

The Chronicle

APR 27 2006

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Vol. 145, N

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Saturday, April 22, 2006

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INSIDE



Beer on tap

The Tap Room at the Somerset Hills Hotel in Warren is offering a sampling of select beers from around the world during the Tap Room's first Beer Tasting. The event will feature more than 15 types of beer and food from the new Tap Room menu. For more, call (908) 647-6700.

Borough gets logo

BOUND BROOK — The 325th Anniversary Committee called on one of the borough's residents to design a logo for its anniversary celebration. Wanting to contribute to this important occasion, Bill Rosner put his professional experience to work and created the image for Bound Brooks 325th Anniversary. His focus was an oak tree. Under the still standing Council Oak on Maple Avenue the purchase of Bound Brook took place in 1861. Rosner's experience in the field of design and design-management spans over 25 years at leading New York design firms and as an independent consultant. He specializes in branding and print and on-screen communications. He received his degree in graphic design from Philadelphia University of the Arts. Rosner Associates was established in 1994. Clients have included Air Products and Chemicals, The American Stock Exchange, Andersen Consulting, Avon, Bausch and Lomb, EnergyOne, Eli Lilly, InSight, Interactive Elements, InSight, OpenMRI, Pfizer, Premier Cruise Lines, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Diagnostic Radiology associates, MedAccept, BellSouth International, King Pharmaceuticals, Luxembourg, Motorola and the Army.

Spring cleaning

SOUTH PLAINFIELD — The Clean Communities Advisory Board sponsors a borough-wide cleanup in late April. The main cleanup program is being held today. Meet at 9 a.m. at Borough Hall, 2480 Plainfield Ave., to pick up equipment and find out where you should go. Roadsides, parks, streams and empty lots will be targeted. You can come on your own or form a crew. A pizza party at Borough Hall follows at noon with "environmentally friendly" door prizes. For more information, e-mail atempel@southplainfieldnj.com or call (908) 226-7621.

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County program promotes home ownership

Middlesex County Freeholder Camille Fernicola has announced a new program designed to promote homeownership in the county.

The American Dream Downpayment Initiative program, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, will provide down payment assistance and closing costs to first-time homebuyers who purchase homes in 23 Middlesex County municipalities. The minimum level of assistance will

be \$9,200 to qualified applicants.

"The ADDI will assist low-income families and singles by providing them with the opportunity to achieve homeownership in an area with some of the nation's highest housing costs," Fernicola said. "The assistance will go a long way in helping eligible people realize their American dream."

Potential applicants are required to complete homeownership training and counseling provided by the

Housing Coalition of Central Jersey Inc. The county retained the Housing Coalition to assist applicants in this process.

Applicants must also meet income eligibility limits. The limit is \$51,500 for a single person and \$73,600 for a family of four.

"The ADDI assistance, combined with mortgage options geared toward first-time homebuyers and programs such as First Home Club, which provide matching funds for

down payment savings, can make the difference between being able to purchase a home or not for many households," according to Michelle Pizarro, executive director of the Housing Coalition.

For further information about the American Dream Downpayment Initiative program, contact Melissa Palfy at (732) 745-2922. To enroll in a homebuyer education training class, contact the Housing Coalition at (732) 249-9700.

There's beauty in the ballpark

Commerce Bank Ballpark crowning jewel of league

GET MORE ON THE COMMERCE BANK BALLPARK FIELD AND OUR FIELD OF DREAMS SERIES, WHICH BEGINS THIS WEEK. SEE PAGE A6.
FOR THE LATEST ON WHO HAS BEEN SIGNED TO THE SOMERSET PATRIOTS CLUB, PAGE B1.

By JIM WHITE
Staff Writer

BRIDGEWATER — It was April 29, 1998 when little Jon Czajkowski decided to take matters into his own hands. Literally, the then 4-year-old grabbed his plastic shovel and went to work prior to the start of the ceremonial groundbreaking for Commerce Bank Ballpark.

"I was at the groundbreaking, and I got the first shovel in — my plastic shovel, before anyone else," said Jon, now 12. "I remember people giving speeches and stuff. So I just snuck behind them and started digging. I liked baseball and thought, maybe if I start digging I can be part of the team."

Still a bit too young to make the Patriots' roster, Jon, of Franklin, hones his skills on a local Little League team. And he and his dad attend about 15 Patriots' games a season.

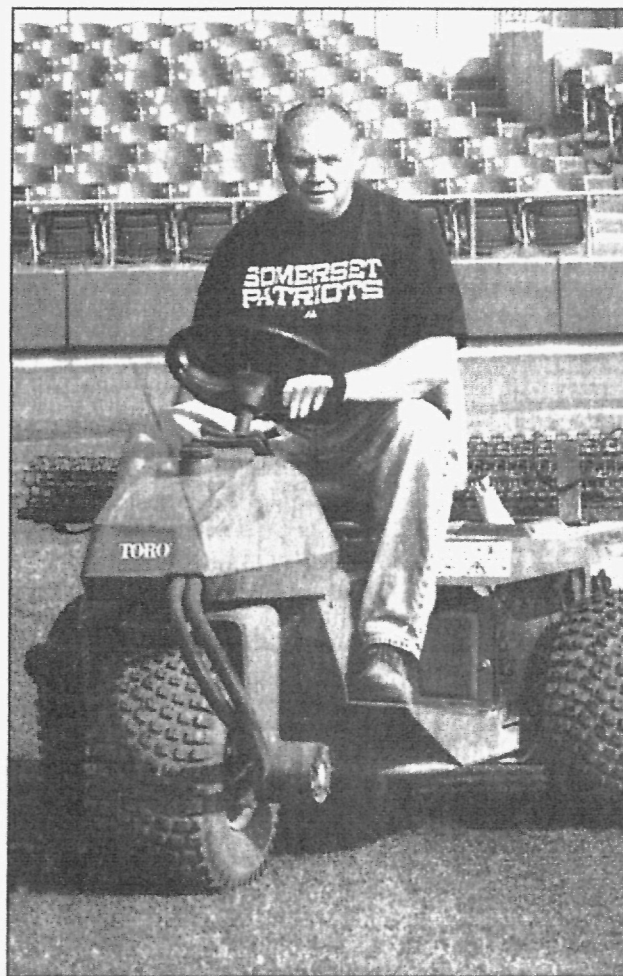
"We both love baseball," said Jon's father, Ron Czajkowski. "It's family entertainment you can get up close and personal to."

Dubbed the "Jewel of the Atlantic League," Commerce Bank Ballpark — the home of the three-time Atlantic League Champions — opened its gates with its first home game on June 7, 1999 in front of 6,506 fans. About 70 of the Patriots' games are played here per season.

Designed by Clark Caton and Hintz and SSP Architecture, and built by Epic Construction, the \$17.7 million, 6,100-seat ballpark — 317 feet deep in left field, 402 feet deep in center field and 315 feet deep in right field — features an executive party deck, 20 luxury suites and a picnic area.

And along the right field line is the Turf Club, a grassy area where fans can watch the bullpen.

The field is maintained by a team lead by Ray Cipperly, head groundskeeper, and Joe Zavadnick, assistant groundskeeper. For the past month *The Chronicle* and Somerset Patriots have co-sponsored the "Field of Dreams" contest, which ends today. Cipperly, along with representatives of the Patriots and *The Reporter*, will judge the contest, and pick third- and first-prize winners. The winners will be announced opening weekend at Commerce Bank Ballpark during pre-game ceremonies April 28. Grand Prize is an on-site assessment of the winner's lawn and help restore



GEORGE PACCIELLO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ray Cipperly, head groundskeeper at Commerce Bank Ballpark, readies the field in preparation for Somerset Patriots' open tryouts, held recently. It takes constant care from Cipperly and his crew, including Joe Zavadnick, assistant groundskeeper, to keep the field in top condition. The hard work has paid off: The field is known as the "Jewel of the Atlantic League" and was twice named the field of the year by the Atlantic League of Professional Baseball and was included in the top 10 of Baseball America's top fields list.

the "green."

Jon, a sixth-grader at St. Matthias Elementary School in Somerset, recalled how he enjoyed watching former Patriots pitcher Lance Calmus warm up during a game a few years ago.

"I was sitting in the grass and I could hear him pitching. It sounded like hissing," he said. "And when the catcher caught it, it sounded like a shotgun."

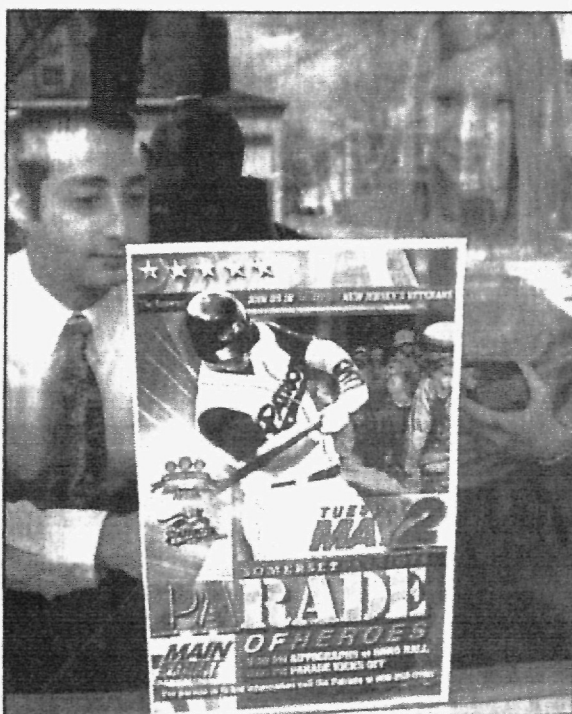
Jon also rattled off some of his favorite players who have donned the red, white and blue over the years.

"Antuan Bunkley, he was a pretty good first baseman. (Outfielder) Billy Hall, he's fast, and he gave me a bat a couple of years ago. And (outfielder) Greg Blosser, because he sort of looks like me," Jon said.

