Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: ‘What are you doing for others?’”

On a snowy and cold Friday night, January 14, just two days before Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Mayor Richard Thomas hosted a “Be the Change” panel discussion on peace initiatives in Mount Vernon.

Crime within Mount Vernon has accelerated dramatically within the last year, especially in the area of shootings, resulting in the senseless death of Shamoya McKenzie, a very intelligent, athletic and popular young Mount Vernon student. Her death has galvanized the community into action like never before.

Acting as the Mistress of Ceremonies was Sylvia Gadson, Deputy Commissioner of the Mount Vernon Recreation Department, who did a phenomenal job during the two-hour panel discussion intended to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

After introducing Mayor Thomas, Gadson introduced the members of the panel which consisted of representatives from the Mount Vernon Police Department, the Chamber of Commerce, the Youth Bureau, church leaders, Department of

Continued on page 7

Harriet Tubman National Park may become a reality soon

Harriet Tubman, left, with family and neighbors, circa 1887

Harriet Tubman’s upcoming debut on the $20 bill is just half the good news in the upstate New York town where the Underground Railroad conductor settled down and grew old.

A long-sought national historical park here honoring Tubman could be officially established as early as this summer. The move would give a boost to preservation efforts at her old home and church just as the former slave is poised to replace President Andrew Jackson as the face of the $20 bill.

“It’s about time,” Judith Bryant, Tubman’s 80-year-old great-great-grand-niece said of the recognition as the first African-American on U.S. paper currency.

Continued on page 6
CELEBRATE
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Dialysis Program now available at
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The Westchester Center is keeping up with ever changing medical needs of our residents and patients. We are proud now to offer on-site Hemodialysis. We are among the few sub-acute care providers of this service presently in the Westchester area. The Westchester Center provides the most effective rehabilitation environment for both chronic and short-term dialysis patients. With our new state-of-the-art dialysis center it eliminates the need for our patients to leave the facility three days a week to an off-site dialysis center. Our patients gain valuable rehabilitation time that help them return home sooner.

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The Westchester Center for Rehabilitation & Nursing
10 Claremont Avenue, Mt. Vernon, NY 10550
Tel: (914) 659-1600
EDITORIAL

Response to Mayor Thomas’ letter on Mt. Vernon city budget

Mayor Vernon, which is my adopted home, is a magnificent city experiencing something similar to what Bronx residents had to endure in the 1970’s before they overcame what appeared to be endless and insurmountable obstacles.

With unprecedented division amongst a population of almost 100,000 residents, and crime at a record high, every Mount Vernonite must find a way to get involved to overcome the issues plaguing the city.

We are all struggling to make sense of the recent and unspeakable tragedy involving the loss of a brilliant and athletic 13-year-old young lady, and to find a way to comfort the family and community that were shattered by this incomprehensible violence. Part of our healing must be the conviction that we will do everything in our power to keep tragedies like this from happening again. We must strive as a united city to prevent the continuous drumbeat of death-by-gun that claims too many lives in Mount Vernon.

Citizens of Mount Vernon need to find ways to have their voices heard. And the way to do that is to participate in City Council meetings in large number and speak during the public speaking sessions – like Brenda Crump does. Mount Vernon needs more Brenda Crumps. If you stay home and let the other guy represent you – that won’t work.

You can take your city back from the current division and despair, but you need to unite and become one family again – like you were when I came to Mount Vernon 13 years ago. Stop complaining amongst each other and complain to the elected officials. And most importantly, you must get out to vote to remove individuals viewed as so-called “burns.”

Joe Parisi
Publisher/Editor

Why I will never post on Facebook again!

On January 2 I posted what I thought was an encouraging and motivating editorial on the Inquirer’s website. I then very innocently posted it on my Facebook page, which I never use. Well, the editorial created a frenzy of posts – many positive, but one in particular hurt my feelings in a serious way.

My post prompted one user to state that I had sold my soul and was benefitting financially by taking sides with the current mayor of Mount Vernon. I realize that the person who created said post is ignorant about my mission as the publisher and editor of the Inquirer. My mission is basically to act as a messenger of all the good things that happen in Mount Vernon on a daily basis. In the interim I do get press releases from the mayor’s office, which I print. I also print press releases and letters to the editor from other city officials and citizens in general. And please keep in mind that I continuously print editorials that are not viewed as favorable by the mayor’s office and others.

After 13 years as publisher of the Inquirer, I have always been accused of taking sides with the incumbent mayor because I print many of his press releases. One person actually asked me if Mayor Ernest D. Davis was my partner, since he was always in the Inquirer. It all has to do withstandiated allegations that appear to be a result of his vivid imagination. The adopted 2017 budget results in a 1.07% property tax increase, the lowest in over two decades. The budget funds the services required by the residents and businesses in Mount Vernon.

It also should be noted that the Mayor who is a former member of the Board of Estimate and Contract, for the 2017 budget. How could he vote in favor of the budget and now criticize it? Contrary to his claims, the money to finance 2017’s contractual wage increase has been appropriate in the 2017 budget and will be paid out in 2017. The city has already paid the 2014, 2015 and 2016 increases in the year 2016. The Mayor has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate a profound, unfortunate and embarrassing inability to read and understand basic and elementary financial and accounting documents. It has often been said that “it is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt.” This is exactly what Mayor Thomas has done in his unfortunate letter that is riddled with inconsistencies and errors.

Respectfully Submitted,
Maureen Walker, CPA
Comptroller of the City of Mount Vernon
914-665-2304 (Office)

My post was a learning experience and I have never made that mistake again. When I was a narcotics detective I had countless opportunities to steal drugs and money, but it never crossed my mind and I left the NYPD under honorable conditions.

I’m a tough guy, but even tough guys have feelings. And that individual who posted those remarks on Facebook really hurt me. Now I know what cyberbullying is all about and why some kids are hurt to a point that they wind up committing suicide.

What happened to me on Facebook was a learning experience and I have promised myself to stay away from Facebook – especially since I am a journalist. But no matter what, I still love Mount Vernon and its people.

Joe Parisi
Publisher/Editor

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Response to Mayor Thomas’ letter on Mt. Vernon city budget

This letter is written in response to a letter written by Mount Vernon Mayor Thomas in reference to the 2017 City Budget. In his letter, Mr. Thomas states that the 2017 adopted city budget results in an $18.00 a month property tax. This information is incorrect. The budget actually results in an $18 per year increase for a house with a $10,000 assessed valuation.

In relation to his other claims, there is no evidence to justify the wild and unsubstantiated allegations that appear to be a result of his vivid imagination. The adopted 2017 budget results in a 1.07% property tax increase, the lowest in over two decades. The budget funds the services required by the residents and businesses in Mount Vernon.

It also should be noted that the Mayor who is a former member of the Board of Estimate and Contract, for the 2017 budget. How could he vote in favor of the budget and now criticize it? Contrary to his claims, the money to finance 2017’s contractual wage increase has been appropriate in the 2017 budget and will be paid out in 2017. The city has already paid the 2014, 2015 and 2016 increases in the year 2016. The Mayor has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate a profound, unfortunate and embarrassing inability to read and understand basic and elementary financial and accounting documents. It has often been said that “it is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt.” This is exactly what Mayor Thomas has done in his unfortunate letter that is riddled with inconsistencies and errors.

Respectfully Submitted,
Maureen Walker, CPA
Comptroller of the City of Mount Vernon
914-665-2304 (Office)

One thing I must emphasize – nobody buys Joe Parisi. I am a straight shooter who specializes in reporting the crime. I think you specialize in reporting the crime.” I told them when they pick it up every month: I’ll let you specialize in reporting the crime.” I have kept my promise after 13 years.

