

FEATURES



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Mt. Vernon holds Annual 9/11 Memorial Service

Story by Joe Parisi

A crowd of elected officials, city officials, police, firefighters, emergency service personnel and members of the community gathered on the Mount Vernon City Hall Plaza to honor the victims of 9/11 on the 16th anniversary of that infamous day.

Opening comments came from Deputy Chief Roy Hastings who acted as the Master of Ceremonies. For many years, Chief Hastings played taps with his horn at the annual ceremony prompting many tears to be shed by the participants.

When introduced, Mayor Richard Thomas gracefully had Congressman Eliot Engel speak before him since he had to immediately depart due to other engagements.

"I love representing Mount Vernon because of what is happening here right now. Mount Vernon is a community that cares deeply about many things, especially 9/11 when five Mount Vernonites perished. It is truly an honor to represent



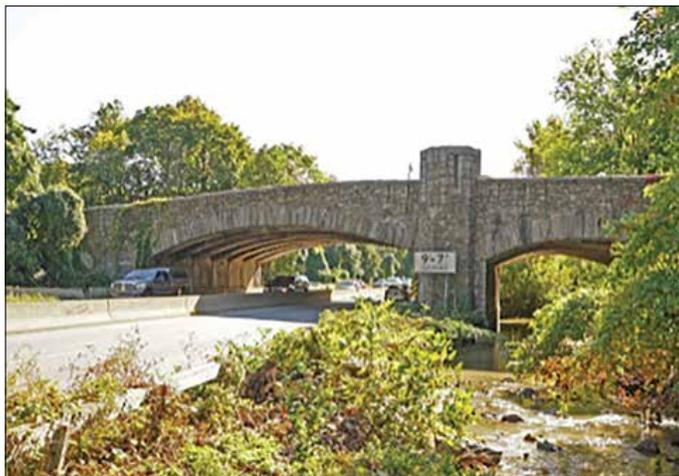
Mayor Thomas, accompanied by Mt. Vernon Boys Scouts and a city official, laid a wreath by the Twin Towers Memorial

this city for over 20 years," said Engel. Other speakers included NY State Assemblyman Gary Pretlow and City Council President Roberta Apuzzo.

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Aging historic 3rd Street Bridge to be closed and replaced

Story by Joe Parisi



East Third Street Bridge

The New York State Department of Transportation has classified the aging East Third Street Bridge as functionally obsolete and plans are in place to close and replace the bridge. Work on the project is expected to begin this coming November.

Many residents from Mount Vernon and Pelham attended a public information meeting on the closing of the bridge Tuesday night, September 19, at the Daranco Town House in Pelham, which was hosted by the NYS Department of Transportation.

NYS Department of Transportation representatives, along with engineers and representatives from the company assigned to rebuild the bridge were in attendance. A very detailed slide presentation

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Mt. Vernon artist and poet James Fair ("jaFa") has died



James Fair ("jaFa")

James Fair, better known as "jaFa", a longtime Mount Vernon legendary artist, poet, writer and actor, has died.

"jaFa" lived by himself and had absolutely no family or even a next of kin. His adopted family were the individuals that run AC-BAW on Fourth Avenue in Mount Vernon led by Saleem William Sullivan, and Joe Parisi, who he wrote a column for in the Inquirer newspaper.

Very little is known about his death other than he died in a hospital due to unknown causes.

He died on the 22nd of August and Saleem is trying to determine what the hospital did with his body, since he did not have a next of kin.

"jaFa" was a very talented individual and also kept busy as a photographer, videographer and computer graphic artist.

He graduated from Howard University's College of Fine Arts, where he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts (cum laude) in theatre.

He was actively involved as a member of AC-BAW, where he constantly hosted

local poetry and writer's workshops. He worked very hard to keep the arts alive in the City of Mount Vernon.

"jaFa's" masterful artwork was routinely on display at different locations throughout Mount Vernon, especially in the library's rotunda, as well as at City Hall.

He worked very closely with another talented artist, Barry L. Mason, and they were both members of the Mount Vernon Arts Council.

"jaFa" was the editor of jaFa's Poet's Corner in the Mount Vernon Inquirer newspaper for over ten years. He was also editor and publisher of Blood Beats in Four Square Miles – a poetry anthology - showcasing 19 area wordsmiths. He was also vice president/board member of Got Art? Inc.

"jaFa" will be missed dearly, and hopefully the arts in Mount Vernon will not be impacted too much due to his death.

May he rest in peace!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Payments In Lieu of Taxes ('PILOTS')

Dear Mount Vernon Inquirer Editor: A recent editorial opinion piece lambasted the city of Mount Vernon's use of Payments In Lieu of Taxes ('PILOTS'). It is an important topic to address given the debate about the state of Mount Vernon's schools and the effort to promote development and get our economy moving forward.

As for PILOTS, the school district has misleadingly tried to blame the Mount Vernon Industrial Development Authority ('MVIDA') for its financial woes. The Mount Vernon City School District has been struggling for decades, and it was mismanaged until former Superintendent (and now NYS Regent) Judith Johnson instituted major reforms, which are blossoming under current Superintendent Dr. Kenneth Hamilton.

The school district collects over 60% of all local property taxes, amassing an annual budget of \$257 million to educate 8,000 students. That is over a quarter billion dollars annually divided among 8,000 students, averaging out to more than \$32,000 per student.

Combined with the recent \$108 million in bonds the school district floated and another \$44 million in energy upgrades,

the Mount Vernon City School District is spending nearly half a billion dollars while yielding a graduation rate that still hovers at 54%. I think we can agree that our students and families are entitled to a better return on their investment.

In 2009 the school district disclosed that it spent over \$20 million on failed projects ranging from technology to uniforms, all while gutting after-school programs, forcing the community to rally to raise money to fund the Mount Vernon Boys Varsity Basketball team.

The district later went on to sue the State of New York seeking over \$40 million to plug massive holes in its operational budget. This was part of a joint action with other districts around the state which ultimately lost.

Now the School District has taken on MVIDA in a last-ditch effort to stave off the necessary budget corrections it must make.

To Mount Vernon's educational leaders: If you spent as much time committed to our kids as you do in the court system, or as you do in looking for scapegoats, our school system might be a lot more respected than it currently is.

Add to that, it appears that the district is

also now spending our school tax money to pay for a campaign by a team of nameless, faceless bloggers to disparage the reputation of all city public officials and spread misinformation to continue a false narrative about the real situation related to its finances and management of tax dollars.

Like the bloggers, the school district attempts to prop up its claims by repeatedly using buzzwords like "conceal," "improper," "illegal," "inappropriate," "unlawful," "wanton," "disregard," "brazenly," "unconscionable," "colluding," and "conspiring," although the School Board makes no effort to tie its allegations to any existing statutory right.

Rather, the School throws these words around solely for effect and to create the illusion that its baseless claims have merit. It's time to stop the nonsense and get to work. That work is teaching kids, not coming up with excuses or scapegoats for its shortcomings.

Respectfully,
Sean McIntyre
Deputy Director, Mount Vernon Industrial Development Agency

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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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was many available to the large gathering of people, along with a Q&A session.

Work is expected to begin September 25, which will entail having to build a temporary bridge. Fortunately, traffic will continue to flow through the old bridge while the temporary bridge is built. The project is expected to be completed in August 2018. Now, nearly ninety years after the bridge was built, the historic East Third Street Bridge that connects Pelham with Mount Vernon will give way to a modernized version.

Also in attendance was Mayor Richard Thomas, who stated, "As mayor of the City of Mount Vernon, which is adjacent to the bridge, I have a vested interest in ensuring this bridge replacement is completed in a timely manner with minimal disruption to the city and its residents. I don't believe this is a project that needs to be dragged out for 18-24 months."

In addition to the bridge being replaced, flooding that occurs on the Hutchinson River Parkway and along adjoining roadways is also being addressed.

Residents living in the vicinity of the project were assured that noise from the project will be bearable, and dust will also be kept in check.

Initially, residents will experience a problem with parking, but it will only improve as the project moves along.

The bridge is a remarkable and special structure. It has aesthetic, rough-cut stone facing on a two-span bridge: the main arched span arches above the Hutchinson River Parkway. The smaller arched span arches above the Hutchin-

son River adjacent to the Parkway. There is a large stone-faced tower on the off-centered pier between the two spans. In 2014 the bridge was deemed eligible for a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Regrettably, the bridge now has been deemed "functionally obsolete" by the NYS Department of Transportation and plans have been finalized to remove and replace it.

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Deputy Chief Roy Hastings was the MC



Mayor Richard Thomas

When Mayor Thomas approached the podium to speak, he had a solemn look on his face.

"It is an honor to be in the presence of so many first responders knowing that some of you participated in the rescue effort on that terrible day of destruction at the World Trade Center," said Mayor

Thomas.

Prior to ending his speech, the mayor read the names of the five individuals that Mount Vernon lost on 9/11. They included: Michael A. Boccardi, Jonathan E. Briley, Sandra P. Campell, Katie M. McCloskey and Rochelle Snell.

Cornelia Brown provided excellent vo-

cal musical selections throughout the ceremony and sang the national anthem.

The highlight of the ceremony took place when Rev. Alfred Gordon, a Marine Corps veteran, read a unique and moving poem in memory of those that perished on 9/11. He received a thunderous applause from the audience. Rev. Gordon also provided the invocation and the benediction.

