



Montclair Local Pet of the Week: Diamond



Diamond

Courtesy Pound Animal Welfare Society of Montclair, Inc.

Diamond was surrendered to an inner city shelter, for no apparent reason other than maybe her age because she was too old to bear puppies anymore and the shelter believes she was used for breeding. She is an active 10-year-old Staffie, but she does love to relax with her people as well. She is said to be great with children.

Diamond would probably do best as an only dog in the home, but she has walked well in pack walks with other dogs. She has been spayed and fully vetted.

If interested fill out an application on the PAWS Montclair website at pawsmontclair.org (go to 'our dogs'). Private appointments can be arranged. For additional information, email info@pawsmontclair.org.



Obituary: Carolyn Burdge



Carolyn Burdge

Carolyn Burdge, 73, died on Sept. 18, 2019.

Ms. Burdge was born in Neptune in June of 1946. She was a longstanding animal activist who worked closely with the Montclair Township Animal Shelter and other various rescues to feed and re-home Montclair's local cats and dogs. Her dedication was recognized locally by the shelters that she worked with.

Ms. Burdge is survived by her daughter, Jacqueline Dubesky, and her two grandchildren, Ocival (Pele) Marques, and Ozana Marques.

A memorial service was held on Saturday, Oct. 26, at the First Montclair House in Montclair.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that donations be made to the Montclair Township Animal Shelter, PAWS, the Purple Heart and Vietnam Veterans of America.



Letters to the editor, Oct. 31



Go to the polls

The League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area urges all registered voters to go to the polls on Tuesday, Nov. 5 to exercise their right to vote and have a say in America's future. Every vote counts, and our votes make a difference.

Voters can check their registration status, find the location and hours of their polling location, review the rules for registration and voting by mail, and link to other important election events by going to state.nj.us/state/elections/.

Voting brings us together as Americans. This election is about our jobs, our health, our communities, our security and our future. Take control and commit to vote on Nov. 5.

SUSAN MACK

Montclair

The writer is the voter registration chair of the League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area.

History Center thankful for successful home tour

The Montclair History Center thanks those who helped make our Harvest Home Tour on Oct. 5, 2019 a big success. It was a wonderful day to stroll through four centuries of diverse homes and historic properties.

First, we thank the private homeowners and The George for graciously allowing us to visit. Each stop was a delight. We are also grateful to the members of the recently formed Montclair Chapter of Questers (an international organization dedicated to the study, conservation and preservation of historical objects for the benefit of today and tomorrow), who enthusiastically spearheaded this event and worked hard on it from start to finish:

Cathy Peter, Marcella Perez, Joan Barrett, Suzanne Miller, Nancy Simonic, Wendy Grotyohann, and Daryn Sirota. We also thank the many, many volunteers at the houses.

Of course, nothing at the Montclair History Center happens without the creative energy of our dedicated and hard-working staff—led by Jane Eliasof, with Erin Benz, Susanne Costa, and Diane Israel—who never cease to amaze us.

To the Montclair History Center's tremendous volunteers...you are always there when we need you and we are so very grateful. The Montclair History Center also thanks the ticket-holders, who share our interest in Montclair's architecture, and the advertisers in the event booklet.

Fundraising initiatives like this are vital to a small non-profit like ours. On behalf of the entire Montclair History Center Board, thank you to all involved for the support, enthusiasm and participation that made the Harvest Home Tour 2019 a success. Looking forward to next year's tour.

ELIZABETH HYNES and HELEN FALLON

Montclair

Hynes is the president of the Montclair History Center Board of Trustees and Fallon is the vice president.

Urge representatives to act on Energy Innovation Act

As a member of the Citizens' Climate Lobby, I hereby urge people to phone or write to their representatives and urge them to co-sponsor HR 763, the Energy Innovation Act. It would place a tax on carbon use and sales and divide the proceeds equally among all U.S. adult citizens.

