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the Fanwoodian

Volume #15 Issue #4 December 2013

On the web: www.fanwoodnj.org

NJ Monthly: Just call our town Fan(tastic)wood!

Borough garners high rankings in biennial magazine survey

Fifteen years ago, when Darlene and Joe Rigney were looking to move to New Jersey from Long Island, Fanwood wasn't on their radar. After house-hunting in the nearby towns, and not having any success after bidding on a couple of homes, they broadened their search a bit and looked in Fanwood.

After seeing what the borough had to offer, it was clear to them - Fanwood would be their new home.

"It was a nice area and we were looking for an older home," Darlene said. Joe added, "A lot of it is economics. You can still get in here at a fairly reasonable level."

They've not regretted that choice since and, like so many other young marrieds, they've found Fanwood to be a great place to make their home and raise their families. So much so, that New Jersey Monthly Magazine has named the borough the #3 location in the state for raising a young family. That honor is backed up by the borough's Top 100 rating in the same survey in the category of "Best Places to Live."

"I wasn't at all surprised with the recognition," said Mayor Colleen Mahr. "I have three young sons and, like so many of you, I love the community spirit we enjoy here in Fanwood. In addition to the great schools and municipal services, I think the folks who want to raise their families in Fanwood are looking for that Mayberry feel, and we've got it!"

The Rigneys also love the small-town feel of the borough. Darlene said, "We like that we can live close to the train and to the town. We like the library,



Darlene and Joe Rigney, and their sons Kyle and Jake, like Fanwood's small-town atmosphere.

especially when the kids were little. There's a level of responsiveness from the police and fire, and the Public Works people do such a good job."

See Fanwood, page 4

IN THIS EDITION

3

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Colleen Mahr's quarterly column on all things Fanwood

4

MAKING THE PIECES FIT

Borough Zoning Officer Ray Sullivan helps businesses and residents make the zoning puzzle pieces fit

7

HOLIDAY CELEBRATION SET

The lawn of the North Side Train Station will be the stage as Santa comes to town and the town's Christmas tree is lit.

7

WINTER REC PROGRAMS

A new program for Seniors and some old favorites for the kids highlight the winter lineup from the Recreation Commission.

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Let us hear from you!

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Parenti ends long term of service to the borough

Not many people can say they've served the citizens of Fanwood for longer than Tony Parenti. First, as a Police Department patrolman beginning in 1957, rising through the ranks to chief before retiring in 1998, then later as a member of the borough's council for two terms, Parenti has more than 47 years of service to the community.

That chapter in Parenti's life and the borough's history comes to a close at the end of the year with his departure from the council. He says it is time to rest up a bit and spend more time with his grandchildren.

After serving in the U.S. Air Force, Parenti joined the Plainfield police force in 1956 before moving over to the Fanwood department a year later. Moving up through the ranks to lieutenant, Parenti was the department's first Traffic Safety Officer.

Later, as chief, Parenti was one of the founders and a former president of the New Jersey Police Traffic Officers Association and built a national reputation on the subject, even authoring a weekly newspaper column on traffic safety for the Courier News.

Parenti retired from the force on the last day of 1998 but didn't get out of police work. Instead, he took over the leadership of the John H. Stamler Police Academy in Scotch Plains five days later, serving as director until 2007.

After attending borough council meetings for several years as police chief, Parenti had acquired an interest in local government and, after his retirement from police work, was elected for two three-year terms to council.

His second term ends on New Year's Eve this year and the man, who in his spare time has owned more than 100 race horses over the years and aspired to be a harness race driver before a motorcycle injury in 1982 ended that career, will step down from public life.

If he follows his normal form, though, there's a good chance you'll still see him involved around the town he has called home for more than 50 years. It seems like Parenti and retirement just don't mix.



Tony Parenti

mayor's message

by Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr



There have been many exciting developments in Fanwood recently, but none more important than the possible creation of a joint Fanwood and Scotch Plains Police Department.

We have spent several years in discussion; working with Scotch Plains elected officials, professionals, police chiefs of both towns and the labor attorneys representing the PBAs of both forces.

On Oct. 21, we held a public meeting at the high school to share our findings and heard thoughtful and worthwhile comments from the public to take into consideration as we continue this discussion.

We've crafted a proposal that helps both towns. Both will have an equal voice in the governance of the proposed department and more importantly, all our residents will enjoy better police services at a lower cost.