One thing I must emphasize – nobody
Fulton Avenue bridge set to close for about a year or more

The project to rehabilitate the Fulton Avenue Drawbridge located along the border of Mount Vernon and Pelham Manor will fully close the bridge to motorists and pedestrians starting on January 4, 2017, between Seccor Lane and Edison Avenue. A detour route will be posted following Pelham Parkway, Boston Post Road, Provost Avenue, South Third Avenue and South Columbus Avenue. As an alternative route, motorists can use the Hutchinson River Parkway between Boston Post Road (Route 1) and Sandford Boulevard.

This closure was scheduled after the busy holiday shopping seasons to avoid further disruption. It is estimated that the bridge will re-open in November 2017. This project is necessary to eliminate the need for interim and emergency repairs. Work to be performed on this project includes major steel, electrical and mechanical rehabilitation, as well as removal and replacement of the steel bridge deck, steel stingers, sidewalk panels, both approach spans, the operator’s area, painting and associated electrical components. A new emergency generator will be installed to operate the bridge in the event of a utility power failure using a new emergency span drive.

The $14.8 million bridge rehabilitation project, which is expected to create approximately 148 FTE jobs, was awarded to E.E. Cruz and Company, Inc.

For additional information, contact Westchester County Department of Public Works and Transportation at (914) 995-2555.

REDISCOVERING BLACK HISTORY

The first African-American commissioned officer in the USMC

The National Archives holds thousands of photographs illustrating the various activities of service men and women in all branches of the Armed Forces. The photographs are able to give visuals of the bravery and sacrifice that men and women in the military made during their service.

In several of the series, there are images of lesser known military heroes whose stories deserved to be acknowledged. One such person is Frederick C. Branch, the first African-American commissioned officer in the United States Marine Corps (USMC).

After receiving a draft notice in May 1943, Branch reported to Fort Bragg in North Carolina, where he was inducted into the Marines. He was one of the first African-Americans selected into the USMC after President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which allowed black men to join the corps.

Branch’s service and commitment during World War II, earned him at place in the officer’s training program.

On November 10, 1945, Branch was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. Branch would later achieve the rank of Captain in 1952.

Freeerick C. Branch having his second lieutenant’s bars pinned on by his wife. (11/5/45)

Frederick Clinton Branch and wife cut the ribbon and officially dedicate Branch Hall at the Officers Candidates School, Marine Corps Combat Development Command. (7/9/97)
Fleetwood CVS no longer open 24 hours

Don’t count on going to CVS in Fleetwood in the middle of the night anymore. According to one store manager, the store’s pharmacy is no longer open around the clock, so the city told them they could no longer keep the store open 24 hours.

According to Mayor Thomas, there is an ordinance on the books that requires CVS to have the 24 hour pharmacy in place to operate 24 hours. Since they have ceased the 24 hour pharmacy, the Buildings Department has enforced said rule.

So, now that CVS is no longer open around the clock, you’ll need to make some telephone calls to find another pharmacy that is open all night.

NY State Bar Association urges action on legislation to strengthen indigent criminal defense services

Governor Andrew Cuomo has vetoed a bill (S.8114 and A.10706) that would have required the State of New York to gradually assume the costs of providing constitutionally mandated legal representation to indigent criminal defendants.

The bill was approved by the State Legislature with unanimous, bipartisan support. It called for a seven-year phase-in of state assumption of the costs, now largely borne by county governments.

In a statement, New York State Bar Association President Claire P. Gutekunst said:

“We are disappointed by the Governor’s veto. Sponsors Senator John DeFrancisco and Assemblywoman Patricia Fahey crafted a thoughtful bill that had widespread support from county governments, the legal community and community organizations.

“The State Bar Association’s priority continues to be enactment of a law to ensure that New York’s public criminal defense system provides meaningful legal representation to all indigent criminal defendants in New York, in accordance with the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in Gideon v. Wainwright (1963).”

“We hope to work with the Governor and Legislature to accomplish that goal early in the new year.”

Mayor Thomas statement on “Making college tuition-free for middle class New Yorkers”

All of our young people deserve access to higher education and the chance to realize their dreams. Thanks to Governor Andrew Cuomo for bringing this dream closer to reality. High tuition and enormous school loans are turning the American Dream into an American Nightmare.

These financial burdens are crippling credit and preventing hard working people of all ages from buying homes or investing in their communities. Mount Vernon is home to bright, creative, intelligent young people and I am happy to work with Governor Cuomo to widen the pathway to higher education for Mount Vernon.”
when four young members of the 4 Square Peace Project addressed the audience. The group is being looked at as revolutionary, since they bring together a variety of the top Mount Vernon artists, coming together to create a catalog of music that is intended to quell the city’s violence. The group will hopefully bridge the gap between The Golden Era of Hip Hop, old school R&B and modern production.

Collectively utilizing this project, the artists, politicians and members of the community aim to raise funds in order to create new facilities for Mount Vernon’s youth. “We have collaborated with Bedroc Records (Mount Vernon based record label) and the mayor of Mount Vernon, along with all his office staff and city officials to create and distribute this project,” stated one of them during the panel discussion. The mayor and many others are hoping that the 4 Square Peace Project and its 54 talented artists can help bring peace to the City of Mount Vernon.

Applications being accepted for seasonal park rangers

The Westchester County Department of Public Safety is accepting applications for seasonal park rangers to patrol county parks this summer. Applications are due by Feb. 27 and are available online at the Department of Public Safety’s web pages: http://publicsafety.westchestergov.com.

Uniformed park rangers work under the supervision of county police officers to maintain a safe and enjoyable atmosphere in the county’s parks. They assist park users, provide information on park rules and procedures, help in searches for lost children, perform basic first aid on occasion and make regular security checks of buildings and facilities.

First-time park rangers are paid $14 hourly. Salaries are higher for those who have worked as a ranger for the county before.

To qualify, applicants must be a high school graduate, at least 19 years of age, a U.S. citizen, a resident of Westchester County and possess a valid New York State driver’s license by the time of appointment.

Accepted candidates must attend a three-week training program at the Westchester County Police Academy.

Mt. Vernon City Council to review personnel policies and procedures

In light of unfolding developments surrounding the criminal and employment background of David Hardy, the suspect charged with the New Year’s Eve killing of 13-year-old Shamoya McKenzie, the City Council will be working with the Police Department, Human Resources and other municipal departments to discuss and review city personnel policies and procedures.

Clarkson University early college program offers scholarship to high school students

The award is based on a nomination from a student’s high school administration and is available to students who are currently in their junior year, have excelled academically and are interested in starting college early. To receive consideration, students are encouraged to speak with their high school guidance department.

Since 1978, The Clarkson School (TCS) has provided academic high achievers, who have progressed beyond their high school curriculum, the opportunity to start college early. Students take a full first-year college course load and have the chance to participate in professor-led research, join athletic teams, and get involved in student clubs and organizations.

As opposed to the typical freshman experience, TCS students live in their own residence hall with a dedicated staff. The living environment and sense of community are as important to TCS year as the enriching academic experience.

The residence building is reserved for TCS students, with the administrative offices connected to the residence hall and easily accessible. Each of the floors has a common area for socializing, studying and meetings, as well as a house advisor living on each floor.

Simply put, TCS students have the best of both worlds: access to all the resources and amenities of a nationally-ranked University, while also living in separate residential facilities with a dedicated faculty and staff to assist in the transition to a college setting.

