

A Service of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders

October 2006

A Newsletter for Union County Seniors

Volume 16



SHARING TO SAVE

Meetings with Municipalities Seeking Solutions on Cutting Costs

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders has taken the lead to build a consensus among its residents on shared services, and as part of these efforts recently unveiled a 30-second commercial featuring its shared service initiatives with its municipalities. The commercial ran on cable systems throughout the county.

Union County Freeholder Chairman Al Mirabella (center) and Freeholders Chester Holmes (2nd L) and Dan Sullivan (R) speak with Celeste Carpiano (L) from the New Jersey Association of Counties, and Summit Deputy Police Chief W. Paul Kelley.

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County Installing Life-Saving Equipment in Public Areas At Least One Will Be Installed in Every Town

The County of Union will distribute 45 Automatic External Defibrillators across the County. At least one will be in every town. The life saving equipment will be placed at public facilities that serve senior citizens. Placing defibrillators in public spaces was one of Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella's 2006 initiatives. Defibrillators can save the life of someone experiencing a heart problem or stoppage. As required by law, Union County will provide training in the use of the defibrillators and will install them. "Union County is very pleased to be able to offer the defibrillators and the training to the centers," Freeholder Chairman Mirabella said. "Having these defibrillators on

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Helping Seniors Manage Soaring Drug Prices

By Freeholder Chester Holmes



During the first quarter of this year, the manufacturers of 193 brand-name prescription drugs used by older Americans raised their wholesale prices by 3.9 percent on average, according to a recent report by the American Association of Retired Persons.

This is the highest average first quarter increase since 2000, according to AARP. In the first quarter of 2006, the increase in brand-name drug prices were more than triple the inflation rate, according to AARP. In fact, the average manufacturers' price increase over the last 12-months was 6.2 percent compared to a 3.5 percent growth in inflation.

This is bad news for older Americans, many of whom may not have adequate prescription plans or lack a plan at all. To help fill the void for those in need, the County of Union has provided a prescription drug discount purchasing plan, which we implemented in 2003. The plan is open to all residents regardless of age, income or assets. This program provides a way to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for permanent residents of Union County, and is especially beneficial for those who have no prescription coverage. Savings vary and depend on whether the medication is a brand name or

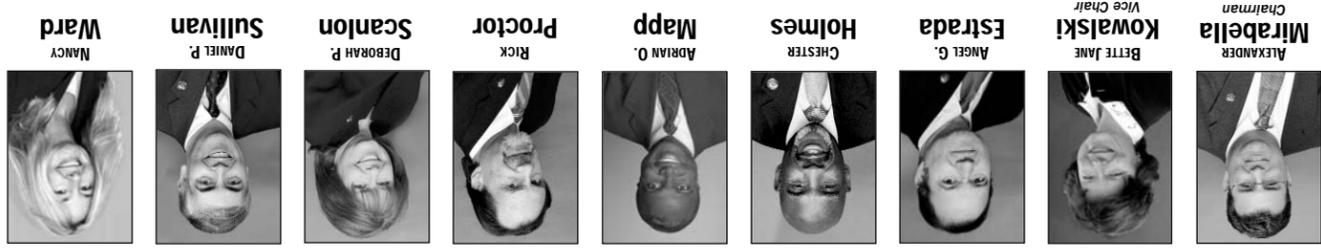
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More than 20,000 music fans came to Nomahagan Park in September for Union County's MusicFest. Among the bands performing: 80s rockers Cheap Trick, Labamba and the Hubcaps featuring Southside Johnny and the Fab Faux (left).



Union County Freeholder Chairman Al Mirabella (C) cuts the ribbon opening the new Visitors Center at the Trailside Nature and Science Center on Sept 28, in Mountainside. He is joined by Center director Patty Bertsch (R) Debbi Judd (2nd R), Director of the Union County Division of Recreation and Administrative Support, Salt Brook School teacher Pat Boyle (L) and students Alex Schack (2nd L) and Jacob Kogan from New Providence.

