







**COMMUNITY FORUM****Plight of cats has happy ending**

Fortunately, the issue involving four feral cats living on the Watchung Reservation has been resolved to just about everyone's satisfaction.

County parks officials became aware of the animals while installing new playground equipment at the reservation. With the anticipated influx of children to the area, parents and officials decided that the cats could pose a danger to humans and must be removed. While most animals living on the wildlife reservation are left untouched, the cats posed a unique problem as they are technically considered domestic strays and therefore could be captured along with the rest of the county's homeless pets.

Controversy ensued when Mountainside residents Lou and Helen Vitale entered the spotlight by urging officials to leave the felines where they are, citing the unlikely probability that the animals could be successfully adopted into suburban home after living a long in the wild. The Vitales have provided food and a makeshift shelter for the cats for the past four years and have stated that the animals are spayed and have received rabies vaccinations.

They also stated that, like other wild animals on the reservation, the cats will run at the sight of humans and would be unlikely to hang around a park full of children long enough to inflict a bite or scratch, as area parents feared.

With evidence that the cats do not carry hazardous diseases or behave viciously, along with their probable euthanization in an animal shelter if captured, animal activists adamantly opposed the argument of county officials, calling the planned eviction inhumane. Happily, a woman in Pennsylvania who heard of the cats' plight has offered a viable solution for all by offering her 14-acre property as their new home.

Thanks to her generosity, the four animals have been placed into carriers and transported to an area where they may live without fear of harm from humans and parents can now take their kids to the reservation playground without apprehension. While the Vitales will surely miss their self-selvive feline friends, this resolution to the problem is clearly a win for everyone involved and we think those responsible for the well-placed concern on either side of the issue,



Photo by Walter Elliott

**TEACHING SAFETY** — Members of the Springfield Fire Department demonstrate how emergency personnel extricate car accident victims from their vehicles during the Business Against Drunk Driving fair on Saturday.

**Driver fatigue can be avoided with planning****White I'm Here**

By Walter Elliott  
Staff Writer

The summer vacation season, which for most of us means driving is pretty well over. Some of us stretched their drive timeabit and are worse for wear. A few stretched further — and are no longer with us.

I'm talking about drivers fatigue. It may have contributed to an accident which I had to cover on the Garden State Parkway in Union July 19.

I was on my way to cover an Indy car race that day in Dover. Her I left home at 6:30 a.m., planning to make the race's noon start. My attempt to the race, however, was diverted by the crash.

That plan was wiped out by 10 emergency vehicles at the Kahlberg Service Plaza. They were surrounding a northbound Ford Bronco which had ran head-on into a tree. The supervisor State Police Trooper said the ambulance just took a passenger to the University Hospital Trauma Unit in Newark.

The other four occupants died on impact. They were driving overnight from Atlantic City back home to church in Paterson. Evidence indicates that the driver had fallen asleep.

It was time to seek professional advice. My first advisor was Indiana state 500 winner Edsel Cheever. He has competed in races around the world, from the 24 Hours of Le Mans to Saturday night races on the Indy Racing League circuit. I asked him how best prepared for night driving.

"I don't like to race in the last 40 percent of my waking hours," said Cheever. "In preparation for race

night, I would go to bed around 7 a.m. to change the cycle."

Cheever said he eats a lot of protein the week before a race and switches carbohydrates the day before. He avoids television and anything which focuses my attention on one thing.

"I think the combination helps me," said Cheever. "I hate honestly admit, I enjoyed driving the race itself."

My next stop was the State Police Headquarters in West Windsor. Sgt. Al Delta Fave explained how tropics adapt to night driving.

"We start at the academy level by putting trainees on midnight guard duty before classes two or three times," said Delta Fave. "Just to get the feel. We also apply nutritional information and practice on reading their internal clock."

Delta Fave said that headquarters have put two troopers on midnight patrol cars on a bus system and allow drivers to sleep along the side of the road. He considers driver fatigue an under-reported cause of accidents and the Park Way north of Atlantic City as the worst area.

"Many drivers leave the easiness and the bright lights and head north on a pitch-black Parkway," said Delta Fave. "The number one shoulder helps a little but, once a driver falls asleep, the car keeps going until it has something. A driver has to know where he's too tired to drive."