To learn more about the Clarkson School Scholars Award or TCS, visit www.clarkson.edu/tcs or call 800-574-4425.
Statement from Minority Leader John Testa on affordable housing settlement

The Republican Legislators are proud to stand with County Executive Astorino and our local communities in recognizing the completion of Westchester County’s obligations under the terms of the 2009 fair and affordable housing settlement. I applaud the County Executive, the Westchester County Planning Department and our municipal partners for not only meeting but also exceeding the requirement to build 750 units of affordable Housing by the end of this year.

I am hopeful that the latest Analysis of Impediments document which has been arbitrarily rejected by HUD on 8 separate submissions will finally be accepted under a new federal administration.

Mayor Thomas returns to court to continue fight on residency requirements

Mayor Thomas has vehemently argued about the residency ordinance and the significant legal ramifications associated with such an act.

In a surprising move, on December 23, the mayor vetoed the City Council’s ordinance, but the City Council turned around and voted unanimously to overturn the mayor’s veto and ordered to permanently vacate the positions effective Thursday, December 29. Consequently, Comptroller Maureen Walker notified the affected individuals that their last paycheck would be dispensed on Friday, January 6.

The following is a list of the five impacted members of Thomas’ administration:

- Commissioner Ralph Uzzi (who lives in Saddlebrook, NJ), Corporation Counsel Lawrence A. Porcari (who live in Yonkers), Deputy Police Commissioner Joseph Spiezo III (who lives in Florida), Special Assistant to the Mayor Maria Donovan, Esq., (who lives in Queens), 3rd Assistant Corporation Counsel La-Teea Going, Esq., and others, who are in violation of the City Charter’s Residency Requirements.

UConn women’s basketball makes Shamoya McKenzie an honorary team member

While most teenagers are preparing for life in high school or contemplating which major to study in college, Shamoya McKenzie had her future planned out.

The 13-year-old star on the Mount Vernon (N.Y.) junior varsity basketball team wanted to go to the University of Connecticut not just to play for the women’s basketball team, but to major in business. She then planned to play in the WNBA.

Lady Knights varsity head coach Ayo Hart said they were hoping for a letter from Huskies head coach Geno Auriemma to “bring solace” to McKenzie’s mother, Nadine.

UConn officially made Shamoya McKenzie an honorary member of the UConn women’s basketball program on January 6.

UConn's official website is www.uconn.edu.
On Wednesday, January 11, with heavy hearts, the Shamoya McKenzie family, students, parents and supporters of the Mount Vernon basketball community held a silent candlelight vigil. The large group assembled at The Mansion, located at 4 North 3rd Avenue and then marched to Police Headquarters, where they paused and held a moment of silence. The group then proceeded to nearby City Hall and filed into the City Council Chambers and attended the regularly scheduled meeting of the City Council.

The Shamoya McKenzie Foundation, the Mount Vernon Lady Elite Basketball Club and the Mount Vernon Junior Knights Basketball Club united in an initial demonstration of “Silent Protest” as a show of support for the families of Shamoya McKenzie, O’Neil Bandoo and other victims, impacted by senseless shootings in Mount Vernon.

What was a poorly attended City Council meeting, suddenly became a standing room only session after the protesters all sat down.

Yuhanna Edwards, acting as president of the City Council during the president’s absence, immediately interrupted the ongoing session to recognize the large group of protesters.

George Brown, the City Clerk, was provided with a statement to read, authored by Crystal Collins, a Mount Vernon Junior Knight parent.

As Brown read the statement, you could hear a pin drop in the room, as everybody listened intently.

The following are excerpts from the statement:

“We are Shamoya!” We want our parents and the young people affected by these tragic losses of lives to constructively express their sorrow and anguish. It is important that they understand those governing our community can hear their voices constructively. This is vitally important if we are to facilitate change by teaching them the value of working together - something that’s been absent for some time.

Our youth are frightened and are looking toward us for solutions. We must show them that we are adults, ready to take their safety seriously.

Shamoya McKenzie’s untimely death has sparked a fire among parents who view her death as senseless. Many feel that Mount Vernon must not allow her death or that of O’Neil Bandoo and all of those victims and families of gun violence to be in vain.

The “Silent Protest” is intended to be a testament to the firm stance taken by Shamoya McKenzie’s immediate family, her basketball family, athlete parents and all of whom loved Shamoya dearly. Many are deeply mourning her death. The group is imploring city leaders to exhibit their leadership abilities at a time when the community needs it most with an honest commitment to eradicate Mount Vernon of illegal guns and the violence they bring. They need to know that the anger is palpable. The desire is high; people are coming together and egos are being put on the side. We are growing! We are organizing! This time we come in silence. Next time we bring the noise.”

After the statement was read, several individuals spoke in support of the protesters. One individual verbally assailed Councilman Edwards and stated: “I have come here many times pleading that you act on many of my complaints about crime related issues in Mount Vernon, but you have failed to act.”

Before the group departed a long moment of silence took place.
Why I vehemently support the Sentinel LED streetlight contract

Readers of the Inquirer are aware that I have done extensive coverage on the controversy surrounding the LED streetlight contract. I can proudly state that my publication has been the only one that has empowered the citizens of Mount Vernon with the honest facts from the very beginning. While other media sources have tried to confuse readers with fake news, the Inquirer has only printed the honest and accurate facts.

One of the biggest fake stories about the whole streetlight debacle revolves around Terrence Horton’s trip to South Korea with a small delegation led by Mayor Ernest D. Davis. The purpose of the historic trip was to sign a friendship agreement between Gwangju, South Korea and Mount Vernon. Also signed was an international trade agreement between Gwangju-based Soosung Electronics and Sentinel Construction Inc. of Mount Vernon, Horton’s company.

“This will begin an era of cultural and technological exchange with tremendous benefits between the two cities,” said Davis during the signing ceremony.

As publisher and editor of the Inquirer, I traveled with the delegation to cover the event due to the importance of the historic signing. And please note that at no time were city funds used to fund the trip – as stated by other media sources. I verified that.

Horton has previously produced irrefutable proof that there was previously an international distribution and trade agreement already established with Cho Jang Hyung of Cedic, which was supported by Mayor Kang of Gwangju South Korea. The signed agreement was in place more than two years before the Mount Vernon delegation was even conceived. And at no time did it have a bearing on the eventual contract that Horton earned to install streetlights throughout Mount Vernon. Horton basically laid out the framework and infrastructure for job creation, education, paid internships, with guarantee job placement, and new development opportunities that would have introduced multiple billion-dollar firms to invest and open new businesses within the City of Mount Vernon.

Horton has been in the LED business for several years, therefore, the international trade agreement he signed with Soosung Electrics was strictly to enhance his business in Mount Vernon with state-of-the-art LED lights and other electronic equipment that would also benefit Soosung Electronics. Basically, it was all about two companies seeking to benefit by trading with each other.

After Horton was officially and legally selected to install the streetlights by the City of Mount Vernon, the streetlights were going to be provided by Soosung Electronics at a great discount.

I have monitored the whole process from day one, and not once did I detect any wrongdoing by Horton. Had I detected any impropriety, I would have severed my support for Horton immediately. Sentinel Technology Services International was selected by the city because unlike other companies that sought the lucrative contract, he had the best interest of the taxpayers in mind.

Furthermore, Sentinel is the only Mount Vernon company that had assured the Mount Vernon taxpayers that their hard-earned tax dollars would benefit the local economy by his company installing the streetlights.

Sentinel formed the Sentinel Vocational Apprentice Training (SVAT), and nine students graduated in 2015 from Mount Vernon High School. It was the first vocational program created at the high school in 20 years.

Another Sentinel initiative was to be the hiring of unemployed, as well as the underemployed Mount Vernon citizens, and the formation of an International Northeast Distribution Center on Third Street.

