

# Echo LEADER

Serving Springfield and Mountainside

SPRINGFIELD, N.J., VOL. 73 NO. 37

THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2002

TWO SECTIONS

## Defeated school budget should be finalized tonight

By Joan M. Devlin  
Staff Writer

Nothing was decided. After a long and what one parent called "contentious" meeting of the Mountainside Board of Education and Mountainside Borough Council regarding the defeated school budget on Monday, everyone must go back to the drawing board.

The problem must be decided by tonight, and so the two bodies will meet again in Borough Hall at 8 p.m. Chief School Administrator Gerard Schaller would only say the meeting was "unhappy," and he said, "But it will be resolved on Thursday because it must be resolved." Several parents reported Monday's meeting lasted until past midnight, with much

input from more than 100 residents in Council Chambers.

At Tuesday's regular Board of Education meeting at Deerfield School, about 20 parents again congregated, hoping to discuss the budget again, but it was not to be. Instead, Deerfield School Principal Priscilla Church gave a presentation on the curriculum and the state's requirements.

Schaller said Mayor Robert Vigiante and the council wanted to have more than \$600,000 cut from the budget. Board President Richard Kress "did an excellent job of defending our budget and trying to explain what it is all about," he said. "When the budget was developed from the demographic

study we anticipated no more than 61 kindergarten children, then the number rose to 95." Schaller said he would love to have the fifth kindergarten also but it was never budgeted for.

Schaller did say the mayor told them that he did not want to see any educational programs hit, and was in full support of the fifth kindergarten. "What I was told, second hand," said Schaller, "was that many of the parents at the meeting who wanted the kindergarten did not even go out and vote for the budget."

"It is difficult that we have to even go through this," he added.

Another point Schaller feels everyone has forgotten is that the school expansion project

is in the budget, and the first payment will be coming out of next year's budget. Still he is optimistic. "We feel there are other ways we could reduce the budget, and will be resolved."

The budget was not brought up at Tuesday's regular meeting. After Tuesday's meeting, several kindergarten mothers said they would be back tonight. One mom said, "We know there have to be cuts, but we need five kindergarten classes and we cannot accept 25 children in a class — that is our position."

"I thought the meeting was spirited, and I just want to say that the mayor and council pledged that evening that there will be a fifth

kindergarten," Township Administrator and Police Chief James Debbie said. "I know there will be an agreement and that will happen."

Debbie said there are other ways the Board of Education can cut, and hopefully be able to realize the \$75,000 for another kindergarten class. "I am sure that the cuts will be sufficient and that they can do this without any cut in educational programs." He said everyone wants what is best for the children. Vigiante could not be reached for comment.

The Board of Education budget had called for the largest tax increase in Mountainside's history, with about \$675 for the average assessed home of \$150,000.

## Township agrees to co-op

By Joshua Zaitz  
Staff Writer

The Springfield Board of Education has agreed to continue a cooperative sports program with the Kenilworth Board of Education for the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years. This marks the second time that Springfield has participated in a cooperative sports program with Kenilworth.

Jonathan Dayton High School students will team up with David Brearley High School in Kenilworth for gymnastics, football, wrestling, bowling, ice hockey and swimming.

"Without the cooperative sports program we would not be able to run these programs," said Springfield Athletic Director Dan Gallagher.

Last year, Dayton and Brearley joined forces for the same activities.

"What this does is give the students an opportunity to compete in sports in which a school does not have enough students to actually host that sport," said Kenilworth Athletic Director Joe Lafferdy. "An example is with Dayton and football. They only had 12 kids interested and that's not really enough to have a football team so they come over and play for us. And vice versa. For hockey, they have enough for their hockey team but we only have three or four who are interested, so they go over there."

Dayton will be the lead school in gymnastics, ice hockey and swimming, while Brearley will be the lead school for football, wrestling and bowling.

Being the lead school means that the students participate under the lead school's name. For example, when Brearley students join Dayton students for ice hockey, the team will be called the Dayton Bulldogs, not the Brearley Bears.

"Cheerleaders cheer at whichever school hosts the event," said Lafferdy. "We host football and wrestling so our cheerleaders will cheer at those sports. They host hockey, swimming and gymnastics. Their cheerleaders will cheer at those sports."

