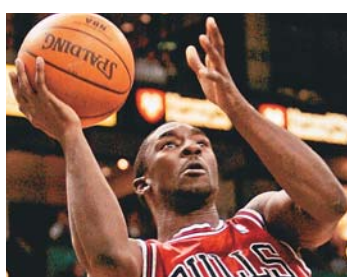




Chef's DISH

GET TO KNOW LOWER HUDSON VALLEY CHEFS IN A NEW FOOD COLUMN | 1D

WESTCHESTER FINAL



BEN GORDON CASHES IN WITH ADVERTISING | 1C

SUIT CLAIMS IBM OWES OT | 9C

TIME TO COOK UP A STORM | 1D

LoHud.com Webcast

AN EARLY EYE ON WEEKEND WEATHER

Wednesday January 25, 2006

The Journal News

50 cents

LoHud.com

SERVING THE LOWER HUDSON VALLEY SINCE 1850

914-694-9300

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGE | CHANGING VIEWS ON WHO CAN RAISE CHILDREN



John Starks of Yonkers holds his son, Jeremiah, as he talks about the parenting classes at Westchester Arc. With the support of Arc, Starks and his wife, Bonnie, who is also developmentally disabled, were awarded custody of their son.

Learning to be good parents

Program for disabled covers topics from diapers to discipline

Marcela Rojas
The Journal News

YONKERS
One day after delivery, Bonnie Starks did not find herself at home cuddling her newborn son, Jeremiah, but standing in front of a judge, pleading to be a mother. "I told the judge, 'I want my child to come home,'" she said softly. "I learned how to be a good parent."

Starks had four of her children taken from her in 2003 and placed in foster care, in part, she said, because she was not equipped with the parenting skills to raise them. The 30-year-old has developmental disabilities and, until recently, was devoid of a support system to help her rear her children.

But with a new marriage and Westchester Arc backing her, Starks and her husband, John, were—that same day in court—granted custody of their son.

"This is my first child and my first wife," said John Starks, 45, as 18-month-old Jeremiah slept soundly in his lap. Both father and son suffer from developmental delays.

The Yonkers couple participate in Westchester Arc's parenting group, a program launched in 2002 that teach-

es mothers and fathers with mild to moderate developmental disabilities skills that range from changing diapers to child-proofing a home to disciplining their children.

"We've seen tremendous growth in the parents," said Barbara Powell, a senior social worker at Westchester Arc. "Only one mother's child was placed in foster care and not because of her developmental disabilities but because of (the parent's) mood disorders and domestic violence issues."

Currently, 10 mothers and four fathers participate in the bimonthly program that meets in the agency's Yonkers offices. Separate sessions are held for the men and women. Along with parenting lessons, the participants are taught how to budget their money and maintain healthy relationships, among other life skills. The program, funded by the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, is free to participants and cab fare is included.

"I enjoy coming because I learn a lot of stuff I don't know about," said Toni Carter-Perkins, 30, of Yonkers. "If it wasn't for this program, I'd be lost."

Carter-Perkins has five children between the ages of 1 and 11. She joined the parenting group when her last daughter, Deaja, was born. Four of her children have varying levels of developmental disabilities and one has not been classified. With the help of the program, Deaja is now benefiting



FYI

For more information on Westchester Arc's parenting program, call Sharisse Hunter at 914-428-8330, Ext. 3141, or visit its Web site at www.westchesterarc.org

Bonnie Starks, left, of Yonkers talks about the parenting classes she attends. Because of those classes, she says, "I learned how to be a good parent."

from early intervention education, she said.

"I would have none of this for my daughter," Carter-Perkins said, as Deaja playfully ran around the room. "She didn't talk before and now she says all kinds of words."

The parenting group was born out of a growing need in the community,

Powell said, and specifically after she encountered a mother with autism.

"It was an unidentified need," she said. "The trend now is to see more parents with developmental disabilities."

The subject of parents with intel-

Please see PARENTS, 13A

Laborer hiring site to be shut

Trustees: Official spot draws from outside community

Candice Ferrette
and Ernie Garcia
The Journal News

MAMARONECK VILLAGE — A parking lot near Columbus Park will no longer serve as an official hiring site for day laborers as of Feb. 1 — a move that is already drawing criticism from Hispanic advocates.

Laborers who wait there for work have become a liability for the village while neighboring communities aren't doing their part, according to a resolution adopted by the Board of Trustees in a 3-2 vote this week. The site could reopen April 1, but only if Larchmont and the town of Mamaroneck agree to open their own sites, the board decided.

"These are not residents of the village. They are locusts. They are takers. They come in here and take, and they won't ever give back to the community," Trustee Joseph Angilletta said about laborers from other communities who gather in Mamaroneck village. "I was elected to protect the residents of the village."

The decision comes as day laborers — and controversies around them — proliferate

Please see LABORERS, 13A

Hiring sites

Some municipalities have created official hiring sites for day laborers, while elsewhere the hiring is much less formal.

Official sites

- Port Chester
- Mount Kisco
- Ossining
- Peekskill
- Spring Valley
- Mamaroneck village

Unofficial sites

- Yonkers. (City has proposed funds to establish an official site.)
- Mount Vernon
- New Rochelle. (An official site operated through the summer.)
- White Plains
- Brewster. (The village has proposed an official site.)

Putnam may raise retirees' cost for benefits

Workers should pay 20% of premiums, county legislator says

Susan Elan
The Journal News

CARMEL — Current and future county retirees could be facing significant increases in their health-care contributions under one solution being eyed to solve county government's skyrocketing medical insurance costs.

County Legislator Tony Hay, R-Southeast, who chairs a panel studying the problem, said he plans to propose a formula Feb. 6, whereby all would share equally in the pain of rising expenses.

Please see BENEFITS, 13A

INSIDE

Classified	1E	Movies	4D
Comics	2D	Obituaries	4B
Crossword	7E	Opinion	6B
Dear Abby	3D	Scoreboard	7C
Lotteries	2B	Television	4D

Day: Windy, High 47.
Night: Cloudy, Low 23.
Weather 13A

LoHud.com

Multimedia
Audio slideshows from the Lower Hudson Valley at lohud.com/view



Tomorrow in Sports

A new trend has taken hold in the region: yoga in high-heat venues.



© 2006 The Journal News
For home delivery: 800-942-1010
Main number: 914-694-9300

Majority of senators say they'll back Alito

Nominee expected to win confirmation; court may tilt right

Jesse J. Holland
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito won commitments from a majority of senators yesterday, ensuring his eventual confirmation and a likely tilt of the court to the right.

On the same day Alito won a 10-

Inside

Schumer refuses to back Alito, 1B

8 party-line approval from the Senate Judiciary Committee, five Republicans announced that they would vote for his confirmation in the full Senate, pushing him over 50 votes in the 100-member chamber.

Fifty Senate Republicans, plus one Democrat, Ben Nelson of Nebraska, have publicly committed to

Please see ALITO, 12A



Kenneth Cirigliano, left, and Takanori Okkotsu play a block game during indoor recess at John F. Kennedy Elementary School in Brewster.

The inside scoop on recess

Bad weather may keep some schoolchildren indoors, but they nonetheless enjoy innovative and stimulating recess activities that allow them to play while expanding their social skills.

Details, 1B