



Montclair, let's widen our circle of inclusion

By Joan Hocky

For Montclair Local

Recently my son and I attended a sensory-friendly program as part of Autism Awareness month at Van Vleck house, an architectural and environmental gem.

Volunteers patiently and nonjudgmentally helped our kids plant seeds, do crafts, look at animals. As we were leaving I thanked the volunteer who had welcomed us. "It's so nice to have an event like this in town." "Oh, yes," she responded, "there are so many resources for you now!" I restrained myself from saying what I really was thinking — "Are you kidding me? There are so few resources for kids like mine with more severe autism."

The public face of autism is usually someone on the mild end of the spectrum, and disability policy and community programming focus disproportionately on that segment. Montclair prides itself on its wonderful cultural and recreational resources, with a self-image of diversity and inclusion. But for those on the more complex or severe end of the autism spectrum, inclusion entails more than inspiring rhetoric or good intentions. It requires adaptations to address sensory disorders or other co-morbid conditions, other supports like aides, and more acceptance by community members.

Research shows that autistic symptoms and disruptive behavior play the largest role in how often a child is rejected by others. The greater number of those behaviors, the more isolated and excluded the family feels. The isolation and rejection experienced by people with autism and their families is similar to that experienced by others whose differences set them apart, but autism's combination of pervasive disability and apparent physical normality create an almost perfect storm for intensified stigma. I know this firsthand. I spent many hours with my energetic younger son (now 16 and towering over me) at parks and playgrounds where he "presented" as an athletic, well-coordinated, typical child, only to display a range of behaviors — from severe impulse control, difficulty waiting in line, unintentionally violating other people's personal space, and expressing his excitement by skipping, jumping and making odd sounds — that made other children uncomfortable and other parents judgmental.

It's hard to describe just how demoralizing it is to care for a child who needs constant supervision, intervention and help navigating the world — in itself exhausting and isolating — only to face regular reproach and rejection. Or to be told that a drumming class or affordable recreation program is open to people with special needs only to find out that your family member is too special because of the need for supervision or modifications.

Social isolation has a greater impact on lifespan than smoking, drinking and obesity combined. No one wants to feel isolated. Every parent of a child with special needs would like nothing more than to feel part of the community, especially one as dynamic as ours. We wish we didn't have to travel so far to feel welcome and accommodated. We take my son to West Orange for recreational activities, Livingston and Millburn for religious programs, Denville for school and afterschool as well as social skills classes and haircuts, Nutley for music, and New York City for theater and other performances. Montclair offers all of these services for neurotypical kids or those with mild disabilities, yet not for moderately-severely impacted kids or adults. We are taxpaying residents — why do we have to expend so much time and expense schlepping all over the region for what could easily be provided locally?

Ed Roberts, the father of the modern disability rights movement, fought to become the first student with severe disabilities to attend Berkeley in the 1960s (he became a quadriplegic at age 14 as the result of polio), modeled his activism after the civil rights movement. He was a radical in the best sense, thinking outside the box that others had created to constrain him. His motto, which the movement retains to this day, is “Nihil de nobis sine nobis” ... nothing about us without us!

There's much we can do as a community to increase inclusion and understanding. Having more diverse voices at the table is a good way to start, with a racially and economically diverse mix of both self-advocates — people with disabilities able to advocate for themselves — and family members of those with more severe disabilities involved in leadership or planning positions at local organizations and municipal offices.

There are so many ways we could be more inclusive; I hear them all the time from my fellow seekers of solace:

Could the annual Easter egg hunt start an hour early for those with sensory disorders who cannot tolerate loud noise and big crowds?

Could our public pools, which have evening sessions for seniors, do the same for individuals with special needs who are overwhelmed by the typical bustle in the water?

Could our movie theaters offer monthly sensory-friendly films, a service that is popular in other towns? Could we replicate an effective multi-sector model implemented in other towns that brings together business owners, nonprofit and community leaders and those with disabilities to find ways to increase job training and employment opportunities?