Then write or call Senators Bob Menendez and Cory Booker and ask them to introduce a similar bill in the senate. Their numbers are 202-224-4744 and 202-224-3224, respectively.

Climate change is a terrible threat to human life, within the lifetime of children alive today. As a gardener, I can already see significant effects.

Nov. 6 is the day CCL hopes the congressional lines will be flooded. Please write and/or call.

PAT KENSCHAFT

Montclair



Montclair Police Blotter, Oct. 31



ARRESTS

Thursday, Oct. 24—A 51-year-old Carlstadt woman was arrested on Grove Street and charged with driving while intoxicated.

Friday, Oct. 25—A 28-year-old Verona man was arrested on Valley Road and charged with driving while intoxicated.

Friday, Oct. 25—A 45-year-old Essex Fells woman was arrested on Myrtle Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated.

Saturday, Oct. 26—A 68-year-old Montclair man was arrested on Bloomfield Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated.

Saturday, Oct. 26—Jason Webber, 35, of Montclair was arrested and charged with shoplifting approximately \$65 of merchandise from CVS, 514 Bloomfield Ave.

Sunday, Oct. 27—A 30-year-old Bloomfield man was arrested on Bloomfield Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated.

Monday, Oct. 28—A 24-year-old Montclair woman was arrested on Grove Street and charged with driving while intoxicated.

BURGLARY/THEFT

Tuesday, Oct. 22—Police responded on a report of a man attempting to enter a Godfrey Road residence. The resident told police that she heard glass shatter, and when she ran to the kitchen, she saw a man wearing a black hooded sweatshirt, a black ski mask, black pants and black gloves, standing near the kitchen door which was partially ajar. She ran from the kitchen and called police. The suspect fled the scene prior to police arrival.

Tuesday, Oct. 22—A package containing an iPhone 6, valued at \$600, was stolen from outside a Claremont Avenue apartment sometime approximately two months ago.

Tuesday, Oct. 22—A Christopher Street resident seeing his vehicle interior light turn on and observing a male wearing gray sweatpants and a dark, hooded sweatshirt holding a flashlight and searching the interior of his vehicle. The vehicle had been left unlocked. The resident yelled at the suspect, who fled south on Christopher Street. Officers checked the area, but were unable to locate the suspect.

Wednesday, Oct. 23—An employee at 7-Eleven, 15 Bloomfield Ave., told police that a female stole approximately \$18 in merchandise. She and another male fled east on Bloomfield Avenue in a blue or black

Nissan Altima.

Wednesday, Oct. 23—A resident reported that an Apple MacBook, valued at \$300-\$500, was stolen from her vehicle sometime since mid-June. She believes that the vehicle was left unlocked prior to the theft.

Thursday, Oct. 24—Police responded to the QuickChek, 146 Valley Road, on a report of a shoplifting. An employee states that approximately \$8 in merchandise was taken by a female, 15-17 years old.

Thursday, Oct. 24—The man reported his cell phone, valued at \$200, was stolen from the counter of Amore Pizza by Jack Calandra, 322 Orange Road.

Friday, Oct. 25—An Orbea mountain bike, valued at \$1,500, was reported stolen. The bicycle had been locked to a bike rack on Maple Avenue prior to the theft.

Friday, Oct. 25—A neon green Specialized bike, valued at \$500, was reported stolen on Church Street. The bicycle had been locked to a bike rack prior to the theft.

Saturday, Oct. 26—Police responded to a Myrtle Avenue residence on a report of a burglary after a resident had been alerted remotely that someone had been ringing the doorbell to his residence. Video shows the suspect attempt to enter the residence and later leaving the house via the front door. The resident states that the suspect entered the residence through a window. It is unknown if anything was stolen. The suspect is described as a tall white male with short brown hair and a goatee, last seen wearing a dark gray hooded sweatshirt, dark blue jeans, gray sneakers with white soles, and a black backpack.