After Mayor Thomas became mayor, he mistakenly attempted to sever the streetlight contract between the city and Sentinel, stating: “I think I can do better.”

It was a legally binding contract that could not be broken and should never have been pursued by the city in the courts. The law firm retained by the city was firmly behind the contract initially, but then was instructed to try to stop the contract from materializing by the city. The law firm dragged the matter to court, knowing fully that they could not win the case against Sentinel, resulting in astronomical legal fees being incurred by the taxpayers.

Ironically, when Mayor Thomas was a Mount Vernon City Councilman, during a regularly scheduled meeting of the City Council, he encouraged his colleagues to support the LED streetlight contract Horton had won the bid on. He spoke at length on the merits of Mount Vernon’s bright future. He spoke to his colleagues by virtue of his background and education on sustainability, and he did so in an articulate and eloquent way. “The City of Mount Vernon finally got this one right,” stated then Councilman Thomas.

The clear understanding of the City Council’s unprecedented second and redundant approval, triggered the Arent Fox law firm to provide a legally binding opinion letter, which resulted in Capital One Public Finance to close and transfer the funding into Deutsche Bank. The funds have not been used and are currently raking up absorbent interest fees.

Inexplicably, when Thomas became mayor he decided to oppose the contract and to try to renege on it — which was ill advised.

Recently, the city’s attorney was excused from the case and they have been warned by the judge to make sure an attorney is in attendance at the next hearing or they may lose.

Mayor Thomas needs to do the right thing for the taxpayers and simply allow Horton to get to work on installing the lights. He really has run out of options and it is costing taxpayers handsomely in legal fees. Not only that, the city signed off on a note that exceeds 3.1 million dollars and they have to pay interest on that with nothing in return. You also have to take into account interest and damages to be paid to Horton. And if they refuse to allow Horton to fulfill the contract over three million taxpayer dollars will go down the drain. Starting again with another company won’t be the same, since they will simply install the lights and go on to the next job. But worst of all, the city has to start the process all over again, meaning another three million dollars or more. Almost forgot, taxpayers are currently not benefiting from the cost savings - calculated at one million annually, with two years lost to date. Had they been installed, the more energy efficient lights would have produced the sorely needed revenues to pay for the note.

Joe Parisi
Publisher/Editor
News on latest streetlight court hearing: “City is in danger of default”

The court case involving Sentinel Technology Services, Inc. and the City of Mount Vernon is becoming more and more incomprehensible as time goes by.

A team of Sentinel attorneys appeared in White Plains Supreme Court before Judge Alan Scheinkman, Administrative Judge of the state’s 9th Judicial District, on January 6 to request that the judge order the city to pay Terrence Horton, president of Sentinel Technology Services, Inc., for phase 2 of the streetlight contract he was awarded by the city. The judge has already ruled that the city must pay Horton $337,000 plus interest on phase 1 of the contract.

When the case was called, Arent Fox, LLP has walked away from the case in disgust – claiming that the city failed to cooperate in its defense of the action involving Sentinel by refusing to communicate with Fox on countless occasions. In addition, the city refuses to pay Arent Fox, LLP’s outstanding legal fees totaling $290,871.02, which averages out to approximately $1,000 an hour for services they have provided in a losing effort.

Mount Vernon taxpayers need to brace themselves for additional fees Arent Fox, LLP will be charging the city for November legal services.

Interestingly, many citizens are complaining that Arent Fox, LLP should have advised the city against pursuing the case against Sentinel. Initially, the law firm completed a letter of opinion and provided not only the city but also the bank with said letter. The letter of opinion stated that Sentinel and Horton met all the requirements satisfactorily as a contractor, thus recommending that Sentinel be allowed to proceed to fulfill the LED contract.

Judge Scheinkman spent three months reviewing the facts and ruled in Horton’s favor, therefore helping to refute everything that could lower the chance of Alzheimer’s for them. Simply taking a portable air purifier and leaving it by their bed can help clear the air of pollutants in their home. This could lower their chances of developing Alzheimer’s, as the air will be clearer of pollutants. As well as this, you can upgrade the quality of the filters in their HVAC. Doing this will prevent small particles from entering the home. In the end, you’ll end up with a much cleaner and fresher home environment for your parents or loved ones.

The Walk To End Alzheimer’s has several walks taking place in the fall, which will all help to raise money towards Alzheimer’s research, and is another great way for you to help the community. These particular fundraising walks all take place in New York State, and you’ll be able to show your support for those suffering with Alzheimer’s by getting involved.

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BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY

The Board of Water Supply owns and maintains approximately 106 miles of mains and 1,190 fire hydrants. Its primary responsibility is to provide an adequate supply of safe, potable water for domestic, industrial and fire-fighting purposes.

Mount Vernonites drink award winning water!

Mount Vernon has won Westchester’s “Best Tasting Water Contest” on several occasions, therefore, drinking bottled water in our city is not a necessity.

The experts say a good glass of water should be clean, crisp, clear and cool. The county’s health department samples the waters routinely, and Mount Vernon continually meets all quality standards.

Individual functions include:

- Monitor water quality and treat with chlorine and other chemicals to ensure that it is safe to drink.
- Collect samples for analysis on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or annual basis as required in order to comply with Part 5 of the New York State Sanitary Code.
- Prepare reports to be submitted to the local and for State Health Department on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis also in compliance with the requirements of the Sanitary Code.
- Prepare and distribute Annual Water Quality Report to inform residents about the water they drink. Maintain, repair, or replace hydrants as needed. Make taps for domestic or industrial customers as required.
- Investigate main leaks and repair.
- Investigate service line leaks and repair leaking services from the main to the curb valve. (Customer is responsible from the curb valve to the meter)
- Maintain or replace water meters to insure accurate billing.
- Conduct Annual Hydrant Flushing Program to remove sediments from the main.
- Conduct Valve Exercising Program as a means to evaluate defective valves in the system so they can be repaired or replaced. This will ensure proper operation in an emergency.
- Read meters and generate bills. Investigate cause of unusually high or low bills.
Boys & Girls Club of Mount Vernon
350 South Sixth Avenue, Mount Vernon NY 10550, 914-668-9580 Fax: 914-668-1902 www.bgcmvny.org

JOIN US AT OUR
2017 Annual Gala

On Tuesday, March 28, the Boys & Girls Club of Mount Vernon will honor Phil Jackson (President, New York Knicks), Hon. Anthony A. Scarpino (Westchester County District Attorney), and the Greater Hudson Valley Links. The 2017 Gala will include a Silent Auction and live entertainment.

Tuesday, March 28, 2017
The Surf Club on the Sound
280 Davenport Avenue
New Rochelle, NY

Auction ■ Cocktails 6:00 pm
Dinner ■ Celebration 7:00 pm
Business Attire

For more information, contact
Jenna Donnellan or Tricia McTeeran
Hospitality Resource Group ■ 914-761-7111
Melvin Campos, 914-668-9580 ■ mcampos@bgcmvny.org
or visit our website: www.bgcmvny.org

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Burr Davis Sharpe Funeral Home Director Anthony Couture, Sr., right, and his associates from left, Carla Cleghetti, Anthony Couture, Jr., and Frank T. Friese.

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ORDER TODAY!

For all those who do not believe that the world is their oyster, this one is for you. Maybe you have lost hope in your dreams. Your list of reasons why you cannot make it is long. It is convincing. Even, heartbreaking.

