



FEATURES



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Record crowd attends Mt. Vernon Kiwanis Holiday Party Luncheon Page 22

Third "Most Wonderful Time" holiday concert continues popular tradition

Story by Tamara Stewart Pictures by Bryan Allen

On Saturday, December 9, the Mount Vernon City School District and several special guests entertained a full house at Mount Vernon High School. Despite taking place during the season's first snowfall, the community brushed off fluffy flakes and came together to participate in one of the season's increasingly popular events.

As in years past, Dwayne Brown, American Christmas, and school district personnel created a beautiful, warm and welcoming atmosphere. Holiday cheer was plentiful, and guests contributed canned goods and toys for the city's many homeless families. Sweet treats were served, and excited children, and even a few adults, took pictures with Santa.

The program itself was a nice blend of old and new. As usual, Superintendent Dr. Kenneth Hamilton was a charming



Wendy Williams reading "A Visit from St. Nicholas"

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Mt. Vernon students and teachers to be offered full scholarships to study in South Korea

Story by Joe Parisi

On December 1, a huge delegation of high ranking education officials from South Korea, led by the president of Chonnam National University (CNU), Dr. Byungseok Jeong, attended an unprecedented signing ceremony at Baruch College in New York City in an effort to establish a student and teacher exchange program between the two renowned learning institutions. The program also included Sentinel Technology Services International, Inc., led by Terrence Horton.

The ceremony was held in the lavishly decorated President's Conference Room (Administration Building) on East 22nd Street, and included high-ranking Baruch College officials, led by Provost and Se-



(l to r) Dr. David Christy and Dr. Byungseok Jeong signing the historic agreement

Continued on page 7

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Mild weather attracts record crowd to City Hall Plaza tree lighting and holiday celebration



The Nut Crackers



The Ice Drumline performing

Tuesday night, December 5, was highly anticipated by many Mount Vernon parents and their kids since the city was scheduled to come to life with the lighting of a 20-foot Christmas tree and a magnificent holiday celebration on City Hall Plaza. For several years, Fred Schwam, CEO of American Christmas, has donated a 20-foot holiday tree to Mount Vernon and the



Santa embracing some very happy children



Bronxville's Young at Arts Choral Ensemble



Children and parents selecting toys



A family enjoying the festivities

tree has been installed on the grounds of City Hall Plaza. Schwam's company also donates the trees seen inside of the Police and Fire Department buildings. American Christmas is a local holiday decorations company specializing in

Astorino vetoes a Board of Legislators budget that included a 2 percent tax hike



Astorino shown vetoing budget

Delivering on a two-term pledge to protect taxpayers and deliver essential services, County Executive Robert P. Astorino today vetoed a Board of Legislators budget that included a 2 percent tax hike.

In his message to legislators, the County Executive emphasized that he delivered a balanced and fiscally prudent budget that meets the needs and obligations of Westchester residents – without increasing the property tax levy.

“Raising property taxes on the already overburdened taxpayer is the last thing we should be doing right now,” Astorino said. “For the past seven years, working in a bi-partisan manner, we have been able to adopt budgets that have fully provided for services and programs and did not rely on the county’s reserve funds. The board’s budget will hurt taxpayers.”

Astorino cited other flaws in the board’s adopted budget, notably their unnecessary draining of \$20 million in reserve funds, which could adversely affect the county’s AAA bond rating, and its omission of a legitimate, long-term and sustainable revenue stream from a proposed public-private partnership to operate the

Westchester County Airport, which would have provided the county with \$30 million in non-tax revenues for the 2018 budget as well as approximately \$5 million in new revenue for the next 39 years. When these factors are coupled with the likelihood of Congress changing the tax code to eliminate or limit the deductibility of local property taxes, the results could be devastating for many Westchester residents.

“With Washington about to cap state and local property tax deductions, the most irresponsible and hypocritical thing to do is to make matters worse by hiking our already sky-high taxes,” Astorino said.

Since taking office in 2010, Astorino has been committed to holding the line on taxes. During his tenure, in fact, the property tax levy actually decreased by 2 percent. The savings to taxpayers has been substantial. If the county had raised the tax levy just 2 percent, the level allowable under the state’s tax cap, the cumulative cost to Westchester taxpayers since Astorino took office would have been \$522 million or \$1,700 for the median homeowner.

In the eight years prior to Astorino becoming County Executive, Westchester’s tax levy actually went up 60 percent.

Edith Walker wins 4th Annual Circle Rx TV Raffle



Edith Walker being presented a Westinghouse 40” inch HD Flat screen TV by the owner of Circle RX

Circle Rx Pharmacy, located at 120 Gramatan Avenue in Mount Vernon, held its yearly TV Raffle and the winner of the Westinghouse 40” inch HD flat screen TV was Edith Walker.

The popular raffle is held every year during the holiday period and this year the raffle was held on December 22. Walker spent \$1.00 to purchase the winning ticket.

Comptroller Walker: A message to the taxpayers of Mt. Vernon



City Comptroller Maureen Walker

As I leave office officially on December 30, I want to take this opportunity to say a few last words. For the past 24 years, I have humbly served this great city of Mount Vernon. During that time, we have never had a year in which we did not issue financial statements. That is, until 2016. Our auditors have informed us that they cannot issue financial statements without the Urban Renewal Agency. The agency’s books and records are incomplete and not audit ready. This is by no fault of the Finance Department. The Urban Renewal

Agency is under the complete control of Mayor Richard Thomas. So, regrettably, I will be leaving office without audited financial statements.

Sadly, the Mayor insisted on doing things in a manner that would lead to the result we have today. Not having audited financial statements means higher interest rates on any future borrowings, nervous holders of current bond issues, and the possibility of a reduction in our bond rating, making borrowing more expensive.

Over the past 24 years, we have maintained Mount Vernon as one of the most financially stable municipalities in the County of Westchester. We preserved services, avoided layoffs, and kept city property tax increases to a bare minimum. I am leaving Mount Vernon having dedicated the last 24 years to carrying out the functions of the Comptroller’s Office in a prudent and lawful manner, never having been involved in any activity that would cast a dark shadow over me, my office, or my wonderful staff, who stood by me and did their assigned tasks with due diligence and professionalism.

Except for not having issued audited financial statements, I am leaving office proud of all my accomplishments and thank all of you for giving me the pleasure of serving as your comptroller for 24 great years.

God Bless you all.
Maureen Walker
City Comptroller

Angela Ciminello receives the 2017 Servant Leadership Award



Angela Ciminello, Wartburg Vice President of Development and Marketing, recently received the 2017 Servant Leadership Award from the Mount Vernon Heights Congregational Church at their 120th Annual Anniversary Gala. Rev. Troy P. DeCohen, Senior Pastor, presented Ms. Ciminello with this prestigious honor in appreciation of her partnership in providing student internships through Wartburg.

"Congratulations on a well-deserved

honor. A servant leader is something we all aspire to be. Angela's recognition makes a positive statement to the community about who she is and what she represents," said David J. Gentner, Wartburg President and CEO.

Ms. Ciminello joined Wartburg, a premier provider of senior residential housing and healthcare services located in Mount Vernon, NY, in 2014. Since then, she has expanded Wartburg's presence by partnering with local senior and healthcare

centers, corporations and individuals to forward Wartburg's mission of caring for the oldest members of the community.