Sunday, Oct. 27—A man reported that someone entered his vehicle on Glenridge Parkway and rummaged through the glove compartment and center console. No items were reported missing. The vehicle may have been left unlocked prior to the incident.

Sunday, Oct. 27—An employee at Romany Liquor Shop, 227 Glenridge Ave., reported that a man stole two bottles of wine, valued at \$22 a piece.

Tuesday, Oct. 29—A BMW X3 was reported stolen from a driveway on Lansing Place.

SUSPICIOUS INCIDENT

Wednesday, Oct. 23—A Park Street resident reported that he witnessed a light-colored or silver SUV pull behind his neighbor's vehicle, and three males in their late teens/ early 20s exit the SUV, while one attempted to gain access to the neighbor's vehicle. When the resident asked the men what they were doing, they three quickly returned to their vehicle and fled south on Park Street. Nothing was reported missing. The vehicle was locked prior to the incident.

VANDALISM

Friday, Oct. 25—A Park Street resident reported seeing two individuals in his neighbor's yard along with fresh graffiti, consisting of illegible white writing, on the back wall of his neighbor's garage. The resident said individuals looked to be 14 to 15 years old.

The police blotter is provided to Montclair Local at the discretion of the Montclair Police Department, and may not reflect the complete scope of police activity. Any incidents described are merely allegations, and any persons mentioned in the blotter are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. The MPD encourages anyone who wishes to report criminal or suspicious activity, or who has information pertaining to an ongoing investigation, to call 973-744-1234. In an emergency, residents are urged to call 911.



Obituaries: Herman Eugene Kiefer III



Herman Eugene Kiefer III

Herman Eugene Kiefer III, 86, formerly of Montclair, died on March 13 2019, after a brave battle with pneumonia.

Mr. Kiefer was born in Glen Ridge in November 1932. He grew up in Ware Shoals, S.C. where he was given the nickname "Dixie" by family and friends. He graduated from Montclair High School in 1951.

As a young man, he enjoyed Boy Scout trips with his father, Herman Eugene Kiefer Jr., and listening to his mother Lois play the piano. Mr. Kiefer and his friends enjoyed childhood adventures on Turkey Creek.

In the summer, Mr. Kiefer would travel with his family to visit relatives in Maine. His first job was building a wooden trap and catching lobsters that he sold to tourists.

At age 14, he traveled alone to Atlanta to take an examination for his ham radio operator's license. He returned home and built his own ham radio, then constructed his own radio antennae on the roof of his parent's house. He studied Latin and Spanish in high school, and practiced his language skills on the radio. Mr. Kiefer contacted ham radio operators in more than 100 countries, and earned a pair of certificates from the Incorporated Radio Society of Great Britain.

Mr. Kiefer attended Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa. As a third generation Lehigh student, he was a member of the Tau Beta Pi engineering honor society. He participated in the Reserve Officers Training Corps, and was a member of the Pershing Rifles drill team, as well as the Arnold Air Society.

A brother of Delta Phi, he was elected president of his fraternity during his senior year. He graduated with honors, earning a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1955.

Mr. Kiefer received commission as a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force and began active duty in March 1956. He served numerous assignments around the United States and across the globe.

As a C-130 navigator with Military Air Transport Service at Evreux Air Base in France, he flew Cold-War missions through Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

In 1967, Mr. Kiefer volunteered for combat in Southeast Asia. He served with the 606th Air Commando Squadron at Nakhon Phanom Air Base in Thailand, flying the A-26 Invader on night bombing missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

He completed his combat tour, returned stateside and purchased a 1967 Ford Mustang. During this time, Mr. Kiefer also became a member in good standing of the International Association of Turtles, and he carried several membership keys to Playboy Clubs across the United States.

