



Westchester County Legislator  
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Dear Neighbor,

I wish you and your family a very healthy and prosperous New Year. Thank you for your continued encouragement and support of my work to provide access to county resources to improve your quality of life. You can always count on me to represent your best interest with integrity, intelligence, and an uncompromising dedication on the Westchester County Board of Legislators.

This Newsletter outlines a few of the accomplishments and challenges since my last publication. I have focused particular attention on the 2013 Westchester County Budget and its impact on Mount Vernon.

*Lyndon D. Williams*

## Economic Development

The African-American Chamber of Commerce is the catalyst for promoting Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) in the lower Hudson Valley. I have partnered with the Chamber to ensure that Mount Vernon based businesses receive an opportunity to participate in the construction and economic activity of the \$5 billion New Tappan Zee Bridge Project. This Project is one of the largest public works projects in the nation. It will generate thousands of jobs and significant economic activity in this area. Over \$400 million worth of work is expected to be awarded to MWBEs and other Disadvantaged Businesses. Funding secured through my office over several years has well positioned the Chamber and other not-for-profit organizations to assist local MWBEs with education, training, mentorships, and contract opportunities. ■



# Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

*Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years*

Winter 2013 Newsletter



**Lyndon D. Williams**

District 13 ~ Mount Vernon



## Supporting Programs for Our Youth

Successfully combating the challenges facing our young people today requires investment in quality education as well as focused decision-making, enhanced skills and self-esteem programs. As your Legislator, I've supported funding such youth programs. Here are a few:

*Girls Embracing Maturity (GEMS)* – this program uses strategies and techniques to address risk factors impacting girls ages 10-21 in Mount Vernon. The program targets violence, gang involvement, bullying, lack of supervision when out of school, risky behaviors, unemployment and lack of job/college readiness skills.

*Summer Jobs Basketball Programs* – a summer jobs and travel camp that incorporates basketball as a tool for building self-esteem, positive roles models, and positive relationship among young men.

*Safe Haven, Step-Up! and Youth Empowerment* – three youth development and juvenile delinquency programs serving almost 200 young people ages 7-21 through academic enrichment; counseling; social, recreational and violence

prevention activities; employment readiness training; and job placement during after-school and summer hours for at-risk youth; positive youth development; training and mentoring, and creating a better relationship between police and the at-risk male population; leadership training, public speaking, and interactive skills for youth. Also, comprehensive job readiness programs for court supervised young people.

*Mount Vernon Boys & Girls Club* – these after-school and summer programs provide tutorial assistance for children from more than 60 families; summer program with field trips in a positive learning environment.

*Youth Community Outreach Program (YCOP)* - summer camp program.

*Summer Reading Buddies Program and Community Partners* – a weekly reading program at the Children's Room of the Mount

Vernon Public Library that pairs Senior Citizens with young children to help the children become better readers. The program builds children's confidence through one-on-one help. It is rewarding for both the Seniors Citizens and the children.

*All Island Association Tutorial Program* - assists high-school and middle-school students with tutorial and test-taking skills.

*The Jandon Scholars Program* – a scholarship program funded by the Jandon Foundation annually awards 15 college scholarships to academic achievers. ■



## Westchester Community College Mount Vernon Campus

Westchester Community College is one of the largest educational institutions reflecting the cultural and economic diversity of this county. I am a strong supporter and advocate for the college and championed legislation for capital improvements on the main and satellite campuses. For several years, the Mount Vernon satellite campus located at 175 Gramatan Avenue offered a host of classes in Business, Marketing, Foods and Nutrition, Mathematics, English, Reading and Study Skills, etc. The campus also offers educational and training opportunities such as review classes for the nurses' entrance examinations; on-site academic support centers where students can build academic skills and obtain tutoring with writing, reading, ESL, math, Spanish, etc. In October 2012, we approved a new 10-year lease to relocate the Gramatan Avenue campus to a larger building located at 15 South Fifth Avenue (the old telephone company building). This new facility will revitalize downtown Mount Vernon and provide a state-of-the-art building with cutting-edge technology, modern larger classroom space, labs, advertisement facilities, conference rooms and a host of other amenities including \$2.3 million of renovations and improvements. Adequate parking is available in two municipal parking lots. ■

