doesn't finalize any agreement." The issue of potential contamination is expected to be discussed as an issue in the negotiations.

In addition to the land swap, county and local school officials are working on a new long-term agreement for use and maintenance of Meisel Avenue Park. The school board's last lease with the county expired in 1983. The park is county-owned but the township's schools have used the fields for many years.

School and county officials have had a "number of conversations" about a new lease "which would be for a number of years, not less than 30," Superintendent of Schools Gary Friedland said during a school board meeting earlier this month.

Priority use for municipal and school use, Friedland said, is a change from the previous contract and a main point for the school district.

"There are certain things we wanted different from the original contract," he said, adding that agreements the county has with other towns, including Summit, were examined.

In 1998, the freeholders agreed to allow Summit to build new ballfields near the Sheriff's Complex on Glenstone Avenue and the city would lease the fields from the county for \$1 a year for 99 years.

Friedland said information gathered from public meetings about the \$3.4-million bond referendum for athletic fields last year was incorporated into the district's draft of the lease that was sent to the county.

## Two of three incumbents decided in Springfield

By Mark Hrywna  
Regional Editor

Two of three incumbents whose terms are up on the Springfield Board of Education this year plan to file for re-election by Monday's 4 p.m. deadline to run in the April 17 public vote.

Linda Duke already filed her nominating petition last week and will seek a

See INCUMBENTS, Page 5



## Expert proposes wall for supermarket site

By Mark Hrywna  
Regional Editor

A 15-foot-high, 1,000-foot-long wall is one option for the owners of a proposed Stop & Shop in Springfield to meet the township's noise ordinance during nighttime hours. Edward Clark of Ostergaard Acoustical Associates of West Orange, an acoustic and noise expert for Village Supermarkets Inc., a competing supermarket firm, offered the option in a noise study presented during testimony at Tuesday night's Board of Adjustment meeting.

Clark was presented by Stephen Barcan, attorney for Springfield-based Village Supermarkets Inc., and cross-examined by James Segreto, attorney for Royal Ahold which owns the former Saks Fifth Avenue property at 90 Millburn Ave. Segreto also brought back Henry Ney, his traffic expert, to answer questions from the public. The firm is seeking site plan approval from the township's Board of Adjustment.

The Stop & Shop application was last heard by the Board of Adjustment in November when Ney was cross-examined by Millburn's attorney, James D'Elia.

In his report, Clark had concerns about "mobile noise sources," such as trucks and tractor-trailers making deliveries, but not with rooftop equipment, such as refrigeration or condensers, because some type of shielding could be used there to meet the township's noise code. Heavy truck or tractor-trailers generate a noise level of 80 decibels, DBA, at a distance of 50 feet; 70 DBA at 150 feet, and 64 DBA at 300 feet.

Clark took noise readings last fall from two points on the Stop & Shop property. Background noise created a DBA level between 47 and 51, primarily due to noise from nearby Route 24. Traffic from Millburn Avenue and a jet plane flying overhead bumped readings to about 65 DBA and a passing firetruck with active sirens generated 70 to 75 DBA.

At a residential property line, the township's ordinance limits noise from a neighboring commercial property to no more than 65 DBA between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. and 50 DBA from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Noise levels are exceeded in all categories of trucks that would use the route within the property — the ring road — to make deliveries, which is only 50 feet from the residential property line. Tractor-trailers at loading docks 300 feet from the property line would generate 64 DBA. The only

way to meet township noise codes "without the extraordinary use of noise control barriers," Clark said, would be to limit trucks to daytime hours.

One supermarket Clark has worked with, in West Windsor, does have a 15- to 20-foot-high wall but it is across the street from a residential area. At a supermarket in Spotswood, a wall and berm have been put in on the residential property line.

A wall is technically feasible, Clark said, since it solves acoustical problems, but then other issues are raised such as aesthetics, wind load, cost and possibly drainage. These factors could be dealt with in the final analysis of the site wall.