Fanwood Police Chief Richard Trigo laid out a plan where public safety and response time would not be jeopardized and more officers would be available to serve at every hour of every day. We anticipate having officers "walking a beat," a welcome return to community policing that benefits everyone. The proposed expansion of the DARE program that is so valuable to students is just another benefit. And a joint force is estimated to generate close to \$200,000 in annual savings for Fanwood.

I do not take the concerns you may have with this concept lightly. However when property taxes remain the #1 issue on people's minds, it is our duty to investigate. There will be more public meetings on this subject. Please watch for developments.

In this age of dwindling state funding, pursuing grants is vital. I am happy to report that we have succeeded in securing grants to improve quality of life and keep taxes down. Recently we've won a grant for \$18,000 from the Union County Kids Recreation Trust Fund to support our parks and \$142,000 from FEMA to replace the aging gasoline generator at Borough Hall with an efficient natural gas generator. Fanwood was one of only 15 winners out of dozens of applicants for the FEMA grant. We've also received Union County Heart Grant monies to support cultural programs, and two grants from Sustainable New Jersey to continue work in environmental stewardship. These are in addition to the street improvement grants we compete for each year in order to fund the ongoing effort to maintain our roads.

As a result, we've done a good deal of capital improvement in the borough over the last months. Hunter Avenue and Farley Road have been repaved, Glenwood Avenue is in the midst of a large-scale drainage upgrade and the downtown Municipal Parking Lot has been completely reconstructed. Once the parking lot is

complete, you can expect to see construction begin on the next mixed-use building on South Avenue.

You'll note that retailers are beginning to take notice that Fanwood is an attractive place to do business, and I am happy to welcome our newest business, Sky Yoga, to our local business community.

Enhancing quality of life continues to top my agenda for Fanwood. So, imagine boarding a train in Fanwood and not changing trains in Newark en route to New York City. That dream is possible.

I've been working with the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition (RVRC) to lobby New Jersey Transit (NJT) to bring the "One-Seat-Ride" to the Raritan Valley line. With the Raritan Valley Line comprising nearly 10% of NJT ridership and NJT's recent purchase of 35 dual-power locomotives, now is the time to act. I am leading an active group of Mayors along the line and we are serious about achieving this goal.

Part of our work is to raise awareness among residents/commuters and to encourage you to share your thoughts on this with New Jersey Transit.

Visit <http://www.raritanvalleyrail.com/>, where you can learn about the issue and how you can make your voice heard. After the ARC Tunnel Project was killed, this is the last opportunity for us to act. It's up to us to make this happen!

I sadly bid a very fond farewell to our departing Councilman and former Police Chief, Anthony Parenti. After a lifetime of service to the Borough of Fanwood, the "Chief" is stepping down from public office. There is an article on his achievements on page 2 in this issue. I hope you will read it. Tony Parenti is a very special member of our community and we wish him all the best in his retirement from public life.

A town like Fanwood couldn't function without the dozens of volunteers who work in a variety of capacities, from Shade Tree to Recreation to the Rescue Squad to the Planning Board. We all owe a debt of thanks to these volunteers.

Volunteering can be very rewarding and it is a great way for you to meet your neighbors and have an impact on life in Fanwood.

This year we are hoping to establish a special committee to mark Fanwood's 25th year celebrating Earth Day. I am hoping folks of all ages will volunteer to work on this project. All you need to do to get started is to email me at mayor@fanwoodnj.org. Or, look for the Volunteer Sign Up table at the Dec. 8 Holiday Celebration.

I hope to see you all at the celebration Dec. 8. I will be there with my family to wish you all the best for a safe and happy season.

Fanwood (cont'd)

They point to the schools as a great asset.

"We've been grateful for the schools," Joe said. "We are happy with our sons' (eighth-grader Jack and sixth-grader Kyle) progress as students. We like that there is diversity. The kids are going to school with students who represent the world we live in today."

"We are also very pleased with the level of engagement with the parents and the families," he added. "There is a lot of volunteerism for the schools." Darlene has been a regular volunteer for school activities and Joe has coached sports. "The town does lend itself to that," Joe said. "In this situation, people know where their kids are and they are engaged. That breeds a strong sense of community. It's an area without a lot of pretense."

It sounds like the Rigney's are sold on Fanwood.

"We've created our memories here," Joe said.



Zoning officer Ray Sullivan

Striking a balance and making the puzzle pieces fit

You can call Ray Sullivan, the borough's Zoning Officer, the puzzle master.

