

The Westfield Leader Union County HAWK

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Gratitude for Anxiety...Huh?

By PATRICIA STECKLER, Ph.D. For The Westfield Leader and Union County HAWK

Anxiety is a misunderstood emotion. When stomach knots, shortness of breath, and racing hearts invade our bodies, and worrisome thoughts consume us, we try hard to conquer or extinguish them.

Anxiety rates in the U.S. have skyrocketed. More than 100 million people currently suffer from anxiety or will in their lifetime. How often have you felt the tension in your body catalyzed by an upcoming mammogram or colonoscopy, or the required renewal of your driver's license, given long lines that end with a brusque, overworked clerk?

Anxiety and I traveled together throughout my 40 years as a psychologist. In my second year of graduate school as a 23-year-old, I asked an advanced graduate student if he felt like a psychologist yet.

I took those words to heart, and at every 10-year interval, I checked in with myself. Now do I feel like a psychologist? Had that daily performance anxiety evaporated?

Midway through my career, I had an "aha" moment. The chronic tightness in my stomach and forehead had kept me alert, keenly interested in my patients, and eager to help. Those revved-up sensations were my friends, not adversaries to defeat and banish.

"Future Tense: Why Anxiety Is Good for You (Even Though It Feels Bad)", by psychologist Tracy Den-

nis-Tiway advises anxiety sufferers to "reframe and reclaim anxiety as an advantage. Anxiety does its job by forcing us to sit up and pay attention."

Here are steps to cope better with the discomfort of anxiety:

1. Sit quietly with your racing hearts and stomach butterflies. Try not to shoot them away. Instead, scroll through a mental list of recent upsets to find triggering events: Your preschooler uncharacteristically freaking out two mornings in a row, an upcoming root canal appointment, or your presentation to senior management.

2. Make an action plan: Confer

with the preschool teacher. Alert the periodontist that you're fretful and take a friend along. Practice your presentation in front of the mirror. Practice reduces anxiety.

3. Anxiety either gets better or worse. Coping reduces it. Avoidance heightens it.

Tell us how you cope with anxiety with The Westfield Leader and Union County HAWK by writing Gratitude in the subject line and emailing: press@goleader.com or pattisteckler@gmail.com.

Gratefully Yours, Patti

The Student View

A collaboration with the Westfield High School Journalism Program

Gen Z Must Jump Into the Political Pool While They are Still Young

By Ryan J. Karlin For The Westfield Leader and Union County HAWK

"One in 10 think the Declaration of Independence freed slaves in the Confederate states and almost 1 in 5 believe the first 10 amendments of the U.S. Constitution are called the Declaration of Independence instead of the Bill of Rights," according to the American Bar Association. The political divide in this country has grown exponentially in the past decade, but something we can all agree on is that these statistics have to change.

When Americans do not understand the founding documents, rules and structures that make up the government, they easily fall victim to false information and trickery. We are seeing the number of misled voters expand greatly because of this. The most straightforward solution to this problem is educating Americans during their formative years, and the best way to do this is through real world experiences. This is why more teenage Americans need to get involved with political campaigns and governmental work. By doing this, young Americans will gain insight, education, and possibly insure the prosperity of the United States of America.

I say that experiencing the political world is the best way to learn about it, because I have done it myself. I first got involved in politics in 2021 when I became an intern for the Westfield Together slate of candidates. My duties on the campaign were simple. I went to events, helped out with whatever needed to be done, and learned a

whole lot along the way. Working on the campaign taught me a ton about the electoral process and the political world. These lessons will be with me for the rest of my life as I become a voting citizen in just a few months. I would never have learned them if I didn't get involved as a young adult.

According to an NPR/Ipsos poll, 64 percent of Americans believe that democracy in the United States is "in crisis and at risk of failing." The numbers do not lie, Americans are losing faith in democracy.

This is certainly a problem. The U.S. has always been a great experiment, one that only succeeds with the faith of the people behind it. I understand losing faith in democracy these days, especially when some politicians are doing things that are plainly undemocratic. But, if you have an issue with the way things are going, go do something about it. If you don't like the way the mayor of your town is handling an issue, go support the opposition. If you want your district to be represented in Congress by someone that aligns with your beliefs, volunteer on a campaign and spread the word.