The number of students who will participate in the program will not be known until registration for the different sports begins in the summer.

Even if only one student from Dayton wants to participate in a sports program, they will be able to do so.

"It can be just one as long as there are enough, in total, for the team to participate," said Gallagher.

Home meets for bowling take place at Hyway Bowl on Route 22 in Union.

"We'll do our best to have a bus to shuttle them back and forth," said Gallagher. "The only problem that comes in is coordinating getting the kids out, getting them to the bus, getting the bus over there in time. After last year, I'll be pretty confident that we'd have everything all set and ready to go at the start of school."

Gallagher said one of things Dayton is waiting to see is who the new head football coach at Brearley will be.

"Obviously he's going to want to come over here and talk to the returning kids as well as the new kids coming up. Basically see how many kids would be interested in playing," Gallagher said.

Last year, swimming took place at the Boys & Girls Club in Union. This year, we will be doing that at the club in Union, said Gallagher.

## All for One



Photo By Joseph Sorrentino

Group One, a senior citizen group in Springfield, celebrated their 40th anniversary at the Sarah Bailey Civic Center on May 8. As part of the festivities, Kathy Gardella tallies the bingo numbers while Sal Gibaldi keeps track of the cash.

## Firefighters awarded for critical, near death rescue

By Joshua Zaitz  
Staff Writer

Six members of the Springfield Fire Department were honored with Unit Awards, recognizing their efforts in a combined operation in which they performed with extraordinary presence of mind and good judgment.

"Due to the aggressiveness and determination of our personnel, two victims were safely removed from a near death situation, transported to trauma units and are both doing well," said Fire Chief William Gras. "We proudly issue the Unit Award to personnel whose efforts unquestionably bring credit to both the fire service and the Township of Springfield."

Deputy Fire Chief Donald Schwerdt, Capt. John Pyar, and firefighters Joseph Pepe, Frank Fiorelli, Michael Bilotti and Stewart Jurczak

received their awards at the Township Committee meeting Tuesday night.

"The Unit Award is issued when the efforts of a single member cannot be credited with the successful conclusion of an incident but rather for a combined effort," said Gras.

On Feb. 16, a 24-foot refrigerated box truck skidded off Route 24 West, blazing through the guardrail and leaving two occupants trapped and in need of extrication as the truck laid at the bottom of a 10-foot deep concrete culvert filled with water.

"I happened to have the fortune, or misfortune, of happening upon that scene pretty much at the beginning of when it occurred," said Mayor Steven Goldstein. "It was an incredible operation, especially for someone who has no training to be watching how the different departments, the police, the fire, the emergency services, work

together. Specifically, the deputy chief who took control of the scene and I thought did an incredible job with all the coordinating. He seemed to be in several places at one time."

The Fire Department and First Aid Squad responded to the crash, which occurred at 10:25 a.m. at milepost 10, near the Route 78 split in the township.

"Size-up of the incident revealed that two injured victims were trapped in the cab and what would normally have been a routine extrication soon escalated to a complex, extended operation," said Gras.

The driver had lost control on the curb and the vehicle turned over onto the driver's side. It slid several hundred feet, smashed into the guardrail and went down into the culvert.

The truck was wedged into the corner of the 10-foot-by-10-foot high

## To deter car thieves, police eye Loews lot

By Joshua Zaitz  
Staff Writer

Since the beginning of the year, five vehicles have been stolen from the parking lot of Loews Theatre on Route 22 East in Mountainside.

All of the cars have been recovered and the borough's Police Department is conducting several operations to deter crooks from coming to the movie theater's parking lot.

"We've had probably around two dozen attempted burglaries since the beginning of the year," said Mountainside Lt. Todd Turner. "When I say attempts, I don't know if they're trying to steal the cars or not because the ignitions are not damaged. They're gaining entry into the car."

High-end cars, such as Jaguar, Lexus, Infiniti, Porsche and BMW seem to be the target.

"The few that have been stolen have all been recovered. They're not taking them and chopping them and shipping them overseas. Most of the time they are taken for joy riding," said Turner.

Generally, the vehicles are recovered within a day, usually in Essex County. They are found in different states of repair. Some are partially

stripped, some are damaged from crashing into poles at high speeds, and others just the ignition is broken.