## The 2013 Westchester County Budget

Perhaps for the first time in Westchester County's history, the county is operating under a budget that did not follow procedures in the County Charter for passing a budget. County Executive Rob Astorino, seven Republican Legislators and two Democrats (Virginia Perez of Yonkers and Michael Kaplowitz of Yorktown) orchestrated a fiasco to disrupt the legislature's budget process in December. Astorino and the Republican led effort approved a document that eliminated funding for child care subsidies to low income working families, community health centers, programs for at-risk youth, senior citizens nutrition programs, immigrant services, soup kitchens and food for the poor and homeless, and several other safety-net services that disproportionately harm poor and working class Westchester residents, particularly those in Mount Vernon. The budget cuts were not made to reduce Westchester County taxes because the Board of Legislators passed budgets the last two years with zero tax increases without eliminating vital safety-net services. Mr. Astorino balanced the budget on the backs of the poor and working class by cutting services while using almost \$6 million of taxpayers' money for political patronage jobs. His budget also lay off experienced county employees and replaced them with inexperienced unqualified political appointees. The validity of Astorino's budget is now before the courts. **However, here are some of the highlights:**



### Child Care Subsidies

Before Rob Astorino took office, the County provided child care subsidies for low-income working families. Most of the families are single working mothers. The subsidy allows a working mother to place her infant or toddler in a safe regulated day care center while she goes off to work. Without the subsidy many young mothers would either have to quit their jobs and go on welfare, or place their babies with inexpensive but potentially unsafe babysitters. Further, statistics show that early childhood education is important to a child's success in school both academically and emotionally. Since taking office, Mr. Astorino targeted child care subsidy for children in low-income families for severe budget cuts. My colleagues and I, as well as the courts, have prevented him from eliminating funding for this program. We

fought to keep the subsidy where the parent's share is 20% of the cost because low-income working mothers cannot afford to pay more. The County subsidizes many activities including golfers who play at county-owned golf courses. Mr. Astorino is adamantly against cutting the subsidy to golfers but he insists on getting rid of subsidies for young children. The child care subsidy affects many Mount Vernon working mothers and families. It also affects all Mount Vernon day care centers like the Mount Vernon Day Care Center. Astorino's budget demands that a working mother pay \$70 more per week, if she wants to keep her baby in a safe day care. But, he rejected the Democratic members of the Legislature request for golfers to pay just \$5 more. I will continue to fight to preserve child care subsidies. ■

### Community Health Centers

Before Rob Astorino took office, the County provided matching funds to community health centers like the Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center. Because of the County's match, the health centers received money from New York State. Without the match, the health centers lose the state funding. The health centers provide care for uninsured working class families. Since taking office, Mr. Astorino targeted community health centers' funding for

elimination. My colleagues and I, prevented him from doing so. We fought to continue funding health centers so that residents can receive vital healthcare services. Astorino eliminated all funding to community health centers in 2013 budget. These health centers provide affordable health care to low-income working families. Most of the patients are Black and Latino families who do not have employer-based health coverage. Many of the health center patients are employed in landscaping, housecleaning, house painting or by restaurants, dry-cleaners,

and other low-wage jobs. The County is mandated by law to provide public-health services to the poor include screening, treating and preventing the spread of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases and influenza. Prior County Executives recognized that paying health centers to deliver mandated public-health services to the uninsured made sense because it cost less money. Astorino would have the county abandon any responsibility for providing health services to the poor and uninsured. ■

### Here are some other Mount Vernon Programs that have been targeted by Astorino's Budget for elimination:

- Programs Benefiting Children and At-Risk Youth such as Safe Haven after school program; Youth Empowerment Program, Step Up program; Mount Vernon Boys and Girls Club; Mount Vernon Summer Jobs Program; Youth Community Outreach Program; All Island's Association Tutorial Program; Children's Reading Program at Mount Vernon Library; Mount Vernon Day Care; Collin Allen Day Care; Vernon Heights Day Care.
- Programs for Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention such as Mount Vernon United Tenants; Foreclosure Prevention; Eviction Prevention Services; Community Capital Resources
- Programs to Feed the Homeless such as Sacred Heart Soup Kitchen, Food Bank, and Food for the Homeless
- Disabled Persons: Services for the Developmentally Disabled
- Senior Citizens: Senior Citizens Nutrition Programs; Elder Abuse Programs
- Women: Domestic violence prevention programs, Prevention of Human Trafficking
- Immigrant Legal Services
- Arts and Culture programs – Arts-on-Third, Presbyterian Jazz Society, Summer Breeze Concerts