How about bi-lingual signage at playgrounds, pools and community centers that explains in simple language accessible to kids and adults alike, the symptoms of autism, links to screening resources, and ways to be more accepting. (“Stop staring” and “Remember that not every disability is a visible one” are two suggestions

I hear often.)

I'm sure we could make positive changes so that everyone in this town, whatever their attributes and challenges, could truly be part of the fabric of Montclair.

Joan Hocky is a writer, an advocate for racial and economic equity, and a 2016-17 participant in the Partners in Policymaking program at the Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities (part of the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at Rutgers). To help make Montclair a more inclusive town, email barnonemontclair@gmail.com.



Letters to the editor, May 18



Frelinghuysen far from a moderate

I'm writing this in response to a charge that Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen made last month in a fundraising letter. He claimed that "Liberal, Bernie Sanders-style activists have put me on their hit list" and "They're organizing a Super-PAC against me, and lying about my record."

The fact is that since the new Congress was seated on Jan. 3, Rodney has voted for the Trump agenda 100 percent of the time. It's very difficult for anyone to lie about or distort that figure; the votes are a matter of public record. Also on the record are his approval ratings from the NRA (2000: 23 percent; 2016: 64 percent) and NARAL (1998: 100 percent; 2015: 15 percent). The trends are rather consistent.

The image that the congressman attempts to cultivate for himself is that of good old Rodney, moderate Republican, pro-business, pro-choice, anti-regulations, etc. His voting record however doesn't say moderate Republican, it says Tea Party. Look at what he does, not what he says. The only person trying to distort Rodney's record is Rodney.

Jim Price

Montclair

Resist?

Lord, if comments like this had been made after the 2008 presidential election those making them would have been attacked, demonized and demoralized by the liberal media on a scale never seen before.

This hypocrisy and fascist mentality is appalling. You can't have another opinion without being homophobic, misogynist or racist. How few are stepping back and assessing the madness of the "resist movement" is unfortunate.

Is this what happens when your candidate loses an election? We don't have to recognize the process nor the elected?

I didn't support Barack Obama because of his flawed policies but he was still my president. I have the right to protest and express my differences in America. I can respectfully disagree. But tragically, in this day, anyone who doesn't submit to the leftist prospective are denigrated, ostracized and vilified.

I resist dismembering an innocent child in the womb and selling her or his body parts. I resist the pimping of our children by an education cabal that continually produces failing schools and failed generations of children. And then they ask for more money!?! I resist policies that would impose questionable sexuality upon my vulnerable grandchildren, confuse them mentally and put them in danger in the bathroom.

I resist those who refuse to have honest debate and who lie about the data that would expose their self-aggrandizing agendas. I resist those who use race to further their political ambitions and who profit from racial tensions. I resist those who would create strife to be relevant.

But I will not resist lower unemployment, better job creation and the freedom to discuss American politics from the pulpit or inner-city restorations led by an African-American who was raised in public housing.

The Rev. Clenard H. Childress Jr.

Montclair

Rev. Childress is senior pastor at The New Calvary Baptist Church.

Don't infringe on religious freedom

At a time when, due to a fluke of Electoral College math, our country has elected a president who openly disdains the First Amendment, we must be especially vigilant about attacks on our freedoms.

Glenfield Middle School clearly violated the First Amendment rights of its students and families when it invited

a Christian group to proselytize to students under the guise of sexual education. No amount of administrative double-talk about “points of view” can change that fact.

I commend School Board members Joe Kavesh and Eve Robinson and the vigilant parents who spoke out against this misguided and unconstitutional infringement on students’ religious freedom.

Jonathan Greenberg

Montclair

Organic garden tour this Saturday

The Cornucopia Network of NJ will sponsor an organic vegetable garden tour this Saturday, May 20.

Nick DiMinni at 11 Bruce Road has a European-inspired vegetable and herb garden with a grapevine-covered pergola and a Zen garden with many perennials. It will be open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Ray Hoffman at 174 Valley Road, across from Chestnut Street, will open his garden from 2 to 4:30. His back yard has a sunny plot of tiered vegetable beds and several other areas with herbs and shade-loving perennials.

