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# Mayor Thomas arrested and arraigned on grand larceny charges

Story by Joe Parisi

**O**n Monday, March 12, Mount Vernon Mayor Richard Thomas was arrested and arraigned on grand larceny charges as part of a corruption probe by the New York State Attorney General's Office into campaign finance irregularities.

Soon after being arraigned without bail at the Mount Vernon Criminal Court House by Judge Adrian Armstrong, Thomas walked out of City Hall with his wife and his attorney and held a press conference.

"I expect to be fully vindicated and I want to assure Mount Vernon residents that the allegations had nothing to do with my service in office," said the mayor.

Per his attorney's advice, the mayor refused to take questions from a legion of reporters attending the press conference.

Thomas is facing serious criminal charges that may ruin his political career



**Mayor Thomas, accompanied by his wife and attorney, speaking during his press conference**

Continued on page 5

# Mayor Thomas: "I will continue to govern as your mayor"

Story by Joe Parisi

**O**n Wednesday, March 14, Mount Vernon's highly anticipated State of the City Address was held in the City Council Chambers as opposed to the City Hall rotunda. It was a prudent change from last year when the mayor angered the City Council body by not having his annual State of the City Address in their chamber.

The mayor came close to repeating last year's mistake by publicizing that this year's address was being held at the Wartburg. The Wartburg location was changed in an impromptu matter and the event was successfully held at the City Council Chambers to the relief of his supporters.

This year's State of the City Address



**Mayor Thomas addressing the capacity crowd**

Continued on page 6



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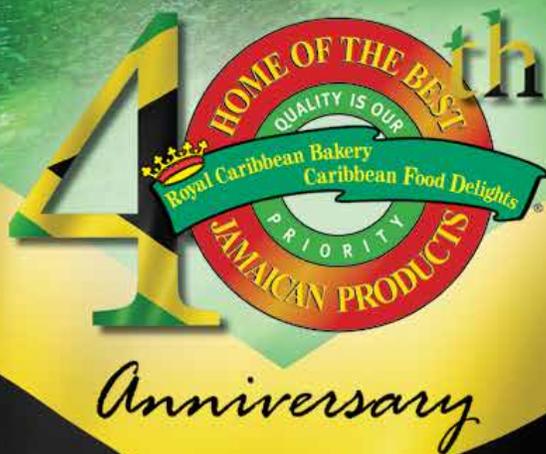
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*The People's Newspaper*

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Readers are encouraged to send us letters expressing their viewpoints on any issue. Letters should not contain inflammatory or provocative language and will be subject to editorial review. Please keep your letters brief and not to exceed 300 words. Your name and address must be included, but will be withheld upon request.

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We welcome all suggestions concerning news we should cover in our newspaper. Please call the Editor with suggestions at 914-584-6386.

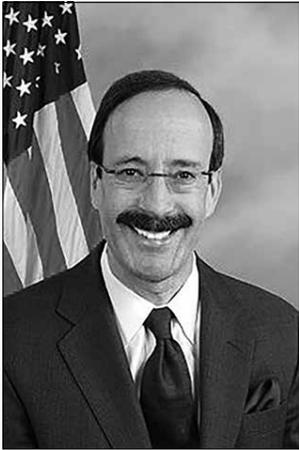
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**NYPA***Continued from page 1*

at a young age.

The mayor he defeated, Ernest D. Davis, also faced criminal charges while in office, but he got off easy and simply retired.

Many are wondering what impact the current criminal charges against the mayor will have on his ability to govern the city effectively.

## Engel announces \$1,544,866 federal grant for Mount Vernon Health Center Network



**C**ongressman Eliot L. Engel, a top member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, announced today that the Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center Network has been awarded a \$1,544,866 federal grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The funding will continue to support the delivery of comprehensive, affordable primary care services to members of the Mt. Vernon, Yonkers, and Greenburgh communities.

"The Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center Network provides quality health services to those who need it most," Congressman Engel said. "Without the Center's services, many of

our neighbors would not have a place to turn for compassionate care. I am pleased these federal funds will continue to support the Center's tremendous work in communities like Mount Vernon, Yonkers, and Greenburgh."

"This federal grant will make an impactful difference in the lives of our most vulnerable patients," said Opal Dunstan, CEO of the Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center Network, Yonkers Community Health Center and Greenburgh Health Center. "These funds along with our recent recognition as a Health Center Quality Leader, from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) reaffirms our value to our patients, families and community."

## Senator Jamaal T. Bailey informs constituents on their unclaimed funds

**S**enator Jamaal T. Bailey announced along with the State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli and local elected officials the amount of unclaimed funds in the 36th Senatorial District and how constituents can access that information.

Unclaimed funds are money that has been turned over to the state until its rightful owner claims it. In most cases, unclaimed funds accounts come from old bank accounts, accounts from insurance companies, uncashed checks, utility deposits, and stocks. In the 36th Senatorial District, the State Comptroller's

office identified 199,945 residents with unclaimed funds accounts, which generated a total of \$122,342,048.34 unclaimed in the district.

"I am always glad to help out the families and residents of my district. As a father of two young daughters, I understand the costs that come with providing and raising a family and how beneficial extra funds can be. I think it's important to inform constituents about the possibility of these funds and guide them towards accessing this money," said Senator Jamaal Bailey.

"I salute Senator Bailey, and Comptrol-

ler Thomas DiNapoli, for reaching out to the people of Mount Vernon - every person who is able to claim an unclaimed funds check will be thankful for their diligence and hard work," said County Executive George Latimer.

The best way for residents to view if they have any unclaimed funds is by visiting, <https://ouf.osc.state.ny.us/ouf/> or by calling 1-800-221-9311. If residents have unclaimed funds, they are guided by the state comptroller's office through the process of claiming the money.

## LSHV sues Mt. Vernon based Bozeman Law Firm

**B**arbara Finkelstein, CEO of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV), announced that the non-profit organization has filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of five current and former tenants of the Greenburgh Housing Authority (GHA) against The Bozeman Law Firm, PLLC, a Mount Vernon law firm which represents the GHA (a public housing authority) in landlord-tenant disputes lawsuits.

The lawsuit alleges that Bozeman Law is a "debt collector" for GHA and has violated the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, as well as New York Law with respect to the tenants' right to remain in their homes. The suit seeks an end to this harassment and a declaration that it violates federal and state law. It also seeks statutory damages of \$1,000 per plaintiff.

## Eastern Student Nathalia Taylor of Mount Vernon participates in University Club

**M**any Eastern Connecticut State University students participate in Eastern's clubs during the academic year.

Nathalia Taylor, 19, of Mount Vernon, NY, participated in the Fashion Forward Club during the fall 2017 semester. Taylor's major is Women's and Gender Studies.

Eastern students who participate in clubs/organizations excel in the classroom and do better academically than students who do not participate. Students participating in clubs had an average

GPA of 3.10, much higher than the 2.94 average for students who do not participate in any of the clubs/organizations.

Clubs/organizations planned and implemented numerous events for the semester. These programs have a direct impact on the daily life of all students on Eastern's campus. The programs range from social to educational, physical to spiritual and civic engagement programs, many of which also benefit the local community.

*Continued from page 1*

attracted a record crowd and a legion of media personnel due to the mayor's arrest just two days prior to the event unfolding. Legions of Thomas supporters were in attendance, prompting the police to close off access to the second floor, since the City Council Chambers had become unsafe due to an overflowing crowd anxious to hear what the mayor had to say.

When the mayor was introduced he received a thunderous ovation from his many supporters in attendance.