During Ms. Ciminello's tenure, and after a 10 year hiatus, Wartburg hosted its historic Fall Festival again and brought back the Car Show, held each summer on Wartburg's beautiful 34-acre campus. In celebration of Wartburg's 150th anniversary in 2016, Ms. Ciminello led a year-long celebration of the organization's history first as The Warburg Orphans' Farm School and now a senior care provider.

In 2016, Ms. Ciminello was named one of 914 Inc. Magazine's "Women in Business" honoring "Westchester's most powerful executives, entrepreneurs, and government and nonprofit leaders" for demonstrating a consistent level of success in her field and making a lasting impact on the economy and her community, according to the criteria. She was also recently recognized in Marquis's Who's Who in America.

A philanthropist in her own right, Ms. Ciminello is a board member for the Plagiocare Foundation, the Mount Vernon Parks Conservancy and the Theodore D. Young Community Center Board in Greenburgh, NY. Ms. Ciminello received both her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Science degrees from Iona College, New Rochelle, NY.

Wartburg's president receives Humanitarian Award from Grace – The Ujamaa Community Development Corporations



(l to r) David J. Gentner, Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson and Deacon Timothy Marshall

Wartburg's President and CEO, David J. Gentner, recently received the 2017 Humanitarian Award from The Grace – Ujamaa Development Corporations in Mount Vernon, NY during their Village of Grace Awards

Dinner. President Gentner's award was given in appreciation for his vision and efforts to provide quality care for the oldest members of the community. The evening also highlighted the programs and services of The Grace – Ujamaa Community Development

Corporations, which provide support to those in need in the tri-state area, with a focus on Westchester County.

"It was an honor to be recognized by such a venerated pillar in this community. The Grace -Ujamaa Community Development Corporations have made such an impact, particularly in the area of affordable housing. On behalf of Wartburg, my friends and my family, I want to thank the Awards Dinner Committee for what was a very special night," said Mr. Gentner.

David J. Gentner is the 10th President of Wartburg & Wartburg Foundation, a senior residential and healthcare facility located in Mount Vernon, NY. Mr. Gentner joined Wartburg in 2004 as Vice President, Health Services. Since his appointment as President in 2010, Mr. Gentner has positioned Wartburg for unprecedented growth with the opening of a state-of-the-art, 71,000 square foot Rehabilitation and Adult Day Services Center and a 61-apartment affordable housing facility lauded by The New York Times, both buildings LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certified.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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.

SUGGESTED NEWS ITEMS

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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**HAPPY
NEW YEAR
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2018**

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All City Chorus



All City Orchestra

host, emcee, and smooth crooner, a special invited guest read aloud "A Visit from St. Nicholas", and the Jenkins Brothers harmonized and showed-off their soul-stirring vocal virtuosity. Holiday concert firsts included performances by the newly formed Mount Vernon All City Orchestra, All City Chorus, and the Arts Magnet Drummers. In addition, Valerie Adams

and the Dimensions Band performed. Wendy Williams was definitely herself as she brought humor to her reading of "A Visit from St. Nicholas", and Valerie Adams' up-tempo renditions of several holiday classics breathed new life into them. When Evelyn Collins, Director of Arts and Gifted and Talented Education, announced the formation of the new All



Valerie Adams & Dr. Hamilton



The Jenkins Brothers

City Orchestra and All City Chorus, as well as the Arts Magnet Drummers, she was clearly excited about these new opportunities for young people to develop and showcase their talents. Although all three groups were only formed recently, the youth exhibited great poise and professionalism during their performances. In fact, the audience was admonished to remember its manners and not shout out

individual performers' names. Ms. Collins also proudly announced that the school district had received a grant from Disney, and students will be performing the Lion King, Jr. on January 26, 27 & 28.

The holiday concert concluded with a group singing of "Joy to the World," and this year's "Most Wonderful Time" holiday concert was just that; a most wonderful time.



Arts Magnet Drummers



Dr. Hamilton performing

Continued from page 1



Specially personalized Cross pens provided by Sentinel being displayed prior to the signing



Sentinel personnel, Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow and members of the Korean delegation during the tour of the Baruch College campus

nior Vice President, Dr. David Christy.

Prior to the MOU signing ceremony commencing, individuals from both institutions spoke, including Dr. Jeong and Dr. David Christy. Also speaking was Horton, who was the one responsible for organizing the ceremony and convincing Chonnam National University to sponsor the incredible student and teacher exchange program. Just recently, Chonnam National University (CNU) appointed Horton as CNU's Global Honorary Ambassador for the greater New York area. Also helping to facilitate the event was Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow.

"On behalf of Sentinel, I am particularly excited about the prospect of a pipeline for students from Mount Vernon to benefit from the partnership between Baruch College and Chonnam National University. In this interconnected economy, it is vital that our young people be given every opportunity to learn at leading academic institutions such as Baruch and Chonnam University," said Horton.

"Participating in an exchange program will allow Mount Vernon students to enhance foreign language, intercultural skills and establish friendships with local students. The program also enables students

to learn different perspectives from different cultures."

As the signing ceremony was about to commence, there was much excitement in the room since it was viewed by the many in attendance as history in the making.

Student exchange programs are very common, but as Dr. David Christy and Dr. Jeong signed the MOU, they were signing an agreement that involved not only students to participate in the exchange program, but also teachers. In addition, the agreement entails a full expense free scholarship, which includes round-trip airfare, living allowance and free medical insurance.

At the conclusion of the signing, which included Horton signing an agreement as well, a deafening and thunderous applause took place.

After the ceremony, the Korean delegation was taken on a tour of the Baruch College campus.

Parents interested in learning more about the program can contact:

Sentinel Technology Services International, Inc.

Mount Vernon, NY 10550

Phone: (914) 699-2210



The signing ceremony in progress

Westchester County Clerk to provide help in applying for new Veterans I.D. Card

A long-awaited mandate to honor veterans that was legislated in 2015 has finally been rolled out by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The Westchester County Clerk's Office would like to highlight the National Veterans Identification Card (VIC), informing all honorably discharged veterans, another action honoring their service to this country.

Only those veterans with honorable service will be able to apply for the ID card, which will provide proof of military service, and may be accepted by retailers in lieu of the standard DD-214 form used to obtain promotional discounts and other services offered to veterans.

County Clerk Tim Idoni, records keeper of the files said, "The VIC provides a more portable and secure alternative for those who served the minimum obligated time in service, but did not meet the retirement or medical discharge threshold. The Westchester County Clerk's office is pleased to announce that we can assist veterans in receiving this inval-

able resource." Veterans Affairs Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin said, "The new Veterans Identification Card provides a safer and more convenient and efficient way for more veterans to show proof of service with the card. Veterans with honorable service to our nation will no longer need to carry around their paper DD-2114s to obtain Veterans discounts and other services. In fact, veterans are encouraged to file their DD-214's with the Clerk's office for safekeeping.

Veterans who served in the armed forces, including the reserve components, and who have a discharge of honorable or general (under honorable conditions) can request a VIC. In addition to securing the card locally through the Office of the Westchester County Clerk, eligible veterans can request a VIC, by applying online at www.vets.gov. On the bottom left of the page click on "Apply for Printed Veteran ID Card" and sign in or create an account.



Dr. Byungseok Jeong speaking during the ceremony

Ribbon cutting ceremony held at renovated MVHS swimming pool



(l to r) Ken Silver, Adriane Saunders, Dr. Kenneth R. Hamilton, Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow and Michael Pelliccio

Superintendent Dr. Kenneth R. Hamilton, Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow and members of the Mount Vernon City School District gathered for a ribbon cutting ceremony on Monday, December 4 at the newly renovated Mount Vernon High School swimming pool.

