Mirrors give an almost futuristic look to a third floor room.

Success of month-long event attributed to community spirit.

By NADIA ZIGALKA
Courier-News Writer

PLAINFIELD — The result of 15 months of planning by the Auxiliary of Muhlenberg Hospital and the efforts of 1,000 volunteers, it stands as a monument to community spirit.

The description comes from Kay Redden, president of the Auxiliary.
Plainfield’s Renaissance Showhouse

A popular attraction is a child’s playroom located on the third floor.

By NADIA ZIGALKA
Courier-News Writer

PLAINFIELD — The result of 15 months of planning by the Auxiliary of Muhlenberg Hospital and the efforts of 1,000 volunteers, it stands as a monument to community spirit. The description comes from Kay Rosenthal of Plainfield, who has been working on the event attributed to community effort.

Textiles, antiques, reproductions of antiques, rare and unusual accessories, art of every description and almost a forest of potted plants transform the dwelling into 20th century elegance.

Most of the furnishings are for sale to be picked up at the close of the exhibition. Notable among those that already have found buyers is a $9,000 antique mahogany.

In the same stratosphere is a $3,500 vase in the English country sitting room designed by Lucy Rose, who lives in the adjacent converted barn which once had been a part of the property. The sitting room is contiguous to a bathroom which Rose also renovated. It is woody with a nostalgic charm despite its modernity. Even the hardware is of good.
Here’s when it’s open

The showhouse itself is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Lunch is served daily from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and brunch during the same hours on Sunday. The cost is $5 on weekdays and $6.50 on Sundays.

Wish you hadn’t mailed that letter?
Post office can get it back for you

By LAURIE P. COHEN
Column News Service
and JIM MCCOMBE
Courier-News Staff Writer

If you ever drop a letter for a bill payment into a mailbox and then remember you forgot to enclose the check, there’s a good chance that you can retrieve it.

It’s a service not many people know about, but it’s one that postal employees provide when requested.

The Somerville Post Office regularly gets requests from mail patrons who want a letter returned.

But in Plainfield such requests are rare.

Somerville Postmaster Paul Frey said his office is asked about five times a month to get a letter back for a customer.

He said the usual explanation is that someone forgot to enclose a check for a bill. Quite often the missing check is made out to the Internal Revenue Service.

Occasionally the sender wants a letter back because a photograph or a personal item was left out.

Frey said his office usually can get the letter back if the sender acts promptly.

If you wait several hours after mailing a letter for nearby delivery, it might be too late; he pointed out.

To get a letter back you must fill out a form entitled “Sender’s Application For Return of Mail.”

You’ll also be told to call the post office at the point of destination to notify them that the form is being sent. If your letter hasn’t been delivered, it will be returned when the form is received at the other end.

Frey said a receiving post office will hold a letter for a day or two. But if the needed form hasn’t arrived by that time, the letter will usually be delivered.

He said an undelivered letter can be given back to a sender. “Because it’s your mail until we deliver it.”

Frey said his office may get more requests than a larger office such as Plainfield because Somerville is a county seat and a lot of mail from non-residents is processed there.

Plainfield Postmaster Elwood Pryor said in the four and a half years that he has been in charge of the city’s post office he knows of only one instance in which a sender asked to have a letter returned.

On that occasion, which he said was “two or three years ago,” the sender forgot to enclose a check intended as a federal income tax payment.

The amount of money, he said, “was a couple of hundred dollars and we were able to retrieve it.”

Frey said there is no fee for the service, but if you want to use a Post Office phone to call the office of destination, you’ll have to pay the charges.

In larger cities such requests also occur infrequently and sometimes there is a small fee for the retrieval service. In those areas, also, the reasons for wanting a letter back may be for reasons other than a missing check.

“It could be love letters people didn’t want to send, incomplete tax forms, wrong checks or wedding rings that were dropped into envelopes by mistake,” said Louis F. Calza, a clerk at the Manhattan General Post Office. “We get recall requests for lots of reasons.”

But Calza emphasized that the rate of success in tracking down a letter depends on how soon a sender discovers the error.

“Time is very important,” he said. “If you call us two hours after you sent it, we have a better chance of intercepting it.”

Calza said he gets about 35 recall requests each month from the more than 300 million pieces of mail collected in New York City. Of those requests, he estimated that there is a 75 percent success rate.

In the 15 years Jerry Reynolds has worked for the San Francisco post office, he hasn’t seen more than a couple of recall requests.
20th century elegance.

The description comes from Kay Funkhouser of Plainfield who as general chairman engineered the Plainfield Renaissance Designers' Showhouse at 1217 Watchung Ave.

The structure, a turn-of-the-century mansion refurbished under the guidance of 30 interior designers who contributed their labors and provided the furnishings, has attracted several thousand admiring visitors a mid-way in a month-long hospital benefit.

The money raised will finance a high-risk nursery at the hospital.

Large daily crowds have been reported at the mansion, but specific attendance figures were not available.

What makes the showhouse remarkable, aside from the public interest it has aroused, is the way people have pitched in to help, according to Funkhouser.

Many materials were donated, ranging from the silver service for 200 given by the Lawyers' Club in New York City, to horticultural supplies, carpeting, paint and lumber.

"There was no way we could have done this without (those who donated time or materials)," said Funkhouser who spends every day at the mansion even though she is not a member of the sponsoring group.

The mansion, built in 1902 by Stephen A. Ginna at a cost of $10,000, is a treasure trove of ideas for home owners. "Before" photos at the entrance to each room underscore what has been accomplished and the results are impressive.

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...And coming up this Sunday

They don't make porches like they used to, but you can see the best of them in Plainfield on Sunday.

Five verandas and six gardens will be featured in "In Praise of Porches," from 1 to 5 p.m. in the Crescent Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Tickets are $5 to the event sponsored by the Plainfield Crescent Area Neighborhood Association.

See an Eastlake style mansion with a pentagonal porch owned by Lisa and William Hetfield. Gloria and William Albert's Italian home with a characteristic square tower, the brick mansion with ornamented corbeled brickwork belonging to Mary and Edward Taylor, and the homes of Elizabeth and Richard Kamis, and Robert Schultidt and Richard Ignall.

Also featured are a geometric green

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OK dads, it's your turn

Do you remember the Courier-News story on what motherhood means to mothers in Central Jersey? Well, we're planning the same thing for fathers.

All you dads: tell us what fatherhood means to you — the good and the bad, the joys and the frustrations. Put your thoughts in a letter and send it to:

'The Fatherhood' Courier-News 1201 Route 22 Bridgewater, N.J. 08807

We'll take your responses and compile them into a story explaining how Central Jersey dads view fatherhood. To be eligible, all replies must be received by Friday, June 11.

In period dress, Lisa Hetfield, left, and Gloria Albert rehearse their roles for Sunday's 'In Praise of Porches.'