Prior to touting his accomplishments

as mayor, he touched on his recent arrest and arraignment on criminal charges related to inappropriate use of campaign funds when he was running for mayor. He defiantly stated that corruption charges against him are false and that the city is on the rise.

His supporters within the crowd applauded loudly as he stated: "The allegations stem from campaign rules and regulations that have nothing to do with my tenure as mayor and have nothing to do with how I've conducted myself as mayor." He concluded by adding, "They

are vague, confusing and contradictory. It's always my intention to do what is legal and ethical," he said.

Using two large video screens, he touted the following accomplishments:

- A 32 percent drop in crime since 2011
- An additional 15 police officers to be added this year
- Rising home prices (a 9.6 percent increase from last year)
- A new cable television contract that will pay the city \$1 million annually
- Transformation of the city's Building

Department

- Replacement of the city's dilapidated sewer system
- Clean up of the DPW yard
- Apparent collaboration between him and the City Council members

His supporters are hoping that the mayor can be exonerated on the serious charges lodged against him by the Attorney General's office. He is scheduled to make his first court appearance on May 1.

## NY Governor and NY State Legislature aim to help ex-convicts get jobs

Story by Judge Adrian Armstrong

Most people are not aware of the new law that became effective October 7, 2017 (New York Criminal Procedure Law § 160.59) which now authorizes state courts to seal nonviolent criminal convictions. The initiative is intended to make it easier for individuals who have stayed out of trouble to apply for work, without the stigma of a conviction.

This new state law will allow thousands of New Yorkers to seal records of old criminal convictions. The law will let New Yorkers apply to seal up to two convictions, including one felony, for crimes other than sex offenses and violent felonies, starting 10 years after their sentencing date or release from prison. District Attorneys will have 45 days to object to the application. If the district attorney opposes the sealing application, a hearing must be scheduled. At the hearing, the applicant and the district attorney may

offer evidence and call witnesses to offer testimony. The court must decide the application after considering the evidence offered by both parties at the hearing and issue an order either granting or denying CPL 160.59 sealing.

Sealed records won't be visible to most employers or landlords, but will be available to law enforcement and child-protective services, and can be considered in future criminal cases.

Applications for sealing records are made to the court where the conviction for the most serious offense occurred, or to the court where the applicant was last convicted if all offenses are of the same class. The application must include a sworn statement of the reasons why the convictions should be sealed. The district attorney must be served with the application, and the DA has 45 days to object to the application. Ultimately, the decision on whether to seal the records is up to the

judge, but if the district attorney objects then there will be a hearing scheduled.

The Governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo has the power to grant clemency in the form of reprieves, commutations, and pardons. The Governor is accepting applications for Pardon for Convictions at ages 16 and 17. This pardon is offered to applicants who committed a non-violent crime at age 16 or 17. If you meet all requirements, you are eligible to be recommended for a pardon. If you receive this pardon, the New York State Office of Court Administration has stated that it will restrict public access to your criminal history, meaning that it will not be available to private employers, landlords or other companies that seek this information.

The seven requirements to be eligible for this pardon are:

1. At least 10 years have passed since you were either convicted of the crime, or released from a period of

incarceration for that crime, if applicable.

2. You have been conviction-free since that time.
3. You have been convicted of a non-violent offense.
4. You were not convicted of a sex offense.
5. You are currently a New York State resident.
6. You have paid taxes on any income.
7. You are a productive member of your community, meaning that you are working, looking for work, in school or legitimately unable to work.

The point of these legislative and executive enactments is to give a second chance to people who made a mistake when they were young, but have been leading law-abiding lives for years.

## Mayor Thomas strongly disputes claims by Attorney General on election law filing



Mayor Richard Thomas

quirements during his run for Mayor in 2015. The mayor, who won the election in a landslide and is the youngest mayor ever elected in Mount Vernon, strongly disputed the Attorney General's accusations.

The allegations are merely accusations with no supporting evidence. No indictment has been brought against Mayor Thomas. The allegations are claims of a technical nature relating to Election Law, campaign finance and ethics disclosures. It should be noted that the funds in question, paid to then candidate Thomas' personal account, were legal and justified, and made on the advice of counsel, as compensation for his own campaign duties. Thomas, while a candidate for Mount Vernon mayor, left his job to work solely for his campaign; responsible for a variety of roles, ranging from manager to mail clerk. Additionally, as Schneiderman noted him-

self, there are no legal restrictions under New York State law pertaining to how inaugural funds can, or cannot, be spent.

The accusations are completely independent of the office of the mayor, or the official duties of Mayor Thomas.

Carl Bernstein, the attorney representing Mayor Thomas, said:

"The allegations announced by the Attorney General are unfounded and Mayor Thomas strongly proclaims his innocence. The mayor's 2015 campaign never, in any way, intended to violate the law and expects that, through the justice system, his name will be completely cleared of any wrongdoing. The mayor and his team of legal experts await their opportunity to refute these charges in a court of law. The allegations are not public corruption, they are campaign infractions that could have been handled with simple amendments to

paperwork filed. If the Attorney General really wanted to rid the City of Mount Vernon of corruption, he would be teaming up with Mayor Thomas, who has made public ethics a top priority and has done more to fight corruption than any of his predecessors in City Hall."

On the steps of City Hall, flanked by his wife and other supporters, Mayor Thomas said:

"The allegations are false. I want to reassure the people of Mount Vernon that they are related to the campaign and not my service in office. I have great confidence in our legal system and have no doubt I will be able to prove our full compliance. I will not allow the process to distract me from my service and duties. I expect to be fully vindicated."

Mayor Richard Thomas announced that he is innocent of allegations that he violated Election Law disclosure re-

## EDITORIAL

## Why students need arts education



**T**he arts in education have been vanishing all across America. Over the past several years we've all seen the trend of schools cutting the arts from their curriculum. Music, art, theater—gone for so many.

There's no doubt that the arts are fun for kids. Diving into those finger paints and making a beautiful picture to hang on the fridge is awesome. Acting in a play is exhilarating. But the arts also help kids develop on many fundamental levels.

People that recently attended *The Lion King, Jr.* performances at Mount Vernon High School left super impressed – feeling as if they had just attended the Broadway version of *The Lion King*.

Many of my friends told me that I should see *The Lion King, Jr.* So I did. On Saturday, March 3, my wife and I attended the musical as guests and we were simply awed by the young, superbly talented members of the cast. We were glad to see that the arts are back with a vengeance within the Mount Vernon School District.

Why do students need arts education? Young people who participate in the arts are: four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement; three times more likely to be elected to class office within their schools; four times more likely to participate in a math and science fair; three times more likely to win an award for school attendance; read for pleasure nearly twice as often. In addition, they perform community service more than four times as often. (Study by Stanford University and Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching).

What about test scores?

A 2008 study by the non-profit organi-

zation The Education Commission of the States concludes that arts can play a critical role in improving the academic performance of students. In a national sample of 25,000 students, those students "with high levels of arts-learning experiences" earned higher grades and scored better on standardized tests than those with little or no involvement in the arts—regardless of socioeconomic status. Learning through the arts also appears to have significant effects on learning in other disciplines, with students consistently involved in theater and music showing higher levels of success in math and reading. (2009 Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation report)

Arts education helps at-risk populations

Arts education makes a tremendous impact on the developmental growth of every child and has been proven to help level the "learning field" across socioeconomic boundaries. Arts education has a measurable impact on at-risk youth in deterring delinquent behavior and truancy problems while also increasing overall academic performance among those youth engaged in after school and summer arts programs targeted toward delinquency prevention. Arts education in schools increases test scores across every subject area, lowers dropout rates and helps close the achievement gap regardless of socioeconomic status.