Change of Fortune will change your outlook. Step into the shoes of one man who had none of life’s traditional advantages, and yet conquered his dreams with sheer faith, determination, and hard work. If you are ready for an old-fashioned leap-of-faith story, sit back and take a long, cool drink from the pages of this remarkable memoir. And then ask yourself, “Why not me?”
THE 2ND FOOD CRAWL: A TASTE OF MOUNT VERNON

FEBRUARY 25TH 2017
OVER RESTAURANTS & LOCATIONS 20
Olie THE TROLLEY
SATURDAY 12 - 5PM RAIN OR SHINE
TICKETS $50 (Per Person)

646-450-1727
info@tfraserproductions.com

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@MVFOODCRAWL
#MVFOODCRAWL

T. FRASER PRODUCTIONS
Chinese New Year returns to Pelham Art Center on Saturday, February 4 with family-friendly activities commemorating the beginning of the Year of the Rooster! From 2:00–4:00PM, a paper-craft workshop will be held in which participants can create a Chinese Rooster and a New Year fish. At 3:15PM, members of Kwan’s Kung Fu from Peekskill, NY, will perform a traditional Lion Dance, believed in Chinese culture to scare away evil spirits and to bring good luck. As part of our Folk Arts Series, this event is free and open to all ages.

The Lion Dance program includes an educational and historical introduction of the dance, an interactive performance, followed by a question and answer period. During the performance the lion makes its way around the room interacting with the crowd. Children can feed red envelopes filled with whatever they like to the lion if they wish to bring good luck in the New Year.

Chinese New Year event at Pelham Art Center (l); Lion dance, Kwan’s Fung Fu Studio (r)

Westchester Choral Society seeks new members

Westchester Choral Society, the longest running continuous choir in the county, is inviting new members in all voice parts to join the chorus as it celebrates its 75th anniversary of bringing musical pleasure to Westchester. Weekly rehearsals are underway at the conveniently located Music Conservatory of Westchester in White Plains, where it is the chorus in residence.

The chorus, which has a current roster of more than 60 singers, is known for its friendly, welcoming atmosphere and rich tradition of presenting two concerts each season to audiences in Westchester and nearby communities. It sponsors annual Summer Sings that are open to all and starts in June at the Music Conservatory. In addition, members have shared their musical talent at nursing homes and other venues.

The chorus’ repertoire includes works from Baroque to contemporary, such as Bach’s Cantatas, Beethoven’s Symphony #9 in D minor, Handel’s Messiah, Bartok’s Hungarian and Slovak folk songs, Irving Berlin’s Unforgettable Broadway and Alice Parker’s American Hymns and Songs.

To schedule an audition, contact Numa Rousseve at 914-285-9026.

Rep. Engel receives ‘A’ Grade from National Education Association

Congressman Eliot L. Engel received an “A” on the National Education Association’s (NEA) legislative report card for the 114th Congress. The report card, which can be found here, evaluates Members of Congress based on their votes on issues of importance to the NEA. In the 114th Congress, those issues included reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, preserving the Affordable Care Act and protecting DREAMers.

“I am tremendously pleased to have earned an ‘A’ from the NEA,” Engel said. “As a former teacher and union member, I share the NEA’s commitment to high-quality public education, strong labor protections, affordable health care coverage, and LGBTQ rights. Given the new administration’s nominee for Secretary of Education, it is more important than ever to stand up for the indispensable federal programs that serve our students and to speak out against ill-advised proposals, such as school vouchers. We ought to support our public school students— not shift valuable resources away from already cash-strapped public classrooms.

“As a Member of Congress, I will continue to work to promote these values and make these issues a priority during the 115th Congress.”

Mayor Thomas: “On the dream of Dr. King”

As we came together to celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. recently, we saw many opportunities to rejoice in the progress that has been made from the arc of the moral universe is still long, still bending towards justice, and we must still work together to get it there.

I was privileged to address a group of high school students and community leaders in Westchester as part of their 45th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. program.

I spoke about dreams - the dreams that Dr. King had. The dreams that parents have for their children. The dreams that young people have when they look to the future. And the dreams that I have for the City of Mount Vernon.

As a young Mayor, I am forever indebted to the leaders and activists who refused to ride in the back of the bus and were attacked by police dogs when they stood up for what’s right. I thank them for their dedication and century of sacrifice. This generation appreciates what you have done and we are forever indebted to your courage. Their courage to occupy lunch counters inspired a generation to occupy Wall Street.

The fight is not over. We must continue to make our voices heard and we must continue to work proactively and productively towards transformative change.

I also announced an arrest in the tragic death of Shamoya McKenzie - a Mount Vernon child who carried the dreams of her entire community in her nimble hands as she dribbled down the court. While we were able to provide relief to Shamoya’s brokenhearted family, the pain of her loss remains. As a young man, I also lost friends and neighbors that we all lost friends and neighbors that we all.

Sometimes, it can be hard to keep the despair at bay, but I ask that you say a prayer for the McKenzie family, Mount Vernon, and our children who are confronting this hard reality.

This is why we must hold our kids close, and hold each other accountable to ensure they have an equal opportunity to pursue the American Dream.

We must refuse to turn our back on the future.

We must refuse to give up on the dream.

The process of progress involves struggle. And sometimes that struggle requires a multitude of forces to work toward the same goal... sometimes going different directions... but ultimately arriving in the same place.

I am a son of Mount Vernon. I needed Mount Vernon to help me deal with the heartache of a broken home. I needed Mount Vernon to give me the faith to make sure food would be in the fridge and I wouldn’t go hungry.

I am a son of Mount Vernon who lost loved ones to bad decisions.

I am a son of Mount Vernon who deeply believes that we must dare to pursue our dreams.

As Dr. King said, “We cannot walk alone.”

We need each other, Mount Vernon. We must come together and move forward.

Change does not come without challenge. And if we are inextricably intertwined... then we must find our way to rise above and march toward one goal with one vision, and we will and YES WE CAN achieve anything.

Thank you and let’s move forward toward our dreams.

Sincerely,

Mayor Richard Thomas
The Tiger Woods Foundation is excited to extend the opportunity and invite high school seniors to apply for the 2017-2018 Earl Woods Scholarship. The Earl Woods Scholar Program was created in 2006 to honor the vision and spirit of Earl Woods, Tiger’s father and mentor, to continue his legacy of caring and sharing. The scholarship is open to graduating high school seniors of select regions of Basilicata and Calabria, Italy. His maternal family descends from the region of Sicily, while his paternal family descends from the regions of Basilicata and Calabria, Italy.

Ribustello has not only gained recognition for his acting, but he is also the Deputy Chief Clerk for the Republican Party at the December monthly meeting or learning more about membership in the John D. Calandra Lodge #2600 of the Order of Sons of Italy. He remembers watching Jerry Lewis and the Rat Pack have so much fun, and that’s when he decided to be an actor and entertainer.

“I’m a New York born and bred actor, hoping to make the world a better place and justify the dreams of who I was at the age four, while watching Jerry Lewis host the Labor Day telethon, interviewing some of the members of the Rat Pack. He remembers watching Jerry Lewis and the Rat Pack have so much fun, and that’s when he decided to be an actor and entertainer. ‘I’m a New York born and bred actor, hoping to make the world a better place through the art of acting,’ said Anthony Ribustello.

Ribustello was encouraged to start acting at age four, while watching Jerry Lewis host the Labor Day telethon, interviewing some of the members of the Rat Pack. He remembers watching Jerry Lewis and the Rat Pack have so much fun, and that’s when he decided to be an actor and entertainer. “I’m a New York born and bred actor, hoping to make the world a better place through the art of acting,” said Anthony Ribustello.

Ribustello was born on Adee Avenue in the Bronx, in the neighborhood of Allerton, and he grew up in the neighborhood of Pelham Bay. He attended Public School 71, Public School 101, St. Benedict's Elementary School, Cardinal Spellman High School and graduated from Iona College. His paternal family descends from the region of Sicily, while his maternal family descends from the regions of Basilicata and Calabria, Italy.

