



COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Rutgers will honor Hamady N'Diaye today during Senior Night. **SPORTS, PAGE C1**

NATION

Government still hearing complaints about fixed Toyotas. **DAILY BRIEFING, PAGE A13**



LOAF AROUND

Annual festival to feature more than 20 New Jersey artists. **COMMUNITY LIFE, PAGE B1**

102 — AND COUNTING

Centenarian loves life, education and a good joke. **STORY, PAGE B1**



WEATHER

Cloudy
High: 42; Low: 29
FORECAST, A2

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Courier News Daily

City fills 1 of 3 top posts

By **MARK SPIVEY**
STAFF WRITER

HIRED: IT manager; 2 finance jobs remain vacant

PLAINFIELD — The city has hired a former Plainfield Public Schools official to fill its new position of information technology manager, but municipal officials continue to fret over the vacancies in two other key government positions.

Chris Payne, a 10-year

veteran of the school district who most recently was paid a \$122,000 salary as its coordinator of information technology and support services, resigned from that position effective Feb. 5. Payne took over as the city's IT manager Feb. 8, Mayor Sharon

Robinson-Briggs said Tuesday, the new position comes with a salary range of \$70,000 to \$110,000.

Payne's responsibilities are expected to range from overhauling the municipal Web site to revamping local cable television pro-

gramming and even serving as the city's media liaison, according to Robinson-Briggs. Payne said Wednesday that the decision to take the new position and a corresponding pay cut was a personal one motivated by a desire to be challenged, not

political ambition.

"It's a great opportunity to be the first IT director for the city after I was the first IT director for the district," Payne said. "I think we did great things at the board, and I would like to do the same kind of things here."

See **Plainfield, Page A4**

600 PUPILS HAD A HAND PAINTING 100-FT. MURAL

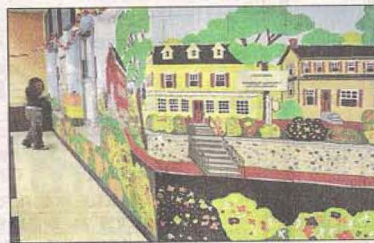


Scenic views from the Basking Ridge section of Bernards have been re-created on a winding hallway leading to the new cafe at the township's Oak Street Elementary School. Local artist Caren Frost Olmsted, whose son Benjamin is a third-grader, said she started work in January on the schoolwide project celebrating the school's 70th anniversary and the township's 250th.

"I basically laid out a huge coloring book," Olmsted said. Each of the school's more than 600 students was assigned to paint in small sections. Another 70 or so parents volunteered to paint the sky and to supervise children in grades K-5 as they painted. Olmsted said.

The mural depicts the school, a centuries-old oak tree, English Farm and other sites and sights.

The mural will be officially unveiled at 6:15 p.m. Friday in the cafe at the school, 70 W. Oak St.



Top: Artist Caren Frost Olmsted puts finishing touches on a 100-foot mural she designed and students and parents painted along a hallway at Oak Street Elementary School in Bernards' Basking Ridge section. **Above:** Some of the township's best-known buildings are among the familiar scenes depicted.

STAFF PHOTOS: ED PAGLIARINI

Renewal zone in Somerville could expand

Post Office Plaza owner wants in

By **MARTIN C. BRICCHETTO**
STAFF WRITER

SOMERVILLE — The borough will explore whether Post Office Plaza should become part of the redevelopment area that includes the Downtown Somerville Shopping Center.

The Borough Council on Monday approved a resolution directing the Planning Board to evaluate the lots with the office building and an adjoining parking area on the corner of Division Street and Veterans Memorial Drive in the redevelopment zone.

Somerville Tic I LLC owns the property being considered for the roughly 14-acre West Main Street Redevelopment Area, according to property records.

Officials have said the owner of the nearby shopping center, JSM at Somerville, is trying to reach a formal lease with Saker ShopRites that would bring a supermarket back to the site between West Main Street and Veterans Memorial Drive as part of broader redevelopment plans. The old shopping center, including the buildings that formerly housed Pathmark, already was demolished by crews last month.

The current action with Post Office Plaza is directly tied to the possibility

See **Renewal, Page A4**

Consolidation studies need budget data

By **MARTIN C. BRICCHETTO**
STAFF WRITER

SOMERVILLE — Consolidation studies undertaken by Somerset County of local police, tax assessment and Municipal Court functions will go through another round of data gathering before updated reports are presented to officials.

The Caldwell-based consultant working on those studies, Thomas Banker, has virtually completed all three reviews but wants to update portions of them with 2008 budget data, according to a March 2 e-mail from Freeholder Director Jack Ciattarelli to members of the Somerset County Municipal Managers Association.

Ciattarelli said the association's role will be to approve or disapprove of moving to the third phase of the police study, which entails a task force of stakeholders in any proposed consolidation. Decisions also would be made on the second phases for the tax assessment and municipal court studies, which would include the design of prototypes and a deployment plan for regional models.

See **Studies, Page A6**

Linda Sadlouskos