Accolades must go out to Evelyn Collins for producing and directing such a wonderful musical, and to the Mount Vernon School District for helping to keep the arts alive.

Joe Parisi  
Publisher/Editor

## Board of Legislators passes Immigration Protection Act

**T**he Westchester County Board of Legislators recently voted to approve the Immigration Protection Act.

The bi-partisan measure passed by a vote of 11-3. It was supported by all of the chamber's 12 Democrats, but two were absent from the meeting for reasons unrelated to the vote, which is reflected in the vote total. It also was supported by Yonkers Republican David J. Tubiolo.

The legislation is not a sanctuary bill, but defines what county law enforcement can ask about a person's citizenship or immigration status and what information the county will share with federal officials.

The Westchester County Departments of Public Safety, Corrections and Probation all supported the legislation and agreed that it will protect all people without violating the law.

"We have made history tonight by passing the Immigration Protection Act, which enhances safety in Westchester County by increasing trust and cooperation between county employees, particularly law enforcement, and all residents," said County Legislator Catherine Borgia, District 9 - Briarcliff Manor, Cortlandt, Croton-on-Hudson, Ossining, Peekskill, chair of the Board's Budget & Appropriations Committee.

## Mayor Thomas calls for investigation into Con Edison's practices

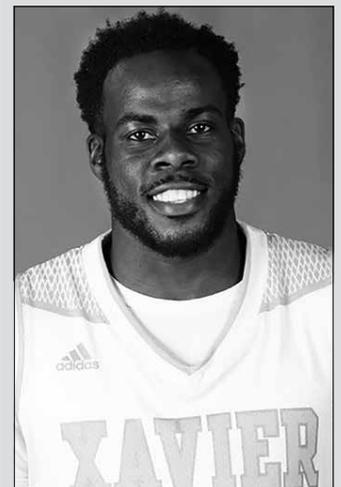
**M**ayor Richard Thomas released the following statement on continuing power outages following winter storms Reilly and Quinn and Con Edison's failures:

"Con Edison's management and response to Winter Storms Reilly and Quinn is unacceptable. I have told Con Ed leadership that their delivery of misleading progress reports is worse than giving us the bad news. A full accounting of what went wrong must be undertaken and Con Ed must reform its way of doing business.

I am joining Governor Andrew Cuomo and my fellow elected officials in calling for an immediate investigation into why Con Edison has failed to do its job in Westchester County. This is hardly the storm of the century, yet there are still homes and businesses without power and ratepayers without answers. We must examine Con Ed's policies and procedures and demand resiliency and investment in our grid. In 2003, a tree branch in Ohio resulted in a massive blackout across the East Coast, costing billions in damage. It's been too long for us not to have learned from that mistake.

I am thankful to our partners in New York State for stepping up and bridging the gap. Their response and communication with the city has been excellent. I am also grateful to our partners in the community such as 11 West Prospect Avenue which is offering free office space and charging stations for local businesses and entrepreneurs that may be struggling without power."

## Mount Vernon resident makes first-team all-conference



**Jalen David**

**X**avier University of Louisiana's Jalen David was named first-team All-Gulf Coast Athletic Conference in men's basketball recently.

David -- a 6-foot-4 senior guard/forward from Mount Vernon, N.Y., and a former Mount Vernon High School and Moberly Area (Mo.) Community College standout -- is averaging 12.1 points and five rebounds through 29 games this season with the Gold Rush. David was second All-GCAC a year ago.

## Engel receives the Mount Vernon Foundation "Great Knight Award"



**Mount Vernon Foundation 2018 "Great Knight Award" recipients (from left) Mike Phillips, Congressman Eliot Engel, Kaya Henderson, and Deajah Stevens**

**C**ongressman Eliot L. Engel was recently awarded the "Great Knight Award" by the Mount Vernon Foundation for all of the work he's done on behalf of the communities he represents in Congress, including Mount Vernon.

"From politics to professional sports to education and music, these warriors of change will receive the 'Great Knight Award' for their contributions to their craft and community," the foundation states online. Joining Congressman Engel were fellow honorees Mike Phillips, Renowned Saxophonist and International Jazz Artist; Kaya Henderson, former Chancellor of Washington D.C. Public Schools; and

Deajah Stevens, 2016 Olympian, world record holder, and Nike sponsored athlete.

"I want to thank the Mount Vernon Foundation for this tremendous honor and congratulate the other honorees who are also being recognized for their remarkable work," Engel said. "It truly is humbling to be recognized with such an impressive slate of extraordinary individuals.

"Serving the community has been my lifelong passion, first as a classroom teacher, then as a guidance counselor, and finally as an elected official. To be recognized for that life's work is truly special, and I am deeply touched to receive this honor."

## County Executive Latimer announces arrival of SeniorU

**S**eniorU is a unique partnership between educational experts at Concordia College New York, and the aging experts at Wartburg Continuing Care for seniors in Mount Vernon. SeniorU allows retirees to take advantage of a new opportunity to earn a college degree – in a community of learners their own age, at a time of life when pursuing one's own interests becomes more achievable. Seniors will discover and go after their new purpose in life with other seniors.

SeniorU is sponsored by Westches-

ter County Livable Communities, part of Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services and the Westchester Public/Private Partnership for Aging Services. The program taps into the natural impulse to keep learning and growing at every age. SeniorU is available for seniors who hold a high school diploma or GED.

Please contact Concordia College at (914) 337-9300 ext. 2124 for more information and/or to register. More information is also available at [www.concordia-ny.edu/SeniorU](http://www.concordia-ny.edu/SeniorU).

### EDITORIAL

## Don't expect Mayor Thomas to step down

**M**ayor Thomas' arrest and arraignment on criminal charges has shocked and rattled Mount Vernonites like never before. Many are demanding that he step down as mayor but his supporters are encouraging him to continue serving.

When you read the charges lodged against him, they strike readers as appalling, since they explain that he systematically looted his campaign funds for personal use.

Until now, Mayor Thomas has exhibited confidence that he will beat the charges in court. His behavior is one of defiance and certainty that he will be vindicated when the "smoke clears." He did an excellent job during his State of the City address and did not show signs of strain or appeared to be nervous. If anything, he carried himself and spoke like he was going to govern for the remainder of his term.

So, why did the mayor expend the campaign funds in what appears to be in an unconcerned fashion – acting as if the funds were intended for his personal use?

The mayor is contending that he had every legal right to use the funds for personal reasons. He claims that the allegations

are merely accusations with no supporting evidence. He goes on to state that the allegations are claims of a technical nature relating to Election Law, campaign finance and ethics disclosures.

According to Mayor Thomas, the funds in question, paid to his personal account, were legal and justified, and spent by him on the advice of counsel, as compensation for his own campaign duties.

Unless the mayor decides to step down, which is still a possibility, he will wind up going to trial in White Plains in a fight against the state and the feds. If he loses, the outcome will not be pretty, since not only will he be forced to step down from his high paying job as mayor, but he will also face jail time.

As of the writing of this editorial, the mayor has publicly stated that he intends to continue governing as mayor. And if he intends to fight the charges in court, he will be taking a big gamble going up against the government. But, you never know, he feels extremely confident he can beat the charges and the possibility is always there.

Joe Parisi  
Editor

## Wartburg volunteers recognized for their service



**Audrey Bonds**



**Shakil Henriques**

**W**artburg is blessed to have dedicated and caring volunteers assisting in a variety of ways. This year we have two special volunteers who have received outside recognition. Audrey Bonds has volunteered at Wartburg for three years and continues to come in three to four days per week. Audrey works with residents, staff and families and has enriched the lives of many. Audrey received the Volunteer of The Year award of 2017 for volunteering in our nursing home.