"It's been my experience that the majority of the cars that are stolen here are not chopped and sold for parts," said Turner.

Many new high-end cars manufactured over the last few years come with valet keys in the warranty and instruction booklets.

"It seems that there's a group working our area, who are breaking into the cars and are looking for the valet key," said Borough Administrator and Police Chief James Debbie.

"What happens is the crook breaks in, generally the passenger-side door, they take the owner's manual, pull out the plastic valet key which looks like a credit card," said Turner. "If the valet key is in there, they hop in your car and they drive it away."

If the key is not in the car, the burglar generally steals whatever is out in the open, such as a cell phone, and then they moves on to the next car.

"We do have a number of significant prints off the cars that were not taken which we're processing through the state police automated finger print

See POLICE, Page 2

*'We proudly issue the Unit Award to personnel whose efforts unquestionably bring credit to both the fire service and the Township of Springfield.'*

— Fire Chief William Gras

walls, crushing the truck cab around the occupants.

"The truck's severely damaged cab was jammed into an enclosed section of the culvert, diesel fuel was leaking, water began accumulating in the cab and the driver, who was pinned by the steering wheel and collapsed dashboard, was in need of immediate medical care," said Gras.

During the course of the nearly three-hour extrication, the Summit and Millburn fire departments, Union County Hazardous Materials Team, Springfield First Aid Squad, paramedics, State Police medivac helicopter, and numerous wreckers, were on hand to help with the extrication.

"All hands worked feverishly to stabilize the vehicle, provide medical care, prevent additional injuries and safely remove the victims," said Gras.

"Due to the adverse environment in which our firefighters were working, it was not possible to permit access by the paramedics dispatched from Overlook Hospital," said Gras. "Instead, one of our firefighters was placed into a harness and lowered, head first, into the vehicle to establish an I.V. on the severely injured driver."

The firefighter was able to free one of the passengers, who was taken to Morristown Memorial Hospital by the Springfield First Aid Squad.

The second victim was pinned by

the roof of the vehicle, which collapsed under the impact, and the steering wheel on the driver's seat. Numerous cutting tools from Millburn, Summit and Springfield were used to cut the cab to try to get him free. However, there was not enough room to free the victim's legs because the vehicle was lying in the culvert, pinned against a concrete wall.

Three heavy-duty tow trucks which were on the scene were used to move the vehicle from the concrete wall so firefighters would have better access to the cab.

Fiorelli and Bilotti were working in the stream in the 40-degree water, literally removing the vehicle from around the driver piece by piece. They were assisted in the culvert by two Summit firefighters, Frank DeLuca and Lou Vecchia.

Route 24 was shut down by the State Police, as a Northstar helicopter landed on the highway and transported the victim to University Hospital in Newark.

"All the guys from Springfield who were there, I just want to congratulate you," said Goldstein.

"I was there for two hours watching you work and I remember it was a really hot day. I just remember it was hot, guys were sweating wearing those heavy uniforms and you guys should be commended."

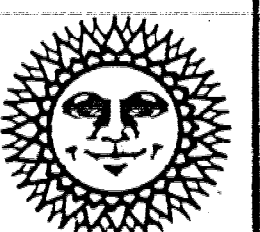


Photo By Joseph Sorrentino

The Springfield Township Committee honored local firefighters for their efforts during an incident in February, including, from left, standing, Deputy Chief Donal Schwerdt, Firefighter Joe Pepe, Capt. John Pyar, Firefighter Michael Bilotti, and kneeling, Firefighters Frank Fiorelli and Stewart Jurczak.

### Looking for fun this summer?

See inside this newspaper for our annual Summer Fun Guide



Welcome to the ECHO LEADER

How to reach us: The Echo Leader is published every Tuesday by Worral Community Newspapers, an independent, family owned newspaper company. Our offices are located at 1291 Stuyvesant Avenue, Union, N.J. 07083. We are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every weekday. Call us at one of the telephone numbers listed below.

Police think thief group small (Continued from Page 1) tance of a couple of county police officers and we conducted an in-depth surveillance of the lot and ended up arresting 18 people in five stolen cars over the course of a 10-day period," said Debbie. "It looks like we might be nearing something like that."

