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2013 Mount Vernon's Memorial Day Parade



Dear Neighbors,

As the Summer 2013 begins, I want to wish you a safe, healthy and fun summer. In these challenging economic times, I continue to support many free and low cost county-funded activities that benefit our community. I look forward to meeting and greeting many of you, as this season gives me the opportunity for greater personal interaction with constituents at events and to listen to your concerns. You can also get information by accessing the Board of Legislators' website - www.westchesterlegislators.com.

If you have young children or grandchildren, please take advantage of the Reading Buddies Program at the Mount Vernon Library Children's Room which begins in July. I have made county funds available for this very worthwhile program to continue. My efforts have been dedicated to bringing resources to Mount Vernon. A few of these initiatives are mentioned in this newsletter.

I plan on hosting public forums to hear your concerns about how, together, we can improve our city.

Please feel free to call my office at any time.

Sincerely,

Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Summer 2013 Newsletter

Lyndon D. Williams
District 13 ~ Mount Vernon

Federal Courts Ruled Against County Executive Astorino Handling of Federal Housing Settlement

Federal Funding to Municipalities Jeopardized and Penalties Could Follow

Two Federal courts have ruled against County Executive Rob Astorino's handling of the implementation of the federal fair housing settlement. On May 3, 2012 the federal district court ruled that the county was in "unambiguous breach" of the settlement because of the County Executive's 2010 veto of legislation passed by the Board of Legislators prohibiting discrimination based on a person's source of income. Astorino's veto allowed landlords to discriminate by denying housing to persons who received Section 8 rental vouchers, social security benefits, disability benefits, alimony or child support payments, veterans benefits, etc. Denying housing to tenants with Section 8 Vouchers is viewed as a proxy for discrimination against poor Black and Latino families.

The settlement agreement specifically calls for the County Executive to "promote" the Board's legislation banning such housing discrimination. Mr. Astorino's refusal by vetoing the bill led to a federal district court finding that he violated the consent decree agreement. The lower court's ruling was affirmed on April 2, 2013 by the Federal Appeals Court, which held that "the county violated the consent decree." It was not until the United States Attorney sent a letter to Mr. Astorino threatening to seek contempt of court sanctions against him that Astorino finally capitulated and sent legislation to the Board of Legisla-

tors. He forwarded the same Source of Income legislation passed by the Board which he vetoed in 2009. This time he must sign it or face the consequences for violating the consent decree. As of this writing, the Board passed the legislation banning discrimination and it's on Mr. Astorino's desk.

As a Westchester County Legislator, I'm saddened that it took the threat of being held in contempt of court to force this County Executive to do the right thing. This behavior would be expected in Birmingham, Alabama in the 1950s and 1960s not in Westchester County in 2013. Discrimination is harmful to anyone who is victimized by such conduct. Most public officials do not need the threat of federal sanction to take a stand against discrimination.

The veteran who placed his or her life on the line to protect us should not face housing discrimination because they receive veterans' benefits; neither should the single low-income working mother who seeks housing for her family; or the senior citizen who receives a pension or social security benefits; or the disabled person receiving disability benefits to help pay the rent.

Because of Astorino's resistance to the housing settlement, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is withholding \$7.4 Million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding from Westchester

Municipalities. The County Executive failed to submit an Analysis of Impediments to Fair & Affordable Housing that is acceptable to HUD. This document which is supposed to outline how the County plans to remedy housing discrimination is required by both CDBG and the housing settlement. The funding being withheld because of this failure is used by municipalities and not-for-profit organizations for housing and infrastructure projects in primarily low-income areas. HUD also directed Hurricane Sandy relief funds to be disbursed by the state instead of the County.

Rather than working cooperatively with HUD, Mr. Astorino engaged in a series of public misinformation and half-truths about the settlement terms that are now threatening protracted disputes and possible litigation between the County and the Federal government.

As Vice-Chairman of the Board of Legislators, I hope that the County Executive will turn away from his bellicose intransigent stance and begin to work collaboratively with the federal government to fully implement the terms of the settlement so we can move forward as a county. The settlement calls on the county to build 750 units of fair and affordable housing. Most of the money for this housing is provided by HUD. This project could be accomplished with less acrimony with cooperative leadership. ■



St. Paul Church National Historic Site Commemorates 250th Anniversary

On May 11, 2013, I attended the 250th commemoration of St. Paul's Church Historic Site in Mount Vernon. I presented David Osborn, the site director, with a proclamation recognizing the event and its historic significance. The building was originally constructed as a church, but used as a hospital during the American Revolutionary War. It was also as a court house after the war. According to David Osborn, the event was in thanksgiving to the people who had the foresight to construct a building that served the community in so many ways - as a center for religious, political, civic and educational needs for 250 years.