Shakil Henriques is a member of the

Youth Shelter of Westchester and volunteers in our Adult Day Care program five days a week. For the past two years, he has assisted staff and residents with meals and recreation activities. We have watched him grow from a quiet young man into a mature, responsible young adult who has great compassion for the people he works with. We are so proud that he was chosen to be this year's Youth Volunteer for Westchester County. He will be recognized at the Volunteer Award Luncheon on April 20, 2018.

## Memorial service held to honor the life and legacy of Marie K. Williams



*Marie Williams*



*Marie Williams with Oprah Winfrey and family members*

played in the Mount Vernon City School District for 34 years before retiring in 2002.

As a Mount Vernon resident and school advocate she worked tirelessly with the community to foster and maintain a positive image of the school system. Williams was an avid reader, a warrior who fought alongside parents to demand that their children receive a quality education. She was active in the local, county and state PTA organizations and served in numerous official capacities. Her sensitivity and warmth, her willingness to help others and her ability to relate to all the residents left an indelible legacy in the City of Mount Vernon.

Williams is survived by daughters Terrie M. Williams and Yolanda (Thomas) Johnson, her sister, Josephine (Lee) Floyd, grandson Rocky Ephraim, numerous nieces and nephews and a host of lifelong friends.

**F**riends, family and admirers of education advocate Marie K. Williams celebrated her life and legacy during a memorial service in her Mount Vernon hometown, Saturday, March 17, at Macedonia Baptist Church. Senior pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, the Rev. Dr. Darren M. Morton, officiated the service.

Some of the guest speakers included Joe Parisi, publisher of the Mount Vernon Inquirer, former Mount Vernon mayor Clinton Young, Linda Nigro and many others.

Williams was born to Earlie Sr. and Laura B. Kearney Davis, March 18, 1932, in Warrenton, N.C. The Kearneys were sharecroppers and had nine children: Helen, Earlie Jr., Willa Mae, William McKinley, Mary Celeste, Marie, Bobby (her twin brother), Ethel M. and Josephine, and seven from Earlie's previous marriage: Charlie, Essex, Lucy, Pearl, Lucille, Bessie and Ruth.

At a young age Williams realized the importance of acquiring an education. She would walk for miles to and from school each day through rain, snow and heat to attend school. May 23, 1950, Williams became the first of her siblings to earn a high school diploma after graduating from John Hawkins.

In the early 1950s, Williams moved to Westchester County, N.Y., where she met and married the late Charles Williams. The couple raised their two daughters, Terrie M. Williams and Yolanda Williams, in the city the couple loved and called home, Mount Vernon.

Williams began her professional career as a community liaison worker in a dropout prevention program at Mount Vernon High School. She received her BA in social science from the College of New Rochelle in 1979, and her MA in social work from Fordham University in 1985. She was em-



*Former Mt. Vernon mayor, Clinton Young, speaking at the memorial service*

## Is Mt. Vernon planning to finalize the Gold Star Mothers Monument?



*City officials at the unveiling of an incomplete Gold Star Mothers Monument in 2015*

**O**n Monday, May 25, 2015 at the end of the Memorial Day parade, Mount Vernon city officials, along with elected officials and the members of the Central Committee for Veterans Affairs (CCVA), flocked to Hartley Park for the unveiling of the Gold Star Mothers Monument. The city had been working over eight years to finalize the project, and the unveiling of the monument was disappointing since the monument was still lacking the statue of a Gold Star Mother that was to sit on the base of the monument.

Officials at the time were told that the remaining statue was expected to cost \$80,000, according to the

designer of the monument, Milton Sherrill, who was also in attendance.

The project was started in 2006 with a \$10,000 grant and continues to remain unfinished. City officials are currently considering spending about \$46,000 to finally finish the Gold Star Mothers Monument. The latest, less-expensive design calls for a large gold star atop the pillar with a sculpture on one side of the pillar and a plaque on another side of the pillar.

If the project is resurrected, the goal is to complete the monument by September 30, which is the observance of National Gold Star Mother's Day.

# Church Women United host 17th Annual Spring Luncheon



*Henrietta Rush receiving "The Valiant Woman" award from Shirley Maurice*



*(l to r) Judy Williams and Judge Nichelle Johnson*

**O**n Saturday, March 17, members and guests of Church Women United (CWU) packed the luxurious Mulino's at Lake Isle Country Club in Eastchester, New York to celebrate their 61st Annual Founder's Day Luncheon. The event's theme was "Reaching for Wholeness."

The organizers of the event were blessed with a picture-perfect day that attracted church members and guests from all across the New York region and beyond.

Church Women United's mission is to be a racially, culturally and theologically inclusive Christian women's movement celebrating unity in diversity and working for a world of peace and justice, specifically for women and children. CWU strives to provide for its members resources and information on a wide range of social justice issues, opportunities for worship and action, and an expansive network of women and women's organizations working to ensure a better world for all.

At its founding, the Movement was named United Council of Church Women (UCCW). Women of faith from three interdenominational women's groups representing 70 denominations convened in Atlantic City, NJ in December, 1941 while

bombs were being dropped and the world was at war. The United Council of Church Women's first action was to circulate a petition signed by 84,000 churchwomen "urging the United States at the signing of the United Nations Charter, to join and take its full responsibility in a world organization."

The action received wide publicity in the media and Eleanor Roosevelt later involved the UCCW in a conference at the White House on "How Women May Share in Post War Policy Making." Such action remains typical for CWU today as its quest for informed prayer for prayerful action continues. Women of the Movement affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence in the world.

This year's event was comprised of an exciting program and commenced with welcoming comments from Nora B. Tyndall, the group's Communications Coordinator, followed by the singing of God Bless America and a scripture reading by Anne Wilson.

Rev. Carol Fryer, Pastor of the United Lutheran Church in Mount Vernon, provided the invocation and blessing of the food.

Next, Diane Watts introduced the personable Mistress of Ceremonies and



*Yvonne Sheppard receiving "The Valiant Woman" award from Shirley Maurice*



*Honorees and speakers enjoying themselves at the dais*

former Mount Vernon Commissioner of Human Services, Judy Williams.

Williams immediately asked Mayor Richard Thomas to provide greetings from the City of Mount Vernon, but realized that he was not in attendance. "I'm sorry Mayor Thomas was unable to make

it, but luckily we have our former mayor in attendance, Mayor Ernest D. Davis, who will say a few words.

Davis drew a thunderous applause from the large audience when he approached the podium and complimented Church Women United on the great job they do in



*Nora B. Tyndall provided opening comments*

# Wartburg resident honored by Mt. Vernon during 100th birthday celebration



**Kristyn Reed honoring Ralph Amato with a certificate of recognition at the Wartburg**

**T**he Mount Vernon Veterans Service Agency was excited to help Wartburg resident Ralph Amato celebrate his 100th birthday on Sunday, March 18th. Kristyn Reed, Director of the Mount Vernon Veterans Service Agency presented Ralph with a flag and certificate of recognition on behalf of Mayor Richard Thomas.

Ralph was born and raised in Yonkers, NY and is a product of the Yonkers public

school system.

During WWII from 1942-1945 he served in the United States Army in New Guinea, the Philippines, and Japan.

Ralph returned from the service to work at his family's bar and married Rose Bernardi and had two children, John and Rosanne.

He worked at the Yonkers Parking Authority for 16 years and was a senior handball champion at the YMCA and an avid

golfer.