Somerset County officials are also big fans of the Patriots organization.

Continued on page A2

Heroes ready to march on Main



GEORGE PACCIELLO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Marc Russinoff, director of public relations, helps Amy Bobrowski, a staff writer at *The Reporter*, hang posters in a Main Street Somerville business advertising the May 2 Somerset Patriots "Parade of Heroes."

The 2005 Atlantic League Champion Somerset Patriots, along with *The Reporter* newspaper and the Somerville District Management Corporation, have announced that the Somerset Patriots "Parade of Heroes" will take place down Main Street in Somerville 6 p.m. May 2.

The Patriots are in Lakeland, Fla. this week for spring training with several other Atlantic League teams, and will return to New Jersey next Wednesday.

Next Thursday, the team will again be introduced at the annual sponsors' breakfast at Cabrera's in Green Brook, with fans invited to come to the ballpark Thursday afternoon to watch the Patriot's final pre-season practice before opening day, April 28, a 7:05 p.m. game against the Atlantic City Surf.

The parade festivities begin with an autograph session with all the Somerset Patriots players and coaches at Borough Hall at 5:15 p.m. The parade will kick off at Borough Hall at 6 p.m. and march down Main Street to the historic Somerville Courthouse.

At the courthouse steps, Somerset County elected officials, Patriots team officials, and veterans will address the crowd in a special program designed to welcome the 2006 Somerset Patriots team, celebrate the 2005 Atlantic League Championship, and salute the U.S. Armed Forces. Somerset Patriots Manager Sparky Lyle will introduce the entire 2006 Patriots team during the program.

Continued on page A2

Comic book inspires students

"Classroom Close-up, N.J.," a six-time Emmy Award winning show produced by the New Jersey Education Association and NJN television, visited the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools' Woodbridge campus to tape a story about "The Comic Book Project."

"Comic Book en español" is a cooperative project between Middlesex County College and Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools' Woodbridge campus where Grade 9 college prep students create a comic book in Spanish. The 16-week project began in November and will end in April.

The project is cross-curricular in design with the integration of social studies, art, language arts and world languages; community is the theme for the storyline. Upon completion of a comic book, students will submit their entry into a nationwide contest.

This is the second year that the Woodbridge campus has participated in the arts-based literacy and learning initiative that was developed by Teachers College of Columbia University and conducted by county colleges. Last year two students from Rafael Nava's Spanish class placed first in this national contest. Their work was published by Dark Horse Comics, one of the largest comic book publishers with works such as "Star Wars" and "Shrek."

The show is scheduled to air on NJN at 6:30 p.m. Monday, May 1 and 7 a.m. Saturday, May 6. Rebroadcasts are scheduled for May 29 and June 3.

The NJEA is the major underwriter for "Classroom Close-up, N.J." with additional support provided by PSE&G, New Jersey Family Care, Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Living Lead-Safe Initiative.

Now in its 11th season, "Classroom Close-up, N.J." features innovative programs going on in local school classrooms. Each half-hour segment shows how caring school professionals inspire and motivate students. Each week, the excitement of learning comes alive as teachers, children and parents work together for success.

The NJEA is the state's largest association of education professionals, representing 192,000 public school teachers and administrators, higher education faculty, education support professionals, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.

Friends of the Woods to clean trails April 30

SOUTH PLAINFIELD — The Friends of the Woods need help for their spring Trail Maintenance Day in the Highlands Woods Education Reserve.

Meet at 11 a.m. Sunday, April 30 at the Sylvania Place gate to the nature preserve. Work continues until around 2 p.m. Latecomers are welcome.

Volunteers will tackle a variety of projects: pruning the trails, spraying the alien plants, picking up the litter. Bring any tools you can — shovels, rakes, hoes, wheelbarrows. Gloves and trash bags will be provided.

For more information, call Lisa Rosco at (908) 561-8280.

Trail Maintenance Days keep the trails enjoyable for the science classes, scout troops and other people who use the nature preserve. The twice-a-year cleanup also provides an opportunity to learn more about the Highlands Woods and meet people who like to be around trees and wildlife.

There's beauty in the ballpark

Continued from page A1

"It's been a great relationship," county Administrator Dick Williams has said of the 25-year lease agreement with the Somerset Patriots, which includes three 15-year renewal options.

"There is probably not another contract in the country where the whole debt service is paid off by revenues from the team," he said. "The taxpayers have not had to pay for the stadium at all."

According to Brian Newman, director of finance for the county, annually, the county gets 30 percent of the first \$4.7 million in gross revenues. This is from anything that goes on at the ballpark — clothing, food and tickets sales, naming rights, the circus, concerts, etc.

The county then gets 7 percent of the next \$2 million in gross revenues and 2 percent of anything over \$6.7 million.

The money the county takes in is used to pay off debt service and interest.

Newman said they have to take in \$1.36 million annually to break even, but they aim higher, closer to the \$1.5 million mark.

So far, the county has made close to \$10 million:

- \$803,000 in 1999
- \$1,451,000 in 2000
- \$1,548,000 in 2001
- \$1,507,000 in 2002
- \$1,495,000 in 2003
- \$1,500,000 in 2004
- \$1,560,000 in 2005

What is left over goes into a fund for capital improvements to the ballpark, Newman said.

Williams has said the only major improvement was the replacement of the infield following Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

He said the county is not obligated to keep all that is left over for the ballpark, but that is what the freeholders decided to do.

"We need to keep the stadium shiny and sparkly unless people won't come," he has said. "I've worked with (owner) Steve (Kalafer) six or seven years

now. He's a great businessman and a great partner. He wants the same thing as we do. Like Steve says, 'It's baseball, but really it's entertainment, family entertainment.' ... Steve does everything first class."

Added Kalafer: "All the promises made have been kept. What we planned back in 1997 has come to fruition."

And fans and families have noticed and continue to come to the ballpark according to Marc Russinoff, director of public relations for the Patriots.

Over 2,500,000 fans have visited the ballpark since it opened in 1999.

Russinoff said the Patriots have continued to rank among the top 20 drawing teams throughout all baseball leagues with comparable-sized ballparks (below the Triple-A level, where ballpark capacity averages about 10,000).

The Patriots rank in the top 10 compared to Double-A teams and Single-A teams, Russinoff said.

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◆ Since 1862 ◆

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Heroes ready to march

Continued from page a1

The Parade of Heroes will include several organizations marching alongside the Somerset Patriots. Veteran groups, Armed Forces members, little league teams, scout troops, marching bands, fire companies, police squads, cheerleaders, non-profit groups, mascots, and partners of the team will march with the team.

"The parade has become one of the events that fans look forward to every season.

It's a great opportunity to meet all of our coaches and players, but more importantly, salute our Armed Forces and community groups," said Patrick McVerry, president and general manager of the Somerset Patriots Baseball Club.

Following the parade, fans will be able to meet and greet players at restaurants throughout Downtown Somerville. Participating restaurants will be Mannion's Pub, Alfonso's, East Star Buffet, The Verve, The Melting Pot, Scampi's, Martino's, and Central Pizzeria.

Groups interested in participating in the parade should contact the Somerset Patriots at (908) 252-0700.

In The Towns

Wine and cheese social in April

METUCHEN — A wine and cheese social after Easter benefits the Milltown-based Interfaith Network of Care.

The fundraising event is at 6 p.m. today in the auditorium at St. Francis of Assisi Cathedral on Main Street. Admission of \$40 includes door prizes.

For tickets, call (732) 247-1655.

Vendors wanted for outdoor sale

EDISON — A multifamily outdoor yard sale is planned for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. today at John Adams Middle School, 1081 New Dover Road.

Vendors are wanted; call Agnes Brooks at (908) 769-9350. Spaces cost \$15 and are about the size of a car.

'Anglo-Indians' are lecture topic

EDISON — "Anglo-Indians" are people of mixed British-India descent.

They married and formed families in India when it was a British colony. Many of their descendants moved abroad after India became an independent nation in 1947.

Blair Williams is one of those descendants and has spoken about "Anglo-Indians on the Verge of Extinction." He gives his program at 2 p.m. today at the Main Branch of the Edison Free Public Library. Admission is free.

For registration, call (732) 287-2298, Ext. 1 or visit the library circulation desk at 340 Plainfield Ave.

Concert benefits scholarship fund

METUCHEN — The Suzy Schwartz Memorial Scholarship Fund presents its 16th annual benefit concert with an encore performance by Kol B'Seder.

The concert is at 7 p.m. tomorrow at Congregation Neve Shalom, 250 Grove Ave. Cost for adults is \$18 in advance or \$20 at the door. Cost for children under

age 18 is \$8. Patron and benefactor seating is available.

For more information, call (732) 548-2238, Ext. 18.

Veterans outreach forum is planned

PISCATAWAY — Are you a veteran or part of a veteran's family? You may want to know about the benefits and services available to you.

The Middlesex County Veterans Advisory Council has scheduled a Veterans Outreach Forum with speakers from local, state and federal agencies. This free forum is at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, April 27 at the Piscataway Senior Center, off Hoes Lane behind John F. Kennedy Library.

For more information, call (732) 745-4051.

Gardens an inspiration to art society members

EDISON — The Edison Arts Society presents its fifth annual "Gardens of the Garden State" juried show at Menlo Park Mall.

This exhibition of art and photography opens Friday, April 28 with Mayor Jun Choi cutting the ceremonial ribbon at noon. Nearly 80 paintings and photographs are in the show, all inspired by specific pictures of local gardens.

"Gardens of the Garden State" can be seen on the mall's lower level in the Nordstrom wing from then through Sunday, April 30.

Award winners will be honored in a reception at 4 p.m. April 30. In addition, Allison Doatch of Edison will be recognized for her "Sunshine" art that adorns the posters promoting the show.

For full information on the exhibit, visit www.edisonarts.org, call (908) 753-ARTS or stop by the Guest Services desk on the mall's upper level near the food court.