The Pine Street Community Garden at 73 Pine St., will be open from noon to 6. In the driveway shopping bags and sidewalk planting boxes show how to grow in very tight areas.

Alan Smith’s front-yard garden at 148 Forest St. will be open for a self-guided tour from 9 to 5. Many plants are volunteers, but he buys tomato plants.

Montclair Community Pre-K Garden Project, 49 Orange Road, offers a self-guided tour all day on weekends. Parking is permitted along the driveway to the right of the Board of Education Building, 22 Valley Road.

I will open my garden at 56 Gordonhurst Ave. from 9 to 11 a.m. both days. I raise almost all my family’s vegetables year round with no poisons, power machinery, or commercial fertilizers.

Luis Vieira, at 94 Evergreen Ave., Bloomfield, will open his garden from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. He started his garden four years ago. It includes collard greens, Swiss chard, and arugula, all of which survived the winter last year.

The Pulaski Park Community Garden at the corner of Mt. Vernon and Howard (east of Broughton, north of Bay) in Bloomfield will be open from 9:30 to 11. Its 21 4- by 8-foot plots have been fully rented for its third season.

Oak View Elementary School’s “Giving Garden” at 150 Garrabrant Ave., Bloomfield, will be open 9:30 to noon. It is at the back of the school next to the teachers’ parking lot.

Pat Kenschaft



Afghan girls educational nonprofit in Montclair this weekend



Three Afghan women who received assistance from the Afghan Girls Financial Assistance Fund attend a retreat at Drew University last fall. Courtesy Sarah Stacke

Educate girls, save the world

By CANDY J. COOPER
For Montclair Local

I can't decide where this story begins, though I know that I came to it in the middle and along the margins. Does it start in 1998, when a spirited 9-year-old girl, Shamila Kohestani, skips off to the market in Kabul, Afghanistan, only to have a Taliban soldier grab her and beat her with a stick because her ankles are bare? Or does it start with Shamila kicking a soccer ball around her small Kabul courtyard, burning with anger and ambition while on virtual lockdown under the Taliban?

Maybe it begins 10 years later at the verdant Blair Academy in Blairstown, New Jersey, where Shamila — at first barely fluent in English, and five years of schooling behind her peers — earns her diploma. Or it starts with her classmate, Alex Motiuk, who is struck by the injustice of his relatively bright future as compared with Shamila's possibly dead-ended one. He shares his upset with his father, Leo, a Morristown lawyer, who is pleased to see his son show an interest in something beyond computer games and trips to the mall.

The elder Motiuk calls a friend, who in turn calls a friend, who is a trustee at Drew University, who then emails the president, Robert Weisbuch. Could Drew possibly sponsor Shamila Kohestani over four years? "I think this sounds promising," the president responds, adding that he is out of town, attending his wife's graduation from a master's degree program. Maybe this story starts soon after, when the Drew president says yes, that he will pay for tuition as well as room and board. But I am biased, because that is my husband, and that, incidentally, was my graduation.

In any case the story keeps writing itself, because Shamila graduates from Drew while Motiuk starts up a fund to bring other Afghan women to the U.S. to go to college. Bob helps place students at Skidmore and Goucher. Over the next nine years, Motiuk and his friends succeed in placing 39 Afghan students, mostly women, in U.S. colleges and universities, including Yale, Rutgers, Smith, Mt. Holyoke, Lafayette, Connecticut College, Oberlin and more. Fifteen of the 39 are in school now and another 21 have graduated, an amazing record of completion.

The goal in every case is to support the higher education of Afghan women who are committed to using their education to bring about social change and gender equality when they return to Afghanistan, which has in more than one survey been ranked the most dangerous country in the world for women. One student, Sajia Darwish, a junior at Mt. Holyoke, returned to Kabul last summer to build a library at her old high school, which hundreds of students and teachers now visit daily. Sajia wants to renew the lost reading culture of Afghanistan.

To go to the annual dinner for the Afghan Girls Financial Assistance Fund is to be wowed and inspired. The young women are extraordinarily self-possessed though most also have gone through one or another kind of hell. Yet their optimism is undamaged. At the dinners, Shamila Kohestani, now 27, calls herself the "grandma," since she was the first and is now the oldest.