"After being closed for most of a decade, the reopening of the Mount Vernon High School pool is a momentous occasion, not just for our students and administration but for the community," said Dr. Hamilton. "This aquatic facility will provide Mount Vernon residents with year-round access to a pool where they can receive instructional lessons and engage in recreational activities."

In July 2015, Assemblyman Pretlow announced the allocation of \$1 million in state funding to make necessary repairs to the pool. It was affected by a leak in 2010 and due to budget cuts, the District was not able to afford repairs. The capital secured by Pretlow allowed Mount Vernon to bring the pool into compliance with all applicable rules and regulations.

Renovating the Mount Vernon High School pool was a priority for the District, but the funding secured by Pretlow accelerated the plan which consisted of three phases and had an estimated completion date of December 1. In addition to student use, the District also plans to provide free year-round swimming lessons to Mount Vernon residents and offer training programs

for students interested in serving as lifeguards.

"The reopening of the pool is a significant event for the city of Mount Vernon and the school district because, according to a 2010 study commissioned by the United States Swimming and Research Corner, 70 percent of African American children and 60 percent of Hispanic children have very little to no swimming ability, compared to 40 percent of Caucasians, putting these communities at risk for drowning fatalities," said Assemblyman Pretlow.

During the first phase of the pool renovation project, electrical upgrades were made to support a new filtration system and the existing main drains within the pool, overhead pool lights, and pool cover system were removed and replaced with new, more efficient equipment. Additionally, a pool lane timer was installed to accommodate competitions.

Phase 2 focused on the removal of all tiles from the pool's floor and walls.

The final phase of renovations included the installation of a new concrete shell in the shallow end of the pool to prevent future leaks, as well as a new floor slab. The entire pool area was reinforced with rebar, creating additional support and rigidity for the new floor. Additionally, tile was used to create break lines and lane markings, while marble-dust plaster was used for the remainder of the pool surface.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A Lesson for Us

As I sit to write this response, I have tremendous sympathy for the family of Lowell Hawthorne. I want to extend my sincere condolences to his entire family as they begin to grapple with his sudden loss under such tragic circumstances.

By all accounts, Mr. Hawthorne accomplished the American Dream in the creation of the Golden Crust Franchise. I am very proud, as a fellow Jamaican, of his accomplishments. As a recently elected Councilwoman in the City of Mount Vernon, I wonder what will be the impact of his death on our city and the Diaspora. As a licensed clinical social worker I wonder what happened, and what can we learn from this tragedy?

Suicide is an act of last resort. The victim of suicide is convinced that there are no options, all hope is lost and the only means of escape is death. These thoughts can come from a seemingly rational mind, or they can be the result of a brain that is experiencing a mental health crisis. One press account stated Mr. Hawthorne had exhibited bizarre behavior just prior to the incident, while others reported no changes were perceived by family in prior days and weeks before the tragedy. Any apparent change in behavior could be a signal that someone's mental status had changed.

Whenever there is drastic change in behavior and the person appears stressed or anxious, seek professional help. When that person has access to a gun or other means of harming themselves, seek immediate help which means calling 911 and having that person transported to the hospital for a psychiatric evaluation.

Mental illness is real. I have no knowledge that Mr. Hawthorne had, or was ever diagnosed with, a mental illness. What I do know, however, is that we, all of us, are just one stressor away from a mental health breakdown. When the stressors in our lives exceed our ability to cope, then that stress can, and often does, cause individuals to break.

The research is clear. Approximately 1 in 5 persons is either diagnosed or diagnosable with a mental health condition. What that suggests is that either you or someone in your immediate family is affected. In healthy family systems, we have compassion for others, and if we are really healthy, we have compassion for ourselves. This brings us to the subject of judgment and the stigma that exists around mental illness. For this discussion, the source of the stress is insignificant. Whether the stressor is financial, family, relationships, work or illness, the impact is often the same. Does the individual possess the coping skill to deal with the problem?

By his own account, Lowell Hawthorne has overcome his fair share of problems. He and his family members rose from relative poverty to build a successful business employing hundreds of people. That could not have been an easy feat. He helped to raise four children. He was generous and gave back to the community to honor his parents. Lowell Hawthorne achieved a high level of success in his 57 years. So

what happened?

This stressor was too much for him. He could not see a way out. His ability to cope was overwhelmed. Was his perception of his reality distorted? Had he expressed any thoughts of suicide in the past? Had he ever attempted suicide before? There are many who believe that asking someone about thoughts of suicide will encourage them. Nothing could be further from the truth. If someone expresses thoughts of wanting to hurt themselves or others, we should take it seriously. We are obligated to explore it and seek help.

This death is a great loss to our community. I feel for the family members and encourage them to seek professional help in dealing with this trauma. You bear no guilt. I encourage all of us to be mindful of those in our network. If you identify new, strange behavior that causes concern, seek help immediately.

We must get beyond the stigma that often hinders folks to seek help. Mental illness is really no different than a physical illness. Our society has done us a great big disservice in promoting the stigma. Let this passing be a lesson for all of us. Suicide is preventable and there is no shame in seeking emotional help to deal with stress.

Delia M. Farquharson, LCSW
Councilwoman - Elect, City of Mount Vernon



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Klein & Fleetwood Neighborhood Association host 4th Annual Tree Lighting



(top) Senator Klein, Santa and members of the Fleetwood Neighborhood Association during the tree lighting celebration

On Sunday, December 10, Senator Jeff Klein and the Fleetwood Neighborhood Association gathered at the Broad Street Playground Gazebo to host their ever-popular 4th Annual Tree Lighting Celebration.

Although several inches of snow fell throughout Westchester the day before, the aftermath of the snowstorm did not stop the tree lighting event from taking place.

Those that attended enjoyed music, caroling and a visit by Santa.

WJCS Kids' Klostet urgently needs new rent-free space

WJCS Kids' Klostet, a volunteer-driven program that has clothed thousands of Westchester children in need for the past seven years, is in urgent need of new space to continue operations. The building that currently houses WJCS Kids' Klostet is being sold and the program must vacate the premises in early April 2018.

WJCS Kids' Klostet, which collects and donates gently used children's clothing and related essentials free of charge, is run by volunteers who have sorted, packed and distributed more than 16,000 "bags of love" or packages of one week's worth of clothing that meet immediate needs. Often the needs are critical, as in the case of families dislocated by fires or other tragedies who have lost everything or want to keep kids warm in winter. The clothing also boosts the children's self-esteem and relieves stress from parents who can't afford a new winter coat or even a pair of shoes.

"While Westchester is a wealthy county, 40 percent of its children live below the poverty line in some communities," says Stephanie Roth, WJCS Kids' Klostet di-

rector. "Many parents rely on our 'bags of love' to get their kids off to school. Some also count on us for a supply of diapers, which cannot be purchased with food stamps. WJCS Kids' Klostet is playing a critical role in helping low-income families meet everyday needs – all without government or fixed funding. It would be a great loss to the county if we have to close our doors. We need the generosity of a real estate owner who wants to give back to the community."

Kids' Klostet requires 3,000 – 5,000 square feet of rent-free space that is easily accessible for donors who must deliver their items and for social workers, clinicians, clergy, teachers, school administrators, nurses and others who collect the bags of love for distribution to their clients. Street-level space or elevator access would be ideal.