He has always been an active member of the veteran community, and has twice been Commander of the AMVETS Armando A. Rauso Post 40 in Yonkers.

Ralph was happy to celebrate this mile-

stone at the Wartburg with his children, their spouses, his grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

The City of Mt. Vernon is proud to count Ralph Amato among its centenarians!

*Continued from page 10*



**MaLinda Daniel Davison singing a song**

Mount Vernon.

After lunch MaLinda Daniel Davison sang an emotional selection and drew a long applause upon completion.

Williams next introduced the guest speaker, the Honorable Nichelle Johnson, who has a long record of service for the City of Mount Vernon, including time as Corporation Counsel and Chief of Staff to the mayor.

As the program was coming to an end, Williams introduced the group's president, Shirley Maurice, who presented "The Valiant Woman" award to Henrietta Rush and Yvonne Sheppard.

Closing remarks came from Maurice and the benediction was provided by Rev. Fryer.

As the crowd exited, one female guest referred to the luncheon as interesting and memorable.

# Legislators grill Con Ed, NYSEG on storm response



**(l to r) Legislators MaryJane Shimsky, Majority Whip; Majority Leader Catherine Parker; Board Chair Ben Boykin; Vice Chair Alfreda Williams**

**T**he County Board of Legislators spent nearly three hours on Monday, March 19, grilling representatives of Consolidated Edison and New York State Electric and Gas about the companies' response to March Nor'easters that left thousands of Westchester County residents without power, many for as long as a week, and some for longer.

Reimbursements and fines, coordination with municipal officials, the process for calling in help from other utilities, and

whether utilities have enough permanent crews at the ready for storm recovery, were some of the topics legislators raised.

"We need to talk broadly about...preparedness, response, coordination with municipalities and communications. The storms may have been natural disasters, but the communications failures were disasters entirely of the companies' own making," said Board Chair Ben Boykin (District 5 -White Plains, Scarsdale, Harrison).

Boykin also singled out the utilities' reli-

ance on aid from across the country as a problem with storm recovery. "Problems with the mutual aid system are slowing response to these storms," he said. "The system is broken."

"It seems there was...a failure in responsiveness, a failure in accuracy and a failure in dissemination of information, said Catherine Parker (District 7 - Harrison, Larchmont, Mamaroneck, New Rochelle, Rye).

"The fact of the matter is, there is too much reliance on mutual aid," said Legislator MaryJane Shimsky (District 12- Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Edgemont, Hartsdale, Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington). "You guys don't have enough employees to do what it is that you are supposed to be doing as a corporation, which is ensuring the reliable distribution of energy to your customers."

At the request of Legislator Michael Kaplowitz (District 4 - New Castle, Somers, Yorktown), company representatives agreed to return for a series of focused discussions about specific fixes, as well to answer outstanding questions about capital expenses, staffing and a range of other topics in a public setting.

"We're looking forward to this being the beginning, not the end, of the dialogue," said Boykin.



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✓ Engel sponsored the Fair Pay Act for **equal pay for equal work for women** and is a sponsor of the new Paycheck Fairness Act to strengthen the current law.

✓ Year after year, Eliot Engel has successfully worked to **secure millions in Federal education funds for our Mount Vernon schools**.

✓ Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center received Federal funds to **improve health care services**.

✓ Engel worked to obtain Federal **funds for Mount Vernon police cameras**, and to **assist veterans**.

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# ▶ Eliot Engel ◀

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May 5th	Saturday	12:00PM	\$21.50
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The Mount Vernon Department of Recreation



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## Alternative Medicine Options by Joe Parisi

### Bottled water is bad for the environment and people

**B**ottled water is not only bad for the environment. It's bad for people. According to a new study by journalism nonprofit Orb Media and researchers at the State University of New York at Fredonia, microplastic contamination in bottled water is nearly universal. The study looked at more than 250 water bottles sourced from 11 brands in nine different countries and found that more than 90% of the samples had an average of 10.4 microplastic particles per liter. That's about twice the level of contamination discovered in the group's earlier study on plastic contamination in tap water.

Many consumers are skeptical of tap water, which has helped fuel the rise of bottled water as the fastest-growing beverage market in the world, valued at \$147 billion per year. Unfortunately, when it comes to microplastic pollution, bottled water may not be better than tap. While Orb says bottled water companies all refused to make their own plastic tests public, researchers' testing

found, for example, one bottle of Nestle Pure Life that had over 10,000 microplastic particles per liter, far above the average.

As to where all that plastic comes from, one major culprit in microplastic pollution is the washing of synthetic clothes.

Scientists now are trying to figure out what microplastic does in the human body. Prior research by the European Food Safety Authority found that while as much as 90% of ingested plastic could pass through a human body, some of it may not, lingering in the gut and lymphatic system. Waterproofing maybe?

The simplest thing you can do to reduce your contribution to the plastic mountain is to find a water bottle that you like enough to use more than once. There are multiple options to suit every taste. From stainless steel, bamboo or glass, to bottles with an option to add fruit to flavor the water, or flasks with filters that promise extra purity. Find the one that works for you.

### Board of Ethics denounced by Mayor Thomas

**M**ayor Richard Thomas calls for City Council to comply with court order and fund an Inspector General in light of unprofessional and unethical report issued by Board of Ethics.

Mayor Thomas' office released the following statement:

"It is hard to imagine a report that could be more wrong, more grossly negligent and more morally bankrupt.

The claims made against me are as unfounded as they are preposterous. I can say, unequivocally, that I have never accepted a dollar of pay from the Amani Public Charter School as payment for any of my role as a Board member, which was properly documented in my ethical filings. Where a resolution came before the city, I have recused myself in accordance with all city ethical requirements

In fact, the money in question was not given to me but to the school by the city's

Youth Bureau, for after school programs, a practice that dates to 2013. What kind of so-called Ethics Board, makes such an egregious mistake and then compounds by it by breaching its confidential duty by leaking multiple falsehoods, falsehoods that had been legally addressed by my counsel prior to completion of the report.

For those reasons, it is time for the City Council to finally fund the city's post of Inspector General, so that the needed reviews of city practices are in fact guided by ethics and professionalism.

"I am dismayed by the willingness of the Board of Ethics to weaponize their appointments for political gain and turn an institution whose role is to preserve the integrity of the government into a 'kangaroo court.' Shame on Chairman Lucio, and the entirety of the Board, for abusing their authority and making a mockery of the very office they've been appointed to."

## FORWARD MARCH



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

### The Mount Vernon Veterans Service Agency is diligently working to meet the needs of the city's veterans

**M**ost notably we have coordinated with Mount Vernon Assessor Stephanie Vanderpool, Mayor Richard Thomas, and the Mount Vernon City Council to enact the Cold War Veterans property tax exemption. Eligible veterans can apply this maximum 15% exemption to city portion of their 2019 property taxes. All requests must be submitted to the Mount Vernon Assessor's Office, Room #8 on the ground floor of City Hall by May 1, 2018- there will be no exceptions made to this date.

We have also made strides towards the completion of the Gold Star Mothers Monument in Hartley Park. The monument which has been in various stages of planning and construction for 12 years was recently featured in The Journal News. A new design is being considered and the VSA looks forward to the completion of the monument in the near future.

We are gearing up for May's activities which include the return of the Universoul Circus, Rye Playland's Memorial Weekend, and the Mount Vernon Memorial Day Parade and Ceremonies. We are seeking parade acts, and volunteers to assist in the marshalling of the parade. Registration forms are available in City Hall and interested volunteers should contact the VSA.

Vet Tip\* - Recently disabled veterans (within 2 years of a rating or rating increase) may be eligible for S-DVI life insurance through the VA. Coverage ranges from \$10,000-\$30,000 dependent upon disability rating.