Near the end of the ceremony, taps was

played and members of Mount Vernon's Finest fired a volley of bullets from their rifles.

Next, accompanied by a group of Mount Vernon Boys Scouts, Mayor Thomas laid a red wreath by the Twin Towers monument.

Prior to the benediction being provided by Rev. Gordon, five candles were lit in remembrance of the five Mount Vernon heroes that died on 9/11.



Congressman Eliot Engel addressing the crowd



Mount Vernon first responders saluting during the singing of the national anthem



Five candles being lit in honor of the five Mt. Vernonites that died on 9/11

James Fair ("jaFa") memorial service to be held at AC-BAW on October 20

The Mount Vernon community will get a chance to memorialize James Fair, better known as "jaFa", at a service in his honor on October 20, from 6 to 8 PM at

the AC-BAW Center for the Arts, located at 128 South Fourth Avenue.

Those interested in being part of the program can call Willie Saleem Sullivan at 914-473-5788.

CityFest debut a huge success



A little girl awed the crowd with her superb dancing ability



For 2017, the current City of Mount Vernon administration made a bold decision to change the name of the popular yearly festival known as Arts on Third to CityFest. In addition, they also changed the festival's location from Third Street, between Fifth Avenue and First Avenue to Gramatan Avenue, between Lincoln Avenue and Prospect Avenue.

CityFest made its debut on Saturday, September 16 under sunny skies and was viewed by the organizers of the event as a huge success. It did not attract 100,000 people like the 2015 Arts on Third festival did, but the event did attract several thousand people and an abundance of vendors.

CityFest can't be compared to Arts on Third, especially in size and the amount of



people that attended, but it was a promising start for a festival that is expected to grow if Mayor Thomas is fortunate to get reelected.

The event started at 2:00 PM and by 4:00 PM attendance was very poor, but as it got later, attendance started to pick up.

Unlike Arts on Third, which had multiple entertainment stages, CityFest only had one, and that is where the bulk of the people were gathered.

The generous array of food, vendors and entertainment made for an exciting day for all who attended, and smiles were in abundance as people made their way through the crowd-filled area of Gramatan designated for CityFest.

Like in past festivals, young and old alike seemed to appreciate the assortment of food and beverages available to satisfy rumbling stomachs and parched throats. And the competing aromas of

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FLASHBACK

Mount Vernon's Own "Mr. Apollo" helps lead historic Harlem theater into the 21st century

Story by Deena Parham, 2006



The Apollo during its early years

On a breezy Wednesday night in Harlem, the street is suddenly energized by an influx of visitors to the legendary Apollo Theater. Crowds gather at the box office to buy tickets to the world famous "Amateur Night" which is credited with launching the careers of an array of American icons including Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn and Gladys Knight and the Pips.

Mount Vernon native Billy Mitchell, the Apollo's Tour Manager, emerges from the theater and stands in front of the pulsating new digitized marquee. As the names of upcoming artists flash in the background, ushers, passersby, and a bevy of visitors from the United States and abroad greet him in waves of hugs and handshakes. As tourists frenetically move closer, eyes light up and cameras appear, hoping to get a personal photo with the man known around the world as "Mr. Apollo." He graciously grants all requests and smiles about all around.

Mitchell was named "Mr. Apollo", he says, by the community. He has the longest tenure of any employee at the Apollo Theater, working there full-time for more than 22 years.

Mitchell, who grew up only 13 miles from Harlem's most identifiable landmark, probably never imagined that his image would one day be beamed around the world in feature stories on major news outlets including CNN. He has been affiliated with the Apollo Theater for more than 40 years, counting back to his days of running errands for stars as a page. The Apollo may be his heart, but Mitchell is quick to tell anyone that he was born and raised in Mount Vernon.

Only two hours earlier, Mitchell quietly sat down with Mount Vernon Inquirer publisher Joe Parisi and this writer to give a candid and poignant interview about his life. From his new office overlooking his-

toric 125th Street, one would never guess that there was a deeper story to be told that was decades in the making.

As a child, he lived on South 8th Avenue and West 5th Street, in a one-bedroom, cold-water flat in a dilapidated building that was demolished many years later. Mitchell, one of fourteen children, grew up in poverty, and recalls how he did not have a gas stove or even a telephone until he was a teenager. It was during those years that he learned an invaluable lesson: "No matter where you come from or what your background is, you can come out of any situation. Fortunately, I know that I can turn to God."

Mitchell did have many community safe havens in Mount Vernon that remained anchors especially during periods of family instability. One of his treasured memories was attending Nathan Hale Elementary School on South Sixth Avenue. It was there that teacher Cecil H. Parker (whom the school would later be renamed in honor of) taught Mitchell for two years. Mitchell also found a refuge in the Southside branch of the nearby Mount Vernon Boys Club and later at Washington Junior High School (now known as Nellie Thornton), where he excelled in football and track. He left Mount Vernon when he was 14 when his family moved to the Bronx.

The Bronx, for Mitchell, was a place with infinite possibilities. Mitchell's boundless ambition and determination led him to pursue a variety of jobs throughout high school. His earliest association with the Apollo Theater was in the 1960s when he became a page to the stars, including Smokey Robinson. When Robinson returned to the theater recently after a 28-year absence Mitchell said that "he remembered that I was a page. That really said a lot that he remembered me after so many years."

In 1984, after attending Bronx Community College and a series of jobs in retail, banking and collections, Mitchell was told about possible job opportunities at the Apollo Theater. The theater had been shuttered since 1977, but was bought in 1981 by entrepreneur Percy Sutton. Mitchell once again jumped at the chance to be a part of a new era of a place that had showcased some of the biggest names in African-American entertainment in the world.

What was Mitchell's first job at the newly restored Apollo Theater? He was assigned as an usher and later became the manager of the ushers. Over the years, Mitchell has played a variety of roles with the Apollo Theater including managing its retail store; coordinator for the Amateur Night, producer of shows for children and he was a stagehand for the television show, "Showtime at the Apollo."

However, it was Mitchell's deep love for the history of the theater and its performers that prompted him to make the suggestion that they offer public tours to promote the cultural significance of the facility. Harlem has approximately 1.3 mil-

lion visitors a year, and the Apollo is one of its most recognizable landmarks. Since 1991, Mitchell has been conducting the tours that give the visitors an oral history of the national, state, and locally landmarked theater built in 1914. Guests are also treated to stories about the performers. Mitchell is known to provide an extra treat for visitors as he usually sings and dances to entertain them.

Mitchell has returned to Mount Vernon frequently, over the years, most recently as host of the Mini-Apollo Amateur Night competition at the Eighth Annual Arts on

Third Festival which was held in September 2006. He said: "I am truly passionate about giving back to Mount Vernon." To that end, he often arranges for school and senior groups from the city to visit the Apollo Theater throughout the year.

After overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds, Billy Mitchell proves that success can come to those who believe. While life is full of challenges, there is also a bounty of opportunity. His advice to young residents of the city is, "there is another world beyond four square miles. Don't be afraid to explore."

Graham Elementary School Alumni Association presents 50 backpacks to students



Students proudly displaying their new backpacks

Representatives of the Graham Elementary School Alumni Association presented 50 backpacks filled with school supplies to school officials to hand out to first-graders on Sept. 12, marking the second year the group has done so.

The association is looking to do this every year as a way of giving back to the community and acknowledging the school's efforts to ensure a high quality education for children in kindergarten through the sixth-grade.

Proceeds from the Graham Heights Community Barbecue --- where many members lived as children --- were used to purchase backpacks and school supplies for first-graders.

"To me, the younger students really appreciate these things," said Dino Young, a spokesperson for the alumni association. "The backpacks are filled with notebooks, crayons, glue sticks, folders, pencils and related items of interest for all students."

Young, a member of the Graham Class of 1970, values school and understands the importance of young people being

prepared each and every day.

"You always give back, that's how I was raised by my parents," said Young. "You should always come back and give (to Graham). Graham School was my first school. I started first-grade there. When I finished there, I was definitely prepared for the next step."

Principal Dr. Natasha Hunter-McGregor was grateful for the group's ongoing interest as she watched the faces of the young people light up as they selected a backpack of their choice.

"They graduated from our school many, many years ago," she said. "But it's clear when they come into the building that they have very, very fond memories of their time here at Graham. That's how we want all of our students to feel. A positive early education experience sets the stage for future success. Not too many elementary schools even have an alumni association. The fact that Graham has an alumni association committed to giving back each year is fabulous. On behalf of the entire Graham community we say, thank you for caring about our first-grade scholars."

EDITORIAL

Deborah Reynolds' Primary Election victory over Maureen Walker a shocker



Deborah Reynolds

Council and her relationship with her colleagues can best be described as a stormy one. She refused to follow the protocol her colleagues abided by and on many occasions spoke out of turn. She also routinely voted "no" on just about all issues that came before the board. She was basically a rebel who did not agree with much as a councilwoman.

Reynolds' history as a councilwoman was expected to be her downfall in the primary she just won. But it appears that she impressed many voters during the debates, with many remembering her feistiness and independent voice as a councilwoman.

If she moves ahead and removes Walker as comptroller, she won't have to deal with four other colleagues like she did as a councilwoman. She'll be her own boss – making her own decisions. And if she is a good comptroller, it may be the beginning of a new dynasty.