Take 'high tea' with garden club

EDISON — A "Pocket Full of Posies" is the theme of a high tea sponsored by the Edison Garden Club.

This high tea is from 1:30-4 p.m. Saturday, April 29 at the Main Branch of the Edison Free Public Library, 340 Plainfield Ave. Pamela Jayne presents a related program on flower arranging. Admission is \$15. Reservations

are required; call (732) 287-0695. Proceeds benefit the Rutgers Scholarship for Landscape Design.

Men's Club is offering Pasta Night on April 30

METUCHEN — Tickets are on sale for the annual Pasta Night sponsored by the Men's Club of Congregation Neve Shalom.

The dinner is from 5:30-7 p.m. Sunday, April 30 in the synagogue at 250 Grove Ave. Cost for adults is \$6 in advance and \$8 at the door. Cost for children is \$5 for ages 5-10 and free for ages 4-under.

For reservations, call Jeff at (732) 494-1518 or Abe at (732) 494-6427.

Friendship Day for church women

METUCHEN — Church Women United of Metuchen-Edison observe May Friendship Day at 12:30 p.m. Friday, May 5 at the First Presbyterian Church, 270 Woodbridge Ave.

"Signs of Growth" is the program presented by women from the Oak Tree Presbyterian Church as well as the First Presbyterian Church. A covered dish luncheon precedes the program.

Flower Fair ready to bloom

The Rutgers Gardens hold their 15th annual Spring Flower Fair from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, May 13 and Sunday, May 14.

This free event features a sale of landscape plants, tours of the Rutgers Gardens and activities for children. Proceeds from the plant sale go toward upkeep of the Rutgers Gardens. Lunch will be available.

As May 14 is Mother's Day, all mothers who attend the Flower Fair receive a free gift plant while supplies last.

For more information, visit www.rutgersgardens.rutgers.edu or call (732) 932-8451. The Rutgers Gardens are on Ryders Lane just south of Route 1.

Also on Mother's Day weekend, the Princeton Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society presents its annual Truss Show. Hours for this related event are 1-4 p.m. May 13 and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. May 14.

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LEGAL NOTICE OPEN RANGE COMMUNICATIONS INC. We are a prospective applicant under the Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program being administered by the Rural Development, Utilities Programs (RDUP), United States Department of Agriculture. We are required, as a prospective applicant, to announce our intent to provide broadband services (200 kbits upstream and downstream) in the State of New Jersey in the following communities: Aberdeen, Belmar, Brigantine, Budd Lake, Cresskill, Fairview, Farwood, Hammonton, Highland Lake, Highlands, Hopatcong, Lake Mohawk, Lincroft, Linwood, Little Silver, Manasquan, Margate City, Mendham, Mystic Island, Northfield, Ocean City, Oceanport, Phillipsburg, Pleasantville, Point Pleasant, Point Pleasant Beach, Rumson, Somers Point, Spring Lake Heights, Villas, Wanaque, Washington, West Long Beach, Yardville-Groveville. Incumbent broadband service providers have 30 days from the date of this Legal Notice to inform RDUP if they are currently providing broadband service in these areas or if they have a commitment to provide service in these areas. Incumbent broadband service providers should submit to RDUP, on a form prescribed by RDUP, the number of residential customers receiving broadband service in the proposed service area, the rates of data transmission, and the cost of each level of service or proof of commitment to provide service in the proposed service area. A map should also be provided showing the boundaries of your service area in relation to the communities above. A Legal Notice Response Form can be obtained from RDUP's website at www.usda.gov/rus/telecom.

Auditions
SCHOOL OF THE PERFORMING ARTS
MIDDLESEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL
Holds its annual audition for exceptional dance and theatre students. The audition takes place from 6:00-8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 26, 2006 and Wednesday, June 14, 2006. The audition begins in the SPA classroom, S441. *Dancers should dress appropriately.
Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High School
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Call guidance counselor Susan Cipperly at 732-254-8700 to register.

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In The Towns

Diocese plans
'Day for Seniors'

PISCATAWAY — The Diocese of Metuchen is making plans to "Celebrate Life: A Day for Seniors" over age 55.

This program is at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 22 in the St. John Neumann Pastoral Center at 146 Metlars Lane. Brother Andre Mathieu, the guest speaker, has 30 years experience in ministry to older adults and their families.

Cost of \$10 includes lunch. For registration, visit www.diocese-metuchen.org or call (732) 562-1990, Ext. 1624.

'Our Town' opening
new college theater

EDISON — "Our Town" opens the newly built Studio Theatre of Middlesex County College.

Showtime is 8 p.m. Friday, 28; 8 p.m. Saturday, April 22; and 2 p.m. Sunday, April 23 and 30. All performances are in the Performing Arts Center on the main MCC campus at 2600 Woodbridge Ave.

The Thornton Wilder play is directed by Lynn Winik, an MCC professor, with actors from New Jersey community theater and the college's performing arts department.

Admission is \$7 for adults, \$5 for students and seniors. For reservations, call (732) 906-2589. Seating is limited.

Animal item drive held
for Humane Society

METUCHEN — The Metuchen-Edison Woman's Club is holding an "Animal Item Drive" for the Plainfield Area Humane Society.

This drive goes on through Sunday, April 30. Items the club is collecting include:

- Cat food, dry and wet
- Cat litter
- Dog food, dry and wet
- Guinea pig bedding
- Rabbit food
- Bleach
- Dishwashing detergent
- Laundry detergent
- Paper towels in rolls

Drop these items off at Borough Hall, 2480 Plainfield Ave., South Plainfield; Donna's Hometown Deli, 1018 Amboy Ave., Edison; or the Metuchen Veterinary Hospital, 69 Pearl St.

For more information, call Helena at (908) 754-0313 or Diana at (732) 548-0925.

Church sale offers
'Trash and Treasure'

EDISON — The Women's Association of the Oak Tree Presbyterian Church, 445 Plainfield Road, holds its annual Trash and Treasure Sale from 9

a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, April 22.

Household goods, small appliances, toys, games, books, jewelry, sporting goods, baby items, children's items, holiday décor and baked goods will be available. All proceeds go to the church.

Early birds are not admitted.

Spring book
sale for Friends

PISCATAWAY — The Friends of Piscataway Library hold their spring book sale the weekend after Easter at Kennedy Library, 500 Hoes Lane.

Sale hours are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, April 22; and 1-4 p.m. Sunday, April 23. Books, CDs and DVDs in all genres are offered. Anything still available on April 23 can be purchased for \$5 per bag.

A members-only Preview Night is from 7-8:30 p.m. Thursday, April 20 with a 10-book limit. Anyone who is not a member of the Friends can join on Preview Night. Membership fees begin at \$5.

For more information, visit www.piscatawaylibrary.org or call (732) 463-1633, Ext. 8. Proceeds benefit the Piscataway Public Library.

Women's Center
has job workshops

EDISON — A free series of "Job Readiness" workshops is open to women who are looking for a new career.

This program is held in the Women's Center at the Jewish Family & Vocational Service of Middlesex County, 515 Plainfield Ave. Workshops are at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday and Wednesday for six weeks beginning April 25.

Other workshops cover finances, computer training, how to obtain a mortgage, assertiveness training and non-traditional jobs for women.

For registration, e-mail n.noel@jvsv.org or call (732) 777-1940.

Funding for the Women's Center is provided in part by a grant from the Division on Women, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.

Romance writer
reads at MCC

EDISON — Michelle Scaplen has written two short stories that appear in the romance anthology "No Law Against Love."

She reads from her work between 3-6 p.m. Monday, April 24 in the Blue Colt Bookstore, on the main campus of Middlesex County College. Copies of "No

Law Against Love" will be signed by the author and available for purchase. The public is invited.

Scaplen lives in Edison and was honored by the Township Council in February for her writings. She and her husband, Frank, have three children.

Proceeds from the anthology will be donated to the American Cancer Society, which also will receive a donation from the Blue Colt Bookstore.

Ready to go
'beyond boxes'

PISCATAWAY — Go "Beyond Origami Boxes" by making a box with a teabag-folded bow and a matching card.

Ronda Wisniewski shows you how at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 26 at Kennedy Library, 500 Hoes Lane. Supplies will be provided.

Space is limited; sign up at the reference desk or call (732) 463-1633, Ext. 6.

Metuchen church
co-sponsors revival

METUCHEN — The New Hope Baptist Church is sponsoring a spring revival with the Plainfield-based Rose of Sharon Community Church.

Revival services are at 7 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, April 26-28 at the New Hope Baptist Church, 45 Hampton St. Rev. Manuel Scott Jr. is the guest preacher and "Empowerment Through Discipleship" is the theme.

For more information, call (732) 549-8941.

NAACP has
college fair

EDISON — The Metuchen-Edison Area Branch of the NAACP sponsors a College and Career Fair for the public.

This free event is from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, April 29 at the Edison Job Corps Academy, 500 Plainfield Ave. Colleges and trade schools from New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Delaware are scheduled to participate. Historically black colleges and universities also will be represented.

For more information, e-mail alonzo1977@msn.com or call Glenn Williams at (908) 705-6672. Details about the Metuchen-Edison Area Branch can be found at www.naacp-meab.org.

Ag Field Day
is coming up

Cook College of Rutgers University holds the 88th annual

Ag Field Day from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, April 29, rain or shine.

This event takes place on the Cook College campus in New Brunswick and features the New Jersey State 4-H Dog Show. Dairy cattle, goats, horses, pigs and sheep, all raised by Cook College students, can be seen on campus. Tours of the Rutgers Gardens are scheduled.

In addition, deans will be on hand to greet visitors in a tent adjacent to the Alumni House. Alumni can stop by the tent to connect with former classmates. Would-be students and their parents can sign up for tours of Cook College.

For more information, visit www.cookcollege.rutgers.edu/afd or call (732) 932-7000, Ext. 4204.