Ribustello has not only gained recognition for his acting, but he is also the Deputy Chief Clerk for the Republican Party at the December monthly meeting, while sharing his insight as an Italian-American actor and activist within the Republican Party. “We thank Anthony for his contributions and welcome him back to the Lodge anytime,” added Tubiolo.

If anyone is interested in coming to a meeting or learning more about membership in the John D. Calandra Lodge #2600 of the Order of Sons of Italy in America (OSIA), please contact Legislator Tubiolo at (914) 995-2815.

For more information call 714.765.8000 or visit www.tigerwoods-foundation.org. Finalists will need to be available for an in-person interview on Wednesday, April 26. Recipients will be announced in May 2015.

Legislator Tubiolo invites actor Anthony Ribustello to speak at Sons of Italy
Drug Interactions: Grapefruit Juice

Question:
I am currently taking Lipitor (atorvastatin) for cholesterol and the yellow sticker on my prescription vial states “to avoid drinking grapefruit juice”. Since this is my favorite juice, I was wondering if one glass every morning is really going to affect my medication?

Answer:
Grapefruit juice in combination with Lipitor, (atorvastatin) was found to increase the level of Lipitor, in your body. Increased amounts of Lipitor, in your body might lead to increased risk of myopathy (muscle pain) or rhabdomyolysis (muscle deterioration), a more serious condition.

If you choose to drink grapefruit juice, here are some general suggestions to minimize the risk:

• I would recommend drinking only one small cup (8-oz.) of grapefruit juice no more than once daily.

• Since the drug-interaction persists for at least 12 hours, try to separate the grapefruit juice at least 12 hours apart from the medication dose.

• Consuming large amounts or grapefruit juice is not recommended due to this drug interaction.

The following are the other medications used to treat cholesterol that have a drug-interaction with grapefruit juice: Mevacor, (lovastatin), Zocor, (simvastatin) and Lescol, (fluvastatin).

Drug Interactions: Antibiotics and Birth Control

Question:
I was recently prescribed the antibiotic Amoxicillin. Will it affect my birth control pill?

Answer:
I applaud you for taking the responsibility to ask! The antibiotic, amoxicillin, is in the penicillin class of antibiotics. Many antibiotics, especially those in the penicillin and tetracycline class, can reduce the effectiveness of birth control pills. Rifampin, an antibiotic, and Griseofulvin, an antifungal, can also reduce the effects of your oral contraceptive (increases risk for pregnancy). Many seizure medications such as Dilantin, Tegretol, and Topamax, can affect the birth control pill.

Here are some general tips to keep in mind whenever starting a new therapy while on the birth control pill:

• Always check with your pharmacist to ensure the medication you have been prescribed does not interact with your birth control pill.

• While on any of the above medications, women on birth control pills containing estrogen should use an additional type of birth control (such as condoms)

• It is very important to consult with your Doctor about any questions and concerns you may have.

The miraculous Manuka Honey

Manuka honey was first introduced to me many years ago by my wife’s best friend, Annie, who brought back a few bottles of it from her New Zealand honeymoon trip. And frankly, when she told me that it was “medicine,” I wasn’t at all thrilled to eat it. I guess many of us tend to associate the word with the synthetic medicine prescribed by doctors in the clinics. Many years later, I came to know the honey as the most treasured honey in New Zealand and Australia that has miraculous healing effects.

Unique Manuka Factor or commonly known as UMF is the only worldwide standard in identifying and measuring the antibacterial strength or quality of some strains of Manuka. It is a guarantee that the honey being sold has the special UMF antibacterial property and a UMF rating of 10 is the minimum recognized. Ordinary Manuka has only the hydrogen peroxide antibacterial property, which is common to most types of honey, whereas, UMF Manuka has both the natural hydrogen peroxide antibacterial property and its own natural UMF antibacterial property, giving it increased antibacterial potency. The UMF property is very stable, unlike the hydrogen peroxide antibacterial property common in most honey, which is easily destroyed by heat, light, as well as certain enzymes in body serum.

Most common uses of Manuka honey:
1. Gastritis
2. Stomach Ulcers
3. Tonsillitis
4. Sinusitis
5. Skin ailments (eczema, hives, rosacea, rashes)
6. Building Body Immunity
7. Facial masks
8. Common Flu, Coughs and Colds

Support your hometown newspaper. . .
The Mount Vernon Inquirer
Newly discovered danger of high fructose corn syrup is alarming

It’s no mystery that packaged and prepared foods in our grocery stores are full of high fructose corn syrup (HFCS). Though while more food makers are omitting this ingredient due to health dangers (and consumer demand), some companies are still including this health-damaging ingredient. Now, new troubling scientific studies reveal how high fructose corn syrup-containing foods are causing yet another unwanted side effect—heart failure.

Unknown previously, but verified through their research and recently published in “Nature”, fructose has been discovered to be a key driver for uncontrolled growth of the heart muscle. This condition can eventually lead to complete heart failure, as the heart literally outgrows its ability to function within the body.

What’s more, since one consumes fructose to cause this issue, they likely have high blood pressure as well, which is a one-two punch to the cardiovascular system. It’s also important to note that the growing heart requires more oxygen. When one has high blood pressure, the veins have a more difficult time pumping oxygen-rich blood to the heart. In an effort to keep us alive, our heart cells switch to an alternate supply of energy that is anaerobic in nature. The body goes into glycolysis—literally, the ‘splitting of sugars’. This, in turn, sets up a fatal chain reaction. The heart actually grows since it is harder to pump the blood through the circulatory system.

In the study, researchers discovered that a lack of oxygen within the heart’s cells would ‘flip a switch’ wherein HIF molecules “cause the heart muscle cells to produce ketohexokinase-C (KHK-C), the central enzyme in fructose metabolism. KHK-C has a high affinity for fructose and can therefore process it very efficiently. The production of KHK-C also has a reinforcing effect on glycolysis.”

The researchers also found that processed foods containing fructose were worrisome for instigating heart failure, whereas, normal consumption of fruit, since it contains fiber, vitamins, and important trace elements, did not have the same effect on the body.

What’s Is Perfection?

This month I want to share a story I read about a learning disabled child who attended Chush, a school for learning disabled children. His father was asked to give a speech at a fundraiser. His message is message that all of us can learn from.

“Where is the perfection in my son, Shaya?” the father asked. “Everything God does is done with perfection. But my child cannot understand things as other children do. My child cannot remember facts and figures. Where is God’s perfection?” Then he went on. “I believe that when God brings a child like this into the world, the perfection He seeks is in the way people react to this child.”

He then told this story about Shaya.

One afternoon Shaya and his father walked past a park where some boys were playing baseball. Shaya asked if his father thought they would let him play. His father knew that most boys would not want Shaya on their team, but he asked one of the boys.

“We are losing by six runs, and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we’ll try to put him up in the ninth inning.” His father was ecstatic.

Shaya put on a glove and went out to play short center. In the bottom of the ninth inning with two outs and the bases loaded, Shaya was scheduled to be up. Would the team do this and give away their chance to win the game? Shaya was given the bat. He didn’t know how to hold it properly, let alone hit the ball. The pitcher moved in closer and threw the ball gently. Shaya swung clumsily and missed. A teammate came over and held the bat with him and they swung together. It was a ground ball.

The pitcher could have thrown the ball to first base and the game would have been over, but he threw it high into right field. Everyone started yelling, “Shaya, run to first! Run to first!”

Now the right fielder knew what the pitcher intended so he threw the ball high over the third baseman’s head. Everyone yelled, “Run to second! Run to second!”