Motiuk and his friends are inspiring as well, for they have no other motive than to help. And they could use some. That is why they are holding two events in Montclair this weekend, one on Friday at 6:30 p.m. at the Montclair Public Library, where they will tell the story of the fund. They will describe the creation of Sajia's library, called Baale Parwaz, translated as "Wings to Fly." And, with the support of Watchung Booksellers, they will be joined by Jeffrey Stern, author of "The Last Thousand," about the Kabul high school from which many of the Afghan girls graduated.

A similar session will take place Saturday at 3 p.m. at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, at 73 South Fullerton Ave. Attendees are asked to bring a nonperishable food contribution to Toni's Kitchen, also a supporter.

Why help Afghan girls when so many American kids also need the support? In our house we say: Do both.

Candy J. Cooper is a journalist and author living in Montclair.



Town Square: 5/11/17

By Candy Cooper

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Letters to the editor, May 11



Stamp Out Hunger food drive this Saturday

I would like to remind all Montclair residents that Saturday, May 13, is the annual National Association of Letter Carriers Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive. All donations will be going to the Human Needs Food Pantry on Label Street, with assistance for Toni's Kitchen. All residents have to do is leave a bag of unexpired nonperishable goods at or in their mailbox and a carrier will pick it up. This is a great time to restock the pantry shelves before the winter months are upon us. As a letter carrier in this town for 20 years I look forward to this day and the opportunity to give back to the community. I am looking forward to working together with the community and making this a successful food drive.

Paul Cooke

Butler

The importance of strong sex education

I am a sexuality educator and author who has lived in Montclair for over 26 years, spending much of that time advocating for comprehensive sexuality education in our schools. In the 1990s, I was part of an advisory board that developed a new curriculum, which to my knowledge was never implemented. Over the years, I visited just about every elementary school and all three middle schools, talking about puberty and sexuality, and even ran evening programs for parents through the central office.

A number of years ago, I got tired of this piecemeal approach and tired of fighting. Now, I just continue to visit the fourth- and fifth-graders at the Charles H. Bullock school every year, as I have for the past 15 years, starting when my children attended the Rand School. But having a guest speaker come once a year to discuss puberty is not sound educational practice. Sexual health needs to be integrated throughout the curriculum. I have a great suggestion too. "Rights, Respect, Responsibility" is a newly published, comprehensive K-12 sexuality curriculum that meets the National Sexuality Education Standards, is inclusive of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and takes a positive approach to sexual health. I know the curriculum well because I am a co-author along with two other sexuality education professionals, one of whom, Dr. Elizabeth Schroeder, is also a Montclair parent. I am very proud of what we have created and would be thrilled if Montclair chose to adapt it even in part.

To be clear, I have no financial stake in 3Rs, as it is known, because it is available for free, to anyone who wants to use it. Advocates for Youth, the publisher, wants to make sure that high quality sexuality education resources are fully accessible to all school districts that want them. 3Rs is available on their website advocatesforyouth.org/3Rs-curriculum. I urge people to take a few minutes to check it out. And whether Montclair ends up using this or some other program, we can no longer continue to kick this can down the road. Our children's emotional, physical and social wellbeing, not to mention academic success, are at stake.

Eva S. Goldfarb, Ph.D.

Montclair

Outsource garbage, recycling pickup to save money

So Mayor Robert Jackson and Councilwoman Renée Baskerville are unhappy at the pace in which another supermarket may ultimately take up residence at the former Pathmark site, with the mayor lamenting how the Pathmark was a “disgrace to Montclair and the community the past five years” per last week’s article in Montclair Local.

Here’s what I find disgraceful: that this mayor and council refuse to outsource our garbage/recycling pickup and continue to waste taxpayer money despite the fact that 95 percent of communities have gone this route to achieve cost savings with the same level of service provided. Further, with the trucks running during recycling drop-off days (Wednesday/Friday/Saturday), one wonders how much carbon pollution we are adding to the atmosphere on a weekly basis? Gray Russell, feel free to comment...