Walker recently announced that she is stepping down as comptroller, so Mount Vernonites are hoping that voting for Reynolds was the right decision, but only time will tell, since there is another candidate running for that position as well.

The City Council winners in the recent Mount Vernon primary elections did not produce any surprises. But, what really surprised many was Comptroller Maureen Walker losing to Deborah Reynolds by a hefty amount of votes.

Yes, it was only a primary election, but the winners of the Primary Election normally go on to win the general election.

Deborah Reynolds once sat on the City

Westchester County Clerk celebrates passage of historic E-Recording legislation



Westchester County Clerk Timothy Idoni

September 24, 2017 will mark the fifth anniversary of the enactment of a law allowing for the e-recording of land records in the State of New York, an effort spearheaded by Westchester County Clerk Timothy Idoni. On Friday, September 22, 2017, the County Clerk's office will celebrate the bill's passage which took the recording of land records from the archaic use of paper to the electronic age, saving millions of dollars

and hours and months of time for the real estate industry, home buyers and sellers, as well as the county government.

Clerk Idoni, fiercely lobbied the state for the change. The legislation changed the process in which deeds and mortgages could be recorded, now by electronic means. It also made access to documents easier and faster. The process of recording land records including deeds and mortgages was limited under the old

Wartburg's 2nd Annual Car and Motorcycle Show brings hundreds to campus



Wartburg hosted its 2nd Annual Car and Motorcycle Show on Sunday, July 30. Over 1,500 people came to Wartburg's 34-acre Mount Vernon campus to see nearly 215 registered cars.

Wartburg partnered with 2Exclusive Auto Club (Bronx, NY) to bring as many cars and motorcycles to campus as possible. Antonio Collazo, Wartburg's Director of Environmental Services and President of the 2Exclusive Auto Club, was instrumental in making this year's event a success both for the club and for Wartburg.

"2Exclusive Auto Club made a HUGE statement with their show on the campus of the Wartburg," said Mr. Collazo.

The day was filled with raffles, games, children's activities and over 100 trophies awarded at the end of the show. Sight impaired residents from Wartburg's Adult Day Services participated by judging the "Best Sounding" car. Attendees included Mount Vernon community members, Wartburg residents and their families, and friends of those with cars in the show. Proceeds from the event support Wartburg's wide array of senior residential and healthcare programs.

"We were thrilled with the turnout for only our second year," said, David J. Gentner, Wartburg President & CEO. "The staff worked really hard to create a fun for all-ages experience where motororing enthusiasts could connect and see the cars and bikes they love. The event has become this region's premier

car and bike show and we hope to grow the event into 2018 and beyond."

Wartburg welcomed different auto clubs from the New York metropolitan area including Free Agents, Neck Breakerz, Wolf Squad, U.T.O., Spooky Ryderz, S.C.R., Hollywood Assassin, Ripping the Streets, Capicu, Family Creationz, MMAC, Stunt 101, Street Rev, Storm 300, BX Attitude, BK Attitude, Grounded Society, NYC Toyoteros. Winners included Danny Garcia's 2015 Dodge Challenger which won "Best in Show," Van Cuba's 2016 Honda Odyssey was named "Best Minivan," Eli Ortiz was awarded "Best Female Ride" for her Volkswagon Golf and "Best Music Sound" was given to Carlos Otera from Family Creationz.

Wartburg's next campus event, the historic Fall Festival, will be held on Saturday, September 23rd from 11am to 5pm. With a robust inter-generational schedule that includes live entertainment, shopping, a children's area with a bouncy castle, an assortment of seasonal treats and activities, a craft area with local art exhibitions and a market sponsored by Morrison Community Living, the expected 1000+ attendees will be able to spend the entire day entertained and engaged as they support one of Westchester's premier senior care facility. This event is free and open to the public rain or shine.

For more information on vendor, entertainment, and sponsorship opportunities, contact Karen Thomas at 914-513-5308 or kthomas@wartburg.org.

law. Original paper documents were delivered by hand, mail, or courier service. The papers were then indexed by manually entering information onto paper or electronic indexes. Original paper documents were then returned usually by regular mail to the submitter. The legislation allowed the Clerk's office to accept all the documentation electronically, eliminating the cost of

labor, supplies, postage and travel time to the clerk's office. If a document fails to have all necessary information, it can be returned electronically and the changes made instantaneously. Payments can be calculated by the system, eliminating bounced checks. A document that used to take months to be recorded can now be done in fifteen (15) minutes.

Zeta Nu Omega Chapter provides children with backpacks and supplies



On July 27, 2017, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Zeta Nu Omega Chapter, partnered with Neighbors Link of Mount Kisco, NY, the United Nations Association of Westchester and the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women in providing 45 backpacks and school supplies to Latino children, many of whom are children of refugees from desperate situations in their home countries.

The back packs were presented to the children at the Mt. Kisco Elementary School. Present to assist with the

presentations were Alpha Kappa Alpha members Dr. Brenda Smith, Mrs. Henryette Fisher and Ms. Janice Heatley. Marcia Brewster, President of UNA-USA, who made the initial contact with the organization, also greeted Ms. Amy Werner, Volunteer Manager of Neighbors Link, together with several of the teachers, teacher assistants and community volunteers. The children will enter kindergarten in September. Although most of the children are just learning English, it is expected that they will be fluent by the end of kindergarten.

Congress members Engel & Lowey meet with USPS Deputy Postmaster Stroman



Congressman Engel (left), Deputy Postmaster Ron Stroman (center) and Congresswoman Nita Lowey (right)

Congressman Eliot Engel (D-NY16) and Congresswoman Nita Lowey (D-NY17) recently met with United States Postal Service Deputy Postmaster General Ron Stroman in Congressman Engel's Washington office to discuss the systemic is-

suings plaguing the post office branches in Westchester, Rockland, and Bronx Counties.

The Congress members presented Deputy Postmaster Stroman with a list of complaints they had received from constituents, including reports of late or

Director of Student Services nominated for NYS Special Education Administrator of the Year



Felicia Gaon

excellence," said Superintendent Dr. Kenneth Hamilton. "Her conscientious work and diligence has greatly benefitted the special needs students in our district."

"I am honored to have been nominated for this award for work that I find so fulfilling," said Gaon. "Working to provide the best education possible for students with disabilities is my passion, and I'm fortunate to have the support of outstanding teachers and administrators in the Mount Vernon City School District."

Gaon began her career in Nassau BOCES as a School Counselor for alternative and special education programs where she worked for 18 years. She moved into an administrative position as the Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services in the Lawrence Union Free School District. From there, she became the Chief District Administrator for Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services in the North Babylon Union Free School District. She also worked for Rockland BOCES as an Assistant Principal in the Jesse Kaplan School. Ms. Gaon has a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Studies and a Master of Arts in Guidance and Counseling, both from New York University. She has a Master of Arts Degree in School Psychology from Touro College, a Professional Diploma in Administration and Supervision from Queens College and is ABD and completing her dissertation at Manhattanville College.

Mount Vernon City School District's Director of Student Services, Felicia Gaon, was nominated for Special Education Administrator of the year by the New York Council of Administrators of Special Education (NYCASE). She was honored in Saratoga recently at the organization's Summer Institute.

Gaon was nominated by Mount Vernon City School District Superintendent Dr. Kenneth R. Hamilton. She was among a select pool of highly qualified and highly regarded Special Education administrators from across New York State who were nominated for this prestigious career achievement award.

"Ms. Gaon engages with other departments and administrative leadership to create a cross-collaborative environment for educational

Gaon lives in Queens with her husband and children. She is an avid reader and in her free time, enjoys hiking and nature walks.

missing deliveries, inconsistent or false information from postal officials, post offices not open during the listed opening hours and phone calls that are routinely unanswered or ignored throughout the day in the post office.

The Congress members made clear that this type of service is unacceptable and the response from postal officials has been inadequate. They were told by Mr. Stroman that steps are being taken to improve service and that additional resources have been allocated to the area.

"We have been reassured by Mr. Stroman that he will return in 30 days to assess the progress that has been made. We hope for positive improvement, but our offices will continue to work with constituents to resolve their complaints. The system is broken, and we were very clear with Mr. Stroman that it needs to be quickly fixed. We remain cautiously optimistic, but will also continue to hold postal officials accountable at the highest level to ensure improved service for our constituents," Engel and Lowey said.

9-year old Mt. Vernon tennis player at US Open



Credit: Dave Dellinger

Net Generation, the youth brand of the USTA, embraces all aspects of youth play for kids ages 5-18. Launching at the 2017 US Open, Net Generation is designed to suit players based on their skill level and developmental readiness.

The goal of Net Generation is to inspire a new generation of tennis players, parents and providers (coaches and those that or-

ganize tennis events). Net Generation is focused on empowerment, unity and play, with an emphasis on learning through play and building character on and off the court – not just through drills and competition.

Net Generation kids of all ages had a special opportunity to be on court for the coin tosses during the 2017 US Open, and it included Hudson Marston, who resides in Mount Vernon.

Mayor Thomas: The transparency fight

Earlier this week, my administration delivered three funding options to the City Council to bring back Urban Renewal Agency workers that were furloughed. The ten furloughed employees were not just forgotten by the City Council and Comptroller Maureen Walker, they were ignored as well over the past 13 months. These workers are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles and grandparents. They deserve to come back to work so they can feed their families. All it takes is a simple budget transfer and yet the City Council refuses to even consider it – even going so far as to hide the proposals from the record. Why? What are they afraid of?