In early 1970, he returned to Southeast Asia as a Weapons System Officer ("Guy in Back") of the F-4 Phantom, serving with the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing. On 20 January 1971, Gene's aircraft caught fire after takeoff from Da Nang Air Base. "We headed toward the water, de-armed and released the ordinance and then ejected," Mr. Kiefer said during a 1971 interview carried by the United Press International, Saigon. Mr. Kiefer and his frontseater, Cptn. David Warner, both parachuted into the South China Sea, and were rescued by helicopter. Mr. Kiefer safely completed his combat tour in 1972. He flew 701 combat missions in North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. "I've done an important job here which has been exciting and has given me a sense of accomplishment," he told The Air Force Times in a 1972 interview. "I'm going to miss all my friends, because this has been a tour I won't ever forget. Another thing I won't forget are my buddies who are prisoners of war in North Vietnam and those good friends of mine who are missing in action."

In the mid 1970s Mr. Kiefer served with the 10th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Hahn Air Base in Germany, where he met his wife of 43 years, Maria.

In the late 1970s, he brought his wife to the United States where they soon welcomed their daughter, Katrin, at Langley Air Force Base.

Later, he was stationed at Rhein Main Air Base in Germany during the early 1980s when his son Rupert was born.

His final duty assignment was as Squadron Commander with the 4th Combat Support Group at Seymour-Johnson Air Force Base in N.C. He retired from active duty in March 1984, as a lieutenant colonel. He spent 28 years in uniform, half of which were served abroad. He spent 14 years and one month overseas, including a temporary duty assignment at Thule Air Base in Greenland, located 750 miles north of the Arctic Circle.

Mr. Kiefer logged 6,067.7 hours of flying time in military aircraft, including the C-130, C-131, C-135, A-26, and F-4.

His military decorations included the Distinguished Flying Cross with Six Oak Leaf Clusters, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with Forty-Three Oak Leaf Clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal with Two Oak Leaf Clusters, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Six Oak Leaf Clusters and Combat "V", Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with One Oak Leaf Cluster, Vietnam Service Ribbon with Nine Bronze Stars, Air Force Overseas Ribbon, and the Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon.

Following his Air Force Career, Mr. Kiefer moved his family to Southern California's Antelope Valley. He worked for Rockwell International from 1985 through 1990 as a civilian engineer on the B-1B Lancer. As a member of the Checkout and Acceptance Department, he worked on each of the 100 of the B-1B's that were built in Palmdale.

In his retirement, he enjoyed spending time with his family, watching the Atlanta Braves play baseball on television, drinking India Pale Ale, quality time with his beloved cats, and driving his Audi roadster with the top down and the wind blowing through his silver hair.

He loved to travel. The Taj Mahal, Iguazu Falls in South America, and the 1958 World's Fair in Belgium were just a few of his many stops. In 2012, he joined the Seven Continents Club when he sailed to Antarctica as a passenger on board the expedition ship "Polar Pioneer."

He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.



Religion Spotlight: Music to the soul — Jazz at Union Congregational Church



UCC music director Eric Olsen on piano, Rob Middleton on saxophone, Ratzon Harris on bass and Tim Horner on drums. COURTESY ERIC OLSEN

By DEBORAH ANN TRIPOLDI

tripoldi@montclairlocal.news

The “Houses of Worship” series spotlights local religious organizations. General information about the church is below. If you have religion news you think we should spotlight, please send to religion@montclairlocal.news and culture@montclairlocal.news.

A jazz concert and a church service all before noon sounds almost impossible and more than a full Sunday morning. However, Union Congregational Church does just that once a month.

It has its own quartet, a four-member band of professionals that perform jazz for the congregation once a month on Sunday mornings during the worship service.



Eric Olsen

The idea started five years ago when congregant David Jovard asked the church to do a jazz service after seeing Montclair's Jazz Festival, said UCC music director Eric Olsen. Olsen said Jovard enjoyed it so much he felt it fitting for the congregation.

