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RHS Students Mobilize For Hospital

Community Unites To Support Targeted Unit



RAHWAY HIGH PETITIONERS OFFER SUPPORT... In show of support for their community hospital, more than 250 Rahway High School students have signed petition to Gov. Jim Florio expressing opposition to State Health Planning Board recommendation to close Rahway Hospital's pediatric/adolescent unit. Shown here are students who spearheaded petition drive, from left, Mike Johnson, Bill Grant and Jay Godin, presenting copy of petition to Nurse Manager Deborah Carney and staff nurse Diane Stulga.

Students at Rahway High School mobilized last week to petition Gov. Jim Florio on behalf of the Rahway Hospital pediatric/adolescent unit, according to Nicholas F. Delmonaco, Principal at the school.

Upon learning that the State Health Plan issued earlier this year by the Department of Health recommends, among changes at other hospitals statewide, the closing of Rahway Hospital's unit, students were indignant. "Many of the students were born at the Hospital, and have first hand knowledge of the services available there. Some serve as junior volunteers at the Hospital, while others have undergone treatment in the unit at various times in their lives or have siblings who

have been hospitalized," Delmonaco explained.

Jay Godin, an 11th Grade student, enlisted the assistance of his pals Bill Grant, a 10th grader, and Mike Johnson, who is in the Ninth Grade. Jay learned of the state's plan to close the pediatric unit recently when he obtained some promotional dolls at the local Burger King to distribute to patients in the pediatric/adolescent unit. When nurses told him of their plight, he came up with the idea of a petition.

The Hospital has initiated a massive letterwriting campaign directed at both elected representatives at the local and state levels and officials within the Department of Health. Hospital Public Relations Director Nancy Jackson commented, "We could never begin to tell all the people who have helped how very much we appreciate their work. If there is a turn-around, it will be in large measure due to the willingness of our local government to support the Hospital and because of all those signatures — more than 25,000 to date."

Things looked a little brighter for the pediatric/adolescent unit last Thursday as the Health Care Administration Board (HCAB) voted to take the "first step" toward approval of the State Health Plan but added a 60-day period for public hearings and written comment before the final vote. Concurrent with the HCAB meeting, Trenton lawmakers considered proposals to delay the plan, including a strategy to add four legislators, two from the Assembly and two from the Senate, to the planning board.

Senate President Donald DiFrancesco, R-22, announced the formation of a Senate Select Committee on Health Care Cost Containment. As we go to press, Assemblyman Stephan Mikulak, R-19, was sponsoring legislation to delay the health plan which advocates closing or consolidating pediatric units at a total of 20

facilities, favoring a more centralized approach to health care for children.

Locally, Mayor Jim Kennedy and the City Council have adopted a resolution backing the Rahway Hospital unit. The neighboring municipalities of Linden, Clark and Carteret also have adopted similar resolutions. In addition, the Union County Board of Freeholders also sent a resolution to the Governor last week, requesting his intervention on behalf of Rahway Hospital (see separate story).

In a statement delivered to the HCAB during last Thursday's meeting, Hospital President John L. Yoder pointed out that the unit's yearly volume is actually higher than many of the pediatric facilities which the state plan designates as "community pediatric centers," and "substantially" higher than the 10 units which the state removed from the closure list during earlier appeals.

Yoder commented on the Hospital's mission, "Inpatient pediatrics is not merely an optional or elective service that we provide; it is an integral part of our institution, tightly tied to our busy obstetrical service and the many outpatient services we provide for women and children. Our pediatrics unit is a valuable service which we and our community will defend."

Yoder stated the Hospital's intention to be allowed to apply for designation as a community pediatric center. He guaranteed willingness to work with the Health Department or any other body to achieve the Hospital's goal.

The Hospital expects a visit from officials of Local Advisory Board III at the early part of next week to initiate the appeals process mandated by the state plan.

During the 60-day appeal process, according to Jackson, "it is imperative that the letterwriting continue. We've already delivered a very clear, positive message to Trenton."

Our efforts must not flag until our objective is met."

Jackson says that the Hospital has set up a display in its lobby, and asks interested citizens to come in on sign copies of a variety of letters of petition to the Governor, the Commissioner of Health and state legislators.

Freelancers Back Hospital

Rahway Hospital's pediatric/adolescent unit has voiced its support in keeping its doors open from members of the Union County Board of Freeholders.

"This unit served close to 1,000 children in 1991," said Freeholder Alan Augustine, regarding the petitioning process to keep the unit open.

"The state did not consult the local residents who are serviced by the facility when it issued its plan to close pediatric units targeted for closing," he stated. "Now, by the way, did it consult with Hospital administration, staff, pediatricians, other physicians or local officials and health care consumers in making its determination?"

Rahway Hospital administration contends in basing its research on statistics only, the state failed to see that the pediatric unit's low rate of occupancy is offset during the winter months when the viral infection incidence rates are high, citing consistent data during the summer.