Anyone who has or knows of available space is urged to contact Susan Lewen, Chief Development Officer, WJCS, at 914-848-8191 or slewen@wjcs.com.

For more information on WJCS Kids' Klostet, visit www.wjcs.com/kidsklostet.

First candle of Chanukah menorah lit outside Mt. Vernon City Hall



Rabbi Morris Barzilai speaking during a press conference

On a chilly Tuesday night, December 12, on the City Hall Plaza, the first day of Chanukah was celebrated with the lighting of the first candle of the menorah.

In attendance for the lighting was Mayor Richard Thomas, who was accompanied by Rabbi Morris Barzilai,

spiritual leader of Sinai Free Synagogue in Mount Vernon.

The mayor invited the public to stop by over the next 8 days to see the candles lit up one by one, in true Chanukah tradition.

The mayor and the rabbi wished people a happy and healthy Chanukah.

Mt. Vernon to benefit from \$6 million for youth programs

County Executive Robert P. Astorino announced that grants totaling more than \$6 million – \$2,123,000 annually for 2018, 2019 and 2020 – will be awarded to 34 agencies for 56 at-risk youth programs under Westchester's Invest-In-Kids program.

"Invest-In-Kids is a vital partnership between Westchester County and our non-profits that responds to the needs of Westchester's youth," Astorino said. "I am excited to partner with these 34 agencies to provide essential services with far-reaching, positive results for our at-risk youth population."

Established in 1993, Invest-In-Kids addresses the needs of at-risk youth in 11 urban communities: Elmsford, Greenburgh, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Ossining, Peekskill, Port Chester, Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, White Plains and Yonkers.

Dr. Iris Pagan, Executive Director of the Westchester County Youth Bureau, said the grants are being awarded to 56 programs as part of a three-year Request For Proposals (RFP) process. The annual grants include \$1,755,000 provided through Westchester County's Invest-in-Kids program and \$368,000 in anticipated grants provided to the Westchester County Youth Bureau by the

New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). Under Invest-In-Kids, programs provide academic support, experiences in the arts, positive relationships with peers and adults, career exploration, and many other activities to support positive youth development. Grants will fund approximately 65 percent of each program for calendar years 2018-2020 with the agency matching 35 percent of costs. Under the terms of the grant, all programs will be provided free of charge and must operate year round.

To help ensure the best possible outcomes for Westchester's youth, Astorino and the Westchester Children's Association created a public-private task force to review the RFP process. The task force designed a transparent and accountable award process for Invest-In-Kids, including a revised grant application and a community review board of youth service providers and child advocates to promote the grant, administer informational sessions for prospective applicants, and offer an objective review of the pool of applicants. Under Westchester County's procurement process, contracts to award the grants will be submitted to the Board of Acquisition and Contract for approval.

City Council adopts zero increase budget for 2018

On December 14, the City Council adopted a zero increase budget after the Board of Estimate and Contract approved it on December 8.

The budget is based on the 2016 assessment because the Comptroller's Office has not received a completed assessment from the Assessor.

According to Article XV 235 of the

City Charter, it mandates that a certified copy of the assessment roll be provided to the Comptroller's Office on August 1 each year for the purpose of apportioning and extending the taxes

for the following year.

According to the Comptroller's Office, they have sent numerous letters to the Assessor requesting the city's assessed valuation without a response.

Continued from page 3



MTV Performing and Visual Arts Magnet Band



Mayor Richard Thomas speaking during the ceremony

Tuesday night, December 5, was highly anticipated by many Mount Vernon parents and their kids since the city was scheduled to come to life with the lighting of a 20-foot Christmas tree and a magnificent holiday celebration on City Hall Plaza.

For several years, Fred Schwam, CEO of American Christmas, has donated a 20-foot holiday tree to Mount Vernon and the tree has been installed on the grounds of City Hall Plaza. Schwam's company also donates the trees seen inside of the Police and Fire Department buildings.

American Christmas is a local holiday decorations company specializing in adorning some of New York City's most notable locations such as Madison Square Garden, Radio City Music Hall, and Saks Fifth Avenue. The company donates

the tree and its decorating services so that residents can appreciate the joy of the season each time they pass City Hall.

This year's holiday event attracted a record crowd thanks to mild weather. Although it started raining, the rain arrived near the end of the festivities – just as the countdown for the tree lighting was about to commence.

Although the event was scheduled to commence at 4:30 PM, many kids and their parents arrived much earlier and waited on line for the toy giveaway to begin. And as expected, the kids jumped with joy when Santa arrived. Santa then provided the hundreds of kids with toys – with the help of volunteers from the city's Youth Bureau who acted as elves.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

IDA Deputy Director's rebuttal to comments from Journal News

As Deputy Director of Mount Vernon Industrial Development Agency, I am proud of the crucial role that the MVIDA has played in spurring the economic growth and revitalization of the city. Recently, some articles have surfaced that misconstrue the agency's mission and. Allow me to set the record straight.

What is the role of the Mount Vernon Industrial Development Agency?

The role of the Mount Vernon IDA is to actively encourage, promote, and develop economically sound policies and initiatives designed to achieve economic prosperity.

In keeping with this mission, the MVIDA Board of Directors, chaired by Mount Vernon Mayor Richard Thomas, has taken bold steps to keep Mount Vernon's economy moving, including the appointment and retention of independent consultants such as Universal Engineering Services and other professional plan reviewers, to assist with clearing the backlog of nearly 450 stalled building permits dating back three years.

To be clear, Mayor Thomas and his Administration inherited this administrative nightmare, and our city's homeowners and businesses have been paying the price for historical ineptitude and government obstruction. Were it not for the timely and effective support of the Mayor's MVIDA Board, the Buildings Department would not have been able to: (a) approve \$28 million in estimated construction costs leading to at least \$2.8 million in additional revenue; (b) assist the city's sole build-

ing inspector perform a thorough review of all outstanding permits, plan reviews, and field inspections; and (c) implement a comprehensive automation campaign to increase departmental efficiency and markedly improve its overall customer service operation.

MVIDA Chair Mayor Thomas, who continues to chide his colleagues on the City's Board of Estimate and Contract for defunding the Buildings Department, put it best: "[The Buildings Department] problem had reached a crisis level for the city. How can we efficiently do the work people need us to do without modernizing this system and creating a more responsive and professional process for approving building permits, renovations and construction? I asked the IDA to step forward and take swift action and that's what we've done."

MVIDA, the Mount Vernon Buildings Department, and, above all, the long-burdened businesses and homeowners collectively ask that the Journal News and any disgruntled colleagues in government to refrain from hurling baseless claims and join us in a meaningful and constructive dialogue concerning the economic renewal of Mount Vernon. We may disagree on how we get there, but at the very least let's resolve to reach a basic understanding of the facts versus signaling out public benefit corporations and their duly appointed consultants tasked with spurring the economic development of the city.

Respectfully,

Sean McIntyre, MVIDA Deputy Director

Mt. Vernon fails to install track at Memorial Field as promised

Many Mount Vernon citizens that have been using the track at Glover Field for years are disappointed that the city did not keep a promise to install a provisional track at Memorial Field the week after Thanksgiving.

The Department of Public Works had been very busy grading the dirt at Memorial Field in preparation for a track to be laid down. After a ten-year hiatus, Mayor Thomas had publicized that the track would be in place the week after

Thanksgiving. Many of the Mount Vernon citizens that have been using the Pelham track were excited about getting their own track.

