

# Watchung Post

Watchung's Hometown Newspaper

NJ

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ISSUE 14 • NOVEMBER 2013

## WATCHUNG - WARREN ROTARY CLUB

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## WATCHUNG HILLS ALUMNI IN MILITARY SERVICE HONORED

By Eleanor Mathews

A first-ever assembly to honor the Watchung Hills Regional High School alumni who have served, or are serving, in the United States Armed Forces took place on the afternoon of October 29. The Performing Arts Center was the setting for a program that was uplifting, dignified and informative for the community adults whose young people are, or were, enrolled in the armed forces, and for the Class of 2014, for whom service to the nation may one day be an option.

Principal George Alexis opened the dedication ceremony with words of welcome and made known that 130 names of graduates in the armed forces had already been submitted for inclusion on the armed services honor roll. (Names of alumni who are presently serving, or who have served, are still being sought, and can be submitted to Vice Principal Terence MacConnell.) All such names will be transcribed into a commemorative book to be kept in an accessible location in the Main Office.

The spirit of patriotism was very dominant as the Color Guard of the Warren Township Police Department posted the colors, following which, the Watchung Hills Regional High School Band, under the baton of David Udell, performed "Armed Forces on Parade," a musical snapshot highlighting the themes of the nation's armed services.

A name and face familiar to the Hills community, Bill Apgar, gave the invocation. Now Colonel (retired) William Apgar Jr., not only is an alumnus of the Class of 1962, but also served as chairperson of the Watchung Hills Regional Board of Education, and in many other capacities in the service of Warren Township. Berlin, Cuba, Vietnam, Iraq, the War on Terror worldwide—all since 1957, and within the school's history—Apgar cited the dedication of the men and women who have served the nation and admonished, "Keep them close to your heart. Eternally memorialize their efforts," he urged his audience.

Elizabeth Jewett, Hills Superintendent, commended those who had been so unselfish, having given of their time, and some, of their very lives. She introduced the guest speaker, Colonel Daniel Mahon, who serves as Director of Logistics, New Jersey Army National Guard.

In his 42 years of service, Col. Mahon, a Warren Township resident and father of two Hills students, has had ample opportunity to observe the wide parameters of volunteerism. He said, "Making a difference is not always a grandiose effort but can be as simple as volunteering for humble tasks—at home, in the neighborhood, for service organizations. (The V.A. Hospital in nearby Lyons, is a good example.) A short film indicated some of the tasks high school youth could perform.

The finale of the program was the unveiling of a plaque by Principal Alexis and Superintendent Jewett. Quietly sitting in the front row of the auditorium were three Watchung women, through whose efforts, to a large extent, the tribute to the school's service men and women was initiated. They wished to have no special recognition or credits in the



Photo Credit: Eleanor Mathews

(above, l-r) Watchung residents, Bonnie Plotkin, Ronnie Liebowitz and Gail Tafaro, mothers of graduates who have served, or are serving in the U.S. military.

program, but it was due to their inspiration and persistence that the event took shape. All Watchung residents, they are: Bonnie Plotkin, Ronnie Liebowitz and Gail Tafaro. All three have sons who serve, or have served, in the Armed Forces.

Alex Plotkin, Class of 2004, has served with the U.S. Army in Hawaii, North Carolina and Iraq. He is awaiting a promotion from his present rank of 1st Lieutenant and a transfer to the Engineering & Civil Affairs Division. A graduate of Lehigh University, he was a member of the ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) there.

Aaron Raymar, son of Mrs. Ronnie Liebowitz, who was also a member of Lehigh University's ROTC, Class of 2004, served in the military (including Iraq) for 4 ½ years upon graduation and is now in the legal profession.

Christopher Tafaro, who graduated with the Class of 2000 from Virginia Tech, served in the rank of Captain in the Marine Corps.

At the request of the "founding mothers," the senior class had been invited to attend the ceremony with the hope that some students might be inspired to serve country and community upon graduation.



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## GREAT FAMILY FUN AT HARVEST FESTIVAL

On Saturday, Oct. 26th, the Watchung Recreation Commission held its annual Harvest Festival at Mobus Field - family fun event!