It's Sullivan's task to make sure the borough's zoning rules for the 2,483 homes and 250 businesses are adhered to. That can include anything from how a business' sign is displayed to a new fence that a homeowner wants to install. Zoning rules detail how the new mix of housing and business in the Fanwood Crossing works, for instance. It is a balance of housing density, business use and other items such as parking.

And, Sullivan also makes suggestions to the borough's planners on how to make changes to the

FANWOOD VOICES

"Fanwood is a wonderful town in which to bring up children. It has a small-town feel, one where I always run into friendly faces at the many parks, the Fanny Wood Day event, or the charming parade on Memorial Day. At the same time, it is only an hour's drive from New York and all that big cities have to offer our kids. The school system is very good with an excellent graduation rate and a top-notch program for children with special needs. The houses are charming and affordable relative to many neighboring towns. Fanwood offers a lot of community events for children, such as summer camps, team sports, music lessons, and more. And the town itself continues to grow more attractive with additional construction, new restaurants and charming shops. I am proud to call Fanwood my home."

-- Christine Moller

"For such a small town we have great parks and a lovely nature preserve. I spent many hours with my children playing in the parks and exploring our nature preserve. I have wonderful memories of movies in the park, soccer and baseball games, Halloween costume contests, and searching for the perfect Christmas tree."

-- Carol Ann Lisanti

"We love the community! We are close to the train, so it's an easy trip to NYC, but there is a real small-town feel when you come home. There are always people walking their dogs and kids riding bikes around the neighborhood. The school system is great and there are tons of parks and activities to keep children active. The Fanwood Recreation department has a terrific assortment of activities, events and camps and there are great local organizations like the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Newcomers' Club that offer opportunities to connect with neighbors and the community."

-- Tracy Wright

local master plan to make Fanwood a better place for businesses and residents.

It's been a busy time recently for Sullivan, and for the borough's construction inspector, Bruce Helmstetter, as new residents and new businesses move to Fanwood.

As the economy has improved, there's been an uptick in add-ons and refurbishment to private homes. Businesses are looking to make the best use of their space. Sullivan works with both groups to make sure their plans fit into the big picture and to help them find solutions when something isn't quite right.

Down the road, Sullivan anticipates special attention will be paid to the western end of South Avenue, the stretch from Terrill Road east, creating Fanwood's gateway. That's all part of the goal to make Fanwood the best possible place to live and work.

Closure shifts food banks to local churches

Scotch Plains' municipal food pantry has closed, but donations of food and living necessities will be accepted at the Fanwood Borough Hall and the Fanwood Library.

The donations will be distributed through the St. Bartholomew the Apostle Food Pantry at the church, 2032 Westfield Avenue, Scotch Plains.

Donations can be also be dropped off at the church during weekend Mass or at the rectory during weekday business hours. Items needed include unexpired canned goods, pasta, dinner kits, etc., as well as shampoo, soap, toothpaste/toothbrushes, and paper products.

Families or individuals seeking the supplies may contact the church - (908)322-5192 or contact@stbartholomewchurch.org - for a registration letter.. Items are dispensed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the rectory.

Other local food banks include:

Fanwood Presbyterian Church, 74 South Martine Ave. in Fanwood (908)889-8891 or fanwoodpc.org.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, 1571 South Martine Ave., Scotch Plains (908)889-2100 or IHM123@aol.com.

Property tax info now online

A new feature has been added to Fanwood's website!

There's now a "Tax Lookup" link at fanwoodnj.org which will allow you to look up information on property taxes if you want to know your next quarterly amount or what you paid in total for the year.

In January, the link will be enhanced with a feature which will allow for on-line tax payments, using a credit/debit card or a direct debit from your personal account.

Poetry series begins Feb. 18

The Fanwood Arts Council/ Carriage House Poetry series will begin its 16th year with the annual "Sweetheart Night" poetry program on Tuesday, Feb. 18. Featured poets will be Edwin Romond and Gail Gerwin.

The poetry series runs every third Tuesday of the month at 8 p.m. at the Patricia Kuran Cultural Arts Center (February-June and September-December).

Recycling group looking for input from residents

Fanwood's recycling association, which operates the Recycling Center on North Avenue, is looking for input from users on whether residents prefer the current drop-off system or if they would prefer to have curbside pickup.

Fanwood is the only town in Union County that doesn't have curbside pickup. But, residents of those other towns must pay for the pickups in their property taxes. Instead, Fanwood works with a primarily volunteer setup that not only doesn't charge for its services but also returns money to the borough and to 21 community groups that help staff the yard.

