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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Winter 2016 Newsletter

Lyndon D. Williams

District 13 ~ Mount Vernon

WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE



One of the best kept secrets in Mount Vernon is Westchester Community College. A few years ago, the County Legislature approved the renovations of the new location of the Mount Vernon satellite campus on South Fifth Avenue. I supported the legislation in the hope that Mount Vernon Residents would take advantage of the training and educational programs offered at this campus. Many skills development and training programs prepare participants for new opportunities in the workforce. In January, High School Equivalency classes will be offered. OPEN HOUSE at the campus – 17 South Fifth Avenue, Mount Vernon (5:30pm – 7:30pm) on January 10, 2017. To register or for information on any of the many programs offered at WCC Mount Vernon Extension, call (914) 606-7600 or visit the website: <http://www.sunywcc.edu/locations/mountvernon/>.

Dear Neighbor,
Wishing you a Joyous Holiday Season and a New Year filled with Peace and Happiness.

I would like to share information with you on a few of the programs that I support for our community through Westchester County. This newsletter only covers a limited number of my legislative activities because space does not permit greater coverage. If you do not receive by periodic electronic news, please send me your name and email address to Williams@westchesterlegislators.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Lyndon D. Williams

MEMORIAL FIELD UPDATE

So many unanswered questions. Unfortunately, since my last newsletter, the conditions at Memorial Field have worsened. There was illegal dumping of contaminated construction debris on the field in the spring and summer of 2015. No one was held accountable for this crime. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation found that the mounds of dirt trucked into Memorial Field contained hazardous substances. Investigations are continuing by law enforcement agencies but it's unclear where they will end up.



The 4,000 seat state-of-the-art sports and recreational facility (below) costing \$12.7 million dollars was approved by the Westchester County Board of Legislators in 2009. Demolition work began in 2011. Who could have thought this 18-month long project would be incomplete 5 years later? The city's administration unilateral decision to change the plans brought the project to a halt; the \$3.2 million advanced by the county to the city to pay for design, demolition, preparing and clearing of the field was wasted. We must now find a way forward.

As Mount Vernon's County Legislator, I will protect the remaining \$6.5 million in county funds earmarked for Memorial Field. The City recently received a \$520 thousand grant from the state for Memorial Field. There is now \$7.0 million available plus the city sold over \$2.0 million in bonds back in 2011 for the field – that's \$9.0 million. Although the County contributes most of the money, I have no legal authority over how or when the project is completed. I have offered my assistant to city officials on a plan. We need to come together in unity to complete this project for Mount Vernon. Here are a few initial suggestions for moving forward:

- The city should enforce its contract with the contractor for the demolition and clearing of the stadium debris;
- The city should fully cooperate with law enforcement authorities to hold the perpetrators responsible for illegal dumping;
- The city should get DEC's approval of a remediation plan for removal of contaminated debris and use non-contaminated demolition materials as foundation for the new stadium;
- The original state-of-the-art design should be modified to fit within the footprint of the existing facility. Do not start over from scratch again.
- Hire a professional consultant to oversee the work (without undue interference). Obtain professional cost estimates and realistic timelines for completion.

Programs for Mount Vernon Youth

I believe that we must invest in youth programs that will keep our young people engaged in positive activities. For that reason, I have supported countywide youth programs and opportunities for summer jobs at Rye Playland, Wilson Woods and other county-wide employers. I have supported several programs for Mount Vernon youth including the following:

MOUNT VERNON YOUTH BUREAU – STEAM PROGRAM

Saturday STEAM Academy is a free and fun weekend series of hands and minds-on activities grounded in architecture and engineering. The academy is designed to sharpen kids' critical thinking skills, enhance problem-solving abilities and spur their creativity. Participants will build an entire model village, design space colonies, and build a puppet theater. Each year I secure funding for youth programs in Mount Vernon.

MV YOUTH BUREAU – STEP UP! PROGRAM



This program focuses on the city's most at-risk young men between the ages 13-19 through mentoring, developing youth leadership skills, job readiness training and public speaking skills. The youth involved in this program are placed in after-school employment as an alternative to unsupervised activities. They are taken on educational field trips and other fun and cultural outings. This program involves a collaborative effort and resources from

Westchester County Board of Legislators, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the City of Mount Vernon and its Youth Bureau and Police Department, and the City's School District.