The Rev. David Shaw joined UCC as senior minister in 2015, so the jazz services preceded him. "The jazz services add energy, a different energy; vibrancy to the service," he said. "It's uplifting and high energy. People look forward to those services."

The quartet is composed of Eric Olsen on piano, Rob Middleton on saxophone, Ratzon Harris on bass and Tim Horner on drums.

Olsen said the church tried to do jazz services about 10 years ago but the timing wasn't right. Jazz was at every service and it didn't resonate with the congregation; members told him they wanted the traditional music. Now, holding the services once a month seems to please all. The congregation participates in the music on Sundays. "Some want to hear the traditional music. [...] Some people come just because of the jazz service," Olsen said.

Olsen and Middleton write or create the arrangements of the music, giving it a jazz spin. "We are very lucky to have a great group working here. If someone wants to hear a hymn in a jazz style we will do it. Jazz services are a lot of fun for everybody, and the musicians included," said Olsen.

One song for example the band performed with a jazz beat is the popular hymnal "Morning Has Broken." According to Olsen, Shaw collaborates with the band on music ideas, but Shaw said, "I let Eric handle all that."

Songs are usually based on the Sunday's theme. For example, the church's theme for this year is being neighborly, and they have been performing Fred Rogers' song "Won't You Be My Neighbor."

Shaw said the music sometimes takes a different spin when the band improvises. "Because of improvisation of

the music, some pieces can last a little longer for contemplation. It serves as a reminder that jazz music can take different turns, just like life's unpredictability.

"Things can take a left turn and they can be beautiful and jazz is kind of like that," he said.

The church also has an orchestra, Ensemble Union Orchestral, with members of the jazz band, Middleton and Olsen, and members of the congregation, including some as young as the fourth grade.

"Jazz is impromptu perception, the place where the spirit goes into you as you are doing improvisation," Olsen said.



Union Congregational Church

UCC Jazz services

Sundays at 10 a.m.

Union Congregational Church

176 Cooper Ave.

Unioncong.org

973-744-7424

Oct. 27; Nov. 17; Dec. 22; Jan. 19; Feb. 23; March 29; April 26; May 24

June 21 — Music Sunday, corresponds with Montclair Makes Music.

Saturday, Feb. 29 at 7:30 p.m.: Union Jazz Band Concert with Eric Olsen, Rob Middleton, Ranzo Harris, and Tim Horner.



Montclair Local Pet of the Week: Chico



Chico

Courtesy Montclair Township Animal Shelter

Chico is ready for his forever family. The shelter is no place for this sweet little guy. He's 5-years-old, but acts like a puppy. Come meet Chico.

The Montclair Township Animal Shelter, 77 North Willow St., is open daily from noon to 4 p.m. For information, call 973-744-8600.



Montclair Police Blotter, Oct. 24



ARRESTS

Friday, Oct. 18—A 47-year-old Woodbridge woman was arrested on Bloomfield Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated.

Saturday, Oct. 19—A 63-year-old Montclair man was arrested on Bloomfield Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated.

Sunday, Oct. 20—A 23-year-old Elmwood Park woman was arrested on Bloomfield Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated.

Sunday, Oct. 20—A 24-year-old East Orange man was arrested on North Willow Street and charged with criminal trespass after police responded to a report of a person in a vacant residence.

BURGLARY/THEFT

Thursday, Oct. 17—Approximately \$200 in merchandise was stolen from a delivered package left in the lobby of a Bloomfield Avenue apartment.

Saturday, Oct. 19—A white Ford 250 van was stolen sometime between 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 18 and 5:30 a.m. on Oct. 19 at Lackawanna Plaza.

Saturday, Oct. 19—A victim reported he dropped his wallet on South Park Street and later learned an unidentified male attempted to use his card to make a purchase at CVS, 514 Bloomfield Ave.