"I just find it incredible that we must continue using Glover Field after being promised a track the week after Thanksgiving," said one unhappy citizen that is a regular at the Glover Field track.

Why the track was not installed remains a mystery, since the weather was not a factor during the period after Thanksgiving.



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Never Give Up

When January arrives almost half of the school year has passed. This is a good time to assess your children's progress and plan strategies to help them succeed. If they have been struggling in school, renew your efforts to work with teachers. When children are taught the way they learn, they can achieve. Never give up.

Sometimes it is very difficult to watch our children struggle to learn. But there are times when suddenly a mini miracle happens and everything clicks. They get it. I want to tell you a true story about one little boy in my class who had a severe language processing disorder. He could not understand language. Imagine sitting in a classroom all day listening to words all around you and not be able to make sense of any of it.

One day Kyle was puzzled by the word "rough". The spelling of the word is enough to confuse anyone. How do the letters gh produce the sound of f? So to help Kyle understand the meaning of rough I asked him to touch several rough surfaces as I repeated the word. Then he touched surfaces that were smooth so that he could feel the difference. We did this over and over.

Suddenly something happened that I cannot explain, I call it a God moment that opened the world of language to this child. He began to understand language. He was able to absorb information and understand it. He could use what he learned. His writing and oral

language became more coherent. He began to smile and laugh. Now he could understand jokes and wanted to share them with me. I can still remember him coming to my desk with a big smile. He just had to tell me his joke. It was as if something within him had burst forth and blossomed.

What is the reason for this story? I want to reiterate that we must teach children the way they learn. We must seize the moment when children come to us with a question. Rather than become impatient with what may appear to be a silly question, we must take a few minutes to give them a solution. Sometimes we must first help them understand the question, then show them how to find the answer. We must take the time. Finding the solution may not be the usual way of explaining a concept. We may have to find two or three different explanations before children get it. This is like finding the missing piece to a puzzle. There is no magic formula. Perhaps the magic comes from our willingness to embrace the learning styles of each child, teach them, motivate them, and inspire them to never give up. When we do this right, the rewards are enormous. Remember Kyle.

There are many ways to teach our children. What a great responsibility it is to know that we are teaching them today so that they may learn and succeed for the rest of their lives. But this responsibility is a huge honor and a gift. Remember this and never, never give up!

Mayor Richard Thomas names Fred Schwam Businessman of the Year

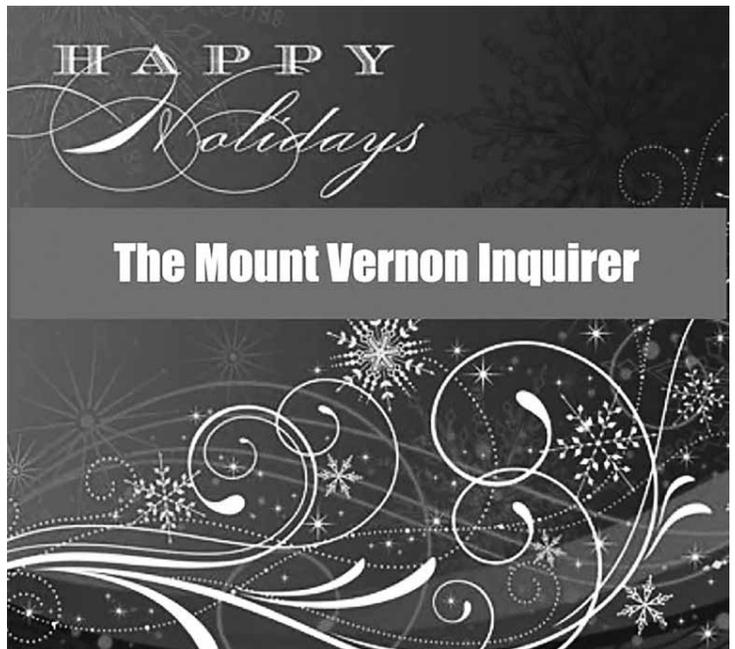


Fred Schwam (r) being honored by Mayor Thomas

Mayor Richard Thomas and the City of Mount Vernon recently honored Fred Schwam, CEO of American Christmas, as businessman of the year. The award was presented at the mayor's inaugural Business Roundtable event hosted by Wartburg.

American Christmas has been decking the halls of New York (and beyond) since 1968. Recently, through partnering with the Mount Vernon Industrial Development Agency, American Christmas was able to attract an international business partner, MK Illumination, and they have brought their business to Mount Vernon, expanding jobs and economic growth.

Schwam, as American Christmas' long-time CEO, has been instrumental in much of the city's growth. In addition, he has engaged in a series of charitable works including his extensive support of the Boys & Girls Club of Mount Vernon.



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FLASHBACK

Record crowd attends 8th Annual Arts on Third Street Festival



Doug E. Fresh



"Notch"

A rainy forecast and an actual rainstorm did not stop an estimated crowd of over 12,000 from coming out to the 8th Annual Arts on Third Street Festival on September 24, 2006. Mount Vernon residents strolled through intermittent breaks of sun on Third Street from Union to Fifth Avenues taking in the sights and sounds that celebrated the best in their hometown. With two stages, more than 150 vendors, two international food courts, a health and wellness area, children's area and sports alley, there was something for everyone.

Those in attendance were treated to an array of local and national talent who performed in a variety of genres as diverse as the crowd itself. Whether it was the traditional toe-tapping jazz sounds of alto saxophone player Riley Bandy and his quartet or the pulsating hip-hop bass heavy beats from the Fourth Avenue stage, it was difficult to leave disappointed.

Mayor Davis honored several people who have contributed to the vitality of the

Mount Vernon community. Among the honorees was Joe Parisi, publisher of the Mount Vernon Inquirer, whom the mayor praised, "for publishing a paper about the good news of Mount Vernon."

The festival also had several interactive features including a doll-making workshop by the 3D Cloth Doll Club of Mount Vernon. The hands-on demonstrations thrilled both children and adults. Artists from the Harlem Arts Alliance and throughout Westchester also participated in the festival. They displayed original artwork, and had a live painting presentation along the Artist's Row. It was a rare opportunity for artists to showcase their creative genius in real-time, and many marveled at their talent.