The Borough Council is evaluating whether to continue the current process, move to curbside recycling or institute some hybrid model. There are clearly multiple costs and benefits to consider in each method.

The opinion of residents is critical in making this decision. To take the short survey, go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/JXD3SHB



Coming up

JANUARY

Brush and branch pickup program

Christmas tree pickup program (all month)

Dog and cat licenses due (all month)

6 - Winter seniors' recreation programs begin

21 - Winter children's recreation programs begin

FEBRUARY

Registration begins for spring after-school and seniors' recreation programs

1 - Borough property taxes due

18 - Borough council meeting

MARCH

18 - Borough council meeting

31 - Spring seniors' recreation programs begin

Library launches “Close the Gap” fund drive

To shrink the gap between increased demand (rising circulation and patron visits) and decreased funding (down over \$40,000 since 2009), the Fanwood Memorial Library has launched a fundraising drive.

Youth baseball signup open

Registration for the SPFBL Spring 2014 baseball season is now open. It's is quick and easy and can be done online at www.spfbbaseballleague.org. Early registration enables teams to be assigned and uniforms to be ordered and ready for April's Opening Day.



25 years of service marked

Mayor Colleen Mahr and Fanwood Memorial Library Director Dan Weiss pose with librarian Eileen Marino as they mark Marino's 25th anniversary with the library. Marino is the borough's third-longest serving employee. "It's always a good day when Eileen is working, so stop by any Monday or Thursday to wish Eileen well for the next 25," Weiss said.

Mitchell, Kranz to borough council

Kathy Mitchell was re-elected to a historic sixth term and Tom Kranz was elected to his first term in borough council elections on Nov. 5.

Mitchell, who has served on the council since 1999 and was twice council president, is a retired nurse and has lived in Fanwood more than 50 years.

Kranz, the captain of the Fanwood Rescue Squad, is the Director of Communications at Chelsea Senior Living. He was the top vote-getter on the council ballot and takes the council seat currently held by Tony Parenti, who did not run for re-election.

Money raised in the drive will be used to shore up two vital service areas residents identified as 'not adequate' in the library's spring survey: new books and other materials, and technology upgrades.

"The money raised from this campaign is critical and every donation, of any size, helps to strengthen our community," said Shelly Ross, president of the Library's Board of Trustees.

Flyers are being sent to Fanwood residents and there is more information on the library's website: www.fanwoodlibrary.org.



Fanwood Foundation seeking donors, volunteers

The Fanwood Community Foundation, a non-profit group founded in 1998 to help donors direct their gifts to local organizations, is looking for donors and volunteers.

The foundation provides funding where needed in the community and, in the past, these grants have gone to groups ranging from the Fanwood Memorial Library to the Resolve Community Counseling Center. Funding comes from the interest and dividends on a permanent endowment, which depends on donations and bequests. Donations to the foundation are tax-deductible.

For more information on donating or volunteering: <http://www.fanwoodcommunityfoundation.org/>.

Cat, dog tags deadline Jan. 31

All cats or dogs, seven months or older, must be registered. The deadline for the annual license is Jan. 31 to avoid a late fee. If the animal is spayed/neutered, the license fee is \$10 per dog or cat; otherwise, the fee is \$15. The late fee is \$2 per month, capped at \$10.

You may get your license at the office of the Municipal Clerk in Borough Hall, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., or Thursday evenings, 5-8 p.m. The licenses are also available by mailing the fee and a copy of the current rabies vaccination certificate with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Borough Hall. For new registrations, you may download the application form and complete it in advance by visiting the Borough's website, fanwoodnj.org and clicking on "Permits & Forms."

If you no longer own a dog or cat that had been registered, please inform the Borough Clerk at (908)322-8236.

Fanwood's Holiday Celebration set for Dec. 8

Fanwood's holiday season officially begins Sunday, Dec. 8, at 3 p.m., with the town's Holiday Celebration, including the lighting of the town tree,

Fanwood's holiday traditions page 8

a visit by Santa and seasonal music, Christmas and Hanukkah crafts and refreshments.

Everyone is invited to meet Santa under the big tent on the lawn in front of the North Avenue Train

Children's winter programs feature favorites, sports

Lego Club, Junior Scientists Lab and Little Bakers Workshop return to Fanwood Recreation's after-school schedule for Winter 2014. Plus, for our youngest athletes, US Sports Institute offers Soccer Squirts, which will be held indoors at the Forest Road Park building.