A final expert had a bumpy ride on the July Parkway tragedy at the Sun and Corinthian meeting two days later. Councilman Dr. Eric Munoz is a trauma surgeon at University Hospital.

"I was head surgeon during the shift that crash victim came in," said Munoz. "We worked our hardest on that kid but we couldn't save him. It's hard to lose a patient but it's harder when it's a youngster, like this 14-year-old, who had a life ahead of him."

This column started by accident. After the above observations, tips and a little planning on driver fatigue, I hope that you will not have one.

**Be prepared**

In the wake of the tornado-like winds that swept through Union County last week toppling trees and power lines and damaging homes, we thought it would be prudent to do some research on emergency management and natural disasters.

Although we discovered several interesting facts and figures, the main point of interest deals with the responsibility of any municipality to its citizens during an emergency or natural disaster.

Public officials may not be aware of it, but they can be held liable if they are not prepared to properly respond to emergencies and disasters. In other words, not only is it a good management practice to be prepared for emergencies or disasters, it is their legal responsibility!

In an article that appeared in the November/December 1989 issue of the "Response" newsletter, Roger L. Kemp noted that "under normal circumstances, few citizens place a high priority on emergency management. These same citizens, however, expect their local government leaders to be able to effectively manage a disaster should one occur."

Kemp went on to say that during emergencies or natural disasters, citizens should be able to expect their local governments to:

- Alert citizens in advance of a disaster
- Quickly and accurately assess the magnitude of an emergency
- Properly keep citizens informed of the situation
- Safely evacuate dangerous areas
- Rehearse evacuation citizens to a safe place
- Provide for a rapid restoration of services
- Give assistance in the form of recovery services
- Mitigate the impact of future emergencies
- Be able to adequately protect life and property
- Detailed tasks should be identified for all functional responsibilities. Nothing should be left to the imagination
- All plans should be community resources that could be used in a disaster

Most governments have mutual agreements for police and fire services only. These pacts should be expanded to ensure the availability of a wide variety of resources and services.

**"A democracy works best when the people have all the information that the security of the nation permits."**

Lyndon B. Johnson  
36th U.S. President  
1960

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**Leaders pick on people and pets**

To the Editor:

In reference to the headline "County to evict cats from reservation" Nov. 19, I am not proud of our feral cat lets as the County-level? Besides raising their own pay increases, it is up to the automobile insurance companies to raise rates to reflect the cost of the damage. This would help to encourage them to pay off their loans.

Most residents are paying off and hoping anything. Rest easy, Mountainside residents, we have been there once again.

Frank Margheris  
Mountainside

**Thanks for easing difficult day**

To the Editor:

Our family would like to thank everyone in the Springfield and Summit Police departments for your heartfelt tribute to our son David. Giving him a police escort was a very special honor. We know that DJ would have loved it! All of us would especially like to thank Steven Stock for arranging all of the details, Officer Joseph Ciceri for driving the lead car, and Officer William Ciceri for holding traffic during the funeral procession.

You gave of your time and energy, and we cannot tell you how much that

meant to us. We also would like to thank the Summit Police Department for helping to hold traffic at Bryant Park. Your support of our family was great.

Both the Springfield and Summit Police departments helped make a very difficult day a little easier for everyone. We will always appreciate your support, kindness and caring.

Lisa, Steven and Rachel Matherne  
Springfield

**Our policy on letters and columns**

The Echo Leader welcomes submissions from its readers. Either letters to the editor or opinion pieces on any subject will be considered for publication on the opinion pages.

This opportunity also is open to all officials and employees of the borough and the County of Union.

The Echo Leader reserves the right to edit all submissions for length, content and style. Writers must include their name, address and daytime telephone number for verification.

For publication, all letters and essays must be received before 9 a.m. Monday at 1291 Stewartson Avenue, Union, N.J. 07083.

The Echo Leader also accepts letters to the editor and guest columns via e-mail. The address is: WCN22@localsource.com.

**Concerned about an issue facing the governing body or Board of Education in your town? Is your street in disrepair? Our readers can use our Infoshare hot line to speak out about any issue whether it is a question, comment, suggestion or opinion. That way, by telling us, you can tell everyone in town.**

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**NEWS CLIPS****Clean communities day scheduled**

The Borough of Mountainside will hold its annual Clean Communities Day program Oct. 3 from 10 a.m. to noon. Deerfield School, lunch will be provided immediately following the event in the Deerfield School cafeteria.