There were fall games, treats, prizes, train rides, pumpkin painting, giant inflatable slides, a petting zoo, a haystack for climbing and music all afternoon. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held for the rededication of the newly renovated Mobus Field Tennis Courts to honor the late Mayor Jerry Mobus. This event was Linda Monetti's first as the newly appointed Recreation Coordinator.



(above, l-r) Linda Monetti, Recreation Coordinator and Mayor Stephen Pote.



(left) Councilman Rob Gibbs and his children



(above, l-r)  
 Deidre Seidel  
 with Ava,  
 Karen Hennelly  
 holding Jack  
 (Watchung).

Photo Credit:  
 Joe Higgins

## TRUNK OR TREAT AT WILSON MEMORIAL CHURCH

More than 80 children from Watchung and neighboring communities enjoyed the opportunity to get a head start on Halloween, as Wilson Memorial hosted its "Second Annual Trunk or Treat" on Sunday, October 27. Although last year's event was cancelled due to Superstorm Sandy, the weather was clear and warm for this year's exciting pre-Halloween festivities, which Michael Droege, Wilson's Youth and Family Director, pronounced "A raging success!"

Droege, dressed for the occasion as "Toy Story" cowboy, Woody, directed sixteen decorated cars to their parking spaces along the church's driveway and parking lot. A steady stream of kids traveled safely from trunk to trunk, collecting Halloween candy and other

goodies. Decorated vehicles ranged from funny to frightening, with giant spiders, pop-up ghosts, witches and wizards, a toothy tongue wagging van and the "Rockin' Rev's Chapel," designed by Barbara Peters, Wilson's pastor. The kids' costumes were equally varied with several princesses, two or three soldiers, Batman, Spiderman, Calvin (with Hobbes) and Elvis all in attendance.

Trophies were given to each family whose children had helped decorate their vehicle, and a panel of "Mystery Judges" selected first and second prize winners. First place went to Arlene and Roger Seidel, whose van was trapped in a giant spider web and enshrouded in fog. Frank and Jesey Newman's Haunted House took second place.

## PROMOTE YOUR COMMUNITY EVENT

Community service organizations and sports teams are encouraged to submit news of upcoming events or highlights and photos on recent events.

Organizations who are interested in submitting content can email Lynn Sjurset at [lynn@rennamedia.com](mailto:lynn@rennamedia.com).



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## ARROW OF LIGHT SCOUTS PLANT TREES AT WATCHUNG RESERVATION

## CHEERING AT CITI FIELD

On September 28, 2013 the Watchung Hills Junior Warriors Junior Varsity and Varsity Cheer squads performed on Citi Field with the NY JETS Flight Crew in the second annual Cheer and Dance Day. The girls worked hard on learning the routine a month prior to the event and were able to meet and practice with a few of the JETS cheerleaders.



(above, l-r) Varsity Captains Marisa Nicastro, Natalie Kuijlaars, Sara Schultz enjoying the game.



(above) Arrow of Light Scouts from Watchung Pack 32 spent the morning on November 2nd with volunteers and staff of the Watchung Reservation planting new trees along the hiking trails.

## GIRL SCOUTS HELP WITH CLEAN UP

On October 7, 2013, a violent storm ripped through The Raptor Trust compound in Millington that left a trail of damage in its path, smashing rehabilitation cages and breaking large trees in half. Watchung Girl Scouts Cadette Troop 65624 offered their assistance to help. The girl scouts, along with their troop leaders, Carolyn Solon, Lane Solon and Diana Churchill, spent several hours raking leaves and helped to clean up the grounds. The Raptor Trust is a nationally recognized leader in wild bird rehabilitation and the conservation of birds of prey. By the end of 2013, the Trust will have cared for 88,000 injured and orphaned birds of over 130 different species. Working along with Ben Montgomery, Property Manager/Educator of the Raptor Trust, the troop was given an opportunity to learn about Raptors and to observe, Sylvie, a Saw-Whet Owl.

The Raptor Trust, 1390 White Bridge Road, Millington, NJ 07946 info@theraptortrust.org 908-647-2353.



(above, top, l-r) Gwen Kinder, Victoria Solon, Sarah Wilson, Ben Montgomery, Property Manager/Educator of the Raptor Trust (bottom) Gianna Tautonico, Danae Churchill.