Another option, Clark said might be to reconfigure the site and move the supermarket building closer to the center of the property, keeping noisy vehicles a maximum distance from homes. Segreto repeatedly asked the noise expert how the site plan could be modified to reduce noise.

"A sound wall would work, it could be done," Barcan said, "to make the operations of the site comply with noise codes." The attorney, however, said Clark is merely a noise engineer, not a site plan engineer, and cannot answer questions about reconfiguring the site.

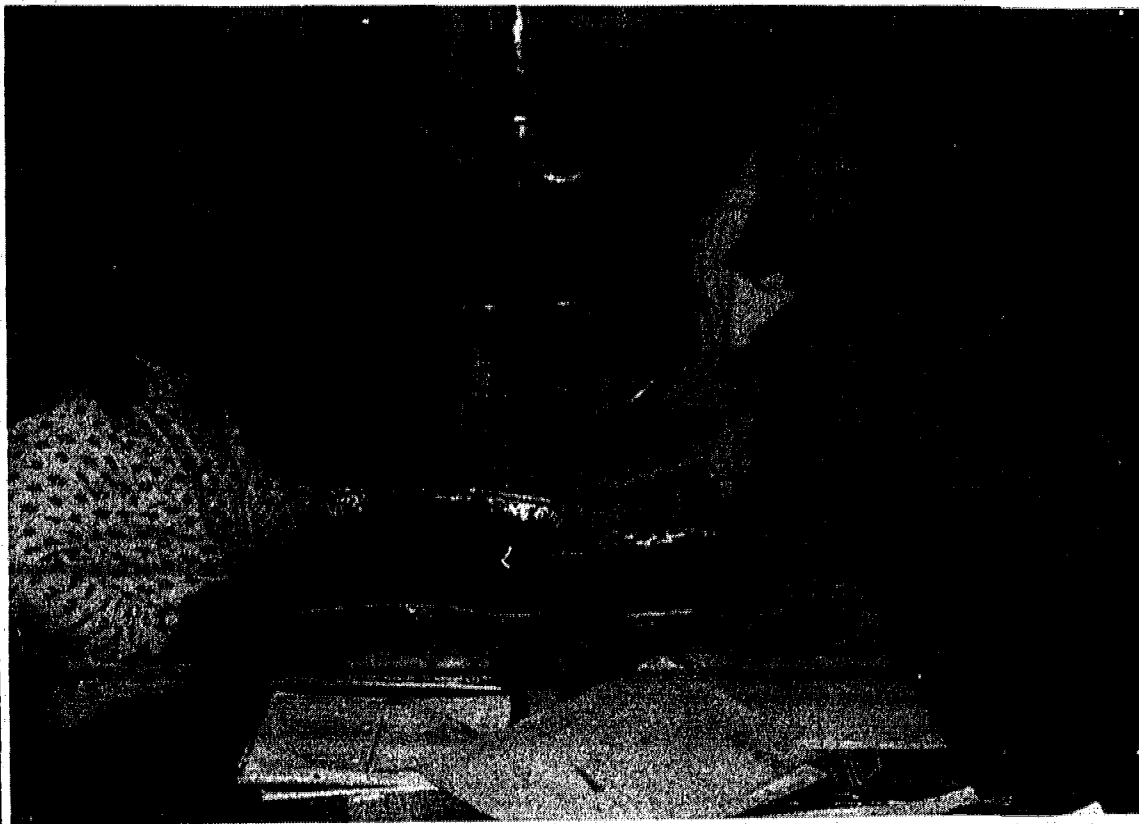
Heavy trucks need 300 feet to meet the township's daytime noise limit, Clark said. The applicant should have had a noise study done. The noise report he presented, Clark said, has options that could mitigate issues of noise on the site plan.

Ney, Stop & Shop's traffic expert, presented a study, requested by the Zoning Board, of traffic in the surrounding area. The report included recommendations to resolve existing traffic problems and will be forwarded to the Township Committee and Police Department.

Stop & Shop's site plan application is expected to continue at the Board of Adjustment's next meeting on March 20 when objecting attorneys will present a traffic engineer, planner and operations person.

