

CROSS ROADS

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Focus On ...

Get To Know Your Building Department

The Oakland Building Department is located at the lower level in the rear of Borough Hall. If you are planning to do any construction on your property, please call this office to see if permits are required. Sheds, decks and various work may require zoning and or building permits. Please check with us first.

New Jersey State law requires that you call 1-800-272-1000 before you dig anywhere. We will be happy to answer any of your questions at 201-337-1644.

The Borough of Oakland reminds all residents that there is a Property Maintenance Code in the Borough. Experience and observations have shown that a lack of maintenance of real property may lead to progressive deterioration and loss of property values. Property Maintenance will insure the desirability of residential and nonresidential uses, neighborhoods will be enhanced and the general health, safety and welfare of all residents will be protected. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

**Joseph Montemarano -
Construction Official**
Robert Porrino - Zoning Official
Gail Bowitz - Technical Assistant

THE MAYOR'S MESSAGE ... THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

First, I must thank the voters of Oakland for the confidence you have placed in me by electing me your mayor this past November. It is a tremendous honor and privilege and I am grateful for your support.

As I reflect on the responsibilities of my office I am reminded of the many qualities of this community that attracted me to live here, invest here and raise a family here. The Ramapo Mountains, the Ramapo River, the quaint downtown shopping area, the school system and, perhaps most of all, the people create a sense of community in Oakland that is unique, precious and irreplaceable. I enjoy all the amenities that come with living in a small town. My priority and commitment to the residents of this Borough will be first and

foremost to protect the character of this community.

With the passage of the open space referendum, we will now begin the process of purchasing critical tracts of land to protect the open space we value so much as a community. With the Council's support, we have already purchased the Raimond Property and with the completion of the Borough's Open Space Plan, we will be prepared to purchase other significant tracts with the assistance of state, county and private funds. Camp Todd to the north and the ridgeline to the south are both priorities for preservation.

The Borough will be submitting a smart growth grant to the State of New Jersey to fund a comprehensive study to revitalize our business district. This study, once completed and endorsed by the state, will enable us to secure funding to improve not only the aesthetics of our downtown but also its function in terms of traffic and pedestrian circulation flow. I have already conducted meetings with key state and county officials to begin to identify the improvements that are needed to accomplish this goal.

The governing body is presently engaged in putting together the 2004 Budget. I wish to assure everyone that the Borough Council and I are working very



Mayor John Szabo

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Municipal Revaluation Taking Place In Oakland This Year

Most residents may already be aware that Oakland has been ordered by the Bergen County Tax Board to undergo a complete municipal-wide revaluation. However, to date very little information has been disseminated to the Oakland taxpayers regarding the revaluation program. The following is an explanation of what a revaluation is, along with a brief history and status of the revaluation as it applies to Oakland.

- **DEFINITION:** A "revaluation" seeks to spread the tax burden equitably within a taxing district by appraising each property according to its true market value, and establishing assessments based on this value. The most common reason for a revaluation is due to significant changes in the real estate market from the time of the last revaluation.

The need for a revaluation becomes evident when there is a greater disparity between the assessed values of the properties and their true market values. The revaluation is accomplished by the mass appraisal of all real property in the taxing district conducted by an outside professional revaluation firm.

- **HISTORY:** The last full-scale revaluation was conducted in 1986 and went into effect for the 1987 tax year. Prior to that revaluation, Oakland's equalization ratio was 36.80%. Simply stated, this ratio indicated that assessed values were approximately one-third of what the properties were actually selling for at that time. The corresponding tax rate at the time was \$5.67. Once the reval was completed and assessments depicting current mar-

ket values were put in place, the tax rate dropped to \$1.54.

Several years later in 1994, the Tax Assessor conducted an in-house computerized reassessment in order to adjust the ratable base to reflect the severe downturn in the housing market after the recession of the early 1990s. Prior to that reassessment, Oakland had been subjected to extensive tax appeal litigation at both the County and State levels.