As Shaya ran towards second base, the opposing short stop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base and shouted, “Run to third!”

As Shaya rounded third, the boys from both teams ran behind him screaming, “Shaya, run home!”

Shaya ran home, stepped on home plate and all eighteen boys lifted him on their shoulders and made him the hero. He had just hit a “grand slam” and won the game for his team.

“That day,” said the father softly, “I realized that we, too, can reach perfection!”

Let us all hold our children up so that we, too, can reach perfection!

“Problem gambling prevention and integration”

Join Michelle O’Neill, LCSW, Substance Abuse & Addiction Counselor at Thornton High School to discuss the dangers associated with reckless gambling. Learn how to:

- Identify different types of gambling
- Identify when gambling becomes dangerous, including warning signs, risk factors and unexpected consequences
- Access treatment and refer another person

Michelle O’Neill has been a social worker for over 15 years and specializes in trauma treatment. She has practiced in community mental health outpatient clinics, and has dedicated her career to treating children, teens, and adults with a wide range of mental health diagnoses and life problems. Additionally, she has managed inpatient care and housing-related programs as a supervisor to improve quality assurance and assist clients who fall through the cracks of the system of care.

Thursday, February 2 at 6:30pm, Mount Vernon Public Library, 28 South First Avenue, Mount Vernon, New York 10550.
Pelham “Au Pair” nominated for International Au Pair of the Year Award

E   ach year, the International Au Pair Association (IAPA) asks families around the world who have an au pair living with them to consider nominating their au pair for the International Au Pair of the Year Award. IAPA selects the International Au Pair of the Year based on the au pair’s extraordinary impact on their host family, commitment to going above and beyond their duties, and appreciation for meaningful cultural exchange. One local family felt that their au pair fit the bill. The Scarlett Family from Pelham has nominated their au pair, Ali from Afghanistan for this prestigious international award. Ali Hoseinzadeh provides live-in childcare for the Scarlett family’s 3 children, and his outstanding dedication and enthusiasm in caring for them led to his nomination for International Au Pair of the Year.

Ali has been living with the Scarlett family since June 2016 as part of the Cultural Care Au Pair intercultural exchange and childcare program. He cares for the family’s children, ages 10, 7 and 10 months old, in exchange for the opportunity to live in the United States. He takes classes at an American college and has become part of a real American family.

“Ali has been a wonderful addition to our family. He has been a fast learner and has adapted quickly to our family, the town, and the country. He is not only interested in being part of the children’s lives, but he is also interested in being part of the town and exploring the city and country. He is always happy, bright and willing to help out,” said the mom, Kristen Scarlett.

IAPA established the Au Pair of the Year Award to recognize the many great young women and men participating in the au pair program, a demanding cultural exchange and childcare experience. The winner of this year’s award will be announced in February and honored at IAPA’s annual conference in March in Munich, Germany.

A message from Mayor Thomas

As we enter 2017, many of us are taking a hard look at ourselves and wondering what we should change and what goals we should strive for in the new year. As Mayor of the City of Mount Vernon, I am taking the occasion of a new year to reassess operations at City Hall and with my staff to set goals for how we can better serve you. We want to keep what’s working and fix what needs to be changed. We are taking a critical eye to management, operations, and staffing decisions and we are reorganizing from our Police Department to our Building Department and all city agencies in between.

Some of you may have seen the coverage in the Journal News about “shake-ups” in our Police Department. But, it’s not about a shake-up or punishing people. It’s about making sure our departments are prepared to handle the challenges of the 21st century. It’s about working with energy and passion as we deal with a limited budget and minimal resources. It’s about making more with less. It’s about wise stewardship of taxpayer money. It’s about transforming our government into a hassle-free service platform.

The truth is, we’ve had to make some significant changes to the way Mount Vernon does business. Some staff has been reassigned, some staff has stepped up and they have been promoted, and sadly, we’ve had to let some staff members go. The fact is, we are holding folks accountable because we understand that you pay too much in taxes to tolerate substandard performance.

As a leader, it’s on my shoulders to create the culture and the culture of entitlement is no longer. The days of the three-hour lunch breaks and endless messenging around online when you should be working are over. Mount Vernon City Hall is a customer-service organization. Residents must be greeted with a smile and a willingness to help. Problems must be handled; requests must be answered; and complaints followed-up on.

I’ll be honest with you. We have a lot of work to do. There are challenges and dynamics that we face on a daily basis. We deal with union contracts, employees’ personal issues, depressed salaries, and a sometimes-tense political atmosphere but none of that is an excuse. The rumblings and naysaying from disgruntled folks who were happy with the status quo will continue but we will not stop moving the city forward. When you hear these negative voices - ask yourself- can we afford to keep Mount Vernon the same? The answer is undoubtedly NO! The chatter and rumor mill affirms that we are doing what you elected me to do – put a lid on the “crony cookie jar” and lead our city to new heights.

We want to hear from you and we want you to let us know how we are doing. My door is always open. Email us at mayorthomas@cmvny.com or call us at 914-665-2360. My team and I will continue to do our best to bring energy, passion, and love to our jobs. We look forward to continuing to work on your behalf as we restore Memorial Field, increase property values, and move our community forward, together.

Yours in service,
Mayor Richard Thomas

Junior League of Bronxville now accepting community grant applications

The Junior League of Bronxville is now accepting Community Grant Applications for 2017. Applications will be accepted from 501(c)3 organizations that serve communities within the Junior League of Bronxville’s service area. These communities are Yonkers, Mount Vernon, Eastchester, Tuckahoe and Bronxville.

The grant request should be for an immediate and specific need related to the alleviation of hunger, the improvement of nutrition or the improvement of the health and/or welfare of girls or women within the communities served. If your organization would like to apply, please visit JLBronxville.org to access the application or you may contact Sheridan Denfeld at CommunityGrants@JLBronxville.org, and an application and instructions will be forwarded to you. The deadline for submission is February 25, 2017.

For more information on the JLB, please visit www.jlbbronxville.org.
On Thursday, January 26, Mayor Richard Thomas held a press conference to showcase the new wall he had built at Memorial Field, which is intended to hide the enormous eyesore that Memorial Field has become. In attendance were many members of the press, city officials and community leaders and activists.

The mayor opened the press conference by stating: “What we built here is not a regular wall, it’s an art wall. And we need to acknowledge Sean McIntyre, head of our Industrial Development Agency for making this wall a reality. His department is helping to bring public art back throughout the City of Mount Vernon, which is exactly what we need.”

“On the wall you will see Mount Vernon’s contribution to the world – sports legends. We are beginning our installation with Deajah Stevens, a girl who knew she could run, but did not know how far she could go until she set foot on the track here at Memorial Field. When she discovered her potential she ran all the way from Mount Vernon to Rio and made it to the finals in the 200-meter dash. It was an amazing accomplishment and this is exactly the step we are taking to make sure we bring back Memorial Field.”

The city plans to install additional banners that will showcase numerous other Mount Vernon legends.

“Memorial Field was a place where character was built, values were defined, and lessons of victory and defeat were learned. It was more than a field. It was a field of dreams,” said the mayor.

According to Mayor Thomas, the city has reached a settlement with the DEC and will be paying a $40,000 fine over the debris that was mysteriously dumped at Memorial Field, paving the way for an early cleanup of the field. The cleanup is expected to take 18 months to complete. In the interim, the city is seeking grant money for the total restoration of the field. The public can expect to have access to the field in approximately four years or less.

“If you are an artist or a visionary, please feel free to contact us so you can share your art ideas with us, since there are other walls within the community that we expect to bring life to.”