THE UNION COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS



Union County Senior Newsletter

A Service of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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A Service of
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Senior Citizens Toll-Free

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(888) 280-8226

County Operator

(908) 527-4000

Department of Human

Services
(908) 527-4808

Division on Aging

(908) 527-4869

Department of Parks,

Recreation & Facilities

(908) 527-4900

Runnels Specialized Hospital

of Union County
(908) 771-5700

County Clerk

(908) 527-4787

County Surrogate

(908) 527-4280

Sheriff's Office

(908) 527-4450

Prosecutor's Office

(908) 527-4500

Union County is always open
for business on the web
www.ucnj.org



CLERK'S OFFICE OPEN TO ASSIST VOTERS

Special Hours to Process Absentee Ballots and Help Voters



Joanne Rajoppi
Union County Clerk

Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi will open her office on Saturday, November 4, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for voters seeking last-minute absentee ballots. The office will be open as a public service for voters unable to vote at the polls in the General Election on Tuesday, November 7. "Every voter should have the opportunity to cast his or her ballot for federal, county and municipal offices," Rajoppi said. "We want to ensure that even those who have a last-minute change of plans can have a chance to vote." Mail-in applications legally cannot be accepted if they are postmarked after October 31. Walk-in applications are accepted up to 3 p.m. on November 6, the day before Election Day.

Voters will be able to drop-off their completed absentee ballot at the Union County Clerk's office. This option, initiated four years ago, allows voters to pick up their ballots, vote in privacy and deposit them in a secured mailbox - all at the same office through 3 p.m. on Nov. 6. "This option will make voting more accessible, particularly for senior citizens and students," Rajoppi said. Voters who need absentee ballots should apply as soon as possible to: Office of the County Clerk, Union County Courthouse, 2 Broad Street, Room 113, Elizabeth NJ 07207. Regular office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. To obtain an application, voters may download the form at the Clerk's website www.ucnj.org/cycle/clk or contact the Clerk's office at (908) 527-4996.

COUNTY WILL CELEBRATE 150TH ANNIVERSARY

County Doesn't Look a Day Over 120

The 150th Anniversary of the founding of Union County will be celebrated next year with a variety of public events organized by the Union County 150th Anniversary Committee. Opening ceremonies will be held in the spring on the Cranford campus of Union County College. Sponsored by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the committee is led by Freeholder Vice Chair Bette Jane Kowalski. The committee consists of more than 30 members, including elected officials, historians, educators, and individuals from a variety of cultural, civic, and veterans agencies.



1903 photo of dignitaries laying the cornerstone of the current Union County Courthouse.

COUNTY TO PROMOTE DIALOG ON SHARED SERVICES

Look for mailer seeking input and new TV ad

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Shared Services meeting with more than 20 representatives from 11 municipalities in early September. The committee explored more than 60 areas to share services, and agreed to pursue mutual opportunities in several areas, including Information Technologies. The panel will also seek two additional grant opportunities from the state to further its initiatives and will be meeting again in late December. Governor Jon Corzine has called on New Jersey's governmental structures to share services as part of his overall effort to reform property taxes. A bipartisan legislative committee will also recommend shared services as a way of increasing efficiency and avoiding duplication. One proposed plan from Trenton seeks to eliminate administrative duplication by having counties collect property taxes, do property assessments, provide health services, and handle animal control.

"These decisions should not be made without input from our voters and residents," said Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella. The Governor has created grant incentive programs to pursue this vision of increased shared services. "We want to save tax dollars by bringing our municipal partners to the table to find ways to share items such as public works equipment, public safety facilities and services, and specialized programs that some governmental bodies may have access to but others don't," Mirabella added. The County has received a \$104,500 grant from the state Department of Community Affairs that enabled it to create the Shared Services committee in order to create initiatives on shared and regionalized services. Union County was one of just two counties in the state to receive the award.

"As we share more services, our partnership will grow even stronger," said Freeholder Dan Sullivan, the chairman of the board's Intergovernmental Relations Committee, which is charged with pursuing shared services. "We want to deliver services as efficiently and effectively as possible." The commercial was followed by a mailing that will ask residents for their input on services they would like to see shared.