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## FEEDING THE BODY AND SOUL AT WILSON MEMORIAL CHURCH

Wilson Memorial Union Church in Watchung has initiated a new adult education offering, called "What's Brewing?" – appropriately held after the post-worship coffee hour on the second Sunday of each month. The initial program, on October 13, was titled What's Brewing – A Closer Look at Star Fish, presented by Hugh Woodruff, treasurer and "chief shelf-stocker" for the Plainfield-based food pantry.

The Star Fish Food Pantry of Plainfield has a simple mission – to provide emergency food assistance to families of Plainfield who find themselves in need. Wilson Memorial, one of many local churches supporting Star Fish, has aided the charity since its inception in 1971, financially and with volunteer workers, as well as with donations of food. This adult education offering was targeted at looking deeper into what happens once the food leaves the church.

Star Fish volunteers coordinate with local Plainfield agencies such as Plainfield Action Services, Union County Social Services, El Centro Hispanoamericano, and others to pack food essentials to support families in need for

several days. Star Fish volunteers work in basement space provided by Covenant United Methodist church and pack grocery bags of food that are delivered to the requesting agencies on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays by other Star Fish volunteers. The food pantry assists about 40 families each week, and nearly 160 families for each of three holidays, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

As part of his presentation, Mr. Woodruff, who also serves as treasurer of Wilson Memorial Church, demonstrated the packing of a typical grocery bag for a family and described the process of getting the food ready for distribution. Matthew Stefanovic, a church school student, assisted him. Mr. Woodruff highlighted the various churches and other organizations, such as the Postal Service, that provide food from their food drives. He also showed a variety of photos of the process, including the filled back of his hatchback as he restocks the shelves at Star Fish following his grocery shopping excursions, "a Prius-ful at a time."

He concluded his talk by reading the statement that is on the key ring he received about a year ago when he assumed his duties for Star Fish, "Work for the Lord. The pay isn't much, but the retirement plan is out of this world."

The next program in the "What's Brewing" series was held on Sunday, November 10 in the sanctuary of Wilson Memorial Church. Rev. Barbara Peters presented "The Power of Vulnerability" by Brene Brown, with a discussion following. The church is located at 7 Valley Road, Watchung, NJ. For additional information, phone (908) 755-5020.

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## SOLVING THE CUBE



Want to amaze your family and friends during the holiday season? Children and their parents are learning how to solve the Rubik's Cube by the holidays, thanks to a series of programs being presented by middle school student Zach Goldring. Zach, a Rubik's Cube master, has developed the program as a community service project. The program will continue on November 20, December 4 and December 18. Cubes for the program were provided through the Rubik's Cube Lending Library.

## LANTERNS LIGHT UP THE LIBRARY

Watchung Library hosted a Lotus Flower Lantern Workshop presented by the Korean Spirit and Culture Promotion Project (KSCPP). Participants used hand-painted rice paper to transform wire frames into beautiful lanterns.

(right) Maria Carracino, Watchung, poses with her beautiful finished lantern.



## WATCHUNG LIBRARY

Watchung Library is located at 12 Stirling Road in Watchung, behind the Watchung Arts Center. For complete program registration information, please check the online calendar ([www.somerset.lib.nj.us](http://www.somerset.lib.nj.us), then go to Evenys/Programs for Watchung). Program information is subject to change, so also look online for updated programs and additions.

## LOCAL STUDENT GIVES BACK IN A BIG WAY

On November 19th, the Friends of the Watchung Library hosted a book signing and reception for author and photographer Justin Scalera, a Junior at Watchung Hills Regional High School. Justin's photo book, *The Perfect Storm*, shows the devastation along the barrier island from Point Pleasant to Seaside Heights, New Jersey following Superstorm Sandy. Justin has raised a total of \$9,000 for Jersey Shore relief funds since the storm hit last year. Signed books are still available for purchase at \$25.00. A portion of the proceeds benefit Jersey Shore relief funds and support the library projects of the Friends of the Watchung Library.

Justin has been interested in taking pictures for a very long time. After joining the photography club in middle school, he really began to focus on his love of taking pictures. He is currently involved with the photography classes at the High School. In fact, Justin has won a few awards and contests for his photos.