We know the reserve fund is over \$19 million, more than enough to restore the position of Police Commissioner and re-open the furloughed agency. So why the fight? Why the refusal to even have a discussion? What do they have to gain by keeping blue-collar people out of work?

Comptroller Walker dug her heels in too, fighting to the bitter end. She wrote a fact-less letter assailing transparency in government proudly proclaiming that she is opposing public access to financial data until “she turns the lights out in her office for good.”

Well that’s where she and I differ. As a Master Mason, I believe in spreading light and letting you, the taxpayer, see how your money is spent. The situation begs the question, “What does Walker have to hide?” My office even had to send her and her staff a notice to not destroy records and to not remove public information from their offices without legal approval. What is she afraid of?

One of the main reasons I ran for mayor was to take back our city from people who want to keep us down and in the dark. Mount Vernon voters have decided to move forward. A State Supreme Court agrees. It ruled against Walker and City Council members Marcus Griffith, Andre Wallace and Lisa Copeland ordering them to cease and desist their “sabotage” motivated by “political animus” and cementing my executive authority as mayor.

Another state judge determined that it was a violation of the City Charter for Walker and Griffith to sign checks behind my back. In most places, this is known as embezzlement; however, the courts opted to strongly admonish Walker and Griffith to stop the shady tactic. If we have to go back to court and get a new order to open the financial books, we will. The mayor’s signature is the necessary signature for city checks and the City Charter is clear when it says that, “the mayor

shall have the authority to examine all books and papers of any elected or appointed officer, employee, or Department of the City at all times and as often as he may deem proper.” (See Article VI, Section 66 of CMVNY Charter.). Again, what are they afraid of?

It is proper to examine the books and papers of the city’s bank accounts while Walker is on her way out. Millions have been wasted over the past 25-years and we need to know what is going on with our tax dollars. Based on the City Charter, the role of comptroller is to “superintend” the financial affairs of the city, not hide the money.

Our fight for transparency is the fight for good government. Good government and good public policy says the taxpayers are allowed access to books and records. Good government says taxpayer money belongs to the taxpayer. Getting access to public records shouldn’t require an exorcism or a changing of the guard. The information will help us better manage limited resources and develop a financial strategy that will work for Mount Vernon. It’s something we need and all deserve.



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Mount Vernon resident awarded police scholarship



Brooke Pi

Kellenberg Memorial High School graduate Brooke Pi has been awarded a \$2,000 Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) Dream Scholarship, which is double the amount awarded to recipients last year. She is among 27 top students who will receive the award to encourage their pursuit of law enforcement/public safety careers by the professional public safety officers of LEEP.

Pi, who graduated with a 3.3 GPA, will use her LEEP Award to pursue a bachelor's degree in Criminology and Forensic Psychology, a double major at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in New York City. She plans to go to law school and then apply to the FBI.

"I feel that I should receive this scholarship because I am a driven, focused student who wants to work hard and pursue a career in law enforcement so that I can help people," Pi wrote in her scholarship application.

She was involved in cheerleading, Drama Club, Speech & Debate Team, and

yearbook in high school. She is a member of Christians Reaching Out Spreading Spirituality (C.R.O.S.S.), a YMCA Senior Counselor and volunteered at Siena House, a shelter for single mothers in The Bronx.

"C.R.O.S.S. is a club in my school that travels every week to visit nursing homes and spread happiness and spirituality to the older generation," she wrote in her application.

"She is very conscientious, level headed and an extremely intelligent person," wrote City of Glen Cove Chief of Police William F. Whitton in a letter of recommendation. "I have been in law enforcement for over 32 years, the last 10 as Chief of Police. When Brooke confided in me that she was going to pursue a career in law enforcement, I was thrilled as I know she will thrive in this field."

Other scholarship winners include: Caitlin Cardenas of Arizona; Nautika Harris of Arkansas; Jennifer Hong and Jose Ruiz of California; Yeraldi Morales and Graciela Popoca of Illinois; Tyler Madden of Kentucky; Brennan Blackstone of Maine; Christian Campbell, Mason Deible, Bradley Duck Jr., Caleb Fort, Meleisha Herington, Austin Lynema, Erik Rittenger and Marybeth Gornley of Michigan; Laura Rognerud of Montana; Michaela Lawrence of Nebraska; Joseph Hill of Nevada; Kyle McCarthy, Cali Martinez of New York; Jazmin Tucker of Ohio; Evan Guin of Tennessee; Amanda Condon of Texas; Alexander Braatz of Washington; and Michaela McDonald of Wisconsin.

In its 13th year, LEEP has awarded some \$216,000 in Dream scholarships to students showing a demonstrated interest in public service/law enforcement careers. The non-profit public safety group's scholarship program is made possible by a growing list of national supporters.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Vernon Woods bylaws/policy

In a time where it seems that there is a loss of empathy, compassion and tolerance, political leadership is working against us, increase in natural disasters, and environmental dangers, one would hope that they could find respite in their community amongst their friends and neighbors. Yet, I find myself in an untenable situation because the Vernon Woods Cooperative Board in Mount Vernon, New York insists on enforcing a leasing policy that places me and their fellow neighbors and apartment owners in financial duress.

You see, the board insists that my tenant of eight (8) years vacate my apartment even though he has not been able to find a comparable space - I cannot afford to maintain a vacant apartment while paying the expenses on the apartment where I currently reside, and the real estate market is flat in Mount Vernon. I fought the board about this policy that was not in place at the time of my purchase without success, and they are taking advantage of their position without any thought for how this policy affects owners, potential sellers, or buyers.

The so-called purpose of the policy was to curtail the number of owners leasing their apartments, but the Board already had control over who leased and never had an issue with too many renters. In my opinion, the policy opens wide the doors for GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACE-

MENT of potential Mount Vernon residents searching for affordable property in the city of their birth.

Income purchase requirements at Vernon Woods exceed the medium income for Mount Vernon residents. The Vernon Woods Board purchased four (4) apartments to sell for a profit over the last twelve (12) months! So I ask you, who benefits and why does this policy exist?

What's worse, after I informed the board that my tenant is looking for a new residence, the board, my neighbors, informed my tenant without first notifying me, that they were starting eviction proceedings against him—a doctor who pays his bills on-time, has caused no problems to my property or our neighbors.

I am angry, frustrated and hurt that this is how these people, many not native to Mount Vernon, living in the community of my birth, sees fit to act against responsible people for the sake of policy.

Policy without reason, meaning or compassion is oppressive and divisive! I encourage Vernon Woods residents, friends of Mount Vernon, and neighbors to write or call the Board at (914)668-9591 and let them know that this will not work.

Yours in kindness,
Raquel M. Bennett
Resident since 1969
Family since 1930's

Mt. Vernon creating a "Dog Park"



Rendition of new dog park

The kids aren't the only ones getting a new place to run and play. Mount Vernon is creating a dog park out of our overgrown and unused areas. The grassy area off of Devonia Avenue is being converted into the city's only off leash dog park, giving furry residents an open space where they can be free to run and

play and non-furry residents a space where they can enjoy their pets and enjoy the city's green spaces.

This is one of many abandoned parks that the city is repurposing to make Mount Vernon more pet friendly.

"Fido deserves a safe place to play just like our kids do," said Mayor Thomas.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Mayor Thomas stopped from accessing city's bank accounts

To Mayor Thomas:

On September 13, 2017 one day after the Democratic primary elections, you approached the banks that the city does business with and demanded that you, Mayor Thomas, Corporation Counsel Lawrence Porcari, and Management Services Commissioner Thomas Rajala be allowed to access all the city's financial accounts.

These bank accounts are under the sole custody of the City Comptroller's Office. As the Chief Financial Officer of the City of Mount Vernon, I find these demands very disturbing, as a result of the timing and also the individuals who you are seeking to provide access to taxpayers' funds.

While I will be leaving this office in three months' time, I believe that it is my duty and obligation to continue to protect taxpayers' money right up until I turn off the lights and leave the Comptroller's Office for good.

Through this letter, I am warning you to cease and desist from trying to gain access to the city's bank accounts for yourself and those who report directly to you and whose duties and responsibilities have absolutely nothing to do with the city's bank accounts. Your questionable and dubious actions raise serious ethical questions about your intentions.

Maureen Walker, CPA
Comptroller

ARE YOU A DEMOCRATIC PARTY ROBOT?

Once in a while, a struggling community or a nation has the opportunity to right the wrongs of the past leaders and take corrective action, measurable steps, towards rebuilding their economy, culture and quality of life. Mount Vernon has that once in a few decades opportunity at this moment. In the November 7th Election, there are three seats up for a new City Council Leadership and one for a new Comptroller. This election can ultimately shift this city from being a city of lost hope, crime, higher and higher taxes with less and less services, failing businesses, lack of jobs, decreasing property values and infrastructure, to a city that has promise for a bright future, a culture of care and an economy that can sustain a quality of life that has not been seen here in Mount Vernon for decades.