I envision, once the services are outsourced, having three large dumpsters take the place of idling trucks. These would be clearly marked “Cardboard/Mixed Paper/Commingled” so the residents can drop off as some of us currently do if we miss a pick-up. The vendor can then pick up the contents once a week at 219 North Fullerton Ave. with trucks that have the forklift prongs on each side, easily lifting/emptying the dumpsters.

It likely will never happen because this mayor/council are happy with the status quo and with the overburdened taxpayers continuing to pay the salaries, benefits, and pensions of town workers along with fuel and upkeep of the recycling trucks. It’s pure madness. One more thing I find disgraceful: with all the new luxury apartment developments that have gone up in the past few years that have added thousands of dollars of additional tax revenue to the rolls, not one cent has been returned to the taxpayers. It proves the point that at any level of government, the more money they have, the more they spend. I really wish Montclair residents would not pay their quarterly property tax payments that are due this week as maybe then we would grab the attention of our mayor/council and drive home to them how pissed off we are at the continual waste of our tax dollars on antiquated methods/processes. Wake up, mayor/council!

Ron Locascio

Montclair

Kudos to Montclair High SVPA’s ‘A Chorus Line’

My husband and I had a Broadway-in-Montclair treat last night at George Inness School, where the SVPA put on “A Chorus Line.” It was fabulous top to bottom: the band, the staging, the dancing, singing, and above all acting. How proud all the parents must be and how proud we should be of all the staff who encouraged such excellence.

Jane Susswein

Verona

Montclair History Center, you’ve lifted my spirit

Through Montclair Local, I would like to publicly thank the Montclair History Center for choosing to display my

art in the Founder's Room at the Crane House.

They held an opening there on Sunday, May 7, and the work is scheduled to remain on display through July. I'm thrilled!

I owe so much to the center's Angelica and MSU's Touri for their efforts to make this project a reality.

It couldn't have gotten off the ground if it wasn't for my loving niece Kim Nicaastro Romola who handled my end of the preparations as health issues would have forced me to turn down the History Center's generous offer. That would have been devastating to me.

So thank you, thank you, thank you to all involved.

Vincent Tango

Montclair



Town Square: 5/4/17

By Joan Hocky

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Letters to the editor, May 4



Organic garden tours this month

The Cornucopia Network of New Jersey, dedicated to promoting local organic food, will sponsor two organic vegetable garden tours this spring, one on May 6 and the other on May 20. The first will include four gardens and the second nine.

This Saturday Virginia Cornue invites you to drop by 143 Claremont Ave. between 2 to 5 p.m. for a self-guided tour of her tiny front yard garden, some porch boxes, storage tubs planters, recycled trellises. This is a minimal second-year garden, starting from nothing in ground that had never been worked in 80 years or more.

My garden at 56 Gordonhurst Ave. will be open from 9 to 11 a.m. I raise almost all my family's vegetables year round. With luck, you will see the Chinese cabbage from which I have harvested two meals a week all the past winter; it is going to seed now.

Alan Smith's front-yard garden at 148 Forest St., will be open for a self-guided tour from 9 to 5 p.m. both days. Many of his plants are volunteers, but he buys tomato plants each year.

Montclair Community Pre-K Garden Project, 49 Orange Road, offers a self-guided tour to the public all day on weekends. The grounds can be entered through gates on either side of the main entrance to the Board of Education Building, 22 Valley Road. parking is permitted along the driveway to the right of the building. On May 6, 9-noon, the MCPK Garden Project will hold its annual Family Garden Day, where the entire school community comes together to prepare our gardens for spring. The day includes sports activities for children, a plant sale, many freebies of perennials, a performance by the MHS a cappella group The Passing Notes and plenty of garden work for all.