Paterson man arrested on Rt. 22 Mountainside On May 8 at 11:11 p.m., Francisco Angulano, 40, of Paterson, was arrested on an outstanding warrant from Berkeley Heights and for driving with a suspended license, while he was driving on Route 22 West.

Highway accident brings firefighters Springfield On April 23 at 12:19 a.m., Springfield firefighters attended to a motor vehicle accident with injuries on Route 24 West.

Community Calendar The Community Calendar is prepared by the Echo Leader to inform residents of various community activities and government meetings.

Springfield's own is Inspector of the Year By Joshua Zaitz Staff Writer Think of David Maas as a salesman, selling fire safety. As Springfield's Fire Official/Fire Sub Code Official, he received the New Jersey Fire Protection Inspector of the Year Award for 2002.

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A hidden discovery It was a family affair for the Community Presbyterian Nursery School in Mountainside April 17 when Ashley Fenton brought her Aunt Cathy to help search for hidden treasure.

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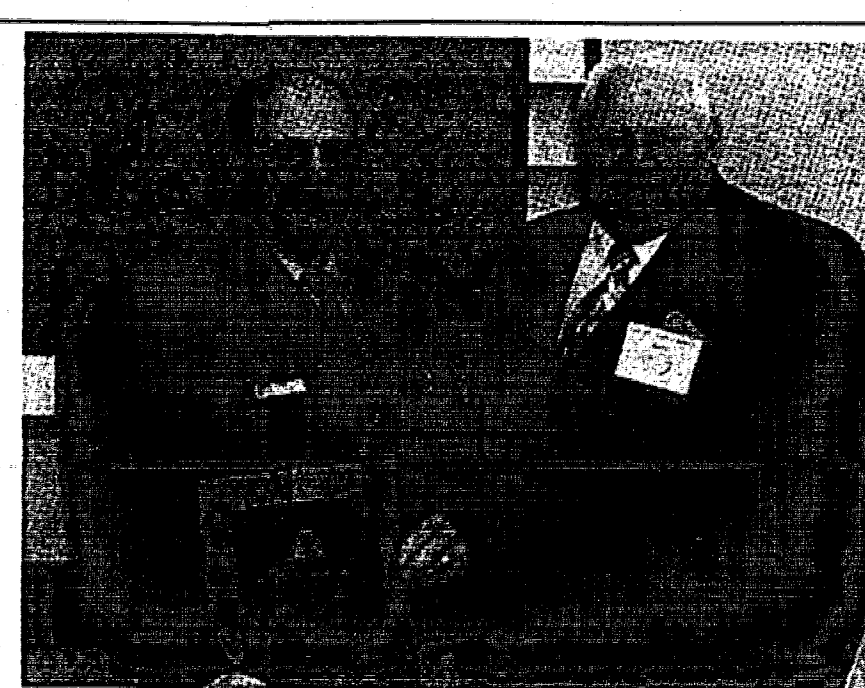
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David Maas, Springfield Fire Official/Fire Sub Code Official receives the NJ Fire Protection Inspector of the Year Award for 2002 from John Lighthbody, president of the New Jersey State Fire Prevention/Protection Association at a May 2 ceremony in Atlantic City.

With all the different laws," said Maas. "We have always recognized what it is he has done. There's no question that we have a real talent in fire loss in this town and although he is in charge of the Bureau of Fire Prevention, it is a group effort, but he leads that effort as our fire official."

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# Medals of Valor awarded

(Continued from Page B1) being transported to local hospitals. They are expected to make a full recovery. Three other people who were found in the room where the fire originated died.

Just doing his job  
Calvin just completed his shift Nov. 9 and was on his way to a local barber shop for a haircut. While at the barber shop, several people came in and told him that a man with a knife and a club was following and threatening a woman.

## Free of vlogs available to mark vets' graves

Union County Office of Veterans Affairs, working with the Union County Memorial Committee, will mark the graves of veterans with American flags during the Memorial Day weekend. They will also provide free flags to the veterans who wish to mark their graves.

Each member in Union County will have a copy of flags on hand for those who wish to mark their graves. The flags are made of heavy-duty material and are made to last. They are made of heavy-duty material and are made to last.

The cooperation between the Memorial Day Committee and all of the veterans groups in Union County makes this possible. The Memorial Day Committee is a group of veterans groups that work together to mark the graves of veterans.