Dinner honors
'Elk of the Year'

BOUND BROOK — Robert "Scooter" Resuta is being honored by the local Elks lodge as its Elk of the Year for 2006.

He will be feted at the annual dinner on Saturday, April 29 in the Elks lodge at 305 E. Second St. Cocktails are at 6:30 p.m. with dinner at 7:30 p.m. Music and dancing follow dinner.

Cost is \$25. For reservations, call (732) 868-1653.

'WalkAmerica'
comes to RU

PISCATAWAY — Every year the March of Dimes holds its "WalkAmerica" to raise funds for research into premature birth.

The Middlesex County edition of "WalkAmerica" steps off on Sunday, April 30 from the Louis Brown Athletic Center at Rutgers University. The 6-mile course winds its way through the school's Piscataway campuses and Johnson Park.

Face painting and games for the family are also planned.

For registration, visit walkamerica.org or call (800) BIG WALK.

Vo-tech offers
course in nursing

PISCATAWAY — Practical Nursing is a course offered on the Piscataway campus of the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools.

Students can apply for a 15-month day program or two-year evening program. The course prepares students to take the exam

to become a licensed practical nurse.

Between April and September of last year, all 16 students in the vo-tech school's Practical Nursing course passed the exam.

For an application, call (732) 985-0717, Ext. 2274.

Library program
on women artists

MIDDLESEX — Anne Swartz speaks of "Women Artists in the Past" at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 4 at the Middlesex Public Library, 1300 Mountain Ave.

Her program covers female artists in medieval times, the Renaissance and more recent years. Swartz is an e-learning professor at the Savannah College of Art and Design.

For more information, call (732) 356-6602. The program is sponsored by the Friends of the Middlesex Public Library.

May art auction
benefits temple

BOUND BROOK — A spring afternoon of culture and fun benefits Congregation Kneseth Israel.

Art and collectibles go up for bid in an auction at 2 p.m. Sunday, May 7 in the synagogue at 229 Mountain Ave. Merchandise in all price ranges will be available.

Admission of \$10 includes wine, cheese, hors d'oeuvres, dessert and coffee. Babysitting and children's activities are available.

For tickets in advance, call (732) 469-0934. Visit www.marinart.com for an auction preview.

Broadway bus
to Sunday matinee

PISCATAWAY — The Recreation Department sponsors a trip on Sunday, May 7 for the current Broadway revival of "The Odd Couple."

Cost of \$115 includes round-trip

bus fare and an orchestra seat to the 3 p.m. matinee. The bus leaves at noon from the Municipal Complex on Hoes Lane. For reservations, call (732) 562-2382.

Historic house
tour in Dunellen

DUNELLEN — The Dunellen Historical Society invites you to see "The Grand Ladies of Dunellen" on Saturday, May 13.

This tour of historic houses begins at 10:30 a.m. at the Dunellen Public Library on New Market Road. The three houses on the tour date from the late 19th century and early 20th century. Cost is \$10.

Advance tickets are available in Heidi's Cottage at 445 North Ave. For more information, call (732) 968-2000.

Elks breakfast
on Mother's Day

SOUTH PLAINFIELD — The Elks lodge at 1254 New Market Ave. has an all-you-can-eat breakfast from 8 a.m.-noon Sunday, May 14, Mother's Day.

Cost is \$6 for adults, \$4 for children ages 5-12 and free for children ages 4-under. The menu includes eggs, bacon, pancakes, sausage, French toast, home fries, coffee, tea and juice.

'Super Chefs'
coming to Edison

EDISON — Two TV chefs and a local restaurateur are scheduled to appear on the local edition of "Simon Super Chefs Live!"

This day of food, wine and cooking is on Saturday, May 20 in Menlo Park Mall. The action begins at 11:30 a.m. in the Nordstrom court on the lower level. A live cook-off ends the program at 5 p.m.

For more information, call (732) 494-6255.

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Saturday, April 22, 2006

Opinion

Small businesses need help providing health-care coverage

By LAURIE EHLBECK

When she was first lady in 1993, Hillary Clinton was asked how she could help small businesses afford her health-care plan. She replied that she couldn't worry about "every under-capitalized entrepreneur in America."

Given the skyrocketing cost of health-care premiums since then, let's hope that Sen. Clinton's thinking doesn't permeate the U.S. Senate when it begins debate on Small-Business Health Plans in May.

During the past five years, small-business owners have seen the highest increases in their health-care costs, a problem that virtually everyone agrees is unsustainable. Currently, twenty-seven million working people in this country are now uninsured; 63 percent of them are either self-employed or work for a small business with less than 100 employees.

Back in 2000, the National Federation of Independent Business surveyed its members and found that 47 percent cited health-care costs as a "critical" problem. When NFIB asked again four years later, the number had risen to 65 percent.

It is time for Congress to act. Small-business owners have patiently waited for a solution from their respective states, but clearly the uninsured numbers continue to increase. Nearly 1.3 million of New Jersey's population is uninsured, and in 2004, the Economic Policy Institute found that more than 206,000 New Jersey workers and their families had lost employer-provided health insurance since 2000, a drop of 2.4 percentage points.

The U.S. House of Representatives listened to small business and has already acted eight times to pass legislation creating Small-Business Health Plans. SBHPs will level the health-insurance playing field and give participating small employers the same buying power as Fortune 500 companies and unions. SBHPs will do that by allowing small businesses to band together through trade and professional associations to purchase affordable health benefits. By joining together, small employers will enjoy savings from greater bargaining power, economies of scale and administrative efficiencies.

It's taken much longer to educate the Senate about how important this issue is to the vitality of small business. With that being said, we are happy to see a strong bipartisan bill coming out of the Senate from Sen. Mike Enzi of Wyoming, chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and Sen. Ben Nelson of Nebraska. They both agree that something must be done to help curb costs for America's small business.

S. 1955, "The Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act of 2005," will allow for more uniform federal regulation while still providing strong consumer protections. SBHPs under this bill will be able to provide lower cost options through a health plan that operates across state lines. This is critically important because of the burdensome structure of costly benefit mandates at the state level. These provisions will change the environment in which insurers operate, thus creating a more competitive marketplace.

We believe the Enzi-Nelson approach gives real legs to small-group insurance reform. For many years, larger insurers have had a strong hold on the marketplace, allowing for rate increases whenever they please. According to the Government Accounting Office, five or fewer insurers control at least three-quarters of the small-group market in most states. This lack of competition is contributing to double-digit rate increases for many small businesses, and a corresponding rise in the number of small-business employees who are uninsured.

NFIB believes this is the right solution for small business. SBHPs, combined with much-needed competition for the small-group market, will bring more choices for those owners struggling to afford health insurance for their employees. It will be a welcome change for small-business owners.

The Enzi-Nelson bill will soon be voted on by the U.S. Senate. Sens. Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez will have the opportunity to decide to back small businesses or not. For more information on SBHPs and the Enzi-Nelson bill, go to www.SBHPsNow.com

Laurie Ehlbeck is the state director of NFIB/New Jersey, the state and nation's largest small-business advocacy group.

The following is contact information for state representatives serving Somerset County, as well as members of Congress serving Central Jersey.

CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE HOLDERS

— U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez (D)
One Gateway Center, 11th Floor, Newark, NJ 07102, (973) 645-3030

(202) 224-4744 (Washington, D.C.)

— U.S. Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D)
One Gateway Center, 23rd Floor, Newark, NJ 07102, (973) 639-8700

Hart Senate Office Building, Suite 324,

Washington, D.C. 20510, (202) 224-3224

— Rep. Michael Ferguson (R-7th)

45 Mountain Blvd., Building D, Suite 1,

Warren, NJ 07059, (908) 757-7835

214 Cannon House Office Building,

Washington, DC 20515, (202) 225-5361

— Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-11th)

30 Schuyler Place, Second Floor,

Morristown, NJ 07960, (973) 984-0711

2442 Rayburn House Office Building,

Washington, DC 20515-3011, (202) 225-5034

State

STATE OFFICE HOLDERS

— Sen. Walter J. Kavanaugh (R-16th)

76 North Bridge Street, Somerville, NJ

08876, (908)-526-4222

— Assemblyman Christopher Bateman (R-16th)
36 East Main St., Somerville, NJ 08876, (908)-526-3600

— Assemblyman Peter J. Biondi (R-16th)
1 East High St., Somerville, NJ 08876, (908)-252-0800

The Chronicle welcomes comments and news tips. The following is a list of our staff and how to reach us:

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The Chronicle is here for you

The following information will help you get your ideas and community news into *The Chronicle*:

Call editor Craig Turpin at (908) 575-6698 with story suggestions, questions or comments. Information can be e-mailed to middlesex@njnpublishing.com.

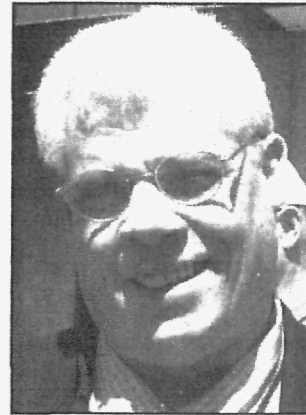
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Correction policy

The Chronicle will correct errors of fact, context or presentation and clarify any news content that confuses or misleads readers. Please report errors to editor Craig Turpin at (908) 575-6698.

Question of the week: What does Earth Day mean to you?



JEFF ELDER
Somerville

"An expression that we have to live on this planet and (we) have to take care of it."



WILLIAM GREEN
Somerville

"People will go out to plant (trees and flowers) to help beautify our cities and our state."



LEON MATUSZEWICZ
Somerville

"It means conservation and ecology."



JOANNE RYBSKI
Manville

"Doing something to take care of our planet on special days — to focus on what we can do."

Letters to the Editor Police grateful for community bonds

To The Editor:

On behalf of all members of Policemen's Benevolent Association Local 193, I would like to express our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to all those who assisted our department following the tragic death of Officer Matthew Melchionda on March 8. The outpouring of support that we received in the days that followed has touched us in ways that words cannot describe. The PBA would like to specifically recognize the following for their extraordinary efforts and support.