I am delighted to have supported funding to underwrite the cost of buses to bring every Mount Vernon Fourth grade classes to St. Paul's for an educational field trip. If you have not visited this historic site, please take some time out to do so over the summer. ■

Legislator Williams Request your Support of Home Rule

Please write letters to the Board of Legislators and County Executive supporting the passage a home rule for a state bill which would ensure that skilled trades people and trainees who need work will get a fair shot to work on construction projects in the county. This will help boost the local economy. I drafted this state legislation and had it introduced in the NYS Legislature by Assemblyman Gary Pretlow and Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson.

The legislation provides for comparison of the unemployment and poverty rates of communities around Westchester and target job creation in the construction industry to those communities with disproportionately high unemployment and poverty rates. The bill also calls for the County to encourage bidders for public works projects to establish apprenticeship and training programs in construction trades for workers residing in communities with high unemployment. ■

New Tappan Zee Bridge Forum



I have been working hard to ensure that Minority and Women Owned Businesses obtain their fair share of the jobs and contracting opportunities on the construction of the New Tappan Zee Bridge. In partnership with the African American Chamber of Commerce of Westchester and Rockland Counties, I have organized forums for minorities, women and displaced workers to meet and interact with state officials and representatives of the major contracting companies on the project, and to obtain information on how they can participate in the 10% set aside (of the five billion dollar investment to build the bridge). The last presentation was held Tuesday, April 30, 2013 in the Mount Vernon City Council Chambers. The event was attended by closed to one hundred contractors and

others who received vital information from Brian Conybeare, Special Advisor to the Governor, Terry Mc-Millan, Director of Public Infrastructure Projects, Janet Torres, Senior Policy Analyst in the Governor's Office, Aimee Vargas, Director of the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council, Carla Julian, Community Outreach Diversity Manager and Chris Woods, DBE Liaison, both from Tappan Zee Constructors. Follow up sessions are planned to assist those who wish to become certified as a DBE, which is mandatory to participate in the construction of the bridge and provide any needed support for DBE's. Information about the bridge and how to participate in its economic opportunities can be obtained from the website: www.tappanzeeconstrutors.com. ■

Legislator Williams Continues to Provide Support for Youth Programs

Thousands of Mount Vernon Youths have benefited from funds provided through my office for educational, recreational and cultural programs. These programs prepare our young people to become productive citizens, keep them off the streets and away from negative influences. Y-COP, an afterschool and summer program based at Lincoln Avenue Methodist Church, provides opportunities for about 100 students. Mount Vernon Boys and Girls Club provides afterschool programs such as

tutoring and homework help, along with supervised recreational and sports activities. The Club also runs a summer camp which offers educational, character, health and life skills, Arts, Technology and recreation programs and weekly field trips. The City of Mount Vernon Youth Bureau, under the direction of Damia Harris, provides a myriad of programs for students. A few of these programs are GEMS (Girls Embracing Maturity) - a mentoring program for young women attending both

A.B. Davis and Nelson Mandela/Dr. Zollifcoffer high schools; Safe Haven After-School Program, at Graham and Longfellow Elementary Schools serves close to 100 students in giving them skills to meet or exceed the standards for academic performance and demonstrate knowledge and skills required for lifelong learning and self-sufficiency; a very successful youth employment program, both in the Fall and for Summer jobs. I encourage you to enroll your children in these programs. ■

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

68th Annual Senior Programs Luncheon

On Monday, May 20, 2013, at the 68th Annual Senior Programs Luncheon held at the Armory, 23 Mount Vernon Seniors were presented with certificates honoring them for having attained the age of 90 years or more.

2013 Mount Vernon Youth Bureau College Summit

Legislator Lyndon Williams was a presenter at the 2013 Mount Vernon Youth Bureau College Summit held on April 20, 2013 at MVHS. The program, attended by more than 300 students, included college and career exploration, job readiness, life and independent skills training that emphasized STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

Mount Vernon Westchester Arts Initiative ►

The Mount Vernon Westchester Arts Initiative Grantees were honored at a reception held on Wednesday, April 3, 2013. The grantees who provide community-wide cultural experiences throughout the year, are Artist-In-You, Mount Vernon Gospel Knights, Mount Vernon Children's Theatre Co., Mount Vernon Jewish Community Council, O'Bey Foundation, PJS Jazz Society, Freedom School/UJAMAA CDC, and Westchester Performing Ensemble.



Legends Concert of the Presbyterian Jazz Society

At the Legends Concert of the Presbyterian Jazz Society on April 14, 2013, I presented famed Jazz pianist and educator Dr. Valerie Capers with a proclamation which noted the challenges she overcame to become the first blind graduate of the Julliard School of Music, where she received both her bachelors and masters degrees, and then went on to teach and perform around the world.



◀ 2013 Jandon Scholarship Award

Five Mount Vernon high school graduates received the Jandon Scholarship Award of \$10,000.00 each. The scholarship is given out over four years along with continuing support from the foundation to help the students succeed. They also receive a laptop. The 2013 awardees are: Dionedra Davidson, Hadia Edwards and Chevaun Samuels, all of Mount Vernon High School; Mayra Alvarez and Daniel Mathew both of Nellie A. Thornton High School.