The inspiration for *The Perfect Storm* came immediately following hurricane Sandy in 2012. Justin's family had recently purchased a small home in Mantoloking and had just spent their second summer there. Justin spent the summer working at the local bait shop and enjoying all the shore had to offer. Here are some excerpts from the forward of his book:

"I started to feel at home, not only at the bait shop but also at the shore. Every day after work I would go right to the beach. Being able to spend every day on the beach is something that I knew I would miss once summer ended and I headed back to school. Leaving that summer was difficult, but I just told myself that it will be even better next year. Little did I know that the Jersey Shore would be changed forever."

"The first picture I saw was of a view of the Mantoloking Bridge and all you could see was



(above) Deb Kinder, Watchung, waits while young author signs her copy of his book.

water and a few half-standing houses. It was not the neighborhood that was there just a few days ago. My family had lost hope that our house a few miles south had survived Sandy's wrath."

"I wondered about all the places I knew and loved. It was a few weeks later when I able to go see what happened for myself. Between the destruction, debris, and military checkpoints, I honestly felt like we were driving into a war zone. With all of these huge houses tipped on their sides, and then finding our home perfectly fine in the midst of destruction, I couldn't help but feel guilty. Everything around me was destroyed and there I was picking up a few sticks out of our driveway."

"Like everyone who loves the shore, I want to see it return to the way it was. I want to be able to go there for many more years and someday share with my children the wonders of the Jersey Shore. It may be a small gesture, but I am donating a portion of the proceeds of this book to the restoration efforts."

Justin's book can be purchased locally at the Watchung Library, or through mail order on facebook at Justin Scalera Photography. It is also available in several retail stores at the Jersey shore.

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# HILLS PHYS ED SUPERVISOR TO RETIRE AFTER 35 YEARS

By Eleanor Mathews

“Almost 35 years to the day,” muses Mario Diez. “It’s almost thirty-five years ago that I came to Watchung Hills Regional High School,” says the retiring chairperson of the Phys Ed/Health Department as he ticks off the years since December 17, 1979.

And what a career it has been! Diez has not only shaped Hills’ phys ed program, but has also become known in wider circles as a winning baseball coach, who has led Hills teams to significant championships: seven at the (Skyland) Conference level; four at the county level (Somerset County Tournament of Champions); and three on the state level.

A graduate of Athens State College (Alabama), and holder of a Master’s Degree from Kean College, Diez has been named to the Hall of Fame of New Jersey Baseball Coaches as well as the Hall of Fame of New Jersey School Coaches. But more than that, Diez’ philosophy about the function of phys ed as part of the total picture of a student’s development has been a model in educational circles. He has been instrumental in developing an elective phys ed curriculum that is progressive and current, one that is student-centered and individualized. Rather than a one-size-fits-all curriculum to which all must subscribe, the Hills physical education course of study offers options that develop life and wellness skills which students can pursue outside of school and beyond school years. Team sports, will, of course, still be

included on the phys ed “menu.”

Among options selected by students on a half-semester basis are such courses as fitness, yoga, dance, judo, power walking, Project Adventure, body sculpting, wellness education, marriage, and more. These are the activities they can still pursue as adults, Diez says.

Students also fill in a “fitness-gram” which helps them assess their aerobic capacity, strength, agility, etc., all of which may play a part in their choice of phys ed courses.

The Hills elective phys ed program, started in the mid-80’s, has been both successful and well-received by Hills students and has been visited by instructors from other schools.

The physical education offerings in the schools in the local sending district are coordinated with those at Hills.

Diez also acts as supervisor of the Business Arts Department. In addition to overseeing financial, family and consumer-oriented courses, he has been interested in developing courses in sports management and entrepreneurship.

Have students changed much in the 35 years of Diez’ tenure? Technology has changed, says “Coach,” but kids remain essentially the same. “Kids are still kids. They are a spirited bunch,” Diez states. “They love to talk and they’re interested in being social. They are facing greater challenges than my generation ever did—but they will overcome these, as every generation does.”