For more information about these programs, including detailed descriptions, dates, times, price, and age group, go to www.fanwoodrecreation.org, where you can also register and pay for these programs online or download a registration form and pay by check.

Station. Children who stop by to say hello to Santa will get a free photograph of their visit with him. There also will be contests and prizes for the kids.

The free celebration concludes at 5 p.m. when Mayor Colleen Mahr lights the town tree on the train station lawn.

Applicants sought for ice rink, summer recreation counselor jobs

Fanwood Recreation is now accepting job applications for ice skating rink attendants at the LaGrande Park rink, and for counselor positions for its 2014 Summer Park Recreation Program and Tweens & Teens Travel Camp.

The Summer Park Recreation Program begins on June 23 and runs for eight weeks, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday–Friday, at LaGrande Park. The Summer Travel Camp will run for two weeks in July, 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday–Friday.

To apply for an attendant or counselor job, go to www.fanwoodrecreation.org and click on the “Job Applications” button to download an application.

Lineup set for seniors' winter rec programs

Fanwood Recreation announces its winter program schedule for Fanwood seniors. New in 2014: Gentle Yoga, a program specifically designed for seniors and taught by Bridget Briant, yoga instructor at the Scotch Plains JCC, Union County College, and Fanwood's new Sacred Karma Yoga studio on South Ave.

Programs begin the week of Jan. 7 and run weekly through the week of March 24:

Aerobics	Tuesdays, 9–10 a.m.
Tai Chi	Tuesdays, 10:15–11:15 a.m.
Zumba Gold section 1	Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m.
Gentle Yoga	Thursdays, 9:30–10:30 a.m.
Line Dancing	Thursdays, 1–2 p.m.
Zumba Gold section 2	Fridays, 9:15–10 a.m.

All classes will be held in the recreation building at Forest Road Park. The fee is \$15 per program for Fanwood and Scotch Plains residents, \$30 for all others.

To register online and pay by credit card, please go to www.fanwoodrecreation.org. Or, if you prefer to pick up a paper schedule and registration form and pay by check, please go to Fanwood Borough Hall.

Holiday traditions marked in the borough

It's a busy time in December as several different groups help the borough's residents celebrate the holidays.

Escorted by the Fanwood Fire Dept., Rescue Squad and Police PBA 123, Santa Claus will make his annual ride through the borough on Saturday, Dec. 14, starting at 11 a.m., distributing gifts.

Santa's elves will accept packages at the Fire House behind Borough Hall for a week, beginning Nov. 30. Drop-off times are 5-9 p.m. on Nov. 30 and 6-9 p.m., Dec. 2-6. Packages may not be dropped off at the Police Dept. Since Santa has to make his list and check it twice, late gifts cannot be accepted. All packages must include name, address and phone number. Gifts must be no larger than 12 inches on any side and only one gift per child is permitted. Packages for the same address must be bundled together. Check the Fanwood Fire Dept.'s web site at www.fanwoodfd.com for more details.

Other long-running holiday traditions going on around the borough include:

Lions Club Christmas Tree Sale Begins Sunday, Dec. 1. The Lions Club will be selling trees at LaGrande Park, as

Annual Holiday Celebration page 7

it has for 64 years, on weekdays, 6-9 p.m., and weekends, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Plain and decorated wreaths and garlands will also be available to buy.

Tiny Tim Carol Night Leave your porch light on Thursday, Dec. 5, so that carolers from the Tiny Tim Fund will know they are welcome. For 30 years, the fund has provided financial assistance to medically needy local children. Carolers can drop off their proceeds and enjoy refreshments at the Stage House Inn in Scotch Plains. If you would like to participate, contact Flavia Blechinger at (908) 753-4228.

Rotary Club Luminary Sale Begins Saturday, Dec. 7. Luminaries will be sold on Dec. 7, 14, 15, 21, 22, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., and Dec. 24, 9 a.m.-12 noon. Luminary kits (candle, bag, and sand) will be sold at the Fanwood Municipal Garage, 270 North Avenue. Each kit costs 60 cents (50 cents when purchasing more than 50 kits). All proceeds will be donated to charities supported by the club. Please bring canned food to donate.

AROUND FANWOOD A postcard from our town



Runners stream over the Martine Ave. Bridge during the fourth annual Fanwood 5K Run on Oct. 20. Fanwood's Jerry Baglien was the overall winner. Bridget Sheratt of Fanwood was second among the women runners.