Stop & Shop is looking to turn the former Saks property at the Springfield-Millburn border into a nearly 70,000-square-foot supermarket. The supermarket chain purchased the 10-acre site in 1994 from Saks. The property is primarily in Springfield with only a small portion stretching into Millburn in Essex County, however, a large part of it borders Springfield homes.

## Learning about soil erosion



David Rennie's fourth-grade science class at James Caldwell School in Springfield learns about soil erosion, including, from left, Jessica Armstrong, Amanda Grywalski, Michael Petrilli and Katie Murphy.

## GL Hilltop Players will present 'Evita' next week

Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's extraordinary opera "Evita" comes to life on the Governor Livingston High School stage. The GL Hilltop Players, featuring 34 cast members, at least 25 crew members, and the theatre production class at the high school have been working since January to bring this 1979 Tony Award-winning musical to life.

"Evita" is an opera based on the life of Eva Peron, the wife of Argentine President Juan Peron. Although she started life in humble surroundings, she became the most powerful woman her country had ever known. Still controversial, Eva Peron's life is one of great contrasts. She has been called everything from sinner to saint. Webber and Rice have drawn their own conclusions about Evita; the audience is invited to draw theirs.

Director Judith Mulder, Musical Director James Campodonico, Assistant Musical Director James Mussachio, Choreographer Patricia Limandri and Technical Director Ken Stiefel are proud of how the students have been hand-

ling this difficult musical. They all agree that this is not typical high school musical fare. The students are being challenged both artistically and intellectually as they prepare this show for an audience.

Likewise, Irene O'Grady's AP Spanish class is using the musical as an opportunity to study the literature and history of Argentina. The class is also helping by translating Spanish dialogue and completing research that will bring a sense of reality to the production.

Columbia Middle School students will appear as a children's choir in the musical and two members of GL's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program are cast members.

Friday and Saturday's performances will be interrupted for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Performances are March 1 at 7:30 p.m. and March 2 and 3 at 8 p.m.

Tickets are \$7, \$4 for senior citizens on Saturday night only.

For advanced tickets call the GL Hilltop Players Auxiliary.

## Slaughter exhibit will open at library Friday

When Linda Slaughter touches her brush to canvas, her colors breathe life into her portraits, which will appear at The Donald B. Palmer Museum of the Springfield Free Public Library, 66 Mountain Ave., from Friday to March 29.

Slaughter studied art at the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Arts, developing her own brand of abstract portraiture using acrylic paint, cardboard and even string. "My paintings

are simply about design and color," she said, "and trying to make every-

thing come together on canvas — color, line, shading and ideas."

## Council introduces boro budget

By Joan M. Devlin  
Staff Writer

The Mountainside Borough Council officially introduced the 2001 municipal budget during its regular meeting Tuesday night. The \$7.6-million budget expects to increase municipal taxes for the average household by approximately \$46.

The budget is approximately 2.98 points higher than last year, and under the proposed plan, the municipal tax rate would rise from \$0.84 per \$100 of assessed value to \$0.87. The average Mountainside homeowner, whose property is assessed at \$154,000, would pay approximately \$1,340 in municipal taxes under the proposed budget for 2001. Last year the average property owner paid approximately \$1,294 in municipal taxes.

A public hearing on the budget will be conducted during the Borough Council's March 20 regular meeting at 8 p.m. in Borough Hall, 1385 Borough Hall. Copies of the budget will be available after March 1.

The proposed county tax rate for 2001 is \$0.93, up from \$0.88 per \$100 in 2000. For the average borough homeowner, county taxes would rise by approximately \$77 — from \$1,355 to \$1,432. The Board of Chosen Freeholders is conducting hearings on the county budget this month and usually adopts the spending plan in the spring.

The tax bill also includes the portion for the Mountainside schools, which the Board of Education will put up for a public vote on April 17. Details on the tax impact of that budget are still not known.

Officially, the council approved a resolution entitled, "Late introduction of the 2001 Municipal Budget."