Chief William Stahl and dispatcher Karen Cuthbert of the Warren Township Police Department, who immediately responded to our headquarters to take charge of our dispatch area and police operations.

Lt. Art Ceccato, Lt. Russ Leffert and PBA delegate Larry Frank, also from Warren, who were instrumental in assisting in the organization of the funeral arrangements for Matt.

All other members of the Warren Township Police Department that helped us.

Chief James Paganessi and his officers of the Readington Township Police Department, and the New Jersey State Police for their assistance with the funeral.

The North Plainfield police and fire departments for

their treatment of Matt and our officers the night of the crash.

The Plainfield Police Department for also responding to the crash.

Twin Brooks Country Club and Colorado Café for their generosity.

The Danbury and Rodriguez families for their hospitality to Matt's family.

The New Jersey State PBA and the New Jersey Critical Incident Stress Management Team for their immediate support and guidance.

To all those who tied blue ribbons throughout the Borough of Watchung, we thank you.

To the media for their dignified coverage of Matt's death, we thank you.

Everyone else, whether you immediately covered the road, fed us, comforted us, provided financial relief to the family or helped us in any other way, we thank you.

To everyone who did not know Matt, but left flowers or stood along the funeral procession route and cried, we thank you.

To all of those that showed up in force to honor Matt, our fallen hero, we thank you.

We are truly humbled by the outpouring of support extended to us in our time of need. We will not forget.

TIM HALE

President, PBA Local 193
Watchung Police Department

Volunteers lifeblood of local Red Cross

To The Editor:

What do you call people who consider themselves on-call 24-hours a day, who get out of bed in the middle of the night to help find a place to sleep for a family whose house has been destroyed by fire? These people respond to 70,000 home fires a year—and they don't get paid a dime for their trouble.

What do you call people who take the time every few months to give away one of the world's most precious gifts: Blood?

What do you call people who show up on a regular schedule to drive others to medical appointments, teach strangers how to save a life, and help U.S. service members separated from their families by military duty stay connected — with no monetary compensation?

You call them American Red Cross volunteers. So far this year, volunteers at the Greater Somerset County Chapter, American Red Cross have donated over 23,000 hours of their time, right here in our communities. They have responded to 15 house and apartment fires which affected 68 families, taught first aid, CPR, aquatics and caregiving to over 6,500 individuals, and provided over 1,950 rides to medical appointments. Nationwide, Red Cross volunteers gave a staggering 162 million hours of service this year.

April 23-29 is National Volunteer Week, a time to thank the many local residents who served our community this year through volunteering with the American Red Cross. The theme of National Volunteer Week is "Inspire by Example" and that is just what Red Cross volunteers do.

The Greater Somerset County Chapter needs people from throughout the community, of all ages and skills. Right now, we would especially welcome people who would like to be part of our Disaster Action Team, enabling us to respond to disasters big and small that occur in our community.

To volunteer, please contact us at (908)725-2217 or log on to www.redcross.org.nj/gssc and go to Volunteer Opportunities.

WILLIAM S. SUNDHEIM

Somerville

The writer is chair of the Board of Directors of the Greater Somerset County Chapter of the American Red Cross located in Somerville.

Give kids 'fresh air'

To The Editor:

Each year, families and individuals in Somerville make summer special for inner city children from New York City as volunteers for the Fresh Air Fund. As National Volunteer Week (April 23-29) approaches, I would like to give my deepest thanks to our Fresh Air heroes: dedicated hosts, volunteers and supporters. Year after year they demonstrate their compassion and concern for the well-being of others by their commitment to New York City children.

Our caring Fresh Air host families open their homes and

share the everyday joys of summertime with their Fresh Air guests. Our local volunteer leaders — many of whom are also hosts — give by serving on our local Friendly Town Committee, planning summer activities, raising funds for special events, publicizing the program and interviewing prospective host families.

For more, please call Terry Hurwitz at (732) 627-9664 or the Fresh Air Fund at (800) 367-0003.

AMANDA CORTESE

Director of Public Relations,
Fresh Air Fund
Manhattan

Somerset County Briefs

Survey will help track homeless population

The Somerset County Department of Human Services is currently seeking volunteers to help conduct a "Point in Time" survey of homeless individuals and families in the county. The purpose of the survey, which will be held on April 27, is to

count, describe and understand homeless people who do not use shelters and are typically found on the streets, in abandoned buildings, or other places not meant for human habitation.

The Department of Human Services is seeking donations of items to be included in the packages that will be distributed. Donated items can

include bottled water, juice boxes, individually wrapped snacks such as granola bars, crackers, nuts, trail mix, tooth brushes, toothpaste, travel-size soap and deodorant. Donations can be dropped off at the Somerset County Community Development Office in the Human Services building at 92 E. Main St., Somerville.

County wants to find safe routes to school

SOMERVILLE — In conjunction with National County Government Week, April 23-29, the Somerset County Planning Board will hold a program overview on how towns, school districts and nonprofit agencies can apply for funding under the

New Jersey "Safe Routes to School" program.

The meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Wednesday in the freeholders' meeting room at the County Administration Building, 20 Grove St.

"Safe Routes to School" is a new federal aid program under the Federal Highway Administration. It provides state funding to substantially

improve the ability of primary and middle school students to safely walk and bicycle to school.

The workshop will be directed to school superintendents, business administrators, traffic coordinators, elected officials, planning boards and nonprofit agencies. The public is also welcome.

Central Jersey Motor Pool transports supplies

Led by a fully-restored 1967 olive drab "deuce-and-a-half" military truck, a convoy of vintage Army vehicles rumbled through downtown Somerville Saturday to deliver supplies to *The Chronicle* office donated by hundreds of shoppers at the Stop'n'Shop supermarket on Route 206 in Raritan.

A couple of jeeps, a utility truck and the high-fender "deuce-and-a-half" had parked outside the supermarket to help draw attention to the volunteers from Operation Shoebox New Jersey 2005 who were outside the store handing out lists of needed items to shoppers as they entered the store.

It was one of two Soldiers' Shopping Sprees held last Saturday; volunteers were also stationed outside the ShopRite, Route 202 in Flemington.

The response at both locations was rewarding, with hundreds of bags filled with snacks, drink mixes and toiletry items handed over to our volunteers. Shoppers were also very generous, with over \$1,300 in donations dropped into the OPSHBX collection jugs. Shoppers in Flemington donated \$613.80, while \$727.94 was collected in Raritan. The money will be used to pay for postage to ship the care packages overseas to U.S. troops. Check the calendar elsewhere on this page for future Soldiers' Shopping Sprees.

Special thanks to Hillsborough resident Stan Lapidow, a retired Army colonel; Piscataway resident John Peterson; East Brunswick resident Joe Domino and Ken Kalinowski of Manville, all members of the vintage military vehicle club for giving up a good part of their Saturday to help out.

Spring to action

The grass is getting greener, forsythias and lilacs are blooming and tree blossoms are popping. The sweet fragrance in the air is fast making winter a distant memory, with thousands of Central Jersey families eager to get

Rod Hirsch
Executive
Editor



out and stay out.

If wide open spaces are on your agenda, be certain to visit any one of Somerset County's parks, which offer a wide range of activities from golf and swimming to tennis and hiking.

We'd also like to remind you that if you plan a visit, remember to bring along something for the troops.

There are five designated drop-off sites in the county park system for donations to Operation Shoebox New Jersey 2005:

Somerset County Park Commission main office, North Branch Park, Milltown Road, Bridgewater;

Somerset County Environmental Education Center, 190 Lord Stirling Road, Basking Ridge;

Leonard J. Buck Garden, 11 Layton Road, Far Hills;

Warrenbrook Golf Course, Warrenville Road, Warren;

Spooky Brook Golf Course, Colonial Park, Amwell Road, Franklin.

Remember while you're enjoying the great outdoors, hundreds of thousands of Americans are stuck in an arid, hostile environment, where daytime temperatures soar well over 100 degrees. They'd appreciate your support.

Girl Scout cookies

Jill Larson and the Girl Scouts of Warren are winding up their month-long sales drive this weekend, having already sold over 200 boxes of Girl Scout cookies that will be sent overseas to U.S. troops.

She is supervising the efforts of 28 Girl Scout troops, with hundreds of girls taking turns selling Thin Mints, Peanut Butter



Helping to unload bags of donated goods collected for Operation Shoebox New Jersey 2005 are, from left, Joseph Domino of the Central New Jersey Military Motor Pool, John Dorell, a volunteer with OPSHBX, John Peterson and Ken Kalinowski, both also members of the motor pool. A convoy of vintage Army vehicles, lead by this fully-restored 1967 olive drab "deuce-and-a-half" military truck, helped deliver items to *The Chronicle* office in Somerville Saturday. The supplies were donated by hundreds of shoppers at the Stop'n'Shop supermarket on Route 206 in Raritan.

and Shortbread cookies door-to-door, as well as manning tables that will be set up outside food stores in town Saturday and Sunday. We've supplied the Girl Scouts with Operation Shoebox posters which are displayed at their tables.

The cookies are a popular item with our soldiers and Marines based overseas; several have written letters of thanks for receiving the cookies in the packages OPSHBX ships overseas.

Though it's hard to believe, Jill says there are people who say "no" when asked to buy the cookies for themselves.

"We're hoping that instead of saying 'no,' they'll say 'yes' to buying a box of cookies for our soldiers instead," she explained.

Sounds like a great idea, and for those of you who do

support the Girl Scouts, make sure you buy an extra box or two for the soldiers. The Girl Scouts will take care of delivering them to OPSHBX, and we'll make sure they get tucked into the packages headed overseas. Call (908) 753-7668 for further information.

Letter from Iraq

Greetings,

Here in Fort Suse, Iraq, we're very happy for all of the wonderful things that were sent to us. It feels good to know that we are not forgotten.