Since the 1994 reassessment, a lot has changed in the real estate market. After a period of relative stagnation for housing values in Oakland during the mid-1990s, positive appreciation returned to the marketplace. Low interest rates over the past several years have fueled a boom in new housing construction and existing housing sales. Many published reports show rates of appreciation in most of Northern New Jersey in excess of 10% per year over the past several years.

While good from an equity point of view for homeowners, this surge in the market value for housing has ultimately contributed to erosion of the relationship between assessment and value for properties in Oakland. This relationship between the assessment and the market value for property is defined in assessment terminology as the "average ratio." The average ratio figure is determined by the Director of the Division of Taxation for every municipality in the State on an annual basis, after a review of all useable sales in each municipality over a specified sampling period.

- **CURRENT REVAL ORDER:** The Bergen County Tax Board has well-established parameters regarding the factors leading to a Revaluation

Order. One of the primary parameters is based on the "average ratio." Once this ratio drops below 85%, the municipality may be subject to a Reval Order.

In the case of Oakland, at the time of the 2002 Reval Order the ratio was 75.22%. For the current 2004 tax year, the ratio is already down to 62.83% (meaning that on average a property is assessed at only 62.83% of its indicated market value). Based on a review of the deeds for new sales that are tracked by the Assessment Office in Oakland, many properties are actually assessed at less than 60% of the price they are currently being sold for.

- **HIRING OF PROFESSIONALS:** By the middle of February, the Borough should have finalized a contract with the firm Appraisal Systems, Inc., Mendham, NJ, to conduct the upcoming revaluation of the municipality.

At the same time, and in conjunction with the revaluation program, there will be a complete overhaul of the Borough's Tax Maps into a GIS compliant system. Last October a contract was awarded to Civil Solutions, Hammonton NJ, for work relating to tax mapping and GIS.

The Director of the Division of Taxation requires that prior to a municipality's execution of a reval contract, the Tax Map must be submitted to the Division of Taxation so that they can determine its suitability for revaluation use. This process has already occurred. Civil Solutions has addressed each problem item as detailed by the State with regard to Oakland's current Tax Map, and in late November the

(Continued on next page)

revised Tax Map was sent to the State Division of Taxation for review and approval. It is anticipated that the Borough will receive some type of authorization and/or conditional approval by the end of February.

- **PROPOSED TIMELINE:** If all goes according to plan, the fieldwork inspections will begin sometime in May 2004. Property owners will be notified by mail from the reval company prior to the commencement of the fieldwork in their particular neighborhoods. If someone is not home during the initial visit from the reval company, a "call-back card" will be left stating when a return visit will occur. This card will also have the phone number of the reval firm in the event the property owner requests a different time for the inspection.

Regardless of when a property is inspected during this program, the new property values will all be determined based on their estimated market value as of October 1, 2004 (the statutory date required by law). Property owners will be notified by mail in late November 2004 of their new assessed values, and given an opportunity to schedule a hearing with a representative of the reval firm in order to review their new assessment.

Assessment reviews will be finalized by late December 2004, and the new assessments will become effective for the 2005 tax year. Subsequent to the implementation of these new assessments, any property owner who wishes to dispute their new assessment may do so by

appealing their valuation with the Bergen County Tax Board prior to the April 1, 2005.

As a result of the revaluation program, the 2005 tax rate should be substantially reduced in a manner generally proportionate with the average increase in the ratable base.

Please note that the revaluation does not serve to generate new revenue for a municipality. The sole objective of a revaluation is to distribute the existing burden of taxation in an equitable manner among all property owners. And that "equitable manner" will be based directly on the estimated market value of each property on October 1, 2004, which will serve as the basis for the newly established assessments for all properties within the Borough.

Channel 77 Is Going LIVE February 24 ... Be There!