"The State of New Jersey says we must produce a budget no later than Feb. 10; however, in order to get the budget done, we needed information from them, and we did not get it on time, the reason for the term late," Mayor Robert Vigilanti said.

## Springfield seniors gather to mark Valentine's Day

Springfield senior citizens celebrated Valentine's Day with a breakfast brunch at the Sarah Bailey Civic Center. Breakfast consisted of eggs, French toast, bagels and an assortment of cream cheese. There were more than 100 members present. There were door prizes and they ended the day by playing Bingo.

The club's next function will be St. Patrick's Day when

on March 16, they will have a corned beef and cabbage luncheon. The price is \$10 per person.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the senior groups can call Theresa at (973) 912-2227 or stop in at Sarah Bailey Civic Center any Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and visit one of the groups.

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# COMMUNITY FORUM

## EDITORIALS

### Make the investment

The \$3.4-million referendum proposed by the Springfield Board of Education to rehabilitate athletic fields is much like making an investment in your home. It's going to cost money, but in the long run, you'll be glad you did it. With all the taxes we pay these days, it's easy to look at every new item as an expense rather than an investment, which this is.

One look at the track at Meisel Field and it's no wonder few people use it. The county must at least offer \$700,000, the school board's initial request, considering how a new track is slated to cost \$605,000 and the baseball and softball fields at Meisel are used by many from across the county since it is a county park.

The cinder track has not hosted a Dayton track meet in a decade. That borders on embarrassing as the team competes against other schools that have had all-weather tracks for many years. But the students aren't the only ones who will benefit from athletic field upgrades. The track will be used a great deal by the school teams; however, this aspect of the park is truly where most county use likely will be.

With a new track, Meisel Field will again become a popular destination for walkers and runners as it once was many years ago, not just attracting residents of Springfield, but from neighboring areas such as Union, Westfield, Kenilworth and Mountainside.

Without a doubt, two of the most important factors for people deciding where to purchase a home are recreation and education. This project will go a long way toward making Springfield more attractive to prospective homeowners and, yes, it will have a positive effect on property values.

The recently raised issue of potentially contaminated land on the Meisel property doesn't scare us. County officials have vowed to look into the situation of possible contamination. What was on the site prior to the development of Meisel Field likely was an old chemical dye plant. It wasn't nuclear waste or hazardous materials. People, including many children, have been using those fields for nearly 65 years and no one seems to be aware of any problems stemming from the former plant. Should problems arise, they can be remediated, but we see no reason to hold up the public approval of the bond.

The former regional school district and county had an agreement regarding who would maintain the land, which expired nearly 20 years ago. That should not happen again, especially with the significant investment taxpayers are providing for the fields. The regional school board allowed the athletic facilities to deteriorate to such a level. Both the current school board and the county are working on an agreement and should do what they can to ensure this does not happen again.

As for the proposed land swap between the township and the county, as long as fine details are resolved regarding maintenance and upkeep of these lands, it is simply an effort by local officials to ensure that township tax dollars are spent on township land.

Voters should cast their ballots Tuesday in favor of Springfield's \$3.4-million referendum to upgrade athletic fields. The project is a reasonable investment that will benefit the township and schools.

### Consider serving

With the filing deadline Monday for the school elections in April, residents of Springfield and Mountainside should consider running for their respective boards of education. There are three-year terms are up on each board.

It is a demanding job. Preparing budgets, negotiating contracts with staff members and keeping abreast with the continuous stream of new regulations from the state Department of Education is not easy. The goal of providing a good education for the children of the community is worth the challenge, however.

Being an educator is not a requirement of serving on a school board. Ideally, school boards are meant for "regular" residents who seek to serve their community in a positive manner.

Schools also affect more than just the children who attend or the parents who are involved. The entire town is affected by a its school district and what it does.

It is a unique volunteer job with vital responsibilities and one that is not easy and sometimes even can be thankless. At the same time it can be rewarding to serve and give back to your town, setting the agenda for the educational community.