Please contact the VSA for more information on any of the topics in this article, other veteran specific information, or to suggest a topic that you would like to see covered in "Forward March" at 914-665-2980.

### Film activity in Westchester County for 2018 already off to a strong start

**A**ccording to the Westchester County Office of Tourism & Film, film activity in Westchester County has risen significantly in the last two years marked by a significant uptick in feature film location shoots. Westchester County collected a total of \$656,224 in location fees for film, television, and commercial shoots at county-owned properties, a 31% increase vs. 2016. In addition, production days for county-owned properties in 2017 were up 27% from 2016.

County Executive George Latimer said: "Film activity is an important

contributor to our local economy in Westchester. Our municipalities, local businesses and local residents reap economic benefits from film activity. It's also a point of pride for us. We enjoy seeing our beautiful county in films, television projects and commercials."

Director of Westchester County Office of Tourism and Film Natasha Caputo notes film activity for 2018 is already off to an impressive start. "Goldfinch," directed by John Crowley and starring Sarah Paulson and Ansel Elgort, began shooting in Yonkers in February.



## Authentic Puerto Rican Recipes

### Mondongo

Tripe Stew

2 pounds honeycomb tripe, cut into small pieces	1 cup alcaparrado
4 cups lemon juice combined with 8 cups cold water	½ lb yautia, peeled and diced
3 quarts cold water mixed with 1 tablespoon salt	½ lb yucca, peeled and diced
1 tablespoon annatto oil	½ lb calabaza (West Indian pumpkin), peeled and diced
1 tablespoon corn oil	2 green plantains, peeled and sliced
¼ pound smoked ham, diced	4 bay leaves
½ cup basic Recaito	½ tablespoon black pepper salt to taste
1 cup tomato sauce	1 cup canned garbanzo beans

Soak the tripe in the lemon water for 30 minutes. Rinse and put in a large soup pot with the 3 quarts of cold salted water. Bring to a boil. Lower the heat, cover, and simmer for about 2-1/2 hours, or until the tripe is tender. Drain and rinse.

In a clean pot, heat the oils. Add the ham, recaito, tomato sauce, and alcaparrado. Saute over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add the tripe, root vegetables, plantain, bay leaves, and enough cold water to cover. Add pepper and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer for 35 minutes, or until the root vegetables are cooked. Add drained garbanzos and cook another 5 minutes or so.

## BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

MAY 2017

### “LONDON’S TAX SERVICES, LLC”

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## Mt. Vernon City Council: “We intend to restore integrity and transparency in city government”

The Mount Vernon City Council expresses concern regarding recent allegations made by the New York State Attorney General, Eric Schneiderman, against Mayor Richard Thomas. As stated by Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, this is an ongoing investigation with a trial date set for May 2nd. The City Council is especially disappointed to learn that a confidential document regarding this on-going investigation was shared without consent of the City Council. Because this is an on-going investigation, the Mount Vernon City

Council refrains at this time from further comment on this matter.

The Mount Vernon City Council reassures residents that it is committed to the people of our great city. We are committed to restore integrity and trust in our city government by cooperating with the investigation, and we will continue to work with all branches of government to ensure our city continues to provide services. As the legislative branch of government, we remain focused on passing laws to benefit and to bring new businesses into our community.

## Board urges “significant financial penalties” on CON ED, NYSEG

The Westchester County Board of Legislators is urging the New York State Public Service Commission to impose stiff financial penalties on Consolidated Edison and New York State Electric and Gas for the companies' response to the March storms that left thousands of Westchester residents without power, many for a week or more.

In a letter signed by all the Legislators and sent to Public Service Commission Chairman John B. Rhodes, the Board asked for “significant financial penalties” to be imposed on the companies for their “inadequate preparation and response” to the storms.

“The Commission's penalizing action is crucial to provoke the utilities to change their procedures and prevent missteps in future storms, which have had such profound impact on our communities,” the Board wrote in the letter. But, the Board noted, the cost of

these penalties must not be passed on to rate-payers.

Earlier this month, the Board urged the Public Service Commission to hold public hearings in Westchester, so the Commission can hear directly from residents who were affected by the extended outages.

The Commission is the government entity that regulates the utilities. On March 14, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that the Department of Public Service would launch an investigation into Con Ed and NYSEG's preparedness for and response to the storms.

Recently, the Board spent nearly three hours grilling representatives of Con Ed and NYSEG about reimbursements to rate-payers, storm preparedness, response coordination with municipal officials, and failures in the “mutual aid” process of calling in help from other utilities.



## Jim and Annie Kiselak's Natural Food Column

Direct from the sunny island of  
Vieques, Puerto Rico

### How unhealthy foods affect the body

Eating unhealthy foods on a regular basis may contribute to health problems. Studies continue to show the negative effects of many common unhealthy food products. For optimal health and wellness, eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains -- and save the empty calories for occasional treats.

#### Obesity

In addition to other causes such as inactivity and medical problems, obesity is also related to an unhealthy diet. Because you must burn more calories than you consume, a high-calorie diet combined with physical inactivity will most likely result in excessive weight gain. Foods that contain large amounts of trans fats, saturated fat and sugar all contribute to increased chances of obesity. For maximum health benefit, always eat breakfast and avoid skipping meals throughout the day to help regulate your metabolism and avoid unhealthy snacking.

#### Heart Health

The quality of your diet has a significant impact on your cardiovascular health. Salt and fatty foods can be particularly detrimental when consumed in excessive quantities on a regular basis. For maximum heart health, Medline Plus recommends limiting salt intake to 2,400 mg each day. Other unhealthy foods to avoid include soda, butter, high-fat meats, organ meats and fried foods. Use

skinless poultry whenever possible. Avoid eating more than three to four egg yolks per week, and always choose low or non-fat dairy products.

#### Disease Prevention

Eating unhealthy foods also contributes to increased susceptibility to illness and chronic disease. Not only does a healthy diet help prevent heart disease, but it may also aid in the prevention of type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and even cancer. An unhealthy diet may also cause nutrient deficiencies, which are particularly common in those who do not meet daily calorie requirements. According to the World Health Organization the most threatening nutrient deficiencies are iron deficiency anemia, vitamin A deficiency and iodine deficiency disorders.

#### Mental Health

As noted by HelpGuide.org, diet plays a crucial role in mental health. Eating too much junk food may aggravate symptoms of mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety. Sugary foods and refined carbohydrates are particularly harmful, since they result in a rapid increase in blood sugar. Potatoes, brown rice, oatmeal and other complex carbohydrates are wiser choices. According to Mayo-Clinic.com, unhealthy food choices and diet habits may also increase your chances of developing mental diseases like Alzheimer's later in life.

## Board of Ethics seeks supplemented Financial Disclosure Statements from Mayor Thomas

The Mount Vernon Board of Ethics is asking Mayor Richard Thomas to supply them with previously submitted Financial Disclosure Statements and his attorney is refusing to do so. According to his lawyer, Laurence D. Laufer, the Board of Ethics is exceeding its limits of its jurisdiction and delegated authority. "One could only surmise that the board and its legal mandate are being

manipulated by outside parties in service of political agendas," stated Laufer.

The Board of Ethics is requesting that the mayor supplement his Financial Disclosure Statements so they disclose information on the purchase of his home, located at 55 Douglas Place in Mount Vernon; Amani Public Carter School; and Cherish Celetti School Loan debt.

