

Gretchen Dater remembered

BY BRETT FREEMAN
For Suburban News

RAMSEY – Gretchen Dater would have been 39 years old on May 17 had she not perished in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988.

But her family and friends were determined to celebrate her life, rather than mourn, as they gathered at Dater Elementary School on Thursday for the annual Gretchen Dater Day.

Attendees gathered for lunch and the dedication of the Gretchen Dater Art Room and to observe the special art classes taught over several days in what has become Gretchen Dater Week.

"If it hadn't been for Gretchen, all of us wouldn't be as close as we are," said Alanna Masker, Gretchen's childhood buddy.

Masker said it brings them joy to be back together at the school, which is named for Gretchen's

great-grandfather, John Y. Dater.

"The Daters mean so much for all of us," she said.

Gretchen majored in fine arts at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, and during her junior year, attended Syracuse University's London Art Center, according to her mother, Joan.

On Dec. 21, 1988, the 20-year-old and dozens of other students perished on their flight back home from their studies, victims of a terrorist attack for which the Libyan government has accepted responsibility.

"Terrorists can take their bodies, but they can't take their spirits," Joan said, adding that her daughter's spirit lives on through events like the one they were celebrating



Dater

at the school.

Along with family and friends, Joan was accompanied by Mary Lou Ciulla and Mary Kay Stratis, whose husbands, Frank and Elia, respectively, also died on the flight.

"Any kind of occasion she has for Gretchen, we join her," Ciulla said, indicating that the three of them had become close.

Gretchen's artistic talent was on display, with her paintings showcased in the art room and a self-portrait prominently displayed inside the entrance hallway.

All week, including a class period before lunch, students were treated to a demonstration by expert potter Cliff Mendelson.

In the morning, students and guests were visibly wowed as Mendelson turned a blob of clay into a vase on his potter's wheel.

Don Warnaar, the Dater Elementary School principal from

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COLLEGES

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■ Tanya Lagatella of Waldwick, a senior political science and journalism student, recently received the Political Science Best Senior Thesis Award for submitting an outstanding and original thesis at the 24th annual Senior Awards Ceremony at Quinnipiac University.

■ The following Johnson & Wales University students have been named to the Dean's List for the 2007 winter term:

Franklin Lakes: Marissa Jaffe.

Mahwah: Leane Picheria, Kate

Rooney, William Savas.

Wyckoff: Joanna Yick.

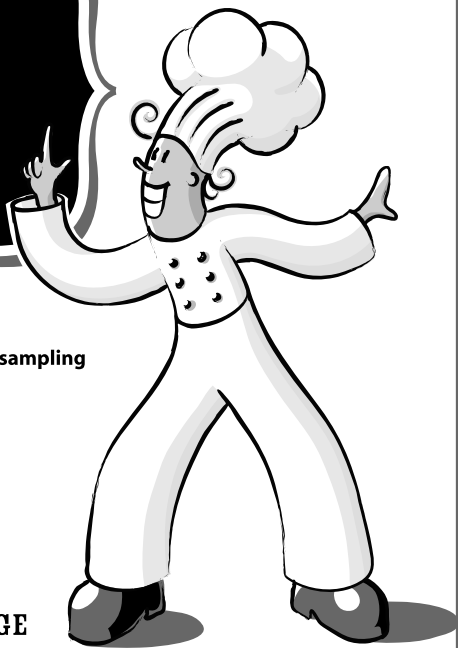
■ Kaity Doolittle of Mahwah has been named to Mount Ida College's Dean's List with honors for the fall 2006 semester.

■ Sarah Gilbert of Oakland, a senior psychology major in the College of Liberal Arts at Quinnipiac University, recently received the R. Gordon Paulacny Graduation Prize in Psychology, which is presented to the student with the highest overall grade point average among graduating psychology students, at the 24th annual Senior Awards Ceremony at Quinnipiac.

■ James Szal of Oakland graduated in 2006 from Indian Hills High

School and Bergen County Technical High School, and continued his training at Wyo Tech, Blairsville, Pa., campus, where he has just successfully passed the ATRA R&R Technician exam.

■ Ali Rasovic of Wyckoff, a student at Fairfield University, was inducted into Beta Gamma Sigma, an international honor society recognizing the outstanding academic achievements of students enrolled in collegiate business programs accredited by AACSB International. Rasovic is the daughter of Carol and Michael Rasovic and a graduate of Ramapo High School.



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