In a truly unique event, Oakland's Public Access television station, Channel 77, is set to begin airing a LIVE television show called, appropriately, Exit 58 Live! Named, of course, after our town's exit off of Route 287, Exit 58 Live! will be filmed live each month in front of a studio audience. It will offer a telephone call-in portion and will profile and publicize local organizations and events.

The first show will be aired live on Tuesday, February 24, at 7:30 p.m. and then that show will continue to air throughout the month. Scheduled as guests are Rose Burik, head of the Oakland Senior Citizens Center, and representatives from the upcoming FLOW Follies, who will provide a sneak preview of their March show at Ramapo High School. The show is being produced by the Oakland Communications Commission and will be co-hosted by OCC members Mike Jacobsen and Al DiGiacomo.



"We have been asked by Oakland residents as well as by our elected officials to continue to provide open communication for people in town through Channel 77, and

this is certainly in response to that," says Jacobsen, who is also chairman of the OCC. "Exit 58 Live! is going to be public access television like this town has never seen before. It is going to be fun."

"The emphasis is to provide more information to the town," adds DiGiacomo. "So we'll have

some live guests, maybe some hot issues that we can ask questions about from a people point of view. We want something lighthearted that entertains, as well as informs."

To that end, Exit 58 Live! will actually allow Oakland residents to call in (201-405-7590) with a question or opinion. The OCC is also welcoming video shorts submitted by residents as well.

Mayor's Message

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hard to maintain a lean budget to ease the growing tax burden upon our residents. This is a difficult challenge given the tremendous pressures we face balancing the need to provide for public safety, public services, maintaining our infrastructure and implementing state-mandated programs with no anticipated increase in state aid.

The Borough is faced with a county-mandated borough-wide revaluation of property this year. The governing body has already approved the funding to comply with the state requirements.

Information about the revaluation will be forthcoming. In fact, the Oakland Communications Commission is working on televising a public information program on this topic next month to help Borough residents understand the property revaluation process. *(Also see the Revaluation article on page 2 of this newsletter.)* We are committed to making sure the public is well informed and the revaluation is done fairly to ensure the rights of all property owners.

The challenges are many but opportunities abound. Working together, I know this community has the will and capacity to move forward to a healthy and prosperous future. – John Szabo

The 'New' Library Is Nearing Completion

Have you noticed the progress that has been made on our new library? Contractors are finishing up the first phase of the exciting project – our brand new children's library. We expect to be located in the new addition in late spring. Look for the announcement of the ribbon cutting party!

Phase Two, the renovation of the existing library, will commence immediately after the completion of the children's library. It is expected that the renovation will take approx-

imately three to four months and that the total project will be complete by late fall. It has been a long time coming and the end of the project is in sight.

The Library Growth Foundation of Oakland is charged with raising funds so that we may properly provide for furniture, fixtures, library equipment and other materials not covered by the construction funds. We invite you to participate in this important part of Oakland's future by making a tax deductible donation.

As part of our community, we are sure you would like to share with us in creating an everlasting improvement to Oakland's landmark building.

Please send us your much-needed and appreciated contribution to the Library Growth Foundation of Oakland, P.O.Box 361, Oakland, NJ 07436.



Oakland Fire Department Installs 2004 Officers

The Oakland Volunteer Fire Department held its annual Installation Dinner on February 7 at the Brownstone House in West Paterson. The purpose of the dinner was the induction of all Fire Department officers for the year 2004. The individuals inducted into office were:

Chief Steven Milano
 Asst. Chief Peter Sondervan
 Asst. Chief Peter Pfeiffer
 Captain James Vulgaris
 Captain Pat Kellett
 Lieutenant Curtis LeRoy
 Lieutenant Gary Walker
 Lieutenant Tom Torpey
 Lieutenant James Raymond Hans
 Engineer Roy Bauberger
 Engineer Edward W. Tryon Jr.
 Secretary Joseph Gallup

The Fire Department also honored outgoing Chief Edward W. Tryon Jr., who just completed three successful years of outstanding service to the Oakland Fire Department. The Fire Department thanks Ed and his family for three years of sacrifice and dedication to the people of Oakland.

