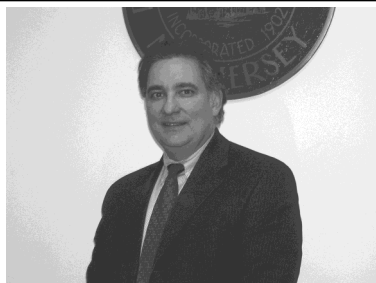


CROSS ROADS

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Summer, 2009
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Mayor's Message

It's hard to believe that summer is over and the season of fall approaches. The change of seasons always reminds me of how timeless and perennial life is and how we need to take a moment and enjoy everything life has to offer. Fortunately, we live in a wonderful and vibrant community that offers us much to enjoy.

We have been meeting monthly with Wyckoff and Franklin Lakes to study areas where we can share services, pool resources and purchase items jointly to save costs. Nicknamed WOLF, we are committed to finding ways we can jointly cooperate in the area of shared services. Our first effort of jointly bidding out recreational equipment was a big success and proved we can work together for a common objective. We will be continuing this effort going forward into the future and I will report on our progress as we proceed.

The Green Team has had its kickoff meeting and is proceeding with putting together an action plan for keeping Oakland green and environmentally friendly. A great example of this is our recent garbage contract. The borough recently rebid its solid waste collection contract, which provides for once a week garbage collection from October through March and twice per week col-

lection for the rest of the year. The once a week collection will require each of us to recycle more of our waste stream.

This will not only reduce the amount of garbage going to the dump but will also save us considerable tax dollars. By reformatting our contract this way the borough saved \$71,000 over a three-year contract. And consider this. We save a minimum of \$142 for every ton of paper that gets recycled (we earn a minimum of \$60 per ton selling the material and avoid \$82 per ton in disposal costs) and save \$94 for every ton of commingled material (\$12 per ton revenue and \$82 per ton disposal costs).

This is only the tip of the iceberg for us. One event we are looking forward to holding is a "Green Fair" right here in Oakland sometime in May where we will have green vendor booths, educational sessions and amusements all intended to make going green a fun and worthwhile effort. I thank the members of the Green Team for their hard work and look forward to working with them on this important initiative. If anyone wishes to become involved in this effort, please email me at mayor@oakland-nj.org and I will make sure you receive information on how you can join in.

Preserving our open space is a critical component of keeping Oakland green and protecting our community's environment from undesirable development that threatens our natural beauty and resources. On October 7th at 7:30 p.m. the Mayor and Council will be holding a public hearing to discuss the potential purchase of the old Pleasureland site off Doty Road. This parcel is located in the flood plain and is part of the wetland and drainage system associated with the Ramapo River. The project cost is \$2.2

million dollars and the Borough has received up to \$1.2 million dollars from the County Open Space Trust to purchase this site. However, additional dollars are needed to complete the purchase. After applying \$500,000.00 of Green Acres dollars, we still need to raise an additional \$600,000.00 in bonding to buy the parcel. The Borough's open space fund can provide funding for this bond but the fund is only authorized for another few years and will require another referendum to continue. The Mayor and Council are seeking your input on this issue and we encourage you to attend this meeting and voice your opinion on whether this purchase should proceed. I personally support this purchase as an ideal opportunity to protect our river front as well as provide an opportunity for the beginning of a riverfront trail system leading back to the recreation fields in the center of town. Please join us in this important discussion.

Finally, on September 12th I had the pleasure of participating in the Oakland Volunteer Fire Department's 100th anniversary celebration. Despite some rain and drizzle, I was thrilled at the turn out and enthusiastic support the OVFD received on this day. These volunteers are among our very finest and we appreciate all that they do for us. The day was not only fun but provided a well-deserved opportunity for all of us to say "Thank You". My personal thanks to all who planned and participated in this great event.

As we head into the cool and refreshing season of fall, please remember, school is in session. Obey local speed limits, watch out for children and keep our kids alive by driving 25!

2009 Municipal Budget

As we began the 2009 budget process, the Finance Committee established various goals, one of which was for us to present a budget to the Governing Body that preserved jobs for Borough Employees. We also had the goal of doing everything in our power to not undertake the States pension deferral program. Personally, I viewed this option as a “poison pill” for current and future budgets and something Oakland needed to avoid at all costs if we wanted to maintain a healthy financial future.

In light of the economic situation I am happy to say that were able to accomplish these goal and many more.

Working with the Governing Body, we were also able to maintain borough services and continue our work to present a budget that secures funding for the current fiscal year but also is forward looking and does not jeopardize future fiscal years.

For 2009, the Borough has adopted a \$17.559 million budget up 0.2% from last year’s \$17.530 million budget. The amount to be raised by local taxes, the amount all of us contribute towards the budget, increased \$610,000 over last year’s level or 4.8%.

The Municipal tax rate will increase by 2.2 cents from 49.9 cents to 52.1 cents per \$100 dollars of assessed value. This means the owner of a home assessed at the Borough average of \$485,107 will pay \$2,527 or \$112 dollars more than last year’s \$2,415 municipal tax bill. This figure does not include School, County or Open Space taxes.

The major item affecting this year’s budget was a reduction of \$581,000 thousand dollars worth of Miscellaneous Revenues. The largest reduction in revenues was a loss of \$281,000 thousand of interest income. With the economy taking major hits, interest rates have declined and the rates the Borough receives on our invested money is significantly lower than what we earned in 2008. We also experienced a \$42,000 reduction in State Aid, a reduction in a Homeland Security grant of \$70,000, as well as the loss of some general fees.

