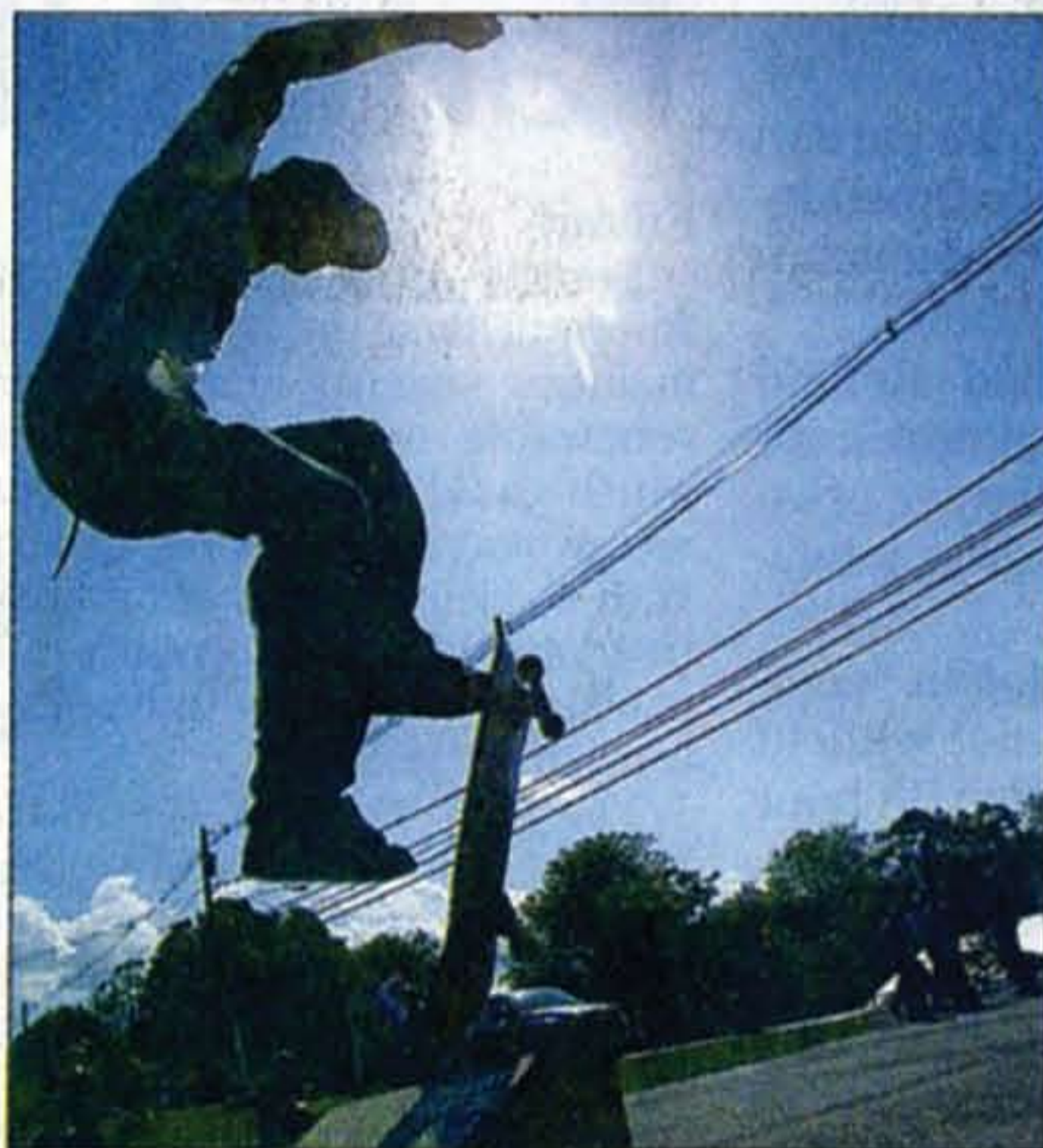




Photos by Daniel Freel/New Jersey Herald

Max Mohr, 14, of Vernon competes in the best trick event during a skateboarding competition at Outkast Sports on Route 94 in Vernon Sunday afternoon. Mohr won the game of skate. Below, Greg Sturm of Vernon, left, and Sean Shouldis of Sparta perform.



Skate shop owners hope for skate park in Vernon

By **ELISA D. KELLER**
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VERNON — At Outkast Sports' tent sale and skateboarding competition on Sunday, five local contestants did jumps off portable wooden ramps in the shop's parking lot, mere feet from Route 94. If partners Kevin Whitehead and Stephen Wanczowski have anything to say about it, county skaters will eventually have a safer, permanent place to practice their tricks and jumps in Vernon.

"I always wanted a good skate park here growing up," said Wanczowski, co-owner of Outkast's online sales department. "I'll go to Sayreville or the city to skate something good, and it's just so far away. It's kind of a dream of mine."

"The big thing is going to be the town coming up with land for us," added Whitehead, who owns the company's retail shop with his wife, Kelly.

The Outkast team is in the process of requesting a land donation from Vernon, hoping to develop a multi-staged arena called the Chris Tyler Memorial Skate Park, after their recently deceased friend.

"They're hopefully going to donate an acre of

land," said Wanczowski, who has already begun attending town meetings, and just set up a non-profit agency. "We're going to start raising the money to build a public skate park in town — something that will be well-rounded for advanced to beginners. Something that will draw people in from all over."

Whitehead feels a skate park would add another outdoor activity to Sussex County's roster of hiking, skiing and biking.

Unlike some local ski shops that close in the spring, Outkast Sports considers skateboarding a logical off-season activity for hundreds of snowboarders in Vernon and the surrounding areas when it's too warm for snow. Compared to organized team sports, Whitehead also believes that skateboarding provides a particularly good outlet for boys age 13 to 19, who may prefer an activity without a strict schedule of practices and games.

"You don't need a team, you could just do it by yourself," he said. "You need at least one other person to (play catch)."