In this time of winter snow storms, the Oakland Fire Department would like to remind all residents to help out and to protect yourselves and your neighbors. If there is a fire hydrant on your property, please be sure that it is uncovered and shovel away any snow in a two-foot radius around the hydrant. If there is no fire hydrant on your property, clear out the fire hydrant nearest to your house! In the event of a fire, if the Fire Department has to locate the fire hydrant in a snow pile or take the time to clear away the snow around it, precious minutes will be lost.

Oakland's OEM Is On Duty For The Town

Oakland residents can rest assured that the borough's Office of Emergency Management is working hard to be ready to serve in the event of any problems in town.

Our current emergency management network evolved from the "civil defense" needs of the Cold War Era. With this era ended, however, emphasis shifted toward disaster relief, recovery mitigation, and disaster-related planning and responsibilities.

Our staff, called the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), works with all local emergency and support services to identify hazards, assess risks and analyze the implications for the community. This provides the basis for establishing our Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), which describes how the community prepares for, responds to, and recovers from major vulnerabilities.

Our staff consists of many dedicated individuals from numerous facets of our community such as:

- Board of Education
- Bergen County Sheriffs Dept.
- Building Department
- Construction Companies
- Communications Commission
- Department Of Public Works
- Fathers' Club
- Fire Department
- Fire Prevention Bureau
- First Aid Squad
- Health Department
- High Hazard Business Owners
- Nurses
- Police Officers
- Teachers

The format for the EOP is standardized by the State Office of Emergency Management. The EOP is

reviewed and certified by both the County OEM as well as the State OEM. Its main annexes consist of the following:

- Basis Plan
- Alert Warnings & Communications
- Damage Assessment
- Emergency Medical Services
- Emergency Operations Center
- Emergency Public Information
- Evacuation Plans
- Fire Services
- Hazardous Materials
- Law Enforcement
- Public Health
- Public Works
- Radiological Protection
- Resource Management
- Shelter Reception and Care
- Social Services
- Terrorism

And we also consider the needs of schools, healthcare facilities, shopping malls, high hazard uses and other special needs within the Boro.

We recently participated in a county-wide Tabletop Drill on terrorism, during which we received fax transmissions from the Bergen County OEM and reacted to the information given. We then faxed our responses to the county. Our staff greatly benefited from participation in this educational and informative exercise. This drill and updating of our EOP qualified us for a \$2,400 state grant to be used for improvements to our emergency operations center.

We are currently working on getting a stream monitoring device installed in the Ramapo River that will provide both stream level and flow via satellite and internet. In addition, the OEM is hoping to improve our public alert system as well as imple-

ment Reverse Telephone Alerting in the near future.

In March, in conjunction with all of the emergency service agencies and LEPC members, we will be conducting another Tabletop Exercise that will be town-wide. It will involve a disaster that will impact a local school. The county OEM will act as the facilitator giving us the scenarios, and we will respond accordingly.

This exercise will be attended by the local Governing Body as well as local and regional school representatives. The Oakland Communications Commission will be taping the drill for the public's viewing on Channel 77. I'm sure it will be a very educational and informative for all.

I would just like to remind all citizens to be prepared at all times by stocking necessary supplies such as food, water, money, medications, batteries, battery operated lights, hard-wired phones and any other items for special needs.

— Roy Bauberger

DO NOT PUT CARDBOARD OUT WITH THE HOUSEHOLD GARBAGE

Corrugated cardboard is a recyclable material. Place cardboard at curbside with all other recyclable paper. Do not leave any plastic or trash inside the boxes. This is strictly a paper and cardboard collection.