IT ALL ADDS UP — Sandmeier School Student Council members Greg Krupit, left, and Matt Shanes present a check for \$310 to Marcia Krupit and Jeff Shanes, volunteer members of the Springfield First Aid Squad. Sandmeier students collected change, rolled the coins and brought them to the bank.

Photo By Ruthanne Wagner

## Reaffirm values of Washington and Lincoln

Presidents' Day, in many ways, is our most confusing holiday. Although the federal government has set aside the third Monday in February as a national holiday, each state selects the name by which that holiday shall be called. Some states opt for Presidents' Day while some still cling to the more traditional Washington's Birthday. Others celebrate a modernistic appellation of Presidents' Day with the hyphenated Washington-Lincoln Day.

And if you go further down the rabbit hole, you find that Washington was in fact not born on the day we are celebrating this year, Feb. 19. He was born on the 22nd day of the month. But, and here it gets even more confusing, if you could ask Washington himself on what day he was born, he would say Feb. 11. That's because he was born during usage of the Julian calendar, which was replaced in the American colonies in 1752 by the Gregorian calendar, which we still use today.

The Julian calendar in America ended Sept. 2, 1752 and the very next day, when the Gregorians marched in, it was officially deemed to be Sept. 14. And Washington's birth date thus was shifted from the 11th to the 22nd.

Confusing, yes. But what's most curious is that the two men

whom we are honoring on Presidents' Day, Washington and Lincoln, are two of the least confusing heroes in American historical mythology.

Both men represent within American folklore the values of honesty, integrity, strength, leadership and courage.

Washington, so goes the story, couldn't lie to his father about cutting down the cherry tree. Lincoln, after he had mistakenly shortchanged a customer a few pennies while clerking in a store, walked several miles after the store had closed to return those pennies.

Apocryphal stories certainly, but indicative of what these men represent for us — Honest Abe and the Father of our Country.

Historically, both men led the country during war time, one as a general and the other as president, and both were considered strong leaders, tough but fair and resourceful. And honest. That's the word which keeps popping up in the mythology — honest.

We all want honest and just leaders who exhibit integrity beyond reproach. We want our leaders to govern fairly. Washington and Lincoln represent our historical standards in this idealism and it is fitting that we set aside one day each year to reaffirm those values.

## Saving for college now helps ensure affordability

The United States can boast number-one status about a lot of things. When it comes to saving for the future, however, studies reveal Americans lag well behind much of the world.

If savings accounts in general are scraping bottom now, how do most people expect to pay for college in five, 10 or even 20 years? Whether it's a two-year or a four-year program, tuition will be less affordable as time passes.

Scholarships are not guaranteed and normally don't cover all education costs. Despite their need, many middle-income families might not qualify for financial aid. And loaded down with student-loan debt is a poor way to begin life after college.

A recent survey by the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities found 97 percent of Garden State citizens believe a college degree is essential for future success.

At the same time, 77 percent of parents with children living at home are worried they might not be able to afford their children's college tuition when the time comes. Seventy percent of the people polled said the state should do more to encourage parents to save for their children's education.

Recognizing children's need for college savings and parents' need for the motivation to save, the Assembly is poised to consider legislation to address both concerns.

### Assembly Seat

By Kevin J. O'Toole

Assembly Bill 1622, which I am sponsoring along with 10 of my colleagues — both Republican and Democrat — is scheduled for an Assembly vote today. The bill would establish the Prepaid Higher Education Expense Program and would allow families to plan financially and begin paying tuition costs well before their children enroll in college.

This prepaid tuition program is meant to encourage parents to think ahead, and lay the financial foundation for their children's future higher education needs.

For many reasons, a prepaid tuition program is important not only for individual students and families, but for the future success of our economy.

Keeping in mind that a college education often defines a person's earning potential for the rest of his or her life, teen-agers need every opportunity to further their education. Unfortunately, poor financial planning denies many young New Jerseyans the chance to study for high-earning careers.

The new millennium is ushering in a new economy that requires a fresh approach to educating and training our students to meet future workforce demands.