(above) Mario Diez

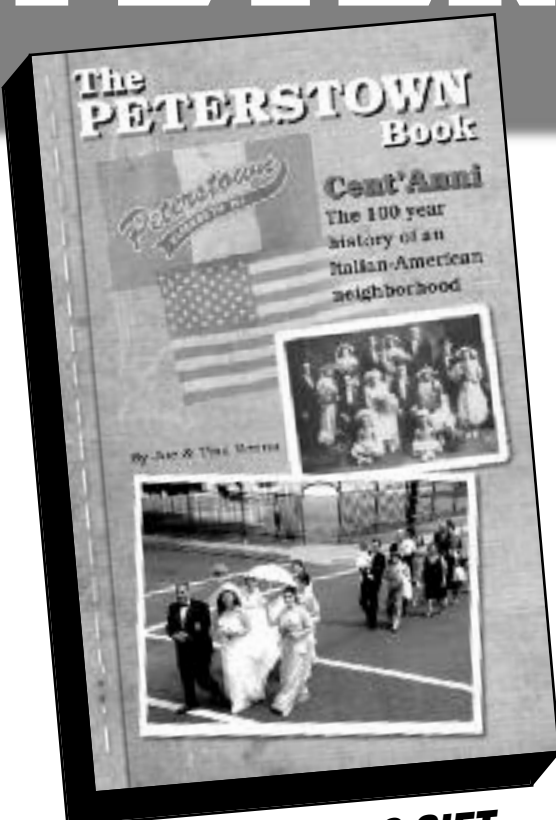
Working at Watchung Hills has been “the thrill of a lifetime,” Diez concludes, but retirement will also bring its joys, such as working in his Whitehouse Station garden, playing with his four grandchildren, some informal coaching, fishing, and finding out what else he can learn to do. Retirement will thus be a special adventure, just as teaching was.

Life will continue to be, as it always has been, a “perfect 10” for this retiring department head.

Anyone who would like to retail the book in their place of business should contact Joe at 908-447-1295 or email [info@rennamedia.com](mailto:info@rennamedia.com)

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The Peterstown Book is the 100 year history of an Italian-American neighborhood told through stories about the people and families who lived there. The book records the oral history in danger of being lost and illustrates the traditions and customs of the community through thousands of photos, hundreds of recipes, and antidotes shared by residents past and present.

**\$45 + Sales Tax (\$3.15 for NJ purchases only.)**

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FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY**

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Freshly baked Portuguese and Italian bread delivered daily!



**Store Hours:**  
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**COUPON**



**FRESH SHRIMP**  
**\$8<sup>99</sup> lb** WAT

By the pound only. Limit 1 lb per customer per coupon per day. Not to be combined with other offer. Offers good thru 12/16/13.

**FRESH FISH**  
 Available Thursday to Sunday  
 Filleted, Steaked, Cleaned to your liking!

**Little Neck or Top CLAMS**  
**\$3<sup>99</sup> /dozen**

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**Fresh Atlantic Salmon Fillet**  
**\$7<sup>99</sup> lb** (farm raised) WAT

By the pound only. Limit 1 lb per customer per coupon per day. Not to be combined with other offer. Offers good thru 12/16/13.

**FRESH FRUIT OR VEGETABLE PLATTERS**  
 Platters over stuffed with the best the season has to offer.  
 14 inch 24.99 • 16 inch 29.99 • 18 inch 39.99



**Perfect for Holiday and Special Occasions!**



**COUPON**



**Boar's Head Imported Ham**  
**\$5<sup>99</sup> lb** WAT

Must purchase 1 lb. Limit 1 lb. per coupon. Coupon may not be combined with other offers. Limit 1 offer and coupon per day. Offer expires 12/16/13.

**COUPON**



**Hormel Dilusso Genoa Salami**  
**\$5<sup>99</sup> lb** WAT

Must purchase 1 lb. Limit 1 lb. per coupon. Coupon may not be combined with other offers. Limit 1 offer and coupon per day. Offer expires 12/16/13.

**COUPON**

**\$1.00 OFF your purchase of \$20.00 OR MORE**



Excludes garden center and fish purchases. Limit 1 offer per customer per day. Not to be combined with other offer. Offer expires 12/16/13.



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 Panettone, Pandoro, Dried Fruits, Spices, Almond Paste, Pignoli Nuts, Torrone, Soppresate, Dried Sausage and much much more.