— Oakland Recycling Department

Message from Oakland Tax Collector

We are awaiting information from the State Department of Taxation regarding the status of New Jersey's Property Tax Reimbursement Program for 2004. Please call the local State Tax Office in Fair Lawn (201-791-0500) for any updates.

Teaching and Learning In The Age of Technology

Parents and other family members, neighbors, and school staff have historically worked together to help children become socialized. Through guidance, instruction, and supervision, children have learned to interact appropriately with other children and adults, to develop manners, and to develop safe behaviors. This teaching helps children learn how to cross a street, how to use a telephone, how to play with others, how to greet adults, and how to resolve conflicts. Home instruction in these areas has been invaluable to children, and it helps to prepare them to be responsible, safe members of society.

In this age of technology, the teaching of appropriate behaviors to children has expanded. Children are spending increasing amounts of time on the computer, and, while we marvel at how they have developed technological skills, we need to realize that they need to be schooled about appropriate use of the computer. Using it as a means to gain information and as a means to communicate, computers have become an integral part of children's lives.

Yet, however great the potential of the computer is for children, adults must be aware of its perils, the potential dangers that may exist for children, and the need for guidance about the use of the computer.

While parents may be relieved that preadolescents and adolescents are not downtown or at the mall, and find comfort that their children are, instead, in their bedrooms, they need to realize that the computers in the home can connect their children with people in locations well

beyond the mall, or expose them to material that parents wouldn't permit their children to view on their television. Thus, the appearance of safe haven in the home may not be reality.

Additionally, children, who live in the confines of protected Oakland, may not realize that anonymous computer contacts may imperil their safety. Neither may children realize that, when they are instant messaging, the uncensored messages that they send to others may have legal consequences, if they are interpreted to be threatening or harassing. Computer messages are often more public and more lasting than telephone conversations; yet, youngsters seldom view their computer writing as something for which they can be held responsible.

Just as parents monitor groups of children in their home, supervise their children on the telephone, and censor television programming, it is incumbent upon them to oversee their children's usage of technology in their home. Parental presence and involvement is essential in this era of technology to protect children from harming themselves and others. Thus, parents need to monitor what their children are doing on their home computers, instruct them about acceptable behavior, and assign consequences, when necessary to promote children's learning in this area.

At school, a filtering system is in place to block sites inappropriate for children, and teacher supervision helps to prevent irresponsible computer communications from occurring. Yet, there is a "spillover effect"



Dr. Richard Heflich

that carries unacceptable home computer behavior over into the school setting.

The computer age is new for many adults, and, for many, their children know more about the computer than they do. Still, the standards that we set for appropriate conduct must encompass children's computer usage. Please join in making certain that children learn the "rights and wrongs" of computer usage. Do not permit them to spend long lengths of time unsupervised on the computer without knowing what they are doing, and please explain your expectations about computer behavior to them. Caution them about "talking" to people they do not know online, and instruct them not to engage in "conversations" that will harm someone else.

Our responsibility to teach children safety and appropriate behavior has never been more important than in this era of technology. Thank you.

— *Dr. Richard G. Heflich*
Superintendent of Schools

Safety Is A Priority In The Oakland School District

By Louis J. Pepe, Business Administrator/Board Secretary

The importance of safety cannot be stressed often enough. As managers of the Oakland school district it is our inherent responsibility to maintain a safe environment for students, faculty, staff and members of the community as they engage in learning, play and work within our schools and on our grounds. Maintaining that safety is our priority!

In order to effectively enhance our overall Safety

Program, we are instituting a District-wide Safety Committee committed to addressing the specific needs of the district regarding overall safety.

The Board of Education and Administration have moved forward to assemble a team of individuals from across the district at every level to include students, faculty, staff and administration. **Louis Albanese** of the Valley Middle School Custodial Department, will serve as committee chairperson, with the assistance of **Karen Marcalus**, Board Safety Liaison, **Andrew Bruno**, District Risk

Volunteerism Is Alive and Well In Oakland's Schools

By Glenn R. Clark, Principal, Dogwood Hill School

From the earliest years in the Oakland School District's elementary grades, through their time at Valley Middle School, students demonstrate a sense of community by giving to others in the community. This sense of community varies from their own school, to their neighborhoods, the Borough of Oakland and the surrounding towns.