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Letters to the editor, Oct. 24



Reasons to protest

I am not a demonstrator. And when I do protest, my full presence is often interrupted by self-consciousness: sometimes it's ambivalence about the cause, or a questioning of the effectiveness of demonstrating. So let's just say I was more than a bit surprised that as a consequence of the force of my clap (read: big hands = loud) and the volume of my chant (you don't have to say it: loud talker) I came to observe myself leading, sans

megaphone, an emboldened call and response chant from the back of the fray just a few weeks ago on Broad Street in Newark.

I feel an urgency to reflect publicly on this experience, to write a protest editorial for protestors like me; we who protest sporadically or half-heartedly or not at all. I want to write a love letter to those of us who rarely demonstrate but feel the protest in our hearts when we breathe in the reality of this exquisitely fouled up version of America and don't know what to do about it. This is me. This is us. I've gleaned something from this most recent experience that I've gleaned before and then forgot, and I'm pretty sure it had been revealed to me a dozen times prior as well. It's worth sharing the good news: it is not and should not be our responsibility alone to solve the world's problems and yet, the solutions to the world's problems are contingent on our showing up to call them out and to bear witness to suffering.

The demonstration happened on Oct. 3, a rainy Thursday afternoon. We assembled to speak against the human rights abuses of our government against immigrants and the blood money collected in Essex County for housing detainees in our jail. We were cold, it was damp. We formed a human chain and stopped traffic on Broad Street in Newark at rush hour. Some were arrested.

Protesting is awkward. I can name a thousand reasons, or maybe 14, why you would be inclined not to do it. Reason No. 3 is that you don't have one one-hundredth the experience of an actual immigrant fighting discrimination or deportation and yet you need to stand next to this person and find something to chat about between rallying cries. Reason No. 12 is that the neo-nazis with bandanas over their faces might kick your ass on your way back to the car. I'm not proud of the awkwardness and I consider myself fortunate to be able to embrace the fact that the awkwardness itself is an implicit acknowledgement of extreme privilege. I'm white and rich. The last thing that made me want to write congress was the cost of my health insurance premium. My back ain't exactly up against the wall.

So sure, it's awkward. And that's also reason No. 416 to do it. In the awkwardness lies the truth if we're brave enough to face it. Mine is that I'm basically a shy privileged white man who has nothing in common with the person who cleans the halls of my kid's school or mows my neighbor's lawn but feels compelled to say something about the debasement of this person and their family. To feel it and not act when an opportunity presents is a failure of democracy. You don't need to find your voice as a protestor before you go to the demonstration. You find your voice as a protestor at the demonstration. And if you don't, you can still bear witness and stand with the person whose back really is up against a wall.

This is not the advice of someone who learned the lesson, this is coming from a person who needs to relearn the lesson each day. People of conscience let's be seekers together. Let's bear witness to suffering and use our voices together. Let's pray more with our feet.

DAVID GAYNES

Montclair

In solidarity with Shant'a

Last week I was waiting my turn at the hair salon, scrolling my Facebook while I found a post on a page I am part of called Conversations on Race-Montclair. Someone posted a Facebook Live video that Shant'a Tia Sawyer had posted on Oct. 8 after leaving the Montclair YMCA, where she and her family are members.

As I was listening to her, I started feeling agitated and enraged. She was describing an incident of "microaggression" as Shant'a called it or plain racism that African Americans suffer on a daily basis. The (white) woman asked her "Do you live around here?" When Shant'a said that she lives in Newark, the woman started inquiring about how long it takes her to get here, and kept making comments about how far it is and even dared to ask her if there is no YMCA in Newark. Shant'a said in her video that there were around 10 adults with their children in the room and that everybody might have been able to listen to this conversation. Although two people said the words "I am sorry," and another person shook his head in solidarity, no one really tried to stop the white woman from continuing her racist comments. We really need more than sympathetic looks and "I am sorry" at this point if we want to eradicate this type of behavior in our communities. White people need to intervene and stop this type of behavior in its tracks.