IT'S TIME TO STOP THE FAILING CYCLE- If you think for one moment that things can change in Mount Vernon with the failed leadership of the Democratic Party, then you really need to consider the facts. We all know the definition of Insanity is "Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome." We have been a majority Democratic town for many decades now. It's not being a Democrat that is the problem. It is being a DEMOCRATIC PARTY ROBOT that is the problem. It is no longer ok to vote straight down party lines, because the interest of the Democratic Party does not represent the majority of its citizens. You have to examine the individual candidates and their values, credentials, capacity and competency. The same that you would do if you were interviewing a baby sitter for your kids, a caretaker for your parents or an employee for your business. You would never hire them simply because they said that they were a Democrat. So then why do we keep electing the same unqualified individuals, backed by a failing Democratic Party leadership, that runs their business in a Party headquarter office that is as dismal and dilapidated as its vision, all while they continue to fail us and the city. I can no longer keep up with the murders, foreclosed homes, car break-ins, pot holes, sewer back-ups, littered streets, dollar stores, and the high taxes that keep good people out and cause longtime residents to either lose their homes or just leave! Is this what we really want? Well this is exactly what you will continue to get if you elect the people backed by the Democratic Party. This November, it's time that all Democrats break the chains of being a Democratic machine ROBOT and break the Party Machine!

DO YOUR HOMEWORK- Here is something we told our kids for years, yet how many of us "*Do our homework*" and learn about the candidates that we vote for? Do we know where they stand on the issues that are important to us? Most candidates simply send out flyers that say "VOTE FOR ME...BECAUSE YOU KNOW ME." Yes, I may know you, but if you are currently in office and have been a failure and you refuse to listen to the citizens because you feel that your failed policies are good for us, then **YOU GOTTA GO!** If I know you and you have not been a role model in this community representing the positive culture of care that we so desperately need and if you don't know what it will take to bring businesses and jobs back, then **YOU GOTTA GO!** If I don't know you, but I do my homework on you and find that you have the credentials for the position that you seek, that you represent my values and vision for this community and that you have the competency and character of a leader, then and only then will you have my vote! IT REALLY IS THAT SIMPLE! Mount Vernon failing in every way...it has the highest taxes, highest murder rate, jobless rate and foreclosure rate in the county? Does this make sense to you? Just look at the people that are making the decisions...they represent POOR LEADERSHIP! And when you don't have competent leaders, then failure is the outcome. We, as a community, have the power of our vote to end this chaos!

NOVEMBER 7th, 2017 is CHANGE DAY!

NEW VISION PARTY:

WALIDAH AIME- COMPTROLLER

ROBIN MYERS- CITY COUNCIL

ANGELA NEIL- CITY COUNCIL

STEVEN FACENDO- CITY COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC PARTY:

DEBORAH REYNOLDS- COMPTROLLER

MARCUS GRIFFITH- CITY COUNCIL

DELIA FARQUHARSON- CITY COUNCIL

JANICE DUARTE- CITY COUNCIL

REPUBLICAN PARTY:

STEVEN "Butch" THOMAS

CHANGE IS COMING-A “NEW VISION” FOR MOUNT VERNON ON CHANGE DAY, NOVEMBER 7TH, 2017

Welcome to the **NEW VISION PARTY**. **Walidah Aime** for Comptroller, **Robin Myers**, **Angela Neil** and **Steven Facendo** as candidates for the City Council. We are citizens, NOT POLITICIANS, willing to challenge and change a system that has been broken and has not worked for us - the citizens, the tax payers, the parents, the children, the students and the workers. We have a “New Vision”, an idea that Mount Vernon can be successful, that our diversity is an asset, and that we need strong and capable leadership to move us forward when many seek to use our city for their financial gain. We need a new direction as we are at a crossroad and critical decisions are being made that will negatively affect our future.

We are independent thinkers. We welcome all who believe that Mount Vernon matters and that she has the potential to once again be a safe city of family values, flourishing businesses and sustainable development. IT IS NOT TOO LATE. We have been working hard as a grassroots movement. We have been winning many battles. From turning around our school district to holding the line on school tax increases and while sounding the alarm on tax breaks in the form of PILOT's for wealthy developers that donate to the campaigns of the Democratic Party candidates. We seek to deal a blow to the “Pay for Play” and the “Business as Usual” that has been going on in this city for decades and has caused its decline. We only need to win your Vote of confidence this November 7th, and we will win back our city, for the people and by the people! This is not the time to be cynical. We represent you. We have stayed too quiet, for too long, but now we have to find our voice. Our voice is your voice. We must hold everyone to a higher standard and cast away the mediocrity that has continued to weigh us down.

The current City Council and Comptroller continues to approve residential development with 30 to 40 year tax breaks. They have passed new laws that circumvent the land use boards with their “Form Based Zoning” initiative. They are directly responsible for seniors losing their homes from the resulting tax increases that burden them and us as well. In addition, these huge tax breaks have caused school tax increases of over 300% since the year 2000. Why? Because developers are not held accountable for the many children who move into these tax free residential buildings. When the developers are not paying their fair share of the school taxes, who do you think pays it? WE DO! Property owners, including the seniors who are on fixed incomes have to foot the bill. Whether we rent or own our homes, we are all sharing this cost. Some of us struggle with the choice of school for our children because our public schools are challenged to maintain basic standards because they are overburdened with less and less resources for more special needs and homeless children than any other district in Westchester County. There needs to be a thoughtful and practical balance for development. We cannot continue to give away our city and provide a good quality of life for our residents that live here now....while our current leaders plan for tens of thousands of new people that will move here with the new developments and take away the resources that we need while causing taxes to skyrocket!

As countless new residential developments are approved, the density of our city increases beyond its resources. School resources are stretched, traffic becomes unbearable, parking is hard to find, fewer police officers to fight crime, outdated equipment for firemen to fight fires, and few ambulances to answer life threatening emergency calls. Basic businesses are disappearing daily such as supermarkets, hardware stores, car dealerships, fine restaurants, and places for family entertainment. We are on the brink of becoming a city of dollar stores and fast food joints, while our home values decline and we take our spending money to other towns. Walking through neighborhoods all over this city, it is apparent that many homeowners are faced with the difficult choice of staying current with their taxes, or maintaining their homes. Crumbling driveways, walkways, dilapidated siding and cracking roof tiles are a painful reality most of us face every day when we come home...not to mention the high cost of utilities and food for our tables!

We are anxious about the poor quality of life and crime that comes with each passing day as a result of irresponsible and incapable leadership that lacks vision and an understanding of the ways to build and market our city that will attract new homeowners and commerce. As with all successful communities, frequent and consistent planning and marketing initiatives along with capable leadership, are necessary to change the downward trajectory and forge a new and brighter path forward. This will be difficult for those who have become comfortable with ‘this is the way we do things in Mount Vernon’ attitude. Change is uncomfortable, and getting out of the box that we have created will take hard work. We can do all of this by voting for “COMPETENT” people rather than the “POPULAR” people that we are used to. This November 7th, when we elect for competence, experience, and integrity, the renaissance of our city can begin! Mount Vernon, it is time to Look further, strive higher, and move towards a bolder future and embrace a bold **NEW VISION**. Find out more at www.newvisionmv.org

CHANGE IS COMING ON NOVEMBER 7TH....VOTE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE AND VOTE FOR THE “NEW VISION PARTY”

OUR “NEW VISION” WILL BE ACHIEVED BY:

- 1- **Enacting the comprehensive plan**- The comprehensive plan must be revised, completed and then enacted – this will involve acknowledging our historical sites, providing for strategic gateway development planning, transportation initiatives and beautification of our community. Our comprehensive plan will outline residential and commercial development. It will plan for various densities in different parts of the city.
- 2- **Using incentives** to attract and retain commercial businesses which will bring increased tax revenues and much needed employment and new job training for our unemployed citizens and our youth.
- 3- **Utilizing beautification** as a quality of life tool. Simple fixes of small problems will create a sense of order - cleaning garbage on streets and sidewalks, removing broken and rusty chain link fences, greening and lighting our business corridors – South 4th Avenue business district, 3rd street improvement district, and the industrial zone. When there is order, there is a feeling of care which reduces crime and promotes business. We all feel this in surrounding towns and when we travel to great destinations. It is the broken windows theory in action. Beautification and restoration will lead to order, which will lead to decreased fear and crime and eventually we will see more participation from residents which will increase levels of informal social control.
- 4- **Supporting the schools** to improve vocational and academic standards. Along with increasing the variety of sports and student activities, residents will once again be encouraged to send their children to our public schools, freeing up money for them to maintain their properties and to save for their children’s college education. Many children previously educated in our schools were not properly prepared for college or careers when they left. The past 3 years began a new 20/20 vision of the schools where children have been actively engaged in their own education and the mission to prepare them for vocation or college was undertaken. Better schools and well maintained neighborhoods will encourage new homeownership, which will reduce the number of empty and foreclosed homes, and strengthen home values.
- 5- **Marketing Mount Vernon** to the business community as the next business destination. When there is an economically diverse population, we can better support local businesses and other businesses will see Mount Vernon as a desirable location. These enterprises will create jobs and we can educate our labor force for vocational and career training. Right now, the current city leadership justifies the approval of residentially subsidized buildings by saying that they are bringing jobs. Not true. These construction jobs are not economically empowering because they are short term. Instead we can empower our Chamber of Commerce to seek businesses and lobby our IDA to use P.I.L.O.T.s for businesses that will support jobs and tax revenue. We can model our Business Improvement Districts (B.I.D.s) after the NYC BID Partnerships on 34th street, 42nd, and 125th streets which provide street cleaning, beautification and security, while also being self-sustaining through Public/Private Partnerships(PPP’s).
- 6- **Increasing revenue** through business sales taxes and code enforcement. The rule of law in Mount Vernon has been so diluted. Cars run stop signs and traffic lights all day. Litter lives indefinitely on and in front of private and commercial properties. These are all infractions that need to be enforced and fined to promote a safer city and better quality of life, while earning revenue from the offenders. Also, all commercial and multi-family residential development should pay impact fees to cover the cost of upgrading our infrastructure and assets.
- 7- **Providing for our seniors and our youth**- We need safe environments and activities for our seniors and our youth. Landscaped and well equipped parks to stave off social isolation, libraries and media centers to stimulate their brain functions, better functioning transportation and organized city services for our aging population and our young. We need to bring back a strong Boys and Girls Club, the “Y”, and other institutions that have historically strengthened the character of our youth and provided for a rich social environment for our seniors.
- 8- **Building more capacity** to our life and safety services. Our police, fire and medical emergency services must be upgraded to handle our current population and any anticipated growth. Continuing education and training will challenge officers and build confidence amongst the rank and file. Community engagement with law enforcement will ensure a high level of communication and trust with the citizens.
- 9- **Rebuilding our infrastructure** must be a priority. We have broken sewers that are flowing into resident’s basements and the Hutchinson River. The federal government has fined the city for this infraction. The roads are akin to driving through Bagdad. Parking is becoming difficult to find. Traffic on the major roads such as route 22, Lincoln Avenue, and the parkway ramps during rush hour are nearly impossible. Many of the MTA bridges have remained closed for years, Memorial Field has been used as a dumping ground for toxic waste – these issues and much more have not been solved under the watch of the current and past leadership. And still more new buildings are pending, with the promise of nearly 24,000 new residents. Our sewers, bridges, roads, police and firemen are unable to sustain the additional load. Our technology is archaic. We do not have an updated intelligent traffic light system, city wide security cameras, license plate readers, speed detectors, Free Wi-Fi hot spots in public spaces, and much more. We have to make an investment in our city, the same way we do in our homes.
- 10- **Attracting future residents.** In order to compete for young, bright Millennials as our current population ages, there needs to be more parks with pedestrian friendly paths for walking, exercising and biking through the city along with access to the Bronx River and Eastchester Creek waterways for water type recreation. There must also be desirable transit oriented development with shopping plazas, zip car rentals, intra-city shuttle system, and other conveniences near the train stations, and not just housing projects stacked next to each other, street after street. Also, our business and shopping districts also need to be safe and look desirable. The storefronts on 4th Avenue need to be improved with much needed signage and security gate reform. Old steel roll down gates must come down and better, less obtrusive open mesh types installed in the interior of the window will make a much more pleasant shopping corridor.



A NEW VISION FOR

COMPTROLLER



WALIDAH AIME

Walidah Duprey Aime is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) licensed in both NY and CT with over 15 years of professional tax, finance and accounting experience. She holds an MBA from Baruch College and a BA in Economics from the University of Pennsylvania. Walidah is an honest choice for Comptroller. She will reform the office by implementing mechanisms and processes that will improve workflow. The current methods and technologies used are antiquated and inadequate to operate a twenty-first century city. This has resulted in the dysfunction between the comptroller's and the mayor's office, which has crippled our city. She will ensure that the City of Mount Vernon invests for its future obligations while making funds available to responsibly operate city services, essential government functions, infrastructure repairs, maintenance and to realize revenue and business opportunities.

CITY COUNCIL



ROBIN MYERS

Robin Harmon-Myers is a visionary for the City Council. She will bring her expertise in design, communication and effective leadership to a city that has so much promise but has failed to engage its physical and human resources for successful outcomes. Robin has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication and has effectively articulated her ideas for a greater Mount Vernon as founder and president of the Mount Vernon Downtown Merchants Association. She further leads by way of example mentoring Mount Vernon's high school girls through Judge Judy's "Her Honor" mentoring program, becoming an approved job site for the Mt. Vernon Youth Bureau employment program and taking a seat on Westchester County's African American Advisory Board. She believes that city officials should operate on a higher frequency to ensure a high level of professional engagement.

CHANGE IS COMING...

MOUNT VERNON



CITY COUNCIL



ANGELA NEIL

Angela Neil has lived in Mount Vernon since 2005 with her family. Her strong sense of fairness, forthrightness, compassion and vision has her convinced that Mount Vernon can pivot in a new direction. She has advocated for a comprehensive city plan, tax PILOT reform, school and city government accountability, community engagement and an alternative to low income housing as an economic development tool. She will work with the city's planning department to help incorporate the comprehensive plan. She will also help coordinate interagency meetings, strengthen the chamber of commerce to seek new business opportunities, improve the city's image and public relations, identify new business industries to rebrand our industrial zone. Angela believes in this New Vision for Mount Vernon. She is a business owner, has a BA in Psychology and volunteers in her children's schools and the community.

CITY COUNCIL



STEVEN FACENDO

Steven Facendo was born and raised in Mount Vernon and owns his business here for the past 29 years. He graduated Skidmore Technical College in 2010. Steven's stellar reputation has earned the trust of hundreds of customers throughout the lower Westchester area. He is convinced that Mt. Vernon's business productivity, culture of care and beauty can be restored to a community that was once built on family values and respect for one another. My vision for a safe, clean and prosperous Mount Vernon is stronger than ever. I want to be part of a city that attracts new homeowners, businesses, and known for excellence in education. When I am elected as your next City Councilman, one of my first goals will be to assert the interests of Mount Vernon over the interests of developers. I want a Mount Vernon we are proud to call home, which is welcoming to people desirous of starting or moving their business.

VOTE NOVEMBER 7TH



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Dr. Orlando Patterson
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Harvard University Professor

**“What Have We Learned About Culture,
Disadvantage and Black Youth”**

Tuesday, October 10, 2017 | 11:00 AM

Seating is limited. Please RSVP via email
to Paula.Dornburgh@sunywcc.edu.

*This event is sponsored by the Alan & Jacqueline
Stuart Endowed Chair in Developmental Studies.*



**Westchester
Community College**

State University of New York

Continued from page 7

seafood, jerk chicken, hot dogs, fried rice and collard greens made it difficult to decide what to eat.

Since its start in 1999, Arts on Third had a humble beginning but eventually evolved into Mount Vernon's signature cultural and community event, and eventually started to draw substantial participation from the tri-state area and beyond. Could it be that CityFest will grow to that magnitude as

well?

Between the booths and storefronts lining the roped off area of Gramatan Avenue and adjacent blocks, visitors were treated to nearly 100 vendors hawking their wares.

Goods and services were offered in abundance, and festivalgoers enjoyed shopping for jewelry, clothing, shoes, hats, bags, toys, health and beauty products, books, artwork, school supplies, and



items for their homes.

The highlight of CityFest was the entertainment, which took place opposite Hartley Park and included high profile performers like The Intruders, Rotimi, Slick Rick, Platinum Kids and many more.

After welcoming the hundreds gathered by the stage, Mayor Richard Thomas officiated a patty-eating contest involving five participants – which was very popular

with the audience. The winner won a cool \$100.00.

The event featured a long list of activities that offered a little for everybody, such as an ArtWestchester Showcase, African Drum Dance, Bill of Rights Enactment, Walk of Stars, Children's Lane, a Sports Lane and much more.



EDITORIAL

Mt. Vernon LED streetlight battle is finally over

After over a two-year legal battle, the Mount Vernon dilemma surrounding the installation of the LED streetlights throughout the city has come to an end.

At a recent town hall meeting held at Memorial Field, Mayor Richard Thomas told over 200 people that the city had reached a settlement with

Mount Vernon based Sentinel Construction, Inc. on the LED streetlights.

"We have reached an amicable settlement with Terrence Horton's company, Sentinel Construction, on the installation of the LED streetlights. And thanks to an agreement with the NY Power Authority, we will start installing the LED streetlights within the next few weeks at no cost to the tax-

payers," said Mayor Thomas.

I have been reporting on this issue for over three years and have made two trips to South Korea in order to report on all the accurate facts related to this matter.

I find it incredible that the NY Power Authority is in the business of installing streetlights at no cost to municipalities. Therefore, I will be doing a

thorough investigation to obtain all the facts on this issue.

I have always reported that Horton signed a legally binding agreement to install the lights and the city reneged on the agreement, forcing him to spend a huge amount of money fighting the city.

Joe Parisi
Publisher/Editor

CityFest launch party held at Lusidas Restaurant

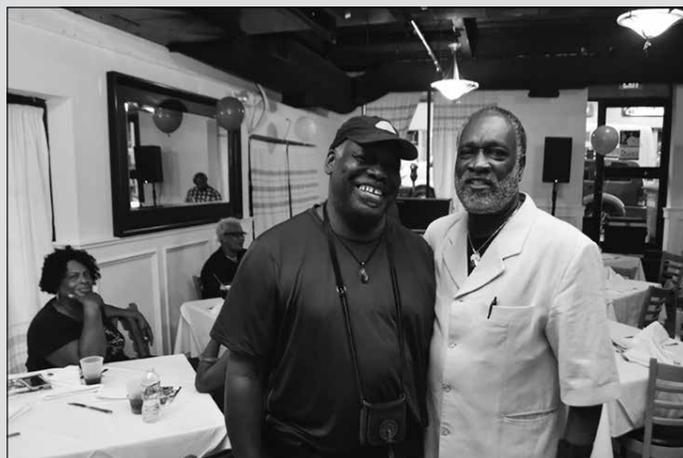


DJ iSlam



The city of Mount Vernon organizers of the inaugural CityFest, held a launch party on Wednesday, September 13, at Lusidas, the popular Portuguese restaurant opposite Mount Vernon City Hall.