Many of our students, from the earliest years, participate in community service activities. The heartfelt service of these youngsters is cause for the entire town to share a sense of pride.

At Valley Middle School students work closely with the town's Newcomer's Club. At both the Halloween Party and Breakfast with Santa, students are on hand to assist. Ten students eagerly signed up for each of these activities, showing their welcoming spirit to families new to Oakland.

Other students at Valley can be counted on to help through the year, as well. The After School Spanish Club has had helpers from Valley over the years. When the Dogwood Hill School held their Family Game Night, Simple Supper and Hats Off to Reading Celebration, students from Valley Middle School were on hand, helping to run the festivities, helping with the prizes or just to read to the younger children. They truly set a wonderful example for the children younger than themselves.

The service is not just for other schools in town. VMS students, working with **Bill DeRoker**, are preparing a new welcoming sign for the Campus of Cornerstone Christian Church in the McGill Ministry Center, in Wyckoff. Another student at Valley Middle School donates time to assist a younger child with her music lessons. Dozens and dozens of students are quietly working among us, showing that the schools are not just about the Three R's, but about helping one another to strengthen the whole community.

The three elementary schools are also proud of the helping hands displayed by their youngsters. With just the slightest of guidance, the children show how they are so willing to help those who may be new to town, or less fortunate than themselves.

For example, at Dogwood, children bring in their nickels and dimes to buy a Thanksgiving dinner for needy Native American families. This tradition is coordinated by **Mary Bergmann**, Student Council Advisor. The student council also annually donates to the Oakland Women's Club to go toward holiday gift baskets. Other children at Dogwood donate canned goods every year to the Annual "Souper" Bowl, bringing canned goods to the food pantries of the area.

At Heights the children also give to the needy. One of the biggest endeavors takes place during the holidays when children donate clothing for their peers less fortunate than themselves. The "Bundle up for Love Drive" involves all of the children at Heights. Children in kindergarten and first grade are asked to bring in a pair of mittens or gloves, which will be donated to the Children's Specialized Hospital. Second and third grade children donate a new hat and children in fourth and fifth grade are invited to donate a new scarf. In this way, the Bundles of Love get to the Children's Specialized Hospital by December 25.

Manito School also is proud of the youngsters who demonstrate caring and good citizenship. This year, in particular, the Manito School students are reaching well beyond the borders of Oakland in their sense of giving back to a larger community. Holiday greetings and pictures, presented by children in kindergarten through fifth grade, are on their way overseas. The men and women in the service in Iraq, especially those who have no families in the States, will be receiving these messages of cheer and good will. This is another example of the wonderful spirit the children at Manito School, and across all the schools, display during the holiday season and throughout the entire year.

There are many other examples, by individual students, scout groups and different classes, of the students from the Oakland Public Schools giving to their peers and fellow citizens. These shining examples of good will toward others remain a symbol of hope for all of us who have faith in the youth of today.

Manager, and myself as District Safety Committee Advisor.

Each school in the district will be represented through an on-site safety team comprised of an administrator, faculty member, custodian, playground aide and a student representative from the Valley Middle School Student Council.

Areas of focus will concentrate on Athletic and Physical Education Programs, Playgrounds, School Transportation, Risk Management,

PEOSHA Requirements & Training, Communication, Feedback and Discussion of Safety Concerns

In addition to improving the overall safety of our district, we will target the area of Workers Compensation by reducing and/or eliminating the total amount of accidents each year throughout the district with the goal of improving our experience rating.