Municipalities explored opportunities to share services at the shared services meeting. Edward Fanning, Springfield Township Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella

Fanning. Eleanor McGovern, Borough Administrator for Fanwood, agreed with Fanning. "The municipalities involved developed a consensus on many of the issues they faced, and on the services they needed to share with the County," McGovern said. The 30-second County commercial, which is running on all cable systems Countywide, highlights existing services the County shares with its municipalities in the areas of emergency management, parks and recreation, health care, and senior services. To view the commercial online, go to www.ucnj.org/sharedservices.

IT'S SIMPLE... THE MORE WE SHARE, THE MORE TAX DOLLARS WE'LL SAVE



UNION COUNTY'S SHARED SERVICES PROGRAM - WE'RE EVEN MORE CONNECTED TO YOU

This mailer, which is being sent to residents, will seek ideas and build support for sharing services. This is just one of the ways Union County is working to help municipalities share services.

TRADE IN YOUR THERMOMETER FOR NEW DIGITAL MODEL

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders is sponsoring a Mercury Thermometer Exchange Program to remove mercury from municipal waste and to educate residents about the potential hazards posed by mercury found in thermometers. Union County residents can turn in their old mercury fever thermometer(s) and receive a new mercury-free digital thermometer - free of charge. The mercury thermometer exchange will take place with the County's next special recycling events: Oct. 21, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Warinanco Ice Skating Center in Roselle at the Household Hazardous Waste Event; and Oct. 28, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Schering Plough in Kenilworth at the Computer and Electronics Recycling Event.

A Park is Created in Downtown Linden

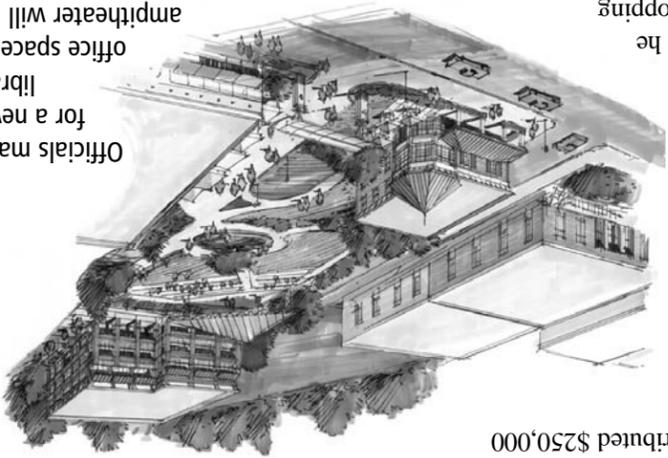
Crumbling Theater Makes Way for Park, Library, Amphitheater



ABOVE - Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella (center left), U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (center right) and Union County Improvement Authority Chairman Charlotte DeFilippo (2nd L) join Linden Mayor John T. Gregorio (center) and other state, county and local officials in cutting the ribbon on the Raymond Wood Bauer Promenade on Wood Avenue.

Freeholder Chairman Alexander T. Gregorio and other local officials to cut the ribbon on the new Raymond Wood Bauer Promenade on Wood Avenue in Linden. The mixed-use development contains a plaza with a 350-seat amphitheater, stone chess tables, bench seating, flower beds, and a two-story, 5,000 square-foot commercial building. A second three-story building, set in the rear of the development will house a new 22,000 square-foot state-of-the-art public library for the City of Linden. Kiosks and a bathroom facility will also be on the promenade. The entire development is in the footprint of the former Linden Theater on North Wood Avenue at Knopf Street. The promenade was named after Raymond Wood Bauer, a deceased banker and philanthropist.

The promenade and amphitheater, when all completed, will cost about \$4.1 million, and is financed and funded in part through the Union County Improvement Authority, the City of Linden,



Officials made way for a new park, library and office space. A new amphitheater will provide performance space for entertainment and community groups.

The project was designed by architect Victor E. Vinegra of Harbor Consultants in Cranford. The Union County Improvement Authority managed the project utilizing Harbor Consultants and the Silicon Group, of Elizabeth.