## EDUCATION COLUMN

By Diane Fulves, M.A., M.Ed.,  
Director, EMPOWERING OUR PARENTS  
Email: dee076@verizon.net

### Evaluations Require Preparation

April has arrived and by now the educational performance of your children may be evaluated at a special education meeting to decide if they may benefit from special education services. You will bring your concerns regarding any problems they may be experiencing. If you have kept notes throughout the school year, if you have paid attention to the issues your children have experienced, if you have kept in contact with their teachers, you will be prepared for this meeting. The information you provide is extremely important. Be clear and as detailed as possible. For example, my child does not always understand the homework. He does not always understand directions. He has trouble following class discussion in a large group. He has trouble studying for tests and recalling information. He has difficulty copying from the board. The more information you can provide the members of the committee, the better understanding they will have regarding problems which will lead to an appropriate decision.

If the committee decides that your child is eligible for special education services, an Individual Education Plan, I.E.P., will be developed for your child. An I.E.P. is a written document, a LEGAL document, designed for each child who has been classified with a disability. This document gives direction to meet the needs of your child. An I.E.P. includes specific goals, objectives, modifications, and accommodations that must be implemented to help your child suc-

ceed. Remember parents, an I.E.P. is not a suggestion. An I.E.P. is a mandate and must be followed.

Parents, you are an integral participant in the evaluation of your child. You do not want the discussion about your child to proceed without your active participation. This is why you must come prepared because this meeting will result in important decisions for your child. The Individuals with Disabilities Act, I.D.E.A., states, "Parents have always been important players in the special education process and their involvement is vital to successful results for students. Parents are entitled to be part of their child's I.E.P. team that makes decisions regarding their child's placement."

Be prepared to ask questions and expect answers. If your child is classified with a disability and receives an I.E.P., you want to know what will happen next. Ask about modifications and accommodations which will be included in the I.E.P. Will homework be modified? Will small group instruction be provided? Will alternate assignments be offered when necessary? Will more time be provided to complete assignments and tests?

Once you receive the I.E.P., examine it carefully. If the academic or behavior issues have not been addressed or if specific modifications and accommodations have not been included, contact the appropriate person immediately. Don't wait. An I.E.P. is the specific plan for your child's success.

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**FLASHBACK**

# Hundreds Attend Mt. Vernon's First Relay for Life for the American Cancer Society

Story by Deena Parham  
Pictures by Joe Parisi



*The luminaria candles lined the track at Memorial Field and were left burning throughout the night*



*Several musicians and fans pictured with Mayor Davis (c)*

**M**ount Vernon residents were among the 3.5 million people in 4,800 communities nationwide to host the American Cancer Society's premiere event, Relay for Life. More than 50 teams of cancer survivors, friends, family, businesses, hospitals, churches and a host of organizations raised more than \$45,000. Proceeds will benefit vital cancer research, educational programs, and services in the community.

Mount Vernon's very first Relay for Life was held from 7 p.m. on June 15, until 8 a.m. on June 16, 2007. Fundraising teams camped out in tents overnight at Memorial Field. A live entertainment stage, barbeque areas, vendors, and a children's play area transformed the field into a small village to celebrate cancer survivorship.

Adrienne D'Imperio, from the American Cancer Society, welcomed the crowd of

more than 500 people, who gathered at the field. Mary Fleming, from the City of Mount Vernon, and one of the event's co-chairs, stated, "I am so excited to see so many people here." Fleming continued, "I have been told that this is one of the best turnouts for a first-time Relay for Life event."

George Brown, Deputy City Clerk, and the event's co-chair, was equally exuberant. Brown commented, "I am elated, and ecstatic, that this has come to fruition." Brown spoke of his earliest meetings with D'Imperio to organize the event seven months ago. "Relay for Life is the marquis event for the American Cancer Society. Mount Vernon is now on the map," said Brown.

Mayor Davis said, "I congratulate the great committee of people for bringing it to the attention of the community, of how



*A young survivor cuts the ribbon to commence the Survivors Lap*



*Vanessa Cowan*

serious this is. We have exceeded our fundraising goal by \$10,000. This is an extension of the Mount Vernon spirit."

Vanessa Cowan, Relay for Life's survivor chair, acknowledged the many friends and family who have supported her since her cancer diagnosis in 2004. Now in remission, Cowan has dedicated her life to become a vocal community activist.

According to Cowan, life after cancer has meant that she had the opportunity to spend time with her grandson, start a business, pursue a marketing degree, and learn how to swim. "I am a better person because of cancer." She urged those who have a cancer diagnosis to have faith, accept help, stay strong, and have a team of health care professionals. She concluded, "Get busy living, or get busy dying, because the choice is yours.

Many of the relay's 79 listed survivors

gathered in a sea of purple t-shirts to lead the Survivors Lap, the first walk around the track. Each team was expected to send one walker around the track throughout the 13-hour event.

Allyson Powell, a singer also known as "Lady Monet" performed as a member of the Mayor's Choir at the Relay for Life. A survivor since 1996, Powell said, "This is very emotional, and I am pleased. I am so glad to see all of the survivors that are here. It means that Mount Vernon is taking this seriously and believing in the cure and elimination of cancer."

Robin Middleton, a cancer survivor for almost a year, had a team of friends and family. The Mount Vernon Hospital worker stated, "Doctors took my lump, and not my spirit. We call our team 'Positive Spirits' because you have to be positive to fight this thing called cancer."

Continued from page 22



Legislator Clinton Young, Jr.



The PBA station led by Commissioner David Chong (c)

Dillard T. Boone II, director of the event's entertainment, introduced Malik Thom, who entertained the audience with outstanding dance performances to the songs, "Mr. Bojangles" and "Candy Man." Malinda Daniel-Hodge, followed Thom, with

an inspirational spoken word performance called "False Illusions."

D-Train Williams sang a moving rendition of "Amazing Grace" as part of the Luminaria Ceremony. Candles were lit within bags that contained names to remember those lost,

those who are currently fighting cancer, or those who have survived cancer. The stadium's lights were then dimmed revealing a brilliant circle of light around the track's perimeter.

As teams took a lap around the track, a Westchester County Police

helicopter, with members from the Mount Vernon Police Department onboard as well, circled over the field. Boone said, "There is no finish line, until we find a cure."

## Board of Legislators to review Playland management contract



**T**he Westchester County Board of Legislators will be undertaking a review of the county's contract with Standard Amusements to manage the Playland amusement park in Rye.

The contract between the county and Standard Amusements was signed in 2016 by former County Executive Rob Astorino. New County Executive George Latimer has said that his administration would be looking at the

Playland agreement with "a fresh set of eyes."

"Public-private partnerships are designed to be a win for both parties. The public-private partnership with Standard Amusements to manage Playland has steadily shifted the burden to the public," said Legislator Catherine Parker, the Board's Majority Leader and representative of the district where Playland is located.

Parker, who has called on the Latimer administration to terminate the agreement, continued, "Given the stated county obligation of tens of millions of dollars for capital improvements in the contract, that we know is significantly higher, the mechanism to recoup those investments is not in the agreement. The goal to unburden the public was negotiated away under the last administration, with substantive changes since the BOL vote in 2016. I look forward to hearing what the new administration has learned related to the management of Playland since taking office."