We plan on utilizing the expertise of safety professionals such as Utica National Insurance Group and the

New Jersey School Boards Association Insurance Group in order to accomplish our goals and objectives. Each group offers risk management resources and educational training tools as part of our membership, thus allowing the Board and the Administration to achieve our safety goals in a cost-efficient manner.

We invite you to visit our web site in order to receive more information on this exciting new addition to our safety program.

VMS Students Reach Across Borders

By Adam Silverstein, Vice Principal, Valley Middle School

Valley Middle School students are reaching out – south of the border – to understand the cultures and to touch the lives of children in South America. Through volunteer work and a series of collaborative art murals, our children are not only increasing their awareness of indigenous American peoples, but are also making an impact on the lives of children on both sides of the Equator.

Science teacher **Don Dean** (*at center in photo at right*), on leave this school year, is spending most of the time in various volunteer projects in South America. He recently shared photos and stories of less-fortunate children in Peru with students at VMS, inspiring them to do something to help.

Seventh grade guidance counselor **Gregg Desiderio** formed a team of students for this Hands Across the Continents project. Immediately, our students organized a drive to collect what the children in the mountainous areas of Peru need most: shoes, warm clothing, toothbrushes and basic first-aid items.

The Oakland community quickly responded with over one thousand items – nearly 100 pairs of shoes, 50 fleece jackets, more than 500 toothbrushes (special thanks to local dentist **Dr. Michael Tsubota** for the donation of two gross). In addition, pounds of toothpaste, boxes of first aid items, and numerous other contributions came flowing into the school. The toothbrushes will be given to



day care centers to teach and encourage dental hygiene to young children, and the shoes and warm clothing will soon be on the feet and backs of homeless children in Peru.

The understanding and connection between our children was also strengthened through art. During the week before Thanksgiving, dozens of enthusiastic VMS students painted pieces of murals that will be shared with their counterparts in Peru and Argentina. One mural was designed to depict themes unifying the historical and modern cultures of North and South America, and features an American skyline on one side and a pinnacle of Incan culture (Macchu Pichu) on the other. Our theme of “Dream, Plan, Achieve” is proudly painted in both English and Spanish.

In October, the right side of these murals was painted with equal enthusiasm by children in a school in Cuzco, Peru. Those children, ranging in age from 13 to 18, recently were delighted to receive a “care package” from VMS and have also painted a set of butterflies to be displayed on our walls. A second set of murals is planned

for a remote village in Argentina, high in the Andes, where winter is seven months long!

The murals were designed and donated by **Arlene RB Sullivan**, Executive Director and Artist of the Changing Images Art Foundation. Mrs. Sullivan’s works are found in hospitals, soup kitchens, schools and other institutions on four continents.

Hands Across the Continents affords students the opportunity to bring various elements of the daily curriculum to life. By supporting the sixth grade social studies unit on South America, the elementary global education curriculum, and the district art and language programs, the project offers meaning and relevance to the concepts our children study.

The Valley Middle School community is enormously grateful to Don Dean for coordinating this outstanding project. The overwhelmingly positive response from our students is a testament to their caring nature and their willingness to help those in need. We are all very proud of everyone who is making a difference through their involvement in this project.

Diversity Highlighted In Oakland's Elementary Schools

By Barbara Tillman, Ed.D,
Principal, Manito School

It is important that one states this or her values. It is even more important that one applies those beliefs that will embellish all of our lives today and in the future. Those are lessons that must start when the children are young and should be modeled day in and day out by the adults whom these students admire. One of those goals that we have in each school and which we report to the Oakland Board of Education, Bergen County Department of Education, and the N.J. State Department of Education, is to enrich all of our lives through the awareness, highlighting and celebration of the diversity of all peoples.

For more than a decade, we have highlighted the diversity of different cultures through the elementary social studies unit of Global Education and that initiative will continue. In addition, there are myriad ways in which

we help the children to understand that there are differences from country to country, culture to culture, religion to religion and language to language, as well as differences in personality type, learning styles, sex, age, body image and myriad other facets of human beings. These differences need to be shared, understood and appreciated.