Several newcomers at the festival marveled at the depth of the stage schedules and the number of vendors. The vendors with products ranging from African masks, carvings, self-published novels, clothing and jewelry, showcased the entrepreneurial spirit that is alive and well in Mount Ver-



(l to r) Judy Williams, Lillian Kleinberg, Mayor Davis and Sir Shadow, a local artist



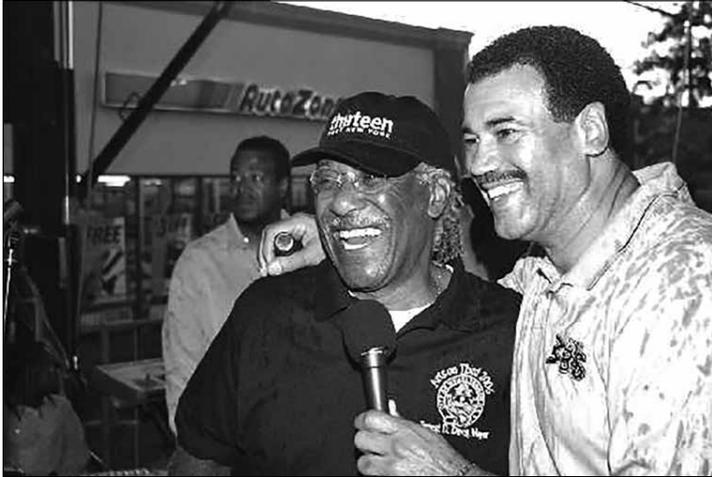
Police Commissioner David Chong (c) with a group of Mount Vernon's Finest



Joe Parisi receiving the Arts on Third "Communications" award from Mayor Davis

Continued on page 17

Continued from page 16



Mayor Davis and Dr. Bob Lee



The Apollo's "Executioner"

non. Others were struck that the festival also served as an informal reunion with old classmates from Mount Vernon schools, childhood friends, neighbors and co-workers. It was hard to pass a block without seeing people gather in embrace, wave or say hello to one another. Some were very proud to see a more diverse crowd, as the

popularity continues to grow in the city of 98 different nationalities. The Main Stage on Third Street hosted the seventh anniversary celebration of the Mayor's Choir. Their stirring gospel performance was followed by an Apollo "Mini" Amateur Night with the Executioner, who wowed the crowd with a rendition of Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean." The audi-

ence cheered along as he impersonated the King of Pop when he did the moonwalk. Several Mount Vernon residents were extended the opportunity to compete for a spot on the Amateur Night at the Apollo in Harlem. The festival was capped off by a performance by Harold Melvin's Blue Notes, The Mighty Sparrow, Brenna Gethers, Collec-

tive Flow and Notch. Doug E. Fresh, one of the most popular headliners at Arts on Third, ended the memorable event with a smashing performance. Mount Vernonites and others have supported The Arts on Third Festival for the eighth year in a row. And this year, in spite of the weather, a record crowd turned out to enjoy everything the festival has to offer.

Fulton Avenue drawbridge finally opens



and additional electrical work. It was a real major undertaking. In the event of an emergency, a new

emergency generator was installed to operate the bridge in case of a power outage.

The often-closed Fulton Avenue Drawbridge that connects Pelham Manor and Mount Vernon has finally opened after being closed for repairs for exactly one full year. The bridge closed in order to allow work crews to make steel repairs, according to county officials.

County officials had predicted that the work to repair the bridge would last an en-

tire year and they were correct. The cost of the interim and emergency repairs were projected to cost \$14.8 million.

According to the county, this round of work that was just completed entailed 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 plus painting



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Mayor Thomas: "Tower of Babel" budget fails the future



What follows is a summary of the main questions and answers on the sewer situation.

They proposed a zero percent tax versus a 4.85 percent increase. Why the big tax rate difference? In my first mayoral budget, for January 2017, I proposed a zero percent tax increase. This year, we proposed a realistic budget that unfortunately presents a 4.85 percent increase, for the simple yet necessary reason that the federal and state governments are threatening to fine Mount Vernon over the unacceptable state of our sewer system, which has been failing for decades.

Of that proposed 4.85 budget percent increase, 4 percent – more than 80 percent of the total increase – is to pay fines we are expected to owe the federal government in short order.

Why is this happening now? Fixing broken sewers is urgent because the city has refused to comply with the Clean Water Act since 2003. Decades of disrespect to Mother Nature and to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has led Mount Vernon into trouble for failing to act.

How much is this going to cost? A lot. Anticipated fines could amount to \$225,000 per day, or nearly \$1.6 million a week. This is the ugly penalty for po-

litical dysfunction and malfeasance. This does not include the cost to make repairs, which are estimated at \$60 million over a 10-year period.

Is the Thomas Administration willing to pass a budget before the end of 2017? Yes, we are willing to consider finalizing the budget particularly so taxpayers can take advantage of deductibility rules before the end of the month. The Trump Tax Plan has left many middle-class families worried and unsure about what is going to happen. Our administration is willing to complete the budget but we must include a stronger set of assurances that the City of Mount Vernon must comply with federal mandates.

How serious is this? Think Flint, Michigan. The difference, according to the DOJ, is "willful intent." We were informed that civil and criminal charges are possible if we fail to act in good faith. Past city leaders have snubbed their nose at the demands of six U.S. Attorneys General, dating back to John Ashcroft in 2003. Our city is not above the law, especially when it comes to such a critical environmental and health issue.

How much work do we have to do and by when? Part of Phase 1 involves televising, mapping and immediately repairing more than 600,000 feet, or 114 miles, of underground pipeline by March 2018.

(Read the entire 10-year schedule, complete with milestones and reporting expectations here.)

What have we done to do something about this? Despite invoking emergency powers in June 2017 to procure services and protect taxpayers, vendors currently assisting the city on sewers have not been paid since May 2017. This has had a catastrophic effect on compliance because outside groups will not work with us. They are weary of the Comptroller's office due to a history of not paying bills. (Watch a video testimonial on this issue here.)

What must happen now to make progress? Fund the plan to comply with federal law and immediately set aside funds to pay "the significant monetary penalty." Let me be more clear: Federal and state regulators will not wait for us to get around to it. The reckoning is coming. We have days left to do this or we will become like other communities that have been taken over by higher authorities at a huge expense. We are better than this and cannot fall for political spin from those with hidden agendas.

Note: the docket number is CWA-02-2-14-3023 for those that want to research the matter further

Mount Vernon is facing potentially hefty fines from the U.S. Department of Justice and if we don't act, the city's financial obligations will only get bigger, future budgets will only get squeezed further, property values will plummet, and vital services cut.

We can still accomplish what we need to do if we work together. We can move forward by discarding petty politics and putting our future and our children first.

As Mayor, I have convened and will continue to convene stakeholders to implement cost saving, job generating solutions. We invite the outgoing government to follow through on their promises to the DOJ and people of Mount Vernon.

Free flu vaccine available at county clinics

With flu activity increasing nationally and as National Influenza Vaccination Week is observed, County Executive Robert P. Astorino urged all residents to get a flu shot.

"Getting vaccinated is a great way to keep you and your family healthy throughout this holiday season and beyond," said County Executive Robert P. Astorino.

Free flu shots are available on Fridays by appointment at the Westchester County Health Department clinics in Yonkers and White Plains while supplies last. To schedule an appointment for a free flu shot, call 914-995-5800.

Flu shots are also available for a fee from many area pharmacists and medical offices.

"There are at least three good reasons for everyone six months and older to get an annual flu shot," said Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD. "First, as flu strains change each year, the vaccine is adapted to take them on. Second, people of every age, including those who are healthy, can become quite ill with

the flu. And third, healthier people who get a flu shot each year help protect infants too young to receive the vaccine, seniors, and people with chronic health conditions, for whom the flu can be very serious."

Flu activity is usually highest between December and February, but can last until May. One flu vaccine now provides protection all season long and can prevent illness or reduce the severity of flu symptoms. The vaccine becomes fully effective after about two weeks.

Amler offered the following advice if you do get a respiratory infection: cough or sneeze into your elbow, wash your hands frequently with soap and water, stay home until 24 hours after your fever subsides to avoid spreading your germs, clean surfaces you touch frequently, such as doorknobs, water faucets, refrigerator handles and telephones, get plenty of rest, exercise and eat healthy food.

For more health information, go to www.westchestergov.com/health; Like us on [Facebook.com/wchealthdept](https://www.facebook.com/wchealthdept) and Follow us on Twitter @wchealthdept.