My name is MA1 Carolyn Hicks, and on behalf of the United States Navy and the United States Army, we thank you so very much for your support. You would be amazed

how much a letter or a package from home means to a deployed soldier or sailor. Everyone here is excited to carry out our mission and honorably come home.

Again from all of us here from the Navy Provisional Detainee Battalion we say thanks and we will be home soon.

Respectfully,

MA1 Carolyn Hicks
United States Navy

T-shirts for sale

Quality T-shirts with the handsome Operation Shoebox New Jersey 2005 poster and logo are available for a donation of \$10.

Several stores on Main Street in Somerville and Main Street in Metuchen are selling the shirts, which fea-

ture the distinctive red, white and blue Operation Shoebox New Jersey 2005 logo, and a full-color reproduction of the Operation Shoebox New Jersey 2005 poster.

The shirts are also available at *The Chronicle* office, 44 Veterans Memorial Drive East. All proceeds from sale of the shirts directly benefit OPSHBX. Sizes available are medium, large and extra-large.

We can also reproduce the shirts in quantity for veterans' groups, corporations, or other sponsors, and include the name of your company or organization on the shirt. Call and ask for details.

Rod Hirsch is executive editor of *The Chronicle*. He can be reached at (908) 575-6684 or e-mail rhirsch@njnpublishing.com

UPCOMING OPERATION SHOEBOX NEW JERSEY 2005 EVENTS

April 22: Soldiers' Shopping Spree, Stop'n'Shop, Route 206, Raritan, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Volunteers will hand out shopping lists and collect donated goods from shoppers as they exit the store.

April 28: Somerset Patriots' Opening Night, 7:05 p.m., Commerce Bank Ballpark,

Bridgewater. OPSHBX volunteers will be on the concourse handing out information and collecting donations during the game.

April 30: Centerplate 3rd Base Concession Stand, Commerce Bank Ballpark, Bridgewater. OPSHBX volunteers will work behind the

counter and earn a percentage from every hot dog, pretzel and soda sold during Somerset Patriots game.

May 2: Somerset Patriots Parade of Champions, 5:30 p.m. Somerville Boro Hall, 6 p.m. Main Street Parade. OPSHBX volunteers will participate in the parade.

Frank Valanzola
financial advisor

I'm a
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How 'bout you?

Frank Valanzola, one of the founders of Operation Shoebox New Jersey 2005 works tirelessly behind the scenes to assure the success of various OPSHBX fund raising events, including the Champagne Open Golf Tournament at the Beaver Brook Country Club in Annandale. Frank helped organize and supervise the first OPSHBX sponsored shipping event in Somerville and is organizing a fund raising bocce ball tournament.

Join The Reporter, Frank Valanzola and other citizens and businesses who support Operation Shoebox New Jersey 2005. Salute the sacrifice of our brave servicemen and women serving overseas. Be a Patriot! Support OPSHBX. Call The Reporter's Executive Editor Rod Hirsch at (908) 575-6684 or click www.nj.com/shoeboxnj for information on how you can help.

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The Reporter, along with our community & corporate partners, are collecting small, personal items that will be packaged and shipped to the brave men and women serving overseas.

Look for our drop-off boxes at a store or business near you! Pick up The Reporter each week for updates and information. For details on becoming a drop off location, contact The Reporter's Executive Editor, Rod Hirsch at (908) 575-6684. Send your message of support today!

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Commerce Bank Ballpark in Bridgewater has been called the "Jewel of the Atlantic League" thanks to its immaculate field. Ray Cipperly is seen at left preparing a section of the field for new sod laid down this spring in advance of the 2005 season. As head groundskeeper for the Somerset Patriots, Cipperly spends many hours preparing the field. In the off-season he and his crew ready the infield by adding new clay and prepare to lay new sod in both the infield and outfield.

GEORGE PACCIELLO/
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

'Everything is done by touch and feel'

There is no magic formula to caring for the 'Jewel of the Atlantic League'

By AMY S. BOBROWSKI
Staff Writer

BRIDGEWATER — The least fun part of Ray Cipperly's job is watching the Somerset Patriots play a game in the rain.

As Head Groundskeeper, Cipperly sees his usually pristine infield "wrecked" and knows he's going to have a heck of a time cleaning it up once the game is done.

"I hate coming in after it's been raining for a whole game," he said. "The infield is just a mess and I know I have to fix it."

After each game, Cipperly, Assistant Groundskeeper Joe Zavodnick and a few seasonal grounds employees take to the field. Under the lights, they repair the pitcher's mound — which by now is worn down from use — the area around home plate and each of the bases. They add more dirt and sand to areas that have really been messed up by the rain and players' cleats. If the day's been exceedingly



dry, they give the field a good drink of water.

"We usually have about 20 minutes to a half hour of work after the last pitch is thrown before we can get out of here," said Zavodnick, who noted that extra-inning games can run past 11 p.m. "It's late and you're tired but you want to get things ready for when you come in the next day."

The "Jewel of the Atlantic League,"

as it's been called, is kept lush, green and smooth by Cipperly, Zavodnick and a seasonal grounds-keeping crew of about 10 people. The field has twice been named the field of the year for the Atlantic League and was included in the top ten of Baseball America's top fields list.

Zavodnick starts prepping the field as soon as the weather breaks. To make the soft infield firm enough for play, Zavodnick adds coarse sand to the dirt. Likewise, each year, the crew has to replace the sod just behind home plate where the Patriots logo is painted on the field. To create the logo and other field patterns, the crew uses large stencils and oil paints. This two-man job can take up to four hours on the first go round, said Zavodnick. After it has been initially painted, the grounds crew completes touch-ups before almost every home game.

During the season, Cipperly and Zavodnick put in long days. They each usually arrive at the stadium by 9 a.m.

to get the field ready for a 7:05 p.m. game.

"Joe and I do all the cutting (of the grass)," said Cipperly, a high school athletic director. "He'll cut the infield with a little mower and I'll do the outfield with the big one. If time's a factor, we'll cut everything with the big mower."

Typically, it takes the pair about three to four hours to mow the whole field. They cut the grass from two directions to ensure a clean cut and to create cross-hatch designs on the field.

By 11 a.m., their summer help comes in and starts work on touching up the oil paint on Patriots logo behind the infield before edging the warning tracks. Additionally, the crew resurfaces and repairs the mounds in the bull pen by adding extra dirt to fill holes and rakes that area.

"When these guys come in, they don't have to ask any questions," Cipperly said. "They know what to

do."

After the mowing is done, Cipperly and Zavodnick take lunch. When they get back, the two water the infield and outfield and drag and hand rake the infield, readying it for batting practice.

"You've got 90 minutes of batting practice and they reverse the work we just did," Cipperly said. "We've got to put all the stuff back and clean it up (before the game)."

Along with the seasonal crew, Cipperly and Zavodnick add dirt where the ground's gone soft or has holes from extensive play. They drag the field again and repair the pitcher's mound and the batting area by putting clay down.

"I drag the infield and someone gets the paint ready to line the field," Cipperly said. "All our lines are painted. It's not done in chalk."

Before each game, Cipperly makes sure the infield has enough moisture with a special test.



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Helen Sulewski

SOUTH PLAINFIELD — Helen M. Marciniak Sulewski, 85, died April 3, 2006 at her home.

She lived in Dunellen and her native Plainfield before moving to South Plainfield.

Mrs. Sulewski and her husband, John, owned a Dolly Madison ice cream shop in Plainfield in the 1960s. She also worked in Plainfield at Winter's Bakery, the Park Avenue Bakery and the Clinton Bakery. He died in 1966.

She was a member of the Dunellen Senior Citizens Club and the Altar Rosary Society at St. Stanislaus Kostka Roman Catholic Church in Plainfield.

Surviving are a daughter,

Patricia Taber and husband Bill, with whom Mrs. Sulewski lived; four sons, John Jr. and wife Sylvia of Dunellen, Steve and wife Maribeth of South Plainfield, Robert and wife Ginny of Hellertown, Pa., and Ronald and wife Judy of Howell; 14 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

A funeral Mass was held April 6 at Our Lady of Czestochowa Roman Catholic Church, following services at the McCriscin Home for Funerals. Burial was in Holy Redeemer Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center ICU, Park Avenue and Randolph Road, Plainfield, NJ 07060.

Eva Helen Meyer

MIDDLESEX — Eva Helen Meyer, 90, died April 15, 2006. Born in Nanty Glo, Pa., she lived in Middlesex before moving to Florida.

Mrs. Meyer was a former member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Dunellen, American Legion Post 306 in Middlesex and the Middlesex Rescue Squad.

Her husband, Steve, died in

1984.

Surviving are a daughter, Patricia; a sister, Mary Scribner; three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Services were held Thursday at the Middlesex Funeral Home. Burial was in Bound Brook Cemetery.

Donations may be sent to a charity of your choice.

Martin McCrone

MIDDLESEX — Martin J. McCrone, 63, died April 14, 2006 at Somerset Medical Center in Somerville.

He was born in Scranton, Pa., and lived in that city before moving to Middlesex in 1966.

Mr. McCrone retired in 2005 after 27 years as an HVAC technician with Amber Air in Union. He was a leader with Boy Scout Troop 45 and a member of American Legion Post 306.

During the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, Mr. McCrone was with the Navy aboard the USS Charles Ware.

Preceding him in death were two sisters, Angela Downer and Eleanor Gummer.

Surviving are a son, Andrew and wife Helen of Middlesex; a daughter, Karen Peery and husband James of Middlesex; a sister, Maryann Flanagan of Green Brook; and five grandchildren.

A funeral Mass was held Tuesday at Our Lady of the Mount Roman Catholic Church in Warren. Burial was in St. Catherine Cemetery, Moscow, Pa.

Arrangements were by the Sheenan Funeral Home in Dunellen.

William Schuyler

DUNELLEN — William J. Schuyler, 76, died April 13, 2006 at University Hospital in Newark.