Pat Kenschaft

Montclair

Remarks on the

Seymour Street redevelopment

The Seymour Street redevelopment is too massive, too ambitious, and too multi-purpose for the site on which it hopes to build. Multi-purpose meaning it seeks to be an apartment house with 200 apartments, a retail center, an office building, a multi-parking garage and an arts and entertainment venue. The site on which it plans to build is hilly, uneven and surrounded by older buildings. The decades-old retaining wall facing South Willow is covered with greenery and in some places has been reinforced with concrete. It should be examined for its structural stability because an older apartment building is situated on the land above the wall. The proposed new apartment building and parking deck will be built very close to the retaining walls and also to the other residences on South Willow and Seymour streets. The construction of both the large apartment building on the east side of Seymour and the seven-story parking structure on the west side of Seymour could undermine the nearby older buildings.

The proposed Seymour parking garage of five stories with an additional setback of two floors of offices has a red brick warehouse appearance. It does not have the positive features of the parking deck behind Church Street, in that it does not fit in with its surroundings in height, in color, in appearance and in landscaping. The new site is more challenging. The plan uses all of the available land so that the new construction will be very close to adjoining buildings.

The parking garage does not blend in with nearby older beige brick apartment buildings, nor does it enhance the planned Seymour Street Plaza, by depriving it of light. This parking deck is taller than the apartment building next to it. It will loom over the Seymour Street Plaza. It will be the view of the new apartments facing Seymour Street, and will have lights on all night. The northern part of Seymour Street will become a continuation to Bloomfield Avenue while the southern end of the street is ignored.

Seymour Street was declared an area in need of redevelopment. Will this large redevelopment really create an improved neighborhood? There will be more congestion with 200 to 400 more people in the area, and more traffic with several hundred more cars and large parking decks. With Seymour Street turned into a two-way dead end, there will be increased traffic on both South Willow and South Fullerton. Any cars going in or out of Seymour will have to use Roosevelt Place. A quiet residential area will need to adjust to increased traffic, noise, delays and other inconveniences in the pursuit of redevelopment for municipal improvement.

The next meeting addressing this plan is at the municipal Building, 205 Claremont Ave., on Monday, May 8, at 7:30 p.m. Please consider attending.

Lucy Fitzgerald

Montclair

Thanks to the Local

Kudos to the publishers/writers at Montclair Local for providing a fresh look at our town of Montclair.

As a local resident for 10+ years, here's some things I notice in your newspaper:

- clever, crisp headlines that deliberately give readers your fine take on community lifestyle issues. Examples: recent story about Inconvenience Store Shopping (the superb word "inconvenience" here says what us local residents feel about the need for a decent supermarket in Montclair Center); Making Progress? to describe the insightful story about an achievement gap in Montclair Public Schools.
- writing style — while Montclair Local writers tell us about select news items, I feel like they are talking "with" me (the reader) rather than "at" me with facts and information;
- thoughtful, easy-to-find calendar listings providing every reader with what's going on and how to participate (many of us plan our in-town activities based on this).
- know your "customers" — keeping on top of the various needs/wants of Montclair's readers and businesses.

Thank you all!

Wilma A. Hurwitz

Montclair



Town Square: 4/27/17

Lisanne Renner, Friends of Anderson Park

It's a fine morning in August 1902 and John Charles Olmsted is visiting Montclair. A major figure in the nation's most prominent landscape architecture firm, he is here to scope out the raw, scrappy land that will eventually become Anderson Park: a field of scrubby, shin-high brush; several swampy acres with cattails; even some houses that will need to be moved. Toney's Brook along the east side is an open ditch.

That afternoon Olmsted appears before the Essex County Park Commission to endorse the land being donated by Charles W. Anderson, a Montclair resident and New York insurance agent. It would, he says, make a fine suburban park.

When Essex County's new park opened three years later, it was such a hit that the Township of Montclair decided to create its own park system. That may seem an unarguable move today, but it was vigorously debated in the Montclair of 1906. Before being put to a vote, the issue twice consumed the front page of the newspaper. Handbills went up all over town. Jacob Riis, the urban reformer who documented slum conditions in his book "How the Other Half Lives," came to Montclair to argue that the town should provide parks "for the people, big and little."