A banner of Deajah Stevens is the first to adorn the wall
TO OUR READERS & SUPPORTERS
From the editor: James “jaFa” Fair
jaFa’s Poets Corner celebrates its 10th year. We are the longest, continuously running poetry column in any local area monthly publication.
We have reached this milestone because of you, the community, who have so generously supported us. THANK YOU!
Please email your poems to vzoz2ch@verizon.net or mail a (typed copy please) to James Fair, 153 South 5th Ave., Apt 6B, Mount Vernon, NY 10550

jaFa’s Poets Corner
2007 - PRESENT
Poems Submitted by Our Readers
Edited by jaFa (James Fair)

Some things to think on:
“There’s so much to remember and to describe, for purposes of exorcism and for purposes of celebratory rites of passage. Things must be made, some fixing ceremony, some memorial, something, some altar, somewhere, where those things can be released, thought and felt... There are certain things that only artists can deal with – and it’s our job!”—Toni Morrison

Today is tomorrow or Please SWIPE 1-9-8-4
Author: bobbyjoemack
Mount Vernon resident
Bar Codes
And Computer Chips
Imbedded into My Skin
Bar Codes
And Computer Chips
Let the Scanning Now begin!
G.P.S. In the Places I’ve been Scanners in Every store
Building a Secret Profile of me
Complete with every Flaw
Bar codes and computer chips
Exposing my Life once more
Tracing Everywhere I go
Even though I truly Don’t
Really want Anyone to Know
Always Trailing Tracking
And silently Following me
O’ Please Big Brother
Let me Invisibly roam Free
With Bar Codes
And Computer Chips
Now Implanted inside of my Head
I Curse the bar codes
And the computer chips
Pressed upon me with much Dread
Now Controlling who I’ll be
With those chips and codes
Hacking into me as if a walking Dead
Some doors are then Closed
Some doors are then Opened
To let some come right on In
But with the Bar Codes
And all the Computer Chips
The Segregation will soon Begin...

METANOIA
Author: G.L.Frazier—G-Man
Mount Vernon resident
To Be or Not to Be,
This is the question inside of me, but oh the answer is not clear to see, it eludes me.
The answer I so desire to give but woe for this incessant thought, will I live to be.

But ought I to wonder of mortality, while still before me lies eternity, to see. So fleeting is the time at hand, as I live and grapple in this foreign land, want good but doing bad, while struggling not to be.

But in the end I know I will be thanking Him, for my ability to look within and for His still quiet voice offering this glorious choice, To Be or Not To Be-Come.

CONTENT
Author: Phillip Lewis
Mount Vernon resident
Did you see that man that walked past?
Embroidered in riches with shoulders bowed with care?
Although reprised there’s doubt in his eyes to last,
With a manner full of despair.
After all the work and the pains,
After the heaping up of gold on top of gold,
And after the success that locks ones feet in chains,
Any random soul could tell that his heart was tired and old.
Strange is it not? - to find happiness in the most simplest way
A friendly laughter with your fellow men
I wonder if rich men jig with enjoyment,
Having such heaps of time to spare for dafting,
Or if they sulk alone when no one is looking.
Empty and cold amongst their luxury and fortune,
I assume it to be that fame and riches are so consuming,
And so are the men that worship them un bowed with care?
Let soft grass and warm cottage be my lot
And after the success that locks ones feet in chains,
With a manner full of despair.
Although reprised there’s doubt in his eyes to last,
With care?

FORWARD MARCH
This column is dedicated to news about Mount Vernon veterans in collaboration with the Mount Vernon Veteran Service Agency

There are currently nearly one million veterans living in the New York area, and many of them reside in Mount Vernon. We must always recognize and respect the veterans who served to keep us safe — not just on one day but every day.
Currently, there are about twenty-two million veterans in America, with almost one million of them living in New York State.
While we are right to rejoice when our loved ones return home, we must remember that veterans often face a different battle when trying to reclaim their civilian lives. We must remember that not all battle scars are visible, and we must ensure that we provide the same level of quality care to all our service-members, whether they are suffering from the physical or psychological wounds of war.
This column has been created, in collaboration with the Mount Vernon Veteran Service Agency (VSA), to honor and keep Mount Vernon veterans in the know about events and happenings in the veteran community and in around Mount Vernon.
• This past Thanksgiving the city’s annual Turkey Drive provided 20 turkeys to veterans in need;
• Mt. Vernon veterans attended the 5th Annual Christmas Concert for Veterans in Peekskill. Tickets to the concert, hosted by “Westchester Stars” were free of charge to Mount Vernon’s veterans;
• Director Reed has met with CCVA members and the city’s engineer aide to discuss ideas for completing the long overdue projects of the Gold Star Mothers’ Monument in Hartley Park and the Veterans Park on Scott’s Bridge. The city has located the original iron fence commissioned for the Gold Star Mother’s Monument and are scheduling its installation;
• The VSA and CCVA would like to invite the entire veteran community to attend a “meet and greet” and installation of the new CCVA officers on January 24, 2017 at Mt. Vernon City Hall at 5:30 pm. If you are a veteran in need of assistance, reach out to Kristyn Briez Reed, Director of the Office of Veteran Services, Mount Vernon, NY. Her office is at City Hall, Office #4 - ground floor. Office: 914.685.2319 | Email: kreed@mvnvm.com

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Lillian Kleinberg with the
HONORING

Graphic Designer: Sheryl Brownlee-Fox
On Thursday night, January 26, over 100 supporters attended a fundraiser for Lyndon Williams, legislator for the 13th Legislative District in Mount Vernon. The event was held at Apricots & Honey Wine and Spirits, an impressive new business located at 673 East Lincoln Avenue, near the Pelham border. Williams, who is running for reelection, is known for his quiet and composed demeanor, but throughout the years he has represented Mount Vernon in a very positive and effective fashion.

Williams was first elected County Legislator for the 13th Legislative District in Mount Vernon in November 2007. He was re-elected in 2009 and 2011 by an overwhelming majority of Mount Vernon voters. In 2010 and 2012, Williams was elected by his colleagues to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Westchester County Board of Legislators.

Prior to becoming a County Legislator, Lyndon was a member of the Mount Vernon City Council - having been elected for three four-year terms. He served as President of the City Council for three one-year terms, and held major leadership positions in the City Council, including chairing several major committees such as the Finance and Planning Committee, the Legislation and Public Works Committee, and Public Safety and Codes Committee.

Williams has championed major legislative initiatives in the areas of economic development, tax relief for residents, housing, crime prevention, recreation, youth services, and programs for senior citizens in Mount Vernon. He is a strong advocate for minority and women-owned business enterprises - sponsoring legislation and funding initiatives to provide opportunity, growth, and success of MWBEs.

Continued on page 25
Williams’ civic involvement in the Mount Vernon community includes his service on the Board of Directors of the Boys & Girls Club, where he also volunteers his legal expertise and co-chairs the club’s fund raising efforts to fund quality programs for young people. He also volunteered his legal expertise to establish the Levister Towers Community Development Corporation for resident-tenants of the city’s largest public housing complex. He is also a member of the Mount Vernon NAACP.

When introduced by the Mistress of Ceremonies, Judy Williams, Williams received a long and enthusiastic ovation from his supporters. Although he spoke about many issues, the highlight of his speech was when he addressed his supporters on the subject of Memorial Field.

“I wish to talk about an issue that defines who we are and where we are going – Memorial Field. It is so important because symbolically it speaks about who we are. Money has not been the issue. We just have not been able to get up and get it done. Very shortly I plan to echo the voices of Mount Vernon residents to make sure this project is completed as quickly as possible,” said Williams.

The ever-popular DJ, Brother Arthur Muhammad, provided musical entertainment.

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