Charlotte DeFilippo, Chairman of the Union County Improvement Authority, thanked the City of Linden, the County of Union, and professionals for making this unique downtown-setting park a reality.

“Part of the Union County Improvement Authority’s mission is to provide financing to develop important public projects that improve the quality of life for our residents,” DeFilippo said. “We’re proud to have participated in the development of the promenade.”

DeFilippo added that the County was recently awarded a National Association of Counties (NACCO) award for another project, the Plainfield Park-Madison complex, which was also financed and developed through the UCI.

The Linden amphitheater, which has professional lighting and sound systems, has already hosted a full schedule of Summer concerts, and will feature additional shows well into the Fall and upcoming Holiday seasons.

The commercial building at the front was built for a restaurant on the ground floor. The plaza itself contains elements of colored stamped concrete, blue stone, slate, brick, and ornamental metals. The promenade will be open to the public daily until 9 p.m.

Wills and Trusts Are Serious Business

Evaluate Products Carefully Before Deciding



James S. LaCorte
Union County Surrogate

The Union County Surrogate’s Office recently reviewed advertising and marketing materials employed by a company called American Family Legal Plan (other names may be used by sales personnel). These materials are highly misleading and deceptive and paint a distorted picture of the Probate Process in New Jersey. Because of these deceptive advertising gimmicks I caution all citizens, particularly seniors to be careful when evaluating products promoted by this company. If a marketer has to resort to unfair and deceptive representations, I have strong doubts as to the legitimacy of the product as a whole.

Trusts and Trust Agreements are sophisticated legal documents. Claims made by unsolicited vendors should be examined carefully and in most cases their products should be rejected out of hand. If you think that such documents are a necessary part of your estate plan contact an experienced tax attorney or accountant to assist you. Your assets are too valuable to waste on unnecessary legal documents.

Recognizing Elizabeth’s Vietnam Fallen

Union County Sheriff Ralph Froehlich salutes the Elizabeth Vietnam Memorial monument. It stands as a memorial to the 29 Elizabeth service-

men killed in action during the Vietnam War. It was erected thanks to the hard work and fund-raising efforts of many individuals, including Union County Sheriff Ralph Froehlich, and veterans groups like the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 779. The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders also contributed funding.



OUTREACH PROGRAMS SCHEDULED

The Union County Department of Human Services, Division on Aging, will bring its Outreach Services Program for senior adults to Elizabeth, Linden, Plainfield, and Rahway during the month of October.

Division on Aging staff will assist seniors with information and help in applying for a variety of government assistance programs, including gas and electric support (LIFE LINE), pharmaceutical assistance (PAAD), and home energy assistance (HEAP). There will also be screening for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) eligibility, and information about the Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP).

“The Union County Freeholders encourage elderly, isolated individuals from throughout the county who meet eligibility requirements to apply for vital services through our outreach program,” said Freeholder Chester Holmes, liaison to the Union County Advisory Council on Aging. “Our staff will conduct private interviews on request.”

The Outreach Services Program will visit the following locations:

Oct. 20, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Supremo Supermarket, 25 S. Broad St., Elizabeth.

Oct. 20, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Twin City Supermarket, 1016 Sherman Ave., Elizabeth.

Oct. 25, from 11:00 a.m. to 12 noon at the O’Donnell Dempsey Senior Center, 622 Salem Ave., Elizabeth.

Office of the Union County Surrogate

The Surrogate is a Constitutional Officer who provides valuable services to residents. Unfortunately, many people are unaware of these services until they need them.

Union County Surrogate James S. LaCorte meets with senior citizen organizations and other community groups several times each month to speak about the importance of wills and estate planning. He keeps the public informed about important changes in the law and other matters related to protecting their assets and their quality of life.

He is responsible for probating wills and appointing executors, administrators, guardians and trustees of decedents’ estates, among other constitutionally mandated duties.

“I feel it’s important to go out into the communities and meet with different senior organizations,” Surrogate LaCorte said. “Having an informed public makes the probate process run more smoothly for everyone.”

For additional information on the Surrogate or Surrogate’s Court, visit the web site at www.ucnj.org/surrogate or call (908) 527-4280.