With tuberculosis a scourge in New York's crowded tenements, the public health benefits of fresh air were cited in rapidly growing Montclair. One doctor, thinking of Italian immigrants and African-Americans living in substandard conditions in town, said parks would provide "breathing spaces" for "the poor mother airing her sick baby in the summertime." Wealthy residents, businessmen and real estate agents saw parks as "beauty

spots,” and anticipated the increased property values they would bestow. Progressives considered parks a form of social justice. James Trimble, a former Democratic politician and Socialist, wrote to the newspaper: “The rich man can plant his home in the midst of his own park; the people must provide the poor man’s.”

The opponents crossed racial, gender and economic lines, objecting to the parks proposal for different reasons. Some developers argued that parks were a luxury, and that tax money was better spent on new schools and sewer lines. Women, not yet allowed to vote, resented that they had no voice in how their taxes were spent.

And although reformers considered parks a perk for low-income minorities, Montclair’s black voters feared that increased taxes would translate to higher rents. They also refused to support civic leaders who they felt ignored their interests. As the Rev. John Love of Union Baptist Church put it: The push for parks would make Montclair “a town where it will be impossible for a poor man to live, except as a laborer or house servant. Besides, the white people never do anything for the Negro, politically.”

In this charged atmosphere, Montclair voters headed to the polls. They voted on tracts of land totaling about 75 acres, selected by a citizens’ committee. To this election in April 1906 we owe Nishuane Park, Edgemont Park, Essex Park and Glenfield Park (that last one later transferred to Essex County).

More than a century after Anderson Park inspired a townwide park system, Montclair owns about 130 acres of parkland. It surrounds or borders five Essex County parks and reservations totaling more than 700 acres. Most residents are walking distance to some portion of the more than 830 acres of parkland within or immediately adjacent to our town’s borders. For a community whose population has more than doubled since 1906, that is a goodly supply of breathing space and beauty spots for us all.



Letters to the editor, April 27



We can't wait for a needed grocery store

Thank you so much for your terrific article about the long absent Pathmark. It's incredible that almost nothing has been said about the fact that [this section of] Montclair has been without a supermarket for so long.

How is it said that condos will be built above the new store? This beautiful town is being ruined by the large number of condos that have been and are being built. We don't need more condos and we can't wait years for a very needed store.

I know that in Belleville they replaced a Pathmark with a ShopRite. It is a disgrace that we have gone so long without a large grocery store. It is worse if we have to wait years longer.

I question the priorities of the town council.

Virginia Hanley

Montclair

Don't cry for me, Upper Montclair

I'm done in. I've had it, and am as angry as I've ever been, residing in Montclair's Fourth Ward. It's now "The Eastern Gateway to Montclair." You're welcome to check this out, as I have no sense of township direction. But I can assure you that it's time for people to stop referring us all as being poor, uneducated, and vulnerable. For goodness sake, we need a public relations firm to pretty up our own residents' perceptions about this part of Montclair.

You're being insulting, not sympathetic. A Planning Board member telling me that "We're trying to make the neighborhood better for you" is not being supportive or accurately portraying us. Better than what or where? I didn't grow up here, merely relocated from Manhattan because it seemed easier for my spouse to get to work in Secaucus than remaining in Murray Hill. We wanted more space for our children, even though there were larger available brownstone units in our area — which we could afford. Moving to Montclair eliminated paying tax in two states. Other than that, I sometimes wonder why we came here.

Living in close proximity to The United Nations, we knew from "diversity." No one had to say it, write it, or drum it into our heads on a daily basis. We just lived it that world. Our multiracial family screams "diversity." People point it out to us in town all the time. We never speak of it, because so many of you are doing so. Yes there were "projects" within a few blocks of us. There were also high rise luxury buildings too. Sounds a lot like the Fourth Ward, right? Not high rise, but certainly what's considered to be high rent. Penthouses with a Bloomfield Avenue view.

The loss of Pathmark in Lackawanna Plaza has brought the issue of race, income, and age to a head once again. After almost two years without a supermarket in both the Third and Fourth wards, I've seen social media postings in many groups asking for people to band together to take the elderly, the poor, the troubled masses to another town to shop. Whoa, there! Why do we need to be transported out of town if there are a number of places to purchase groceries right here in Montclair? Why assume that we can't afford "healthy" food? Who of you out there can prove to me that the thousands of items in other supermarkets actually do

cost more than what we paid at Pathmark?