Born Oct. 20, 1929 in Dunellen, he was a son of the late police Chief Norman B. and Helen I. Appar Schuyler.

Mr. Schuyler attended Dunellen public schools and lived in Dunellen all his life. An automobile mechanic and motorcycle enthusiast, he was a member of the American

Historical Motorcycle Association.

He was with the 2nd Infantry Division of the Army in the Korean War.

Surviving are a brother, George N., with whom Mr. Schuyler lived; and a close friend, Douglas Van Allen and wife Janet of Piscataway.

Services were held Tuesday at the Mundy Funeral Home. Burial was in Fairmount Rural Cemetery, Tewksbury.

Rena M. Rizzo

BOUND BROOK — Rena M. Rizzo, 81, died April 8, 2006 at Community Medical Center in Toms River.

Born April 1, 1925 in Atella, Italy, she was a daughter of the late Pasquale and Teresa Dileo.

Mrs. Rizzo lived in Bound Brook for 56 years before moving to Toms River in 1935. She was a homemaker who enjoyed knitting, crocheting and cooking.

Her husband, Gaspar, died in 2002.

Surviving are a son, Leonard

J.; a daughter, Phyllis Kaesler; a brother, Mario "Marty" Dileo; five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

A funeral Mass was held April 11 at the Immaculate Conception Chapel in Somerville. Burial was in St. Joseph Cemetery, Bridgewater.

Arrangements were by the Bruce C. Van Arsdale Funeral Home in Somerville. Donations may be sent to Deborah Hospital Foundation, P.O. Box 820, Browns Mills, NJ 08015.



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Saturday, April 22, 2006

Sports

Pioneer boys take third in county relays

FRANKLIN — Less than a week after surprising conference rivals and perhaps even themselves, the Somerville High boys fell back to earth a bit Saturday, but not before turning in another solid performance.

Coming off a victory in the Skyland Conference Relays in which it held off Hillsborough and Franklin to win the title by one point, Somerville settled for third place at the 45th renewal of the Somerset County Track and Field Relays at Franklin Middle School.

While the Pioneers, Hillsborough and Franklin were separated by just two points the previous week, Hillsborough and Franklin battled to the end by themselves this time with Hillsborough pulling out a 101-100 triumph to defend its championship.

Somerville's third-place effort of 75.5 points was the best finish for area teams, while the Watchung Hills boys followed in fourth and Bernards was sixth.

On the girls side Hillsborough dominated by totaling 109 points, easily out-distancing

runnerup Montgomery (82). A depleted Watchung Hills team, which was a respectable third at the conference relays, finished fifth in the counties with 51 points and Bridgewater-Raritan followed in sixth with 39.

The Somerville boys used their depth and balance to score in all but one event and came away with one set of gold medals by winning the javelin while collecting four second-place finishes and four thirds.

"I feel good about what we did," Head Coach Tom Reynolds said. "I thought our kids performed pretty well. I was satisfied with everyone's performance. I think we might have been a little mentally fatigued from last week with having that meet go from Saturday to Monday and come back with a (dual) meet Tuesday.

"I can't really say for sure what the difference was from last week to this week. I think the points were distributed a little differently without the Hunterdon County schools. And Franklin didn't get disqualified in the 1600, so that helped them.

"This is pretty much what I figured it would be last week, and it ended up in our favor last week. Any time you win the Skyland Relays as a Group Two school it has to be a surprise, and any time you can stay with Hillsborough and Franklin in the county it has to be a success. I'm not disappointed at all."

The Pioneers' javelin group of Shaun Healey, Sam Pickell and Dan Aubry defended the team's title from a year ago and made a nice improvement from the previous week as they combined for 446 feet, 1 inch to better a runnerup effort of 421-3 in the conference event.

B-R entered one event focused on winning and the Panthers got it done in the distance medley as the quartet of Tom Banafato, Tyler Kelly, Josh Brown and Adam Gruchacz avenged a loss to Hillsborough the previous week by winning in 10:53.1, more than 15 seconds faster than the Raiders' 11:08.9 clocking.

Bernards, which didn't go all-out because it was focusing on Monday's Colonial Hills Conference Relays, came away with the other title earned by an area boys team as Ricky Zamora cleared a meet-record and a personal-best 14-7, combining with Kyle DeGhetto (12-0) for 26-7 and an easy triumph in the pole vault.

The Watchung Hills girls collected the majority of their points in the field events where they captured one relay and shared the top spot in another while placing in all four jumping events and all three throws.

Ryan Olexson and Nina Horowitz repeated their conference championship in the high jump, combining to clear 10 feet, while Sarah O'Meara teamed with Maddie Ballan to total 16-6 in the pole vault to tie Montgomery for first.

Bridgewater-Raritan, meanwhile, concentrated on the running events where the Panthers captured one race

and finished second in two others. They also had a second-place showing in the javelin.

After falling short in the 3200 at the conference relays, B-R's girls put together a huge effort to edge Hillsborough in an outstanding battle.

Jackie Shulak, Margaret Bruno-Metzger, Rachel Mangan and Danica Krivanos combined for a meet-record 9:42.7 to edge Hillsborough at the line, breaking Hillsborough's 2002 mark by two-tenths of a second as the Raiders finished with the same time in their runnerup effort.

Given a 30-meter lead at the final pass, Krivanos had to hold off Hillsborough's Allison Marsicin in the final lap stretch after Marsicin had come all the way back to take a slight advantage.

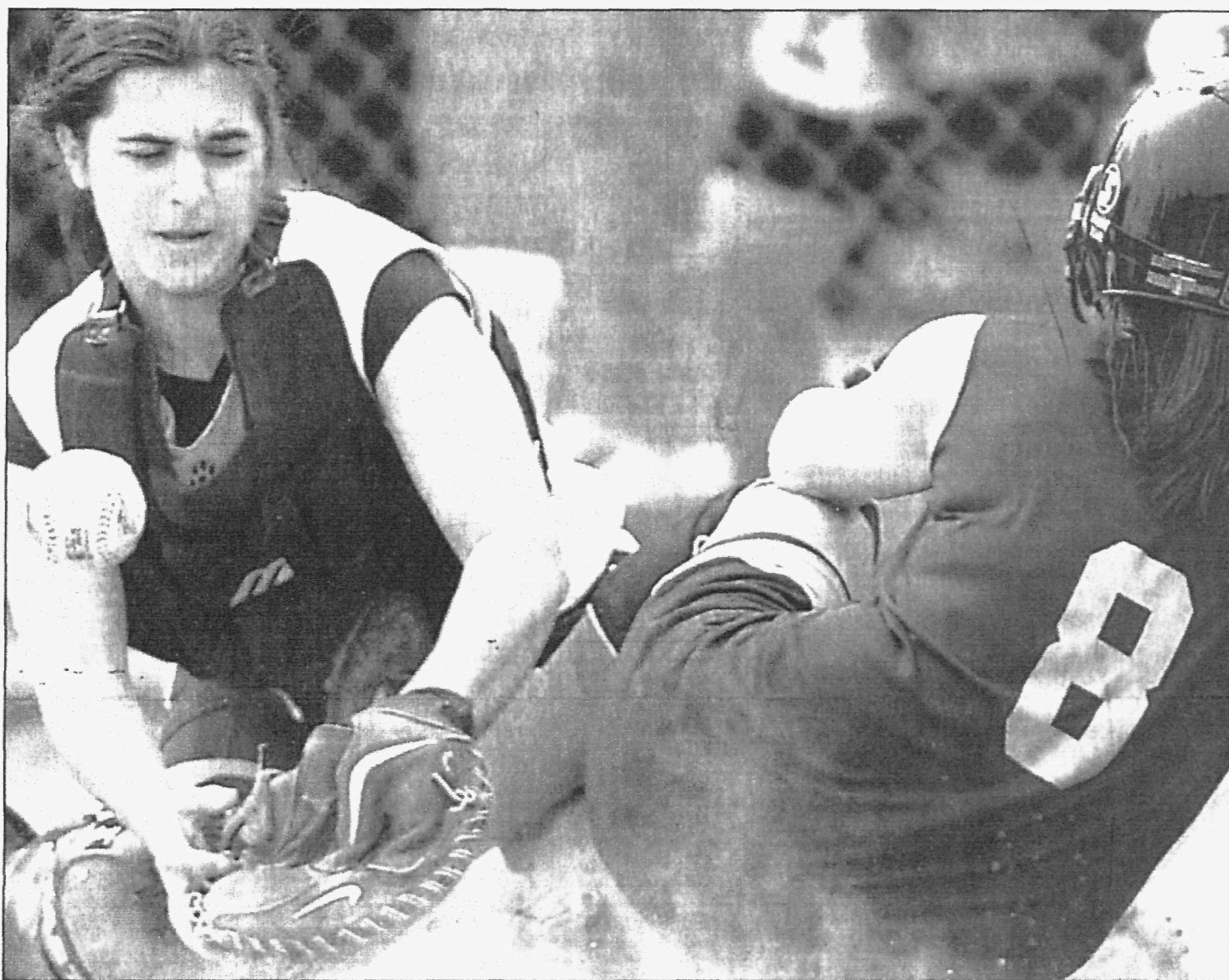
"I didn't think we'd run that fast, and looking back at the race we probably should've gone about five seconds faster," B-R Head Coach Rich Marton said. "Danica was Danica and she did what she had to do. I think the key was

the middle legs. Mangan took three seconds off her best time, and Bruno-Metzger took five-six seconds off.

"I wasn't concerned when (Marsicin) passed Danica with 120 meters to go because Marsicin had worked hard to come back and Danica always waits for the final turn, gets into the second lane and takes off. I was worried when Marsicin came back at her again but Danica kind of fell through the (finish) line and I think that was the difference."

With their final time the Panthers seemingly clinched a spot in the Penn Relays for the event.