Therefore, I propose that the YMCA — which was not responsible for the white woman's behavior but the incident happened in its facility — organize a restorative justice session, where Shant'a, the white woman, people who were that day in the corridor, Y authorities and professionals who know how to conduct this type of events, give all the opportunity to talk, express their feelings, and explain the pain caused by the woman's words, to make this woman accountable.

White people need to intervene in any way possible. It is a problem that we are all responsible to fix.

Shant'a you are welcome in Montclair. Please come back.

MARIA EVA DORIGO

Montclair

Response to letter on Mount Carmel Church

I am writing in response to Tom Russo's letter in the Oct.17 Montclair Local.

For the record, the Rev. Benny Prado never advised parishioners to "boycott" the tricky tray fundraiser.

This is exactly what he posted in the bulletin: "We appreciate and are grateful for all community contributions to support St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish. However it is important to note that the tricky tray event for Nov. 3 sponsored by Religion and More, Inc. and the Community Outreach Program, which is promoted as a fundraiser for Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, is not sponsored or authorized by our parish and therefore, we cannot ensure where donations are contributed. If you have any questions, please contact the office."

CATHERINE MULROE

Montclair

Turtle Back Zoo thrives with new amphitheater

It has been almost 25 years since a large crowd of children, parents and teachers gathered in the parking lot at Essex County Turtle Back Zoo to save this treasure from being closed. Today, Turtle Back is a thriving, dynamic destination where our 900,000 visitors annually see endangered species and learn about conservation and the importance of animals.

When I was serving as freeholder president, the blue ribbon panel I commissioned to study the zoo recognized its potential as an educational and recreational facility and recommended it be kept open. Since I became Essex County executive in 2003, one of my initiatives has been to transform Turtle Back into a first-class facility. During the last 17 years, we have modernized the infrastructure, created new natural habitat themed animal exhibits and introduced amenities to enhance our visitors' experience.

Our latest project is to create a new amphitheater for educational programs. Our current amphitheater is not conducive to this type of activity and does not have space where animals can be kept before the presentations begin. Therefore, we rely on the four classrooms in our Education Building to present these enrichment programs, which is hardly adequate space to meet our daily needs.

On an average day, we welcome about 2,200 children from various schools and recreation programs, but only have space to provide just 150 students with the opportunity to participate in an enrichment program. In the past, groups that came to the zoo passively learned about the importance of each animal by strolling along the paths, watching the animals and reading the signs. Now there is greater demand for an interactive experience. The planned 500-seat addition will provide the opportunity to significantly increase the audience we currently reach with our educational programming and help satisfy requirements of the three nationally recognized organizations that accredit the zoo.

Like many of our projects, the amphitheater is being partially funded with a grant, this one a special appropriation from the state. Relying on grants, NJ Green Acres funding, corporate and philanthropic contributions, Zoological Society of NJ support and individual donations have enabled us to invest over \$75 million of improvements at Turtle Back Zoo without placing a large burden on our taxpayers. In fact, the zoo is unique in that it has been a self-sufficient facility for the last decade, meaning the revenue collected from admissions covers operating costs. This fiscal success contributed to Essex County earning its first-ever AAA bond rating, the highest rating available and the gold standard for financial stability and strength.

There have been concerns about the impact the amphitheater will have on the environment. Since 2003, as the zoo has expanded from 30 to 40 acres, we have followed the stringent guidelines set by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and the NJ Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act to address runoff and erosion. The retention basins and modern drainage systems we have installed when making improvements help reduce run off and address long-standing flooding issues that existed in South Mountain Reservation long before Turtle Back opened 56 years ago.

In addition, we are estimating that about one acre of land from South Mountain Reservation will be needed for the amphitheater, which is just a small piece when considering the reservation encompasses over 2,200 acres. I am a great proponent of open space preservation: We have increased the number of open spaces in the Essex County Parks System from 17 to 23, planted 20,000 new trees throughout Essex County and preserved over 500 acres in our densely populated county, including adding 55 acres to South Mountain. I believe enhancing our educational component is a reasonable use for the land.