SAFE HAVEN

It is such a great comfort to know your children are safe when you are not able to be with them. The Mount Vernon Youth Bureau **Safe Haven After School Program at Rebecca Turner Elementary School** provides a safe place for children to do their homework and participate in stimulating activities to keep them occupied until their parents arrive. The children in the Safe Haven After School program have a quiet-peaceful place for their homework with the assistance of dedicated and qualified staff. Here is a quote from a parent "My child is with staff and teachers they are familiar with and that I trust." This program provides convenience and peace of mind for many working parents knowing their children are safe while getting valuable help with their homework.

MOUNT VERNON BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

These programs are very important for keeping our young people off the streets and engaged in positive and productive activities. The Boys & Girls Club provides a safe, enjoyable, and educational place for children to spend their time after school. The After School Programs provide homework help, a healthy snack, daily physical activity, as well as, mentoring and guidance to children ages 6 - 13. The Power-Hour program helps young people achieve academic success by providing homework help, tutoring and high-yield learning activities, and by encouraging youth to become self-directed learners.

Other after School activities include *Passport to Manhood; Smart Girls; Smart Moves; Project Learn; Robotics; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM); Social Recreation; Physical Activity; Game Room; Basketball; Soccer; Computers Skills; Karate; Jr. Golf; and Film Club*. Special Programs include *Volleyball, Developmental Basketball, Cheerleading, and Dance*. Before I was elected as County Legislator, I served on the Board of Directors of the Boys & Girls Club for 12 years. The Club has an active Board of dedicated individuals who care about young people. I encourage parents and residents to volunteer at the Club and other community-based organizations as a means of giving back to the community. Contact the Boys & Girls Club at 914-668-9580 or Email: info@bgcmvy.org.

READING IS FUNDAMENTAL!



I'm proud to support funding for children's reading program at the Mount Vernon Public Library. Building a generation of lifetime readers is a worthy endeavor. The program provides a solid foundation for children's learning and academic success. ■



Legislator Williams Secures Funding for the Arts

Legislator Williams established the Mount Vernon Arts Initiatives through ArtsWestchester. The program provides funding for local arts programs such as: * *Summer Breeze Concert Series*; * *Arts on Third*; * *Public Art at the Mount Vernon Public Library*; * *Obey Foundation- YouthArts workshop in local high schools and AC-BAW Center*; * *Revelators-Dance Workshop*; * *Summer 2016 "Heavy D Day"*; * *Public Art at Mount Vernon Public Library "Seeing the Wind"* and the * *PJS Jazz Society*. ■

ARTSW
ARTSWESTCHESTER

PJS Jazz Society

The PJS Jazz Society – Westchester County's premier jazz organization – has been presenting first-rate jazz in Mount Vernon for over 36 years, every Second Sunday from September to April at the First Presbyterian Church on Lincoln Avenue (at the corner of Columbus). The mission of the organization is to make great Jazz, America's cultural gift to the world, affordable to the community. PJS collaborates with Jazzmobile director Robin Bell Stevens, the well-known NYC jazz concert producer, to book A-list artists who are legends or rising stars in the jazz world.

A further goal of the organization is to introduce young people to jazz and help them develop a love for this great music. For several years now most PJS concerts have opened with a set by young jazz musicians who are mostly drawn from the Manhattan School of Music in NYC or the Lagond Music School in Elmsford, NY. A new initiative with the Chester Hill Park Neighborhood Association (CHPNA) will bring teachers and students from the Mount Vernon Public Schools to hear great jazz at a PJS concert – and hopefully be inspired to play and listen to "America's classical music" throughout their lives. This year's line-up of PJS



concerts has already featured: **Houston Person** - the great "boss tenor" sax player; **Larry Ridley** - jazz bassist who played with Thelonious Monk and many others; **Louis Hayes** - jazz drummer who worked with Horace Silver and McCoy Tyner and many others; and **Allan Harris** - who has won many awards as "outstanding jazz vocalist" in recent years.

The remaining concerts of this season are: **Jan. 8, Steve Kroon**, who has recorded with much of the "Who's Who" in the recording business such as Ron Carter, Roberta Flack, Aretha

Franklin, and Diana Krall, with his Latin Jazz Sextet; **Feb. 12, Antonio Hart**, alto sax who has played with Roy Hargrove, Jimmy Heath, and Art Blakey and is a Full Professor at Queens College; **Mar. 12, Jazzmeia Horn**, winner of the 2015 Thelonious Monk International Vocal Jazz Competition; and **Apr. 9, Bobby Sanabria**, heir to the throne of Latin jazz drummer Tito Puente, with his Multiverse Latin Jazz Septet. Please attend these great performances right here in Mount Vernon. Contact PJS Jazz Society at www.pjsjazz.org. ■