Mayor Richard Thomas delivers new TV's to the Doles Center and the Armory



Just before Christmas, Mayor Richard Thomas headed to the Armory and the Doles Center to deliver brand-new, flat-screen TV's to the seniors just in time for the holidays.

The seniors at the Doles Center and Armory had gone without small

things that make a huge difference like an exercise facility and TV's for entertainment for too long. Our greatest generation deserves investment and commitment from us and we will continue to advocate for an increase in programming and services.

Agatha House Foundation hosting Annual Spelling Bee



Jeanette Greenaway, Agatha House Foundation official

So often we find the children of our community engaging in activities that are not conducive to the type of lifestyle we envision for them. Children often involve themselves in activities that may not be beneficial to their growth and success. We strive to increase their options. We want the children of our community to have more positive choices. We hope to give them outlets where they feel safe and their strengths are nurtured and their weaknesses improved.

Agatha House Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Our mission is to provide hope and resources for those without life's essentials. We believe all children deserve the opportunity to develop social

skills, gain confidence, eat nutritional meals, play safely and develop lasting values that will serve them into adulthood. We strive to give our children an outlet that will ensure their growth in their community and in their personal lives.

On March 10, at 1pm in the Mount Vernon Public Library, Agatha House Foundation is hosting an Annual Spelling Bee for the children of the community. Children between 6-8 years and children between 9-12 years are invited to participate. The word list for each age group can be found at www.childcarecorner.net on the parent resource page. It can also be picked up at the Mount Vernon Library.

We are asking parents to encourage their children to enter the spelling bee competition.

It provides a valuable educational experience for your child, but also many other benefits as well. Entering into a spelling bee allows your child to develop a range of cognitive skills including the ability to handle pressure. Spelling bees also allow children to compete in a supportive environment. A friendly rivalry is created and children are encouraged to interact with fellow participants and cultivate friendships.

Even if your child does not win, it is important to remember that a spelling bee competition can result in a range of benefits from higher confidence to better vocabulary. However, if they do win the grand prize, they will receive an iPad mini.

Mayor Thomas: "The Power of Mount Vernon"

This week, the sports and entertainment pages were rumbly with the news that the legendary Sean "P. Diddy" Combs was looking to purchase the Carolina Panthers. Many reporters found it almost-comical that a former rapper wants to buy an NFL franchise. I, as someone who knows Mount Vernon and the talent we produce, was not surprised.

Mount Vernon's renaissance is right now. Combs, Denzel Washington, Sidney Poitier, and Nina Simone are just a few examples of Mount Vernon's children that accelerated creative change. And behind them stand many more sons and daughters who are crafting culture and making the world notice.

It's a point of pride to any Mount Vernomite when you ask us about what artistic gifts we have given to the world, that we have a lot to say in response. Be it mu-

sic or sculpture, painting or freestyle, the voice from our four-square miles is one that demands to be heard.

As Mayor, I believe it's time to stop dreaming about what could be and start bringing what "could be" to reality. The artistic forms that the 21st century holds are vibrant and will only enhance Mount Vernon's reputation and economy.

For example, sculptures are no longer quiet pieces in the corner of a museum; they are public statements and an investment in our quality of life. They are interactive elements that transform public parks into exciting community spaces where folks can gather. Public art gardens are being developed in New York City, Seattle, and other cities across the country. As proud Mount Vernonites, we need to showcase what we can do.

Recently, I had the privilege of having brunch with ArtNoir, a group of artists and

culture crafters who are leading the artistic revolution in New York City. These "imagineers" are redefining art, diversity, and changing the conversation by speaking their truth. In short, they are representing Mount Vernon values and making Mount Vernon moves. These artists are from all around the world and are focused on Harlem, yet, they want to come to Mount Vernon because they desire to become part of our historic vibes, our authentic culture, and our positive energy that will infuse and accelerate their creative contributions to the world.

This fearless Mount Vernon attitude is what led Denzel Washington to dare to pursue his dreams and become the first African-American to win best actor at the Academy Awards since 1963. It is that strong spirit that emboldened Nina Simone to break barriers and become the first black classically-trained pianist to per-

form. And it's this Mount Vernon mettle that molded Sean Combs and positions him to become the first African-American majority owner of a major NFL franchise. And he should know that his hometown will support his latest bid to do another big thing.

This is the power of Mount Vernon and we must harness it to flow freely again - in revitalized parks; in athletic and artistic programs; in creating opportunities for careers and higher education. In the New Year, I look forward to inspiring our children and filling our community with awe and wonder through exciting art, music, and sports projects to bring pride back to our beautiful city... simply by providing our leaders of culture and capital a platform to shine again.

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Jim and Annie Kiselak's Natural Food Column

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Do soy foods increase cancer risk?

Soy-based foods are a popular and healthy alternative to meat. As with all foods, the less processed, the better.

Soy-based foods are a popular alternative for those who want to cut back on or eliminate meat from their diet. But what is soy and can it increase or decrease cancer risks? It's a hot topic that's confusing, so let's start with the basics.

Get protein from soy

Soy is a plant protein full of fiber, potassium, magnesium and other vitamins. Common soy-based foods include tofu, edamame, miso and soy milk.

"Soy contains all the essential amino acids that play a role in supporting the body's vital functions," says Clare McKindley, clinical dietitian in MD Anderson's Cancer Prevention Center. "It can be an easy way for people on a vegan or vegetarian diet and those with food allergies to get those required amino acids. But, as with any food, eating in moderation is recommended."

A moderate amount of whole soy foods is up to three daily servings. Examples of a single serving include: 1 cup of soy milk, 1/2 cup cooked soy beans, 1/2 cup of edamame or 1/3 cup of tofu.

Soy and breast cancer

Because natural soy foods contain isoflavones, similar to estrogen, some people fear that soy may raise their risk for certain cancers. This is because estrogen is linked to hormonally-sensitive cancers like breast cancer.

But according to the American Cancer Society, when it comes to soy, isoflavones may act like estrogen, but they have anti-estrogen properties as well. Some studies even show that people who ate soy were less likely to get breast cancer.

"The current research does not support avoiding whole soy foods, even for cancer patients or survivors," McKindley says.

Soy might lower the risk of other cancers

Soybeans, soy nuts and edamame all contain fiber. And a diet high in fiber may lower your risks for several cancers, including colorectal cancer.

Studies among prostate cancer survivors indicate that eating soy foods may lower PSA levels. Among men in various stages of prostate cancer, those who consumed soy milk or isolated soy isoflavones saw their PSA levels rise at a slower rate. The effect was stronger in some men than others, making it unclear whether genetics or metabolism made a difference in lowering PSA levels.

A healthy balanced diet can include soy

It's important to have a variety of foods in your diet, including soy.

"If you're still uncomfortable adding whole soy foods to your diet yet want to reduce how much animal protein you eat, try these common alternatives: beans, lentils, nuts and seeds," McKindley says. "The protein (and amino acid) content will vary for each."

If you want to add soy to your diet, eat fewer processed soy foods, and choose more whole foods like edamame, tofu and soy nuts. Does that mean you should skip the soy nuggets? Not necessarily. That's a personal choice. But, remember that a processed soy nugget is just that—processed food. And avoiding processed foods is another way to lower your cancer risk.

If eating certain foods, like soy, gives you anxiety, skip them.

