

Residents get info via e-mail

BY NAVID IQBAL
Of Suburbanite

As the township considers new ways of reaching out to people to make special announcements, residents have for years been using a relatively successful method: mass e-mails.

For instance, for the last two years, an e-mail group started by community leaders - "Teaneck411" - has produced a prolific amount of information about township services and events.

But "Teaneck411" is just one of the many town related electronic messaging services that residents are a members.

Yahoogroups, run by the popular website YAHOO, provides a relatively simple way to send out mass e-mails to groups of people.

The website lists 42 e-mail groups that describe themselves as something having to do with Teaneck.

Each group has its own special area of dialogue. One group is full of graduates from Teaneck High School's class of 1969. Another larger discussion group is called the "Teaneck-Halaqa," that is a

forum for information exchange for members of the town's Muslim community.

The biggest group in terms of listed subscribers is "Teaneck-Shuls." Calling itself an "announcement list for the Jewish community and shuls in Teaneck," the group has more than 3,000 members. Another TeaneckShuls group has 611 members.

"Teaneck411" has about 100 members and is not specific to any particular category, only things related to Teaneck. Among its contributors are some notables.

Capt. Bill Beavers of the Teaneck xxxxxxx Department used the group last week to announce an EMS demonstration.

Alan Sohn, a spokesman for TeaneckCARES, the organization that supported three Board of Education candidates earlier this year, regularly publicizes upcoming council and statutory board meetings.

Aliza Fischman, Teaneck411's moderator, said the group began after she was asked to help by her friend Deputy Mayor Elie Y. Katz.

"Knowing Elie for as long as I do, and knowing how much he

does for the community, I was more than happy to help," said Fischman through an e-mail message.

Other members of council also frequently get out messages through e-mail.

Perhaps among the most prolific e-mail messengers is Councilman Paul Ostrow, who does not send messages through an e-mail group, but frequently writes messages to a large list of people.

"Unfortunately there is a lack of continuity and control with these e-mail groups," said Ostrow, "but I credit the people for using them. However, the readers of these e-mail groups should not take all that is written as fact."

Councilman Yitz Stern subscribes to the TeaneckShuls group and also forwards articles of interest to his own personal list.

At recent council meetings, council members discussed ways of reaching out to people during emergency situations, such as the Blackout of 2003. But council

members pointed out that high-tech solutions may not work during similar situations.

Officials are trying to decide how to notify residents of special announcements. They have mulled over several ideas, including making announcements using megaphones.

Several residents have complained about the lack of information available especially when the snow ordinance goes into effect.

The emergency snow ordinance prohibits parking on township streets and lifts parking limitations in municipal lots. But residents have complained about not knowing when the ordinance is in effect, and subsequently received summonses.

"We are looking at high-tech solutions, but maybe we need low-tech solutions," said Councilman Deborah Veach at the council meeting Tuesday, Aug. 19.

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