Closing Rahway's Unit would thrust children with life-threatening illness and young accident victims into the precarious situation of treatment at a distant center. Compounding the stress of getting the child to an alternative facility would be the inconvenience of visitation and the chance that the child's regular physician might not be available," Augustine cautioned.

"Rahway Hospital's pediatric/adolescent unit has been an integral part of our area's community services for 75 years," he concluded. "We're requesting that the state Department of Health rethink its plan in directing that this highly-effective, modern, well-equipped facility close its doors. They won't shut a unit with a lower occupancy rate than this unit in Union County."

Candidates Air Their Views

by Pat DiMaggio

Although state legislators have approved a bill delaying school elections until April 28, Gov. Jim Florio has not signed it. Therefore, local districts are proceeding with plans for an April 7 election date in which residents will be asked to vote for Board of Education members and for school budgets.

In Rahway, three incumbents will face off against three challengers for three seats on the Board of Education. Following is a list of candidates in the order they will appear on the ballot, their backgrounds, and the reasons why they chose to run for election.

Peter Kowal is a former board president who is seeking his third term as a representative of the district. A graduate of Rahway High School, Kowal is the proprietor of Butch Kowal's tavern located in the City. He is a member of St. Thomas the Apostle Church, the Rahway Kiwanis, Rahway Elks and Madison School PTA. Kowal also is a member of the Rahway Police-Community Relations Board, the Sideliners and CPYC. He is a former member of the YMCA board of directors. He has a son who attends Madison School.

"This year, with the hiring of a new superintendent and a commitment to the early retirement program for teachers and administrators, I feel it is important for board members with experience to continue serving Rahway," said Kowal, the second senior member of the board. "Just as important as choosing a candidate for the Board of Education, it is equally important for every parent who has a child in the system to support the 1992-93 budget which will not include a tax increase if present funding remains in place."

Mario Kurylak currently serves as the board's president, and is seeking his second term in office. He attended Temple University in Philadelphia, and is the owner and president of Dan-

iel Electric Company Inc., located in Rahway. Kurylak is a member of the Roosevelt School PTA, the Sideliners, St. Thomas the Apostle Church and the Municipal Alliance Committee. He has a daughter who is in the second grade at Roosevelt School.

"Spending more money does not always assure quality education," said Kurylak, who has been cited by the New Jersey School Boards Association for his successful participation in advanced boardmanship conferences. "We must continue to provide for educational enrichment, from pre-K to 12th grade, that will enable students and educational leaders to accept the challenge and achieve a mastery in all subject levels."

Michael Kureczka is a graduate of Seton Hall University, and holds a degree in marketing research. He is self-employed as the owner of Catering by Michael. Kureczka is a member of the parish planning board for St. Thomas the Apostle Church and a Rahway Kiwanian. He has a daughter at Roosevelt School and a younger daughter not yet in the school system.

"The Board of Education is a full-time position," said Kureczka. "With my business the way it is, I can devote full time to it. I also feel my background in operating restaurants will allow me to be an effective board member, cost-conscious taxpayer and experienced administrator. We have to insure monies budgeted are spent as cost-effectively as possible so the children of Rahway, now and in the future, will receive a quality education."

John Ludington II, who is seeking his second term on the board, holds an Associate degree in environmental science from Union County College, and will graduate in August with a degree in political science from Kean College. He is employed as a supervisor of industrial and municipal operations by the Rahway

Valley Sewerage Authority. Ludington, a past president of the board, is also a member of the First Presbyterian Church and the vice president of its board of trustees. He is a member of the Rahway Youth Soccer Association, serves as a coach of a traveling soccer team, and is a member of the Rahway Elks. He also is a member of the Rahway River Association and the Solid Waste Advisory Committee. He has three sons.

"I hope to continue my involvement in the educational system in Rahway," said Ludington. "I feel I can supply leadership for the district. I hope to continue the updating of curriculum to meet the educational needs of the 1990s while meeting the financial needs of the community. We must maintain the educational commitment that the board and staff have towards the children of Rahway."

Fred Brown Jr. holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English education from Newark State College and a Master's degree in educational administration from Kean College. He is currently enrolled at Rutgers University, where he is working on his Doctorate in educational administration. He is employed by the New Brunswick Board of Education as the district's high school principal. Brown has four children, with a daughter at Rahway High School, a son at Grover Cleveland School and preschool twin daughters.

"From sitting on the other side as a parent, I am not satisfied with the manner in which the board is conducting business," said Brown. "I've lost confidence in their ability to serve effectively. Decisions are being made in a manner that don't really reflect the consensus of the public. There are some problems in the school system that I don't think the board has taken seriously, such as the failure rate at the high school. Whatever problems the board is experiencing, they are trying to wish them away. It is about time they own up to the fact

that Rahway's educational system is experiencing problems."

Charles Laskowski is a graduate of Union College and Kean College and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in industrial technology. He is currently enrolled at Montclair State University, where he is working towards his Master's degree in business administration. Laskowski is employed by General Motors, Linden, as an engineer. He is president of the St. Thomas Holy Name Society and a member of the Rahway Elks, Linden Knights of Columbus and Linden VFW. He has three daughters, one of whom will attend Rahway High School in the fall.

"I would like to take an active role in the policies set forth by the board," said Laskowski. "I feel I have a lot to offer as far as organizational skills. My degree is in construction engineering, and I would like to take a serious look at buildings and grounds to make sure everything is up to standard. I would like to be involved in decisions made for the future."

Mayor Denies Making Remark

by Pat DiMaggio

Mayor Jim Kennedy has asked The Rahway News Record to correct a statement attributed to him in last week's headline story. "I didn't say 'shut up,'" said the Mayor.

During a recent City Council meeting, members of the Concerned Citizens of Union County took issue with the council's affirmative vote on an amended host community agreement between the City and the Union County Utilities Authority governing payments to Rahway for the resource recovery facility now under construction in the Fourth Ward.

After the vote, the meeting degenerated into a shouting match between Concerned Citizens and City

officials. At one point during his comments, Kennedy turned to the audience and said "be quiet," not "shut up," as reported in last week's news story, the Mayor says.

At that meeting, the council approved an amended host community agreement with the authority that will guarantee a minimum yearly payment to the City of \$2.198 million while the facility is operating. Included in the agreement is \$199,000 for the loss of 7 rtables because of the siting of the incinerator and a rate of \$4.50 per tonnage, with an additional 50 cents per ton to be added when the incinerator operates above 85-percent capacity. A payment of \$650,000 specified in the

original host community agreement signed in 1986 has been raised to yearly payments of \$800,000 during the construction phase of the facility.

At a meeting held last week, the authority ap-

proved the amended agreement. Project Manager Joseph Kazar said the authority's attorneys are clarifying certain language in the agreement, but no substantive changes will be made.

Rahway High Grads' NAACP Scholarships

Applications are now available in the Rahway High School Guidance Office for the "NAACP Arthur Chapman Scholarship Award."

All graduating Rahway High Seniors who plan to enter college in September 1992 are urged to pick up an application as soon as possible. Applications are due back in the Guidance Office

no later than Wednesday, April 1.

Meeting Postponed

The Rahway Public Schools District School Organization Study (SOS) Committee meeting originally scheduled for today has been postponed.

A new date will be announced at a later time in this newspaper.

Jeffrey Cohen

because the candidate's message "will speak to the real concerns of the district and nation, something that Bernie Dwyer has not done in his 12 years in office."

"Paul is every special interest group's worst nightmare," continued Cohen. "Paul will put the family budget above the special interest budget, a total opposite to Bernie Dwyer's actions."

Cohen plans to bring the hard-won experience he earned in his own race against 20th District incumbent Raymond Lesniak to the Danielczyk campaign. Cohen narrowly lost to Lesniak in a race the political experts predicted would be a Democratic landslide.

Since the Republican sweeps of state races last November, Cohen believes that voter frustration against "professional political incumbents like Dwyer" will make for a Danielczyk victory in November. "Paul came extremely close in 1990," Cohen said. "In 1992, we are going to finish the job."

He stated that "Dwyer's catering to special interests with wasteful spending of the taxpayer's hard earned money, as well as his voting for every tax hike that has come his way is something the laid-off workers in the district will not forget."

Danielczyk said he picked Cohen because he is "a great networker, thinks quick on his feet, is a good conversationalist, and he'll give us that extra punch to get over the top this time."

City's CD Funds Second-Highest

by Pat DiMaggio

Rahway has been notified that it will receive more than \$620,000 in Community Development funds. At last week's City Council meeting, Councilman Chester Holmes announced that the award is the second highest of the 19 Union County municipalities participating in the competitive grant process this year.

The City is scheduled to receive \$620,660 in Community Development Block Grant funding beginning in September. According to Community Development Director Tom Connell, the monies will be used for the following: Comprehensive housing program, \$358,000; code enforcement program, \$28,000; senior citizen bus

program, \$19,660; Monroe Street sewer project, \$49,500; street improvement project, \$85,500; JFK Center renovation project, \$35,000; YMCA comprehensive plan, \$10,000; and YMCA barrier-free access, \$35,000.

At the meeting, the council also authorized the Police Department to sell bicycles and related parts at a public auction, to be held on Saturday, April 25. The auction will begin at 11:30 a.m. at the Rahway Public Works Department, 999 Hart St.

The mayoral appointment of Rudy Ferrara to the Municipal Alcoholic Board and the reappointment of David Erickson as Municipal Court judge also were approved by the council.

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