"We wanted to go under 9:50 because we wanted to get to Penn and I didn't know if our 9:51 would hold up," said Marton. "Usually they say anything under 10 and you qualify, but I wasn't sure. I didn't think we'd go in 9:43 but if a couple of things work out we could actually get into the 9:30s."



Bridgewater-Raritan High catcher Kelly Rafferty can't hold on to the ball as Immaculata's Jenna George slides in with a run during last week's contest at North Bridge Street Field in Bridgewater. The Panthers fell 4-0 but came back three days later to knock off Somerville 3-0.

Foley narrowly misses bid for another crown

BRANCHBURG — He may have looked as if he'd barely survived a boxing match, but Kevin Foley still maintained his status as a true heavyweight of Somerset County golf.

Going after his fourth straight county tournament championship despite suffering a concussion and eye injury less than a week earlier, Foley just fell short Monday. The Immaculata High senior tied the Pingry School's Rob Cronheim for first place during the regulation 18 holes at Neshanic Valley Golf Course, then lost on the initial sudden-death playoff hole.

"That was absolutely one of the most courageous performances I've ever seen," said Immaculata Coach Dan Robinovitz. "I've known Kevin since he was in the sixth grade and have never seen him overcome the odds the way he did today."

"For him to go out there and do what he did... wow. I just wish I could play with two good eyes the way he played with one."

Foley, who carded a two-over-par 38-36—74, was injured April 11 when he collided with another student while playing outfield during a gym class softball game. He was hospitalized two days at Somerset Medical Center, where he was treated for a concussion and a fracture below his left eye.

The lanky 6-foot-2 Somerville resident was uncertain about trying to go after another SCT title — his string of three in a row is unprecedented — until he belted a few balls at the Branchburg Family Golf Center Saturday evening and then played a round with his father, Mike, the next day.

"After seeing I could get through a round OK, I was 100 percent certain I could play," said Foley. "I really just wanted to play and try to defend my title. I wouldn't want to sit home and watch it go by and regret that decision I wanted to take a chance and try to win my fourth in a row."

And he didn't miss by much, despite taking an uncharacteristic 38 putts. Wearing glasses instead of his usual contact lens, Foley was superb from tee to green (he hit 15 greens) but did have some difficulty with his short game, admitting the eye injury altered his perception in judging lies, distances and angles on some shots.

"I felt all right," he said. "The only affect was around the green on some of those 'feel' shots where it was hard to judge distances, like on half-wedge shots, and my putting was kind of bad."

"But I'm not really surprised I came this close to winning. I'd been playing well prior to the accident and the injury didn't hurt my swinging muscles or anything like that. I could hit the ball pretty strong off the tee. It's just that my putting was off. I'm happy I did well."

Foley, whose 69 in last year's SCT was five strokes better than Cronheim's third-place showing, was in the same group with the Pingry senior Monday and both were gunning for a victory as they arrived at the par-5 No. 18 hole tied for top honors.

Cronheim sank an eight-foot birdie putt and then Foley, whose bid for an eagle was about 30 inches short, also birdied to force the playoff.

On the first extra hole — the par-4, 380-yard 10th — Cronheim and Foley both were on the green with similar shots that rolled past the flag about a dozen feet. Foley's putt for a birdie was about an inch wide to the left and went another two feet, while Cronheim was right on target as he claimed the crown.

SOMERSET COUNTY TOURNAMENT

Team Results

1. Hillsborough 316; 2. Ridge 326; 3. Montgomery 331; 4. Pingry 338; 5. Immaculata 339; 6. Bridgewater-Raritan 340; 7. Watchung Hills 362; 8. Bernards 364; 9. Rutgers Prep 370; 10. Somerville 372; 11. Franklin 375; 12. Gil St. Bernard's 382; 13. North Plainfield 488

Individuals

1. Rob Cronheim, Pingry 74 (playoff); 2. Kevin Foley, Immaculata 74; 3. Kevin Leveille, Ridge 75; 4. Andrew Borsuk, Hillsborough 75; 5. Andrew Tursky, Immaculata 76; 6. Logan Cecchine, Hillsborough 77; 7. Jason Stall, Montgomery 77; 8. Steve Cannon, Hillsborough 79; 9. Brendan Cooney, Ridge 81; 10. Vik Varma, Watchung Hills 82

Sharp Connor pitches SHS to another victory

While Somerville High baseball Head Coach Rick Sabol expected to get some fairly decent pitching this spring, even he couldn't have anticipated seeing all those zeros piling up on the opponent's side of the scoreboard day after day.

With Brett Connor tossing another gem, Somerville posted its fifth shutout in the last six games Tuesday, this by a 4-0 margin over Hackettstown at Branchburg's White Oak Park. Connor, who's now 3-0, went

the distance on the mound, allowing two hits and two walks while striking out 10 batters. The senior righthander hasn't yielded a run since the season-opener, a span of 20 innings.

The Pioneers (7-2) have been getting just enough offense to back up their stingy pitching, too. They totaled five hits against Hackettstown (3-4), with junior Mike Kaminski delivering three of them and Brandon Holderbaum and Pat Rubin adding one apiece.

B-R must tighten infield play

This time, Bridgewater-Raritan High wasn't at all affected by several misplays in the field while the Panthers took full advantage of their opponent's errors.

Sandy Baranowski gladly accepted the victory and just hopes matters turn for the better for her Panthers.

"In a way, we lucked out today," said Baranowski, B-R's head coach, after watching her troops knock off Somerville 3-0 in Saturday's Skyland Conference inter-division meeting.

While a pair of infield miscues in the sixth inning put the pressure on Panthers pitcher Lauren Fitzsimmons, she extricated herself from a bases-filled jam and went on to maintain the shutout as B-R claimed its third triumph in seven outings.

On the other hand, B-R needed three errors from the Pioneers to push across its runs during the game's first five innings.

"We've been inconsistent defensively so far this year, which is really an unusual thing for us," said Baranowski. "Of our four losses, two easily should've been wins. We lost our first game because our outfield fell apart (five errors). Then we made some changes and I believe that problem has been rectified because the outfield has been playing really well."

"But now we're making all these infield errors," she added, "and they're coming on routine grounders. I'm not asking them to making diving catches all over the place. We're struggling just catching the routine ones. We're working on it over and over dur-

ing practice. But we've been moving some people around and hopefully we can work through this."

The Panthers weren't even facing Somerville's ace pitcher, Lindsay Lehman. Pioneers' first-year Head Coach Amy Lawless opted to give Laura Nevar her first shot in the circle, and the freshman righthander responded quite well, allowing four hits and three walks while striking out eight batters.

All three runs she permitted were unearned, although the last two were the result of her own throwing error: Lehman, a sophomore, played first base.

"Laura actually has some good stuff," said Lawless, "and we'd been wanting to work her into the lineup to get her some pitching experience and we decided today was the day. So we put her in there to start and she kept doing a great job so we kept her in."

"She really didn't look bad," commented Baranowski.

Fitzsimmons pitched pretty well herself, allowing two hits (both by Nevar) and two walks while fanning a dozen batters.

The Panthers scored their first run in the opening inning when Taryn Schnell led off by reaching on an error, moved up on a passed ball and stolen base and came home when the SHS second baseman booted a two-out grounder.

In the B-R fifth right-handed-swinging Lindsay Durant smacked a triple to the gap in right-center field with one out. Following a walk and an out,

SOFTBALL ROUNDUP

Nevar snagged a bouncer but her throw was awry, allowing two runs in.

Schnell, the Panthers' center-fielder, made a superb grab off a line-drive deep into the gap off the bat of sophomore Cathy Dowling in the sixth. Following an error by the second baseman, Fitzsimmons K'd a batter and then hit Nevar with a pitch — the first of the season by Fitzsimmons — and a miscue by the third baseman loaded the bases. But another strikeout ended the inning and the only true Somerville threat.

Besides Durant's triple, the other B-R hits came from Jill Dorell (second inning), Maria Caro (third) and Michelle Goydan (sixth). For the Pioneers, Nevar singled in the first and doubled in the fourth.

Baranowski also pointed out junior Kelly Rafferty has done a solid job catching in the absence of sophomore starter Samantha DeSimone, who'd been in Australia since the season's fourth game but will return this week.

"We've missed Sammy's bat a bit," said the coach, "but Kelly's been doing an outstanding job. She's made a couple of nice tag plays, holding on to the ball, and not allowing any passed balls. It's nice we have two catchers like that we can use."

OTHER GAMES:

Montgomery 9, B-R 2 — Senior Skylar Roehl, who'd pitched well in her only other start a week earlier against North Hunterdon, lasted just one-third of an inning Tuesday against powerful

Montgomery (9-1) at North Bridge Street Field. She faced 10 batters and allowed seven runs, five earned, before being relieved by Fitzsimmons.

"Montgomery is by far the best team we've played," said Baranowski. "They can hit one through nine in the order."

Schnell, Kat DeFranco and Kayla Stevens had two hits each for the Panthers (3-5). Caro singled in a third-inning run and Goydan's double sent in the other run in the fifth.

Somerville 8, Hackettstown 6 — Lauren Breznak ripped a two-run homer to right-center to highlight the Pioneers' four-run second inning and Laura Nevar connected for a solo homer in the fourth Tuesday, helping the Pioneers (3-4) win at Hackettstown.

Jess Magliaro had two hits and walked twice for SHS and Lauren Markakis doubled in the fourth and scored on throwing errors on the same play. Lindsay Lehman did the pitching, allowing 14 hits.

Immaculata 4, B-R 0 — Losing pitcher Fitzsimmons' double and Rafferty's single were the only hits the Panthers managed against Stephanie Clemente April 12 at North Bridge Street Field. Immaculata (4-1), which took advantage of four B-E errors, did all of its scoring in the fourth.

North Warren 9, SHS 2 — Lehman's triple in the sixth sent in both Pioneer runs April 13 against North Warren (4-2) in Blairstown. Michelle Cecchetti paced the Patriots with three hits, including a three-run homer.

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