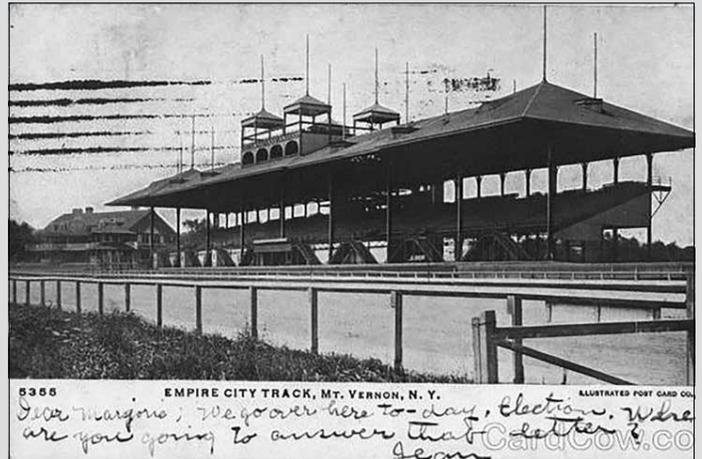
The board's own review of the con-

tract will be undertaken by the committees on Budget and Appropriations, Law and Major Contracts, Parks, Planning and Economic Development and Public Works.

Legislator Lyndon Williams, chair of the Committee on Law & Major Contracts, explained the role of the committee in connection with the agreement, saying, the committee "will assess whether there has been legal compliance with the terms and conditions on the contract approved by the Board of Legislators, and if not, what are the ramifications of such non-compliance."

Williams continued, "This 30-year long-term contract has significant economic effect on county taxpayers, with the county and Standard's commitments of \$60 million. Given the major delays and changes occurring after the Board of Legislators approval, it is important that the committee exercise its oversight fact-gathering function at this stage before reaching any conclusions and before recommending any action."

# Historical photos of Mount Vernon





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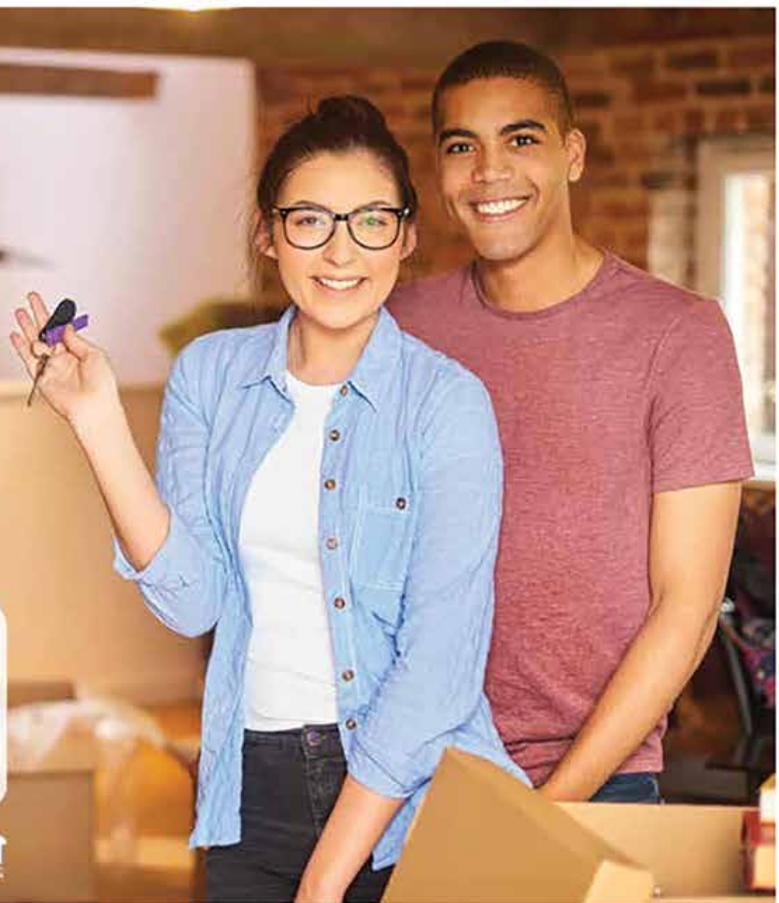
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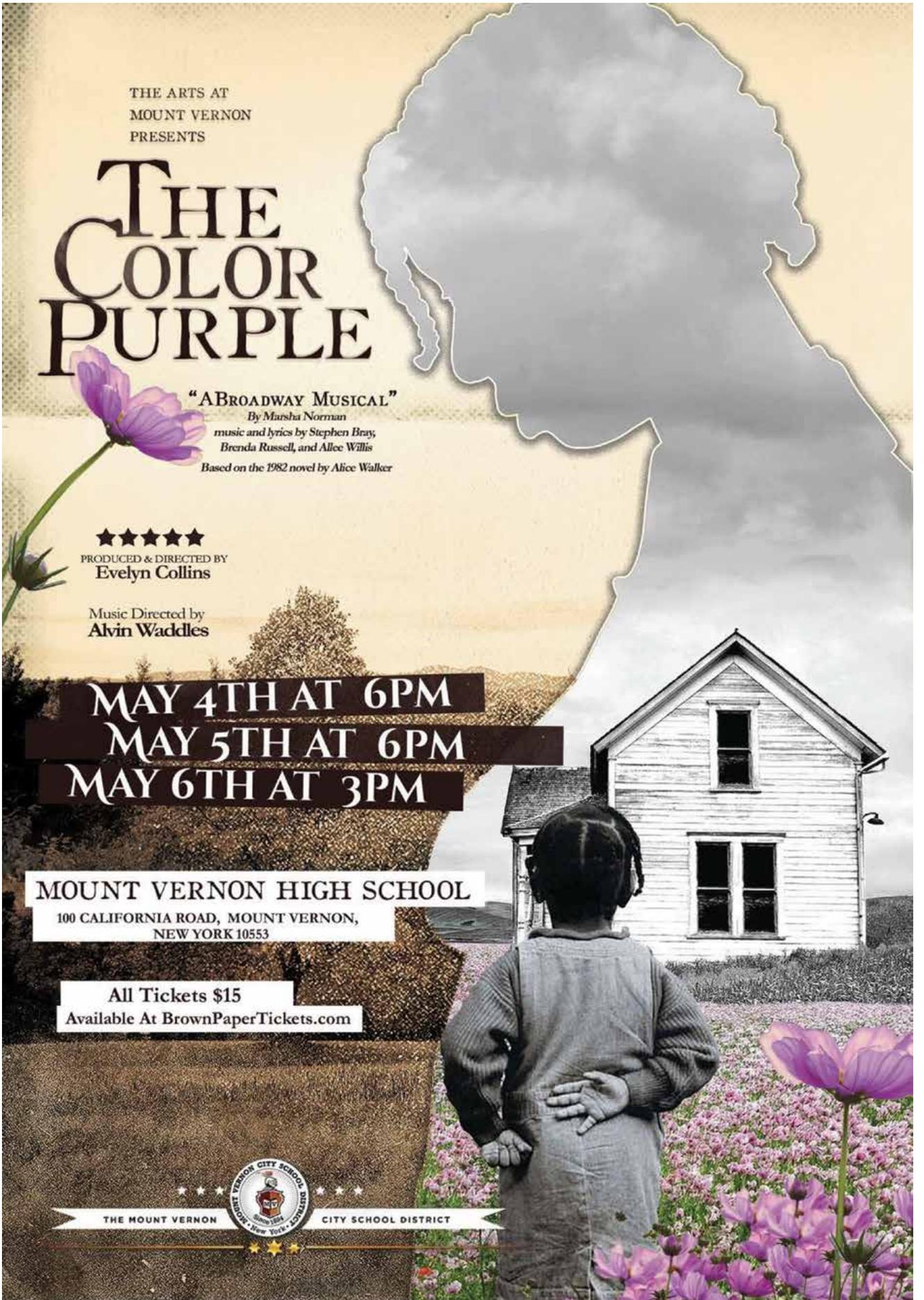
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