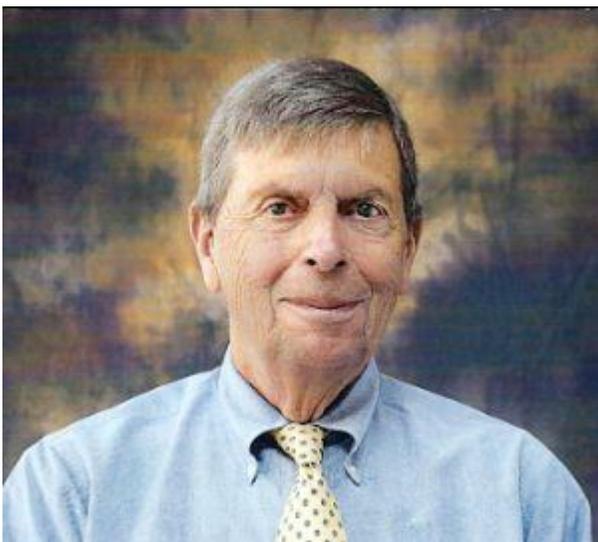
The amphitheater isn't designed to attract more visitors, just to enhance services to those we currently welcome. In addition, a 500-car deck (our third parking facility) opening in December will provide more on-site parking and reduce the number of vehicles parking on Cherry Lane. As I promised, an updated Turtle Back Zoo Master Plan will be completed by year's end.

We have created something special in which all residents of Essex County should take great pride. Along with Turtle Back Zoo, we created the South Mountain Recreation Complex where residents enjoy the walking path around the Orange Reservoir, picnic pavilion, paddle boating and playground. I want Turtle Back Zoo to continue to thrive and, along with the complex, be an attraction that promotes economic development, invigorates the local economy and encourages Essex residents to spend their money where they live. Just like 25 years ago, let's rally in support of Turtle Back Zoo so people of all ages can continue to experience the wonders of the wild, gain an appreciation for animals and become the next generation of environmental stewards.

JOSEPH N. DIVINCENZO JR.

Roseland

The author is the county executive for Essex County.



Obituary: James Clark Lawless



James Clark Lawless

James Clark Lawless, 81, formerly of Mount Lebanon, Pa., died on Oct. 8, 2019. Mr. Lawless had recently been diagnosed with cancer. His children, Mark and Jody, and other family members had been by his side during his illness.

Born on Dec. 18, 1937, he was the only son of James and Marian Lawless of Montclair. He played basketball at Montclair High School.

After graduation from Montclair High and Bucknell University, he moved to Mount Lebanon, where he began his sales career in the insurance industry.

Mr. Lawless worked in a senior executive position at Lincoln National Life and later as a senior group sales executive at Coordinated Benefits in Bridgeville.

He was active as an adult leader in what was then known as the YMCA Indian Guides, as well as the Cub Scouts and Bower Hill Community Church. In more recent years, he treasured his summer beach vacations with friends and family and playing endless matches of tennis year-round on the Mount Lebanon courts.

He was predeceased by his wife, Judith (Judy) Kiesler, and his parents.

Mr. Lawless is survived by his daughter Jody Adams and her husband Frank, of New York, N.Y.; his son, Mark Lawless and his wife Trisha, of Mars, Pa.; and five grandchildren Kathryne Adams, Nicole Adams, Trevor Adams, Ashley Lawless, and Kaitlyn Lawless.

A celebration of life will be held at 3 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 9, at the Bower Hill Community Church in Mount Lebanon, Pa.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Good Samaritan Hospice via Concordia Lutheran Ministries, 134 Marwood Rd Cabot, P.A. 16023, or by email at giving@concordialm.org.

Arrangements entrusted to William Slater II Funeral Service. Condolences may be left at slaterfuneral.com.