"Consider talking with a dietitian if you have questions about going meatless," McKindley says. "It's important to make sure you are getting all the nutrients your body needs. Talking with an expert will help you go in the right direction."



Authentic Puerto Rican Recipes

Puerto Rican Alcapurrias

Ingredients

- 1 lb. taro root (Yautia) or alternatively yucca root (available at Latin markets)
- 4 green plantains
- 1 lb. Sazon seasoning Food So Good Mall Sazon Recipe
- Kosher salt to taste
- 1 3/4 cup back fin crab meat or minced shrimp or a combination of both
- 1/4 cup sofrito Food So Good Mall Sofrito Recipe
- Canola oil for deep frying

- Peel the taro or yucca root and grate on a box grater into a bowl.
- Peel the green bananas or plantains, grate them and add to the same bowl.
- Add the Sazon, salt and pepper and place the mixture in a food processor and process until smooth.
- In a sauté pan add the crabmeat along with a little oil and sofrito. Saute for 2 minutes mixing well.
- Cut banana leaves into rounds for shaping alcapurrias.
- Spread a little oil on the banana leaf.
- Add a tablespoon of batter atop the banana leaf round, then add a spoonful of the crab mixture and fold to shape into a torpedo shape.
- Using hot canola oil (350 degrees) slide the alcapurrias into the hot oil, one at a time. Do not over crowd pan.
- Fry the alcapurrias until golden brown



Joe Parisi, Publisher/Editor
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BUSINESS OF THE MONTH JANUARY 2018 MT. VERNON WCC EXTENSION CENTER

Did you know that nearly half of all college students in the United States begin their college experience at a community college? In fact, each September, more than 1,700 high school graduates from Westchester County and surrounding areas enroll at Westchester Community College.

Each student has a special reason for attending the college. You may want to save money here on your way to a bachelor's degree elsewhere. Or you may seek an education which will lead directly to a career. Whatever your goal, Westchester Community College can help you achieve success.

With more than sixty associate degree and certificate programs, the Mount Vernon Extension Center offers a wide range of academic opportunities. These programs, combined with a full range of counseling and advisement, academic support, and career and transfer services, will provide you with the solid foundation that you will need to reach your individual

goals.

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The Mount Vernon Extension Center of Westchester Community College is located at 17 S. Fifth Avenue in downtown Mount Vernon, a short walk from City Hall. Equipped with smart technology classrooms, a comfortable student lounge, spacious computer labs and a large lecture hall, the center offers students a wide range of courses in general education, liberal arts and ESL.



Alternative Medicine Options by Joe Parisi

Alternative ADHD Treatment: Behavior Therapy

What alternative ADHD treatments work to combat attention deficit disorder?

It's a question more parents are asking doctors after a study, funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, found that the best outcomes — measured by parental satisfaction and some academic standards — were the result of "combination" treatment: ADHD medications that reduce hyperactivity and improve concentration, along with behavior therapy to address some of the more subtle symptoms, such as difficulty with organizational and social skills.

While other non-drug treatments — play therapy, cognitive therapy, psychotherapy, and special ADHD diets — have been regarded as promising, only behavioral treatment has been shown to work.

Although ADHD specialists say they consider behavior therapy a key component of effective ADHD treatment and one that has inspired a recent resurgence of interest, few parents actually invest the necessary time and effort.

"There's so much lip service paid to (combined) treatments, but a lot of people just rely on medication alone," says William L. Coleman, M.D., a developmental pediatrician at the University of North Carolina, who is

chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. "We are a quick-fix society and we want results. There's a lot of time pressure on parents and on teachers."

How behavior therapy works — A behavior therapy regimen can be developed by a pediatrician or a school psychologist or another mental-health worker. Based on a structured system of rewards and consequences — such as increased or decreased TV privileges — the program also includes changes in a child's environment to minimize distractions. Parents also receive training in giving commands and reacting when a child obeys or disobeys.

"The goal is to incrementally teach children new ways of behaving by rewarding desired behavior, such as following directions, and eliminating undesired actions, such as losing homework," notes Ginny Teer, a spokeswoman for Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHAAD), and a national advocacy group in Landover, Maryland.

The Inquirer does not provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The material on our web and our hardcopy publication is provided for education purposes only.

MV Youth Bureau student Ryan Barnes local TV news interview



On Thursday, October 12, Ryan Barnes was invited to be a guest on The Local Live, LMCTV's Community News Show, to talk about his view and showcase his talent to viewers. The segment was to celebrate October 11 which is known as National

Coming Out Day. Ryan Barnes is currently a senior at Mount Saint Michael Academy, Interns at LGBTQ Center, a Peer Educator at Mount Vernon Youth Bureau's CAPP Program, and an avid volunteer for the V.I.C.T.O.R.Y Program through the Mount Vernon Youth Bureau.

Also invited was Sandy Soler who received her MSW from Fordham University and is a worker clinical social at Family Services of Westchester in Portchester, NY. Ms. Soler also works as the Parent & LGBTQAI Education Coordinator at the Mount Vernon Youth Bureau Comprehen-

sive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (CAPP) Program where she runs an LGBTQAI support group and parenting workshops.

Record crowd attends Mt. Vernon Kiwanis Holiday Party Luncheon



Members of the Mount Vernon Kiwanis Club



Tyræ Woodson-Samuels addressing the crowd

The Mount Vernon Armory was bustling with activity and excitement on Tuesday, December 12, as over 300 people attended the annual Mount Vernon Kiwanis Holiday Party Luncheon.

The event has grown in popularity thanks to the efforts of Geraldine Christiana, head of the Mount Vernon Office for the Aging at the Armory, whose endless

creativity helps the yearly event be a wonderful experience for hundreds of seniors that attend every year.

This year they had an incredible raffle in which many seniors were provided with a free raffle ticket as they entered the event.

Guest speakers included Tyræ Woodson-Samuels, staff assistant for Congressman Eliot Engel, a representative from Concordia College who spoke about



A large group of seniors posing for a picture



A group of seniors waiting to be served lunch

educational opportunities for seniors and a Kiwanis official.

As always, the food and dessert was mouth-watering and enjoyed by everybody.

Near the end of the event, those that purchased raffle tickets were able to split

a collection of almost \$500.00 during the 50-50 drawing. Others with free tickets were able to win an impressive holiday fruit basket.

Overall, the apparently record crowd of over 300 seniors had a wonderful holiday luncheon.



Two seniors that decided to dance with each other

Comptroller Walker unveils “Kronos Workforce Timekeeper”

The Mount Vernon Office of the Comptroller has unveiled the city's new timekeeping system, “Kronos Workforce Timekeeper.” All city employees will use biometric hand scanners to punch in and out. The city will now be able to record and track employee times with the touch of a finger.

Kronos Workforce Timekeeper is a proven solution that will deliver direct and indirect labor cost savings to the city by streamlining and automating the way employee time is collected and eventually paid.

Over the past two years, Comptroller Maureen Walker, CPA and her staff have been working closely with Kronos to design and install a system that would

prevent payment of non-worked time, minimize compliance risks and improve productivity.

Comptroller Walker selected Kronos because of their experience, proven track record, reliability and cost efficient scalability. Kronos has more than 40 years of experience in this industry. More than 30 million people in over 100 countries use Kronos solutions daily.

The New York State Comptroller's office encouraged the City of Mount Vernon to move in this direction. In addition to complying with the state comptroller's recommendations, Kronos will have a positive impact on the city's administrative operations, overall performance, and bottom line.

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