The many that attended the party worked very hard to ensure that City-



Fest, held on Saturday, September 16, was a safe and fun day for everybody.

There was definitely electricity in the air, especially with DJ iSlam keeping

everybody in an upbeat mood with his great music. And most importantly, the food was terrific.



Alternative Medicine Options

by
Joe Parisi

Natural home remedies that work

Soothe a sore throat
Gargle twice daily with a solution of six pressed garlic cloves mixed into a glass of warm (not hot) water. Follow the regimen for 3 days. Research shows that fresh garlic juice has antimicrobial properties that fight pain-causing bacteria. The warm liquid soothes inflamed tissue.

Reduce a fever

Sip linden flower tea, which works in two ways: It stimulates the hypothalamus to better control your temperature, and it dilates blood vessels, inducing sweating. Steep 1 tablespoon of dried herb (available in health food stores) in a cup of hot water for 15 minutes, and then sip. Drink three to four cups a day. If you still run hot after a day of sipping tea, seek medical attention.

For a high fever (above 102°F), take a tepid bath, which simply cools the body to match the water temperature. Bathe until your temperature decreases to 101° to 102°F, then sip linden flower tea to lower it even more.

Cool a burn

If you grazed your skin with a hot-from-the-oven cookie pan, apply aloe vera gel to the burn as needed. The soothing and anti-inflammatory gel creates a second skin to protect the burn from air, which irritates exposed nerve

endings.

Stop foot odor

Soak feet nightly in 1 part vinegar and 2 parts water to eliminate odoriferous bacteria. Or take a daily footbath in strong black tea (let it cool first) for 30 minutes. Tea's tannins kill bacteria and close the pores in your feet, keeping feet dry longer; bacteria tend to thrive in moist environments. You'll see results in a few days to a week. One caution: Do the soak only when your feet are free of cuts.

Cut a cold short

Sip a faux hot toddy. Cut a vitamin C-rich lemon in half and squeeze the juice from one half into a cup. Studies show that vitamin C taken before the onset of a cold shortens its duration and severity. Drop the lemon half shell into the cup. Add boiling water and a teaspoon of organic raw honey, an immunity booster that also coats painful throat tissues. Breathe in the healing vapor to open sinuses, and sip a cupful two or three times daily to fight the bug. (To make a traditional hot toddy, add a half shot of brandy.)

The information in this article is not a substitute for medical advice from your primary care physician. It is intended to help you make positive informed decisions about your health.

Astorino and FBI unveil Westchester's new electronics detection canine



County Executive Robert P. Astorino and the FBI recently unveiled the newest member of the Westchester County police today – a cyber dog named Harley who is specially trained to sniff out thumb drives, SD cards, hard drives and other digital storage devices.

These storage devices often contain the critical evidence that law enforcement needs to investigate and prosecute a wide variety of crimes, ranging from financial fraud to child pornography to counter-terrorism cases.

"Harley, a two-year-old Labrador Retriever, is one of only a handful of electronic storage device detection canines in the nation," Astorino said. "She is specially trained to locate hidden or discarded storage devices by detecting the chemical that is used to cool their memory chips."

Astorino noted that a hallmark of his Safer Communities initiative was communication, cooperation and collaboration to provide critically needed services and support to Westchester's communities. The addition of Harley, and her availability to law enforcement throughout Westchester and beyond, is another way that the county is working better and smarter to share vital resources, he said.

Harley and her handler, Westchester County Police Detective Brett Hochron, will support the work of the FBI Cyber Crimes Division. In addition to working with the FBI, Harley will be used in county police investigations and whenever needed by any municipal police department in Westchester.

"We are pleased to bring this new and emerging capability to the Westchester County Police -- and pleased to be able to share this great resource with our lo-

cal, state and federal law enforcement partners," Astorino said.

Astorino was joined today at the Westchester County Police Academy in Valhalla by FBI Special Agent in Charge Aristedes Mahairas of the New York Field Office. He said that Harley will be used when search warrants are executed to locate hidden devices, and she will be deployed at certain crime scenes when there is a search for discarded devices like cell phones.

"In the short time she's been here, there's no doubt Harley has won the hearts, and respect, of many within the FBI's New York Field Office. And, as a matter of fact, she officially executed her first search warrant just last Friday. Poised and ready to take our cyber investigations to a new level, we look forward to all the future holds with the newest member of our team," Mahairas said.

Harley and Hochron recently completed extensive training at the Connecticut State Police Academy before being assigned to the task force.

"Harley will locate hidden or discarded electronics more quickly and efficiently than human searchers can do," Astorino said. "No doubt there will also be times that Harley will ferret out items that may have been well hidden and might otherwise have avoided detection."

Police Commissioner George N. Longworth noted that Harley adds yet another capability to the county police Canine Unit. Highly trained Labradors are used as narcotics, explosives and arson detection canines, while Bloodhounds are used to track lost persons or criminals who fled from a crime scene. "Harley is another great tool to assist our department and all of law enforcement in Westchester," he said.

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Director, EMPOWERING OUR PARENTS
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Make This Year the Best

Already, the first month of the school year is behind us. This can be an exciting time for your children, but for some, it can be a time for significant adjustment to a new classroom, new classmates, a new teacher, and more challenging assignments. Parents, please pay attention to the way your children are adjusting. Spend time each day to listen to their account of the day's events. Ask questions, develop their trust in you. Let them know that you are interested and want to listen. Developing this communication when your children are young is important. You want them to know that they can come to you and feel safe. As some children get older, they may be less inclined to talk to their parents. A trusting relationship at an early age will serve to create a trusting bond with your teenagers, when they may need it most.

Review homework and all the work that comes home each day. Don't let these assignments accumulate in book bags only to be reviewed weeks after they were completed. Parents, you want to know how your children are achieving with their class assignments. If the work is completed well, congratulate them. Words of praise are important and encourage children to continue to be diligent. If the work is not appropriate, you want to know sooner than later. You want to know if the work is too difficult, if they understood how to complete the assignments, if they felt rushed, or if they were distracted. I would

also suggest that you go over the work with your children. If the mistakes are not corrected, what have your children learned from the assignment?

Communicate with the teacher, not only when problems occur. A few words to thank a teacher for helping your children go a long way. However, if your children are struggling, if they are frustrated, if you see failing grades, you must make an appointment to meet with the teacher. You must know why they are failing, but more importantly, you want to know what alternate strategies are or will be used to ensure success: individual attention, small group instruction, shorter or different assignments, additional time given to complete assignments, more attention to developing study skills. Teaching children the way they learn will help them succeed.

Make time to attend meetings. You will gather important information at these meetings and you will also meet parents whose children are in the same class as yours. Sometimes parents feel very isolated, but when they meet and talk with other parents, they may find support.

Encourage your children to complete all assignments with accuracy and excellence. Do not accept mediocrity. Always encourage them to be the best they can be. Challenge them to rise beyond their own expectations. Love them. Believe in them. Empower them to succeed. This is the only option!



Jim and Annie Kiselak's Natural Food Column

Direct from the sunny island of
Vieques, Puerto Rico

The real bonus behind eating fruits and vegetables

A palmful of potato chips won't reduce your risk of certain types of cancer, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and lower blood cholesterol, but research shows that the antioxidants, fiber, vitamins, and minerals in produce like a sweet peach, handful of berries, or a bowlful of bok choy may.

Of course, to get the full benefits of fruits and vegetables -- weight loss, great taste, a reduced risk of chronic disease -- produce needs to replace at least some of the fattier, calorie-dense foods in your diet.

But what if you're not ready to cut out your favorite cookies or forego a single chip? "Even if you change nothing else in your diet, you're still getting the phytonutrients, chemicals, and as-yet unknown nutrients [in produce] that can help protect you from cancer, diabetes, and heart disease," says Christine Gerbstadt, MD, RD, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association.

Yet, once we start snacking on

fruits and veggies, most of us will gradually eat fewer calorie-rich goodies, says Gerbstadt, who adds that because produce helps fill you up and gives your body a boost, "you naturally eat less chips, cookies, and other foods that just don't make you feel good."

So the great news is that fruits and vegetables can give weight loss a real boost. Now the question is, how should you enjoy them: fresh or frozen, canned or dried?

"All of the above," Gerbstadt tells WebMD. Though local, seasonal produce may have a slight nutrient edge at times, "dried, canned, and frozen fruits and vegetables are usually picked just before peak ripeness and then packaged," says Gerbstadt. "So you're really getting very fresh food."

Fresh and healthy -- so long as you avoid the butter sauce or drenching of cheese, say the pros. And remember, try very hard to spend a little more and buy organic.

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Westchester County celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month with a touch of “Salsa”



County Executive Robert Astorino with Luisa Parisi



Willie Colón impressing and pleasing the crowd with his famous trombone

Westchester County, led by County Executive Robert Astorino, celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month on Friday, September 22 at the popular Rancho Grande Mexican restaurant located on Central Avenue in Yonkers. He was joined by the Westchester Hispanic Law Enforcement Association to also honor all of the Hispanic law enforcement officers and businesses in Westchester.