Everyone needs to eat. Whether or not you choose an overpriced specialty store is your choice. I am not without sense or sympathy, realizing that economic status varies from household to household. I've been told the history of why the Fourth Ward was populated the way it was back in the day, but I don't believe it's totally accurate anymore. Just look around and walk around and tell me who or what you see. We're not a National Geographic anthropological study of The Have Nots.

Robin Woods

Montclair

An artist for Montclair

The Montclair History Center (formerly Montclair Historical Society) will be displaying some of my dear friend Vinny Tango's artwork of our town.

Vinny has painted many iconic scenes of our town and is rightly recognized by many as Montclair's artist. His effort has produced memorable scenes of our town's rich history. Some of his artwork will be on display starting Sunday, May 7, at the main room of the Crane House, 110 Orange Road, from 2 to 4 p.m. His artwork will be on display through July.

Vinny has a special knack for poignant and emotional moments and his love for Montclair is in each of his works.

Peter Giuffra

Montclair



Montclair Local Voices: Mayor's Challenge worth the weight



BILL HURLOCK

By William L. Hurlock

Montclair offers a lot to its residents — great schools and libraries, beautiful parks and many wonderful recreational and cultural programs. I recently had the pleasure of participating in one such program through the township Health Department, the Mayor's Wellness Challenge — a great way to get fit and healthy.

I am a big fan of this type of motivational event, having signed up for many health department programs over the years. Last year I participated in the Montclair "Walk to Napa Valley" event where participants made a committed effort to walk every day. We tracked our steps with maps showing how far we travelled from Montclair — eventually walking all the way to Napa Valley, California. I was thrilled when I learned that I was the first participant to complete the journey — and I became a lot healthier in the process!

This past week, we completed the Mayor's Wellness Challenge — an event we started on Jan. 9 with a kick-off party at Fire Department headquarters on Pine Street. The event consisted of teams participating in ways to shed unhealthy pounds and lead a healthier lifestyle in the process.

Under the direction of Health Department Director Sue Portuese and her excellent staff, we all learned how to lead healthier lives through exercise and good nutrition. I personally learned a great deal about myself, information I intend to use for the rest of my life.

Throughout the competition, we attended yoga and exercise classes together. We held “healthy hours” where we met up for smoothies or healthy juices at various establishments in Montclair. Healthcare providers screened us for cholesterol and blood sugar. Instructors came to show us the proper way to exercise, make the right nutritional choices and lead healthier lifestyles.

The Challenge was not easy. Every other Monday from January through April participants weighed in at various locations in town. As many know, weekends can be difficult for diet and exercise. For me, the Mondays following the Super Bowl and my birthday I knew would be tough after having attended parties on both occasions.

But knowing that we were to meet made us all think twice when making our eating choices. The Mayor’s Challenge helped us change our ways.

The camaraderie and competition of participating in teams encouraged us to do better. This was a huge source of inspiration for me. The friendly banter and words of encouragement during our biweekly meetings and classes pushed us all to do our very best. The very thought of these Monday morning encounters made me want to do better.

At the end of our program we held our closing party at Hackensack UMC Mountainside Hospital. Prizes were awarded for those teams and individuals who became healthier by losing weight. Raffles were also held for all the participants. Local businesses and community organizations donated “healthy” prizes, such as gym classes and personal training sessions.

I am looking forward to the town’s next healthy lifestyle program and I encourage everyone to participate in these types of events offered by the Montclair Health Department. After all, who wouldn’t want to get fit and healthy?

Deputy Mayor William L. Hurlock is serving his second term on the Township Council.

Is yours a local voice?

Montclair Local seeks rotating columnists and one-off essay writers for our Local Voices column. Got a passion for a particular subject? Send us a specific pitch and a sample of writing for a series; tell us your expertise in the area and why it would appeal to our local audience. For an individual essay, send the whole piece, of about 500 words, to culture@montclairlocal.news.