Another initiative in which we participate is a bringing together of all of the houses of worship in the FLOW area and encouraging students to write about the vision and dreams of the great American, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We celebrated this brilliant and brave man during the month of January, so we actually began the writing during December in Grades 3 through 5.

Furthermore, within each Oakland elementary school, a showcase and/or prominent bulletin board has a display that touches the souls and "heart-strings" of everybody who visits

the schools and comes to work or learn within one of the schools each day. The Student Council/Cabinet directs the ideas within this display and helps with its construction. Certain grade levels may participate in this display, as well.

If you visited Dogwood, Heights or Manito during January, you will have seen each school's commitment to Dr. King's dreams of freedom, respect, equality, and of people being judged by the "content of their character, rather than the color of their skin."

Respect for the differences in others cannot be a practice in rhetoric. If we believe in the important differences from person to person, we can all work together to create a world that is comprised of decency, understanding and acceptance. The children are seeing this initiative throughout the schools, and we will try every day and in every way to make those dreams come true — in America and around the world.

Elementary World Language To Begin In Fourth Grade

The Oakland Public School District is pleased to announce the continuing expansion of our World Language Program. **Susana Alvarez**, who has been teaching the fifth grade and at Valley Middle School, will begin instruction for the fourth grade students in the second half of the school year. Ms. Alvarez sat in on the committee to prepare the curriculum for the instruction. She will spend two mornings a week at Dogwood Hill School and two mornings a week at Heights School. Manito School will receive her services during four afternoons.

During the summer of 2003, Ms. Alvarez, along with colleagues from across the district, met to review and refine the Elementary World Language Curriculum. Now students in fourth grade will be introduced to basic vocabulary, sentence structure

and pronunciation guidelines. Additionally, in concert with the New Jersey CORE Content Standards, students will also be presented with major cultural practices of Spanish speaking countries.

By now introducing Spanish in a formal setting in fourth grade, the fifth grade curriculum, along with the course content of the middle school, will begin to expand. Although this is not an immediate response caused by earlier elementary education in world language, with time students will master the present sixth grade work more quickly and be ready to move ahead.

Parents are invited to offer their feedback regarding the fourth grade Spanish instruction program to **Glenn Clark**, Elementary World Language liaison for the district. Mr. Clark can be contacted at clark@oakland.k12.nj.us.

OEF Holding Spring Gala Dinner Dance

The Oakland Education Foundation invites all residents to attend its Spring Gala Dinner Dance on Friday, March 12 at The Tides, North Haledon, from 7:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. Tickets are \$75 per person and include a cocktail hour, dinner, open bar, dancing to magnificent music provided by a New York-based orchestra and vocalists, and an array of prizes to be auctioned.

In addition, **Dr. Richard Heflich**, Superintendent of Schools, will be honored for his years of commitment and dedication to the Oakland children and community. All proceeds will benefit Oakland children and public schools.

Please join us for a guaranteed evening of fun while contributing to the OEF. Please contact event

co-chairs **Barbara Ciambra** at 201-337-4147 or **Robin Smolenski** at 201-337-0591 if you would like tickets for the event, would like to make a donation to the Foundation, or would like to donate a prize.

FLOW FOLLIES SET FOR EARLY MARCH

The annual FLOW Follies will be performed on March 4, 5 and 6 at 8:00 p.m. and on March 7 at 2:00 p.m. at Ramapo High School. The show is titled "It's a Mystery To Me" and it will raise money for scholarships. Last year FLOW Follies handed out \$12,000 in student scholarships in the Ramapo-Indian Hills district. Tickets can be purchased in advance from cast members for \$10 for adults, \$5 for students. Adults are \$12 at the door.

Watch Exit 58 Live! • Tuesday, February 24 • 7:30 p.m. • Channel 77

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