The reduction in Miscellaneous Revenues also reflects a reduction of Surplus Revenues in the amount of \$84,000. This is actually a good reduction because it means we are keeping more Surplus Funds than we are using. I am a firm

believer that having a healthy Surplus Fund is essential to the Borough’s long-term financial health. Surplus funds represent our emergency savings fund and my goal is to bring this fund back up to \$1.0 million dollars.

While revenues declined, we were able to offset this decline with an extremely modest spending increase of \$29,687 thousand dollars. We were able to accomplish this by making spending cuts worth \$214,065 dollars. Offsetting this reduction was an increase in contractual salaries & wages for \$243,752 dollars. This amount also includes one-time payouts for employee retirements.

As I have said for the past three years, while we are experiencing a tax increase this year, the percentage increase is lower than it was in each of the last three years. The increase – in both dollars and percent – has continued to decline since 2005 as we move towards stabilizing our tax rate.

Again, I think the most important things to note with this year’s budget are that Oakland is maintaining jobs for its employees and not reducing services. All our employees have families and putting anyone out of work in this economy was something the Governing Body wanted to avoid at all costs.

As many municipalities in New Jersey are taking drastic measures to pass a budget, Oakland, because of the fiscal housecleaning we have undertaken since I join the Council in 2006, is able to realize the benefits of that housecleaning through the controlling of spending growth.

This means that Oakland did not have to take drastic measure such as employee layoffs or furloughs, or cut services for the residents. Because of our planning, because we have been constructing annual budgets that are forward looking and because of all the hard work by our Department Heads to control costs, we can continue to maintain the services our community comes to expect and we place ourselves in a great position for future success.

I would like to thank all of our Department Heads because without their hard work in helping to control spending and finding ways to save money, we would not be as successful as we have been in controlling costs.

Councilman Frank Di Pentima
Chairman of the Finance Committee



Pictured L-R: Councilwoman Betsy Stagg, Councilman Frank DiPentima, Councilwoman Karen Marcalus, Kim Marchese, Valerie Suman, Mayor John Szabo, Roger Marchese, Councilman Donald Burns, Bergen County Exec. Dennis McNerney, Recreation Commissioner Steven Wagoner and Councilman Chris Visconti

Oakland Needs Volunteers!
Board of Health
Borough of Oakland, New Jersey

In the event that a public health issue requires the distribution of medication to the general public, across the state, public health agencies and offices of emergency management are developing plans to rapidly distribute this medication to their local population. While activation of these plans may never become necessary, they must be made. Here in Oakland, the Board of Health, in conjunction with the Office of Emergency Management, is currently developing a plan to distribute medication to the entire community. This is a huge undertaking and will require the help of many volunteers. Oakland's plan will work only if enough volunteers are recruited; otherwise, residents may have to travel a distance to obtain medication at a regional POD (point of distribution).

We need volunteers! Please help your neighbors when they need it most! A medical background is not required. More information will be forthcoming. The first meeting to discuss plans for volunteering was held at 7:00 pm July 28th at the Senior Center. Kindly contact the Oakland Board of Health at 201-337-9254 or health@oakland-nj.org, if interested.

OAKLAND CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY SPECIAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As a part of Oakland's Emergency Preparedness Plan, the Borough is conducting a Community Special Needs Assessment in order to identify those residents who would be unable to evacuate on their own in an emergency, e.g., those who are bedridden, wheelchair-bound, require a walker, are hearing, sight or physically impaired, on oxygen, dialysis, a ventilator, suction machine or other life-supporting equipment.

The Board of Health, Mayor and Council, Borough Administration, Office of Emergency Management, Police and Fire Departments and the First Aid Squad urge residents to complete a Special Needs Survey, available at Borough Hall, the Oakland Library and the Oakland Senior Center. Those who need assistance completing the survey may contact the Health Department at (201) 337-9254. Information will be kept confidential, maintained by the Health Department and will only be accessed by emergency responders in the event of an emergency. Completed surveys should be dropped off or mailed to the Oakland Health Department, One Municipal Plaza, Oakland, NJ 07436. Please help us to help you!

OAKLAND TENNIS COURTS REDEDICATED

On May 31st, Oakland's newly renovated tennis courts were re-dedicated in honor of Peggy Suman (posthumously) and to Roger Marchese. Peggy was a well known Oakland resident, volunteer and dedicated recreation advocate whose daughter-in-law Valerie was on hand for the dedication. Roger Marchese is a longtime Oaklander and Team Tennis recreation organizer who was instrumental in promoting to the Mayor and Council the need for renovating the tennis courts and who helped educate the town's leadership to the fact that hundreds of Oakland residents, from school children to Senior citizens, are involved in playing the sport. The former Oakland courts were in great disrepair with numerous cracks, water damage and hollow sub-surfaces. In addition, the layout of the former courts in relation to the baseball field's night lights and the direction of the sunrise and sunset, created blinding glare for tennis players. Once the project was approved by the Council, Roger dedicated countless hours during the entire renovation process to ensure the tennis courts were properly reconstructed. Now the courts are perfectly surfaced and their positioning vastly reduces glare. Another benefit of the new tennis court construction is increased car parking at the recreation fields.

A message from Recreation Chairman Steve Wagoner

Business Week Magazine recently