I believe the best way to put America back on track is to get the average American involved. If more high school and college-aged Americans entered the political world, they would be more educated, experienced and informed.

I volunteered on a campaign, and I will be a better voter because of it. If you get involved too, our nation could continue to improve for generations to come.

Clearing Up the Confusion About Cannabis In Scotch Plains

By FRED T. ROSSI For The Westfield Leader and Union County HAWK

SCOTCH PLAINS — The biggest misconception about the process for opening cannabis dispensaries in town, says township redevelopment director Thomas Strowe, "is that some people think the township council has authorized permits for recreational cannabis operations to open" in Scotch Plains.

Two years ago, state voters overwhelmingly approved an amendment to the state constitution legalizing the use, sale and manufacture of cannabis for recreational purposes. Statewide, 67 percent of voters supported the legalization question, and in Scotch Plains, the margin was even higher — 70 percent to 30 percent. Municipalities were then given until August 2021 to decide whether to allow the sale and manufacture of cannabis within their borders. In May 2021, the township council unanimously approved an ordinance to permit the sale of cannabis products in Scotch Plains. At the public hearing, no residents spoke in opposition to the ordinance.

Initially, sales were going to be allowed along the two-mile stretch of Route 22 and in the M-1 and M-2 zones, primarily located along a stretch of Plainfield Avenue and Jerusalem Road. But the governing body this past summer modified the ordinance to restrict all cannabis-oriented businesses to only Route 22.

Over the past year, there has been a steady drumbeat of misleading information — on social media, at council meetings and in letters to the newspaper — about cannabis sales in town and the local government's role in the process.

The township council, contrary to what some have been claiming, has not given its approval for any licenses for cannabis operations in Scotch Plains. The state Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC) is the state agency that approves the issuance of operating licenses, and so far, no licenses for Scotch Plains have been issued. All that the council has done, Mr. Strowe told Union County HAWK, "is confirm for the state through resolution that potential cannabis operators are proposing to operate in the correct B-3 zone. It's up to the state to issue a license," he continued. "We have no control over that."

Seven applications are pending at the CRC for potential sites along both eastbound and westbound Route 22, although, as Mayor Joshua Losardo said during the summer, it is "very unlikely" that the agency will issue operating licenses to every applicant who is eligible, a concern that has been raised by some residents fearful of Scotch Plains turning into what they have dubbed "Pot Plains." Mr. Strowe also has noted that the CRC has divided the state into three separate regions — north, south and central — in order to avoid having one region monopolize all the licenses. While it is possible that more than one license could be issued to Scotch

Plains, he echoed the mayor in saying that it is "unlikely" that all applicants would be successful. All applicants seeking to open a facility in Scotch Plains have appeared before the council this year to explain where and how their business would operate, including providing details about hours of operation, security, parking, building renovations and the applicants' own backgrounds. The council has then passed identically-worded resolutions that "formally memorialize [its] support for" the applicants' "pending application to the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission." Those resolutions are not in any way an approval for an actual operating license. But getting the formal backing of the local government for an application is a required component of the application process, Mr. Strowe told HAWK, so the CRC can see that the town has actually opted in for sales and that the proposed facility will be located in the proper zone as set out by the local government.

And once a license is granted by the CRC, the actual opening of a dispensary can take additional time as financing and permits are secured and local land-use boards consider site plans, etc. Further, when any facility does open for business, the township will collect 2 percent of the sales proceeds from any dispensary that opens in Scotch Plains.

Some concerns have been aired by residents about the potential sites themselves, but each applicant has told the council that on-site security will be a priority. No one under 21 will be permitted to enter any facility and — unlike bars — no on-site consumption, either inside or in the parking lot, will be allowed. Nearby dispensaries in Maplewood and Union are run efficiently and professionally; the atmosphere inside more resembles a quiet, low-key retailer than anything else and the clientele ranges from grandmotherly-like senior citizens to white-collar professionals to blue-collar workers.

Homeowners living near potential sites along Route 22 have wondered how their properties and neighborhoods may be affected, but the dispensary on Springfield Avenue in Maplewood is adjacent to a residential neighborhood, with no problems having been reported since it opened. And in Scotch Plains, there are several bars, restaurants and social clubs located in or next to residential neighborhoods, including Stage House Tavern, the Italian-American Club and the American Legion. People consume alcohol at these types of businesses and then typically drive themselves home, while customers at cannabis dispensaries make their purchases and then drive home to consume cannabis products.