All residents are encouraged to participate in the annual litter clean-up event. Registration is required by Sept. 28 so that awards can be awarded.

Note that this event is to clean up the community of litter and debris not bulky waste cleanup. Litter pick-up supplies will be provided.

A meeting will be held on Sept. 28 at 7 p.m. in the small conference room at Borough Hall, 3383 Route 22, to discuss the areas that need to be cleaned up. You do not need to attend the meeting in order to participate on Clean Communities Day.

For registration and/or questions, call Ruth at (908) 232-2409.

**Alzheimer support group to meet**

The next Caregiver Alzheimer Support Group of Rumson Specialized Hospital of Union County will meet from 1 to 2 p.m. today in the Family Conference Room of the facility, located at 40 Washington Way, Berkeley Heights. This professional support, education and information group for caregivers and family members, held the third Tuesday of each month, is open to the community, free of charge, and is facilitated by Kathleen Balascio, a Rumson Specialized Hospital licensed social worker.

The support group share information on the disease, research updates, practical care techniques and a list of community resources. An important part of the meeting is the time devoted to discussing the frustrations individuals feel in caring for those stricken with Alzheimer's disease.

Rumson Specialized Hospital of Union County sponsors the meetings in conjunction with the Northern New Jersey Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, an organization committed to easing the burden and finding a cure for Alzheimer's—the nation's fourth leading fatal disease among older adults—some four million Americans.

For further information on this wheelchair accessible program, call (908) 731-5833.

**Carnival to benefit foundation**

On Oct. 24, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., AutoLand on Route 22 in Springfield will be hosting the Route 22 Chamber of Commerce's "Cultural Carnival for the Cure." Merchants along Route 22 will be participating by asking customers to contribute \$2 for a "Pink Ribbon" during Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This event culminates the month-long campaign to "Buy a Pink Ribbon" and support the Komen Foundation. There will be activities all throughout the day and fun for the entire family.

This day-long carnival will feature acts representing many cultures such as Summit International Folk Dances, Fusion Dance Theatre and Alay Phillips Performing Arts Inc. The carnival is designed to promote education about various cultures combined with educating about breast cancer. The beneficiary of any funds raised will be the North Jersey Chapter of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

The Susan G. Komen Foundation is the nation's largest private funder of research dedicated solely to breast cancer. Volunteers work through local chapters and Race for the Cure events to fund education, screening and treatment projects in communities across the country.

The carnival will feature clowns, moon bounces, entertainment and food. The Outback Steak House will be selling food and all proceeds from the sale will be donated to the North Jersey Chapter of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

In addition, at 4 p.m. WCBS-11 (101.1, "NY's coolies station"), will be providing a music montage—an impersonation as Master of Ceremonies for the giving away of a 1999 Toyota Camry Solaris.

Further details are available by calling (800) 286-6526.

**PEOPLE IN THE NEWS****Pitts appointed****Michele L. Pitts****Attention churches, social clubs**

This newspaper encourages congregations, temples, social and civic organizations to inform their leaders about scheduled events and activities. Releases should be typed, double-spaced, and include a phone number where a representative may be reached during the day.

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**Bagger to hold office hours**

The legislative office of Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger will be open to residents of the 22nd Legislative District from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday.

In addition to regular business hours on weekdays and one Saturday per month, Bagger's office, located at 201 Elm St., Westfield, is open from 10 a.m.

9:30 p.m. Thursday.

The 22nd Legislative District includes Berkeley Heights, Clark, Chatham Township, Cranford, Dunellen, Fanwood, Garwood, Green Brook, Mountain Lakes, New Providence, North Plainfield, Long Hill, Scotch Plains, Warren, Watchung, Westfield and Whitefield.

Further information may be obtained by calling Bagger's legislative office at (908) 212-3673.

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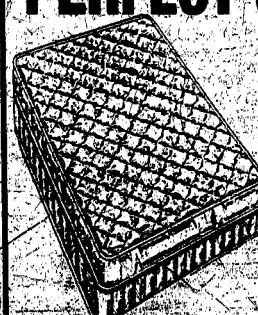
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