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## COUNTY NEWS

**Family Court volunteers**  
Volunteers are needed for a vital program serving the Superior Court, Family Division — Family Court — in Union County. There is a particular need for bilingual volunteers.

Nancy Spano Yurek, coordinator of the Union County Juvenile Conference Committee Program, is seeking adults willing to spend one or two evenings a month volunteering for their local Juvenile Conference Committee.

The Juvenile Conference Committees serve under the authority of the Superior Court, Family Division. A JCC is a six- to nine-member citizen volunteer panel appointed by the Family Division judge that acts as an arm of the court.

Interested adults may call Yurek at 908-659-3260 or write to her at the Family Court, Union County Courthouse Annex, fifth floor, Elizabeth, 07207. She may also be reached by e-mail at nyurek@judiciary.state.nj.us.

Volunteers donate more than 200,000 hours to the state's judicial system every year. Their time, talent and energy has allowed the courts to move cases and provide vital services that would be impossible without their help.

The committee considers the facts and then makes a recommendation to the judge for a resolution that aids in the juvenile's rehabilitation. If the judge approves, the recommendations become a court order which is monitored by the JCC. Upon successful completion of all conditions set down in the recommendations, the case is dismissed. If the obligations are not fulfilled, the case is returned to the courts for further disposition.

Juvenile Conference Committee members are fully trained citizen volunteers. Members are expected to attend two county-level training sessions before they are allowed to sit on a Juvenile Conference Committee panel.

Staff members from the Division of Social Services will conduct private interviews on request. A bilingual staff person will be present.

**Friday: PROCEED Office, 1126 Dickinson St., Elizabeth, 10 to 11:30 a.m.**  
Monday: Rahway Senior Center, 1306 Esterbrook Ave., Rahway, 12:30 to 2 p.m.

**Community blood drives**  
The Blood Center of New Jersey has scheduled the following blood drives:  
Friday, 3 to 7 p.m., Union Hospital, 1000 Galloping Hill Road, Union.

Interested adults may call Yurek at 908-659-3260 or write to her at the Family Court, Union County Courthouse Annex, fifth floor, Elizabeth, 07207. She may also be reached by e-mail at nyurek@judiciary.state.nj.us.

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**Unity Bank earnings up**  
Unity Bancorp Inc., parent company of Unity Bank, reported net income of \$822,000, or \$0.15 per diluted share, for the quarter ended March 31, compared to \$128,000, or \$0.02 per diluted share, for the same period last year.

On Tuesday, the Union County Legal Secretaries Association, the association for legal professionals, will have its annual installation of officers banquet at 6:30 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 36 Valley Road, off Garden State Parkway Exit 135, Clark.

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**THE LOUIS R. CAPPELLI FOUNDATION FUNDING INITIATIVE ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Louis R. Cappelli Foundation announces its 2002 funding initiative to assist Union County's at-risk youth reach their full potential. The initiative is part of the Foundation's overall strategy to address the special needs of youth in Union County.

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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Paper Mill pulls out the stops for fund-raising gala



New Jersey native Leslie Kritzer revisits her 2001 Paper Mill triumph, reprising 'Don't Rain on My Parade' from 'Funny Girl' as Rising Star Award-winner Robert McClure, who appeared in 'I'm Not Rappaport' looks on.

Mill management, and an exclusive Paper Mill dinner party for six prepared by Chef Angelo Del Rossi at his home — with a surprise Paper Mill star. The latter, which had two bids of the same amount, \$21,000 each, brought in \$42,000, and Del Rossi merely staggered on stage. "Pizza," he whispered. And the audience roared at the witticism. Also onstage was Roy Miller, assistant executive producer.

Sparkling gowns on beautiful women and expensive tuxedos on handsome men highlighted the cocktail party, which began outdoors in the area between the theater and the restaurant, with a cocktail party featuring rich wines and liquor, excellent hors d'oeuvres, laughing faces and gracious hearts.

part of the show. Brian Lee Swartz conducted the auction, and the audience response was impressive, particularly when the auction brought in thousands upon thousands of dollars for a private tour of NBC and tickets for two to "Saturday Night Live," a walk-on role for a child in a Paper Mill MainStage production, which included six prime "house seats" to the performance, determined by Paper

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