There is no indication as to when the CRC may act upon the pending applications to open facilities in Scotch Plains. So far, the agency has granted just 19 dispensary licenses statewide.

About That Tree

You may have noticed the many new trees that have been planted along several streets in Westfield. These are called "Street Trees," and they are beautifying our town. Street Trees are free to you, paid for by the town. They are either deciduous shade trees or ornamental trees that are planted on town property in the "right of way." The actual type of tree planted for you will be decided by you in conjunction with the

town. These trees add beauty to any neighborhood, and help us maintain a healthy ratio of new trees to offset the ones that must be removed due to disease and construction.

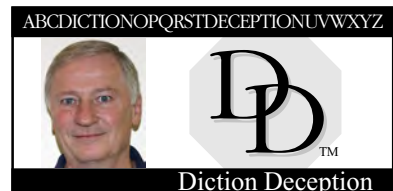
Street Trees are available to Westfield residents simply by submitting a request. Requests will be filled on a first come, first serve basis. The town is now collecting requests for 2023. Residents of Westfield can request Street Trees by emailing Greg O'Neil, Director of Public Works, at goneil@westfieldnj.gov.

Tree Preservation Commission of Westfield

Share Your Upcoming Event in the Leader/HAWK Community Calendar

goleader.com/calendar uchawk.com/calendar

Candidate Statements Welcome Candidates for elected office are invited to submit op-ed columns each week. Columns should be between 250 and 500 words, and be issue based with no personal attacks on opponents.



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions — only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly — good guess. If you get two — well-read individual. If you get three — word expert. If you get all four — You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.

Answers to last week's arcane words.

- 1. Puceron — Plant louse
2. Jugal — The cheekbone
3. Puerilism — Childishness
4. Jorum — A large bowl or vessel for drinking

- 1. To crumble; scatter
2. To entrap or ensnare
3. To wobble or walk in a swaying manner
4. To laugh loudly or too much

- 1. New Year's Eve
2. An effort or endeavor
3. A harem slave
4. A heated debate or dispute

- 1. A battle ax
2. A tanner of pelts or animal skins
3. A large drinking goblet or bowl
4. Spanish strap with which a saddle girth is adjusted

- 1. Concise; brief; to the point
2. Coolness; freshness
3. A sermonizer; preacher
4. Savageness of manner; fierceness

Policy on Political Endorsements

We publish letters to the editor in the printed newspaper on issues of importance to our readers at the discretion of the editors.

Those who would like their political endorsements published in the printed newspaper can do so by using the paid service at www.goleader.com/advertorial.

Candidates for elected office are invited to submit op-ed columns for the printed newspaper each week at no charge. Columns should be between 250 and 500 words, and be issue based with no personal attacks on opponents. Columns should be emailed to editor@goleader.com by Monday at 9 a.m. for print in Thursday's newspaper.

Letters to the Editor

Local Mayor Seeks Support for Consumer Protection Bills

Rep. Frank Pallone (NJ-06) has been a vocal advocate for consumer protection, recently assisting in the passage of six bipartisan bills that will help keep us safe, strengthen our economy, and protect the data privacy and security of all Americans.

That is why I am asking Rep. Pallone to continue championing the interest of New Jersey's customers and small businesses alike by prioritizing the passage of H.R. 5502 - the Integrity, Notification, and Fairness in Online Retail Marketplaces (INFORM) for Consumers Act.

This bipartisan piece of legislation would curb the proliferation of stolen goods online by prioritizing increased transparency and the protection of consumers, while also creating a uniform selling standard that would allow small online retailers to run their businesses without facing unfair and burdensome obstacles fostered by the percolating patchwork of state-by-state regulations.

While inflation remains at a record high, members of Congress should take any opportunity to prevent more burdensome red tape from constraining small businesses. Rep. Pallone, please don't let H.R. 5502 fall through the cracks.

Mayor Joseph Signorello III Roselle Park

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Table with 3 columns: State LD-21, State LD-22, 7th Congressional District, 12th Congressional District. Lists representatives and their contact information.