The following is a list of prominent individuals that attended the celebration:

- Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino
- Lisa Reyes, Anchor, News 12
- Willie Colón, Salsa musician and dancer
- Tarcisco Tovar, Owner of Deli Comercial Mexicana

- Dr. Jesus C. Jaile-Martí, Chief of the Division of Neonatology and Newborn Services, White Plains Hospital
- Priska Diaz, founder & owner BIT-TYLAB LLC
- Detective Hector Cartagena, Yonkers Police Department
- Detective Luis Muñiz, White Plains Police Department
- Jessie Ferreira-Cavallo, Hasting-on Hudson Police Officer
- Luisa Parisi, an NYU corporate manager married to Joe Parisi, publisher of the Mount Vernon Inquirer

Rancho Grande is a huge restaurant and it was overflowing with Hispanics of all ethnic backgrounds – especially Puerto Ricans. Aside from celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month, the over 300 people in attendance were also interested in being

part of a live concert with Salsa legend Willie Colón.

When introduced to the crowd, Astorino surprised the audience when he started speaking in fluent Spanish. His Spanish was truly flawless and he received a thunderous applause when he completed his speech.

When Willie Colón approached the stage, the applause was deafening. Many in attendance grew up listening and dancing to his music in the 1970s.

Colón, Bronx-born of Puerto Rican grandparents, has fused his musical talent, his passion for humanity, and his community and political activism into an extraordinary, multifaceted career.

His achievements in all his activities are widely recognized. As a musician, composer, arranger, singer, and trombonist,

as well as a producer and director, Colón still holds the all-time record for sales. He has created 40 productions that have sold more than thirty million records worldwide. His “Asalto Navideño” and his collaboration with Ruben Blades, “Siembra”, is the biggest selling album of all time for this genre.

Luisa Parisi, who is married to Joe Parisi, publisher of the Mount Vernon Inquirer, is a big fan of Willie Colón. While growing up in the Bronx in the 1970’s, she and her friends flocked to all the clubs where he frequently played. Luisa said hello to Colón and then embraced him warmly.

Colón entertained the huge crowd with his famous trombone for nearly two hours – while many danced to his music non-stop.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letter from Comptroller to Mayor Thomas

Dear Mayor Thomas:
I have been advised that you recently purchased a house at 77 Douglas Place. I would like to congratulate you on becoming a homeowner in Mount Vernon.

It has been brought to my attention that you made repairs to the sidewalks of this property using employees from the City of Mount Vernon’s Department of Public Works while they were on city time. In addition, materials used in these repairs were property of the City of Mount Vernon.

As the Chief Financial Officer of the City of Mount Vernon, I must inform you that this use of City resources for personal benefit deprives the taxpayers of Mount Vernon of services that

they have paid for. Not only does this run afoul of ethical behavior but also violates the oath you took when you assumed the office of Mayor.

At a time when hundreds of property owners in the City of Mount Vernon are pleading to have their sidewalks repaired as a result of damage from the roots of city-owned trees, you are blatantly using your office to complete personal repairs on your property at the expense of Mount Vernon taxpayers.

My office is reviewing this situation and will advise you, in the near future, of any action we will take to recover taxpayers’ money used to benefit you personally. Thank you.

Maureen Walker, CPA
Comptroller

FLASHBACK

A.B. Davis Middle School celebrates Third Annual Ladies Hat Party and Tea

Story by Deena Parham



At high noon on March 7, 2007 the A. B. Davis Middle School was transformed into a spring sanctuary to celebrate the Third Annual Ladies Hat Party and Tea. The Family and Consumer Sciences Department, with Attendance Officer Dawn Jackson, hosted the stellar ladies-only event,



in honor of Women's History Month.

Murdisia Orr, the school's principal, initiated the tea three years ago with less than a dozen students in attendance. Orr stated, "I felt the girls needed socialization, character education, and how to be young ladies, so that they would be ready as middle-schoolers to learn proper etiquette." Attendance for the event has blossomed to more than fifty students who participated throughout the course of the school's four lunch periods.

Staff participation from the Family and Consumer Sciences Department was critical to the success of the event. Mrs. Barvis, Ms. Bisordi, and Mrs. Ferrell created decorative bookmarks and arranged brilliant multi-colored tulip centerpieces for each table. The department also provided butterfly tea service settings for the event. Teachers poured tea for guests, served delicious sandwiches, and decadent desserts.

Many of the students opted to wear

straw hats and understated fedoras either with a fabric band, a small feather or a bow. Throughout the afternoon, they gathered at their respective tables and posed for numerous pictures, some with teacups in hand.

The teachers and community guests sported more extravagant, and somewhat daring millinery in bold colors, festooned with large feathers, fruits, and bows that were magnificently eye-catching. Several women had coordinated their outfits to make a strong monochromatic statement in red, purple, yellow, orange, or black. International hats also made an appearance, including a sombrero, and several made of Kente cloth.

The mood was joyously festive, and provided an opportunity for invited guests to have a small repose from their normally busy schedules. Among the many guests were Superintendent Brenda Smith, City Clerk Lisa Copeland, school trustee Dr. Rose Niles-McCrary, Arts Administra-

Continued on page 27

Mt. Vernon ready to spend \$2 million to remove tainted soil at Memorial Field



Mayor Thomas speaking during his town hall meeting at Memorial Field

Mayor Richard Thomas held a town hall meeting at Memorial Field on Sunday, September 24, and nearly 200 people sat under a large tent to hear the mayor speak. The mayor planned on addressing his proposed budget during the forum,

but he spent most of his time talking about Memorial Field, thanks to some encouraging news he received from the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Outside the tent there were about twenty children carrying protest signs demanding the return of a badly needed clean and fun-filled Memorial Field that they can use. Memorial Field was closed well before many of the young protestors were born.

The main obstacle keeping the city from moving ahead at Memorial Field is a large mound consisting of at least 12,000 cubic yards of soil and debris containing coal, ash and slag. The DEC slapped the city with a \$40,000 fine and the city agreed to clean the contamination as quickly as possible.

The city hired Middletown-based Cornerstone Environmental Group to test the soil and they reported that the material is not hazardous – composed mostly of concrete, asphalt, brick and class. The company has recommend-

ed that the soil be removed and not capped at a cost of \$2 million. Capping the mound would cost approximately \$300,000.

Thomas wants the mound removed so that in its spot the city can build a parking garage with 300 spaces and a green-landscaped roof. "We want to restore a level playing field at Memorial Field," Thomas said. "It (the soil) wasn't there in the first place. It doesn't belong."

The field partially reopened for public use this year with a gravel track and new grass on the field. On Sunday Thomas said that after the running track is improved this fall, better barriers limiting public access to the grandstand will likely be needed to keep people out of that unsafe structure until it is renovated.

The mayor said his goal is to have a proper running track at the park restored by early November, now that the city has a final report on contaminants to give to state officials.

Continued from page 26

tor Angela Adesso, and Executive Director of the Youth Bureau, Camille Banks-Lee. Numerous teachers, and staff from throughout the district, were in attendance as well.

First time attendee Elizabeth Rocha of the PTA Council, said, "It is a great idea. It is an opportunity for the students to be involved with adults and it is wonderful. It is a great way of having other parties, and it had such a wonderful turnout."

Marie Williams, the PTA Council President stated, "This is a class act, specifically for young ladies. It gives them background about tea parties, that it is not old-fashioned, but a way of life, of getting together and socializing. I was most impressed that students were involved here because they model what they see."

Brenda Crump attended with two of her daughters and said, "I am excited. This is my first time coming. Last night we

decided what to wear. This is great, because too often young girls don't have the opportunity to be girls anymore."

A student-led quintet provided musical interludes throughout the afternoon. Guests also had the opportunity to browse at a small boutique set up by Mount Vernon resident Beatrice Jackson of Bee's Creation. Jackson sold hats, jewelry, scarves and numerous accessories with a portion of the proceeds generously donated to the school's PTA fund.

Orr and the Family and Consumer Science staff left no detail to chance and provided a wonderful moment to preserve. Guests were given a day planner in the shape of a hat with a packet of green tea held together by a purple bow. The staff truly created an event that embodied Orr's words at the tea's commencement, "Please enjoy the company, and the tea."

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Thank You

Dear Mount Vernon Residents,

I would like to thank everyone who supported my run for City Council.

Although I did not win, it has been a pleasure meeting and greeting you over the past few months.

I want to assure each one of you, I will continue to be involved in Mount Vernon's future.

Please support the "Democratic" ticket in the upcoming election, November 7th, 2017 .

Warm Regards,
Clyde A. Isley

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DR. ROHIT PATEL Former Assistant Clinical Professor of Dentistry, Columbia University College of Dental Medicine; Attending Dentist, Montefiore Medical Center, NY. 30 Years in Practice.

DR. SITKI MURAT DOGUS Prosthodontist, is a Clinical Instructor, of Dentistry Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Attending Prosthodontist, Montefiore Medical Center, NY.

DR. DANIEL GREENBAUM Board Certified Prosthodontist, with advanced training in implantology and periodontology. DDS Degree from Columbia University College of Dental Medicine in NY.

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