By all accounts, New Jersey's technology- and science-based economy is growing and expanding. But the labor pool to fill essential jobs in these high-tech fields is shrinking. Our labor shortage is at an 11-year high, with the most serious shortages occurring among skilled workers and technical and professional staff. The vast majority of those fields requires advanced study, including college and graduate degrees.

The Prepaid Higher Education Expense Program, along with the New Jersey Better Educational Savings Trust program, would be administered by the yet-to-be-established Prepaid Higher Education Expense Board in the Department of State.

Under the bill, money deposited in the Prepaid Higher Education Expense Trust Fund would be maintained, invested and expended solely for the program's purposes, and include plans for county colleges and universities.

At least 18 states currently have established state prepaid programs, and 22 states have operational savings programs. Colorado, Massachusetts and Virginia are the only states with both prepaid and savings programs.

The recent "Measuring Up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education" showed New Jersey was one of just three states to receive all As and Bs. New Jersey has so many higher-learning choices — some of them world-renowned.

To maintain our state's high educational standards, we need to make higher education available to as many students as possible. For so many families, though, the determining factor for college is affordability. And when families must devote a relatively large portion of their income for tuition and related costs, too often college takes a back seat to more immediate needs.

The prepaid program is a commonsense approach geared toward reducing reliance on loans and financial aid while eliminating the need to choose between paying bills and earning a degree.

As with anything, most people find it easier to afford something given at a substantial cost, if they pay for it through regular contributions.

When it comes to children's futures, it's never too early to start saving.

A resident of Cedar Grove, Republican Assemblyman Kevin J. O'Toole represents the 21st Legislative District, which includes Springfield.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Tax cuts only for those who pay

To the Editor:

With all the discussion about tax reduction can we keep in mind that it's for people that pay taxes; any kind of remuneration to everybody is nothing more than socialistic, which is trending in this great democracy called "The USA."

Joseph C. Chieppa  
Mountainside

### Our policy on letters and columns

The *Echo Leader* welcomes submissions from its readers. Either letters to the editor or opinion pieces on any subject will be considered for publication on the opinion pages.

This opportunity also is open to all officials and employees of the township and borough and the County of Union.

The *Echo Leader* reserves the right to edit all submissions for length, content and style. Writers must include their name, address and daytime telephone number for verification.

For publication, all letters and essays must be received before 9 a.m. Monday at 1291 Stuyvesant Ave., Union, 07083.

The *Echo Leader* also accepts letters to the editor and guest columns via e-mail. The address is WCN22@localsource.com.

Letters and guest columns must be received by 9 a.m. on Mondays to be considered for publication in Thursday's edition.

Letters received via e-mail must be on topics of interest, preferably in response to content that appeared in the newspaper. For purposes of verification, all letters must include a name, address and daytime telephone number. Advertising and news releases will not be accepted by e-mail.

## SPEAK OUT

**Concerned about an issue facing the governing body or Board of Education in your town? Is your street in disrepair? Our readers can use our Infosource hot line to speak out about any issue whether it is a question, comment, suggestion or opinion. That way, by telling us, you can tell everyone in town.**

**Call anytime, day or night. Please speak clearly into the phone when leaving your message. Callers can remain anonymous.**

**CALL 908-686-9898** ENTER SELECTION **8011**

## Echo Leader

*Published Weekly Since 1929  
Incorporating the Springfield Leader  
and Mountainside Echo*

Published By  
Worrall Community Newspapers, Inc.  
1291 Stuyvesant Avenue  
Union, N.J. 07083

(908) 686-7700

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Southern & Central NJ, Phila. & DC via GSP (North) – Exit 155P (left exit).  
Western NJ & PA via Route 80 East – Exit 57B.

Then, follow signs to *Downtown Paterson*. Continue straight to 5th traffic light. Left onto Memorial Drive and go to 3rd traffic light. Left onto College Blvd. Go 1¼ blocks, park in blue municipal parking lot on right. Then cross street, go right, then left around corner to 101 Washington Street. 973-279-3000. Or in Morristown: On the Country Mile, Route 202. 973-425-5500.