

NORTH PLAINFIELD

■ CREDIT-CARD FRAUD. 1:54 p.m. April 4: Police were called to an address on the 100 block of Westervelt Avenue on report of credit-card fraud. Police said that upon arrival, the victim said she checked her Wachovia check card account and saw the account was short money. She further noticed that someone had charged \$1,314.05 at a New York City Dunberry store and \$855.04 at Intermix in New York City. The bank's Check Card Fraud Department was called, and an investigation has begun.

■ FIRE. 7:02 a.m. April 4: Police were called to a residence on the 1200 block of Rock Avenue on report of a theft. A police report states the resident said that between 9 p.m. April 3 and 7 a.m. April 4, someone stole the aluminum rims and tires off her 2006 Honda Accord. The car was found resting on cinder blocks, still parked in the same parking spot where she had parked the car. No further damages were seen on the car.

■ DRIVING WHILE INTOXICATED. 9:54 p.m. April 5: A car driven by Guido M. Paredes, 40, of North Plainfield was involved in a car accident. A police report states the car struck a parked car, overturned and came to a stop against a telephone pole. Paredes had to be extricated from the car by the borough Fire Department and taken to Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital by the Rescue Squad. An officer followed to the hospital, with a blood kit to take a blood alcohol content reading. Paredes was subsequently given a summons for driving while intoxicated, and two other motor vehicle summonses.

■ DRIVING WHILE INTOXICATED. 12:52 a.m. April 6: Police on a DWI patrol on Grove Street, at Prospect Place, saw a white Ford van make a left turn onto Grove Street from Craig Place without stopping. Police said the car then made a wide turn and crossed the southbound lane, then crossed the double yellow lines before swerving back into his lane of travel. The car was pulled over. The driver, Alvaro J. Gonzalez, 23, of North Plainfield gave the officer a license from Guatemala. The officer subsequently detected the odor of an alcoholic beverage on his breath. Sobriety tests were then given, and as a result Gonzalez was charged with driving while intoxicated. Police said that, according to a breath sample, his blood alcohol content tested to be 0.19 percent.

RARITAN TOWNSHIP

■ DRUNKEN DRIVING. MY CITATIONS, 2:55 p.m. May 6: Joseph Russo, 36, of East Bangor, Pa., was charged with drunken driving following a traffic stop on Route 31. Police said Russo was initially stopped for weaving and for not wearing a seat belt. He also was given summonses for reckless driving, having an open container of alcohol in a motor vehicle, consumption of alcohol in a motor vehicle, failure to maintain lane and for failure to wear a seat belt.

■ DRUNKEN DRIVING. MY CITATIONS, 8:50 p.m. May 6: Donald Cooper, 54, of Belvi-

Panel may tighten 'pay to play' ban

By **MARTIN C. BRICKETTO**
STAFF WRITER

Green Brook official says state ban not enough

GREEN BROOK — The township committee today will mull new regulations intended to stymie the exchange of political contributions for government contracts, a practice known as "pay to play."

The measure is being pushed by Committeewoman Melonie Marano, who said there doesn't appear to be a severe problem in Green Brook but the changes would boost public confidence.

"I think the public expects and deserves that transparency and to gain that trust in their elected officials and their government," Marano said. "I don't want there to be the perception by the public that they're being overtaxed by contractors that are supplementing political contributions to the charges that they put to the township."

Marano said a good model for

Green Brook is the pay-to-play ordinance adopted in Montgomery Township.

For work outside of the bidding process that exceeds \$5,000, the measure caps any would-be government contractor's annual donations at \$250 to a candidate and \$500 to any municipal or Somerset County political committee.

Individuals that make up a

business entity — such as principals, partners or officers — would not be able to give more than \$1,000 to all township committee candidates or municipal or county parties combined to receive a township contract above \$5,000.

Companies are also banned from giving to candidates as well as municipal and county parties while dealing with the

township on a more than \$5,000 contract.

State pay-to-play laws for municipalities call for a "fair and open process" in awarding contracts above a certain threshold in lieu of a tighter cap on political donations.

"It's not enough," Marano said.

Marano is the lone Democrat on the township's five-person board, but a pay-to-play law may still have traction.

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Stepping up to the plate



KATHY JOHNSON/Staff photographer

■ Marion Behr, left, holds a plate while her husband Omri holds a print that shows their Electroetch method of etching art plates at Marion's studio.

Local couple spreads print invention worldwide

By **MARTIN C. BRICKETTO**
STAFF WRITER

BRANCHBURG — Marion and Omri Behr of Branchburg may have traveled to Mexico in late March to demonstrate the nontoxic method for etching and printmaking they invented, but the trip was a learning experience for them as well.

Marion Behr, an artist who works in several mediums, observed how some methods usually considered improper were used successfully by accomplished Mexican artists in their own prints, such as using one's hands to wipe the plate used in the process.

"I learned so many 'nevers' from them that worked beautifully, but it was because they had their way, and they had been printing for 20, 30 or God knows how many years," Behr said.

Working in Central Mexico at the Centro de los Artes at San Agustin Etla, the couple showed the environmentally safe "Electroetch" method to the heads of Arts Council of Mexico (CONACULTA) centers throughout the country. The experienced printmakers included Francisco Toledo, one of the most recognized artists in that country.

The print studio is located in

a refurbished former linen factory on a hillside overlooking several villages. One of the two large wings of the building was reserved for a nontoxic print studio and outfitted with Electroetch equipment. Etching itself is an engraving method that dates back thousands of years.

The project was sponsored by CONACULTA, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico and Toledo, according to the couple. Each artist made multiple prints during the session.

The first correspondence the couple received from the

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Voters reject library plan

South Plainfield Council to discuss proposal tonight

By **LINDA SADLOUSKOS**
STAFF WRITER

SOUTH PLAINFIELD — The majority of the 1,148 residents who voted in "Democracy Week," the borough's revived local exercise in democracy, said in a 689 to 479 vote they are against plans to spend \$4.5 million for a new library as it is now proposed.

Democracy Week voting at Borough Hall wrapped up Saturday at 3 p.m. Voting began last Monday. Borough clerk Joann Graf said Sunday afternoon results were technically unofficial, but she expected no change in the outcome.

Borough officials, including Mayor Charles Butrico, said the nonbinding vote results will definitely be discussed at tonight's Borough Council meeting, scheduled for 7 p.m. at the South Plainfield Senior Center, 90 Maple Avenue.

But Butrico said he is unsure whether a vote by less than 10 percent of more than 12,000 registered voters truly represents local feelings on the need for a new and larger library.

Voters were asked whether the borough council should issue bonds for \$4.5 million in order to fund construction of a new 15,000-square-foot library two doors down from the municipal building on Plainfield Avenue. The current library at

2484 Plainfield Avenue is just over 6,300 square feet.

Council President Robert Bengivena said he and three other Republicans who make up the majority of the six-member Borough Council had vowed before Democracy Week they would abide by the results. "The council should listen to the voters," he said.

Graf said her main task over the next few days will be tallying up comments of voters on either side of the issue. She said a summary of comments will likely be ready to present to the Borough Council later this week.

"Some people said 'no' for economic reasons. Some said 'no' because the didn't like the (building) plan, or the location," Graf said. "Some people just said no."

"One person said, 'Over my dead body.'"

A large portion of yes votes came from families with young children who attend library programs, she said. But Graf said some senior residents also voted yes because they rely on library programs.

Butrico said the council was about to move ahead in January and advertise for bids on the new library with prepared drawings, following about four years of planning. At that time, newly elected 4-2

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Indian Association festival on Saturday

By **RITU JHA**
STAFF WRITER

SOMERSET — Started with an objective to build confidence and eliminate stage fear among their children, the Indian Association of Somerset County is celebrating its Spring Festival on Saturday, May 17, starting at 6 p.m. at the Bridgewater Middle School.

"We started with six families and today there are 250 families," said Ajay Shah, vice president of the Indian Association of Somerset County.

Shah said the association is growing. Last year there were

plan the event.

After the meeting, the committee sends fliers to the members and parents who have children to participate in the event.

The choreographer then teaches children ages 5 to 17 years song and dance which is then performed by the children in a group.

"There is no solo performance," he said.

He said this year there are 18 dance teams based on folk and Bollywood songs.

The three-hour event will also have a 45-minute break for refreshments.

Business blooms on Mother's Day

By **JOSHUA BURD**
STAFF WRITER

SOUTH PLAINFIELD — Football season is long gone by May, but for the Rossi family, the owners of Coppola's Garden Center, the "big game" mentality is at its peak on Mother's Day.

"In the garden center we say this is our Super Bowl," Bob Rossi said. "It's the big game for us this weekend. Nobody forgets mom."

Even in a slumping economy, Mother's Day came without missing a beat as probably the busiest day of the year for some local garden centers. The New Durham Road market was one of many where last-minute shoppers flocked on Sunday to buy plants or flowers, those popular and seemingly perpetual gifts for the springtime holiday.

Around 1:30 p.m. the parking lot at Coppola's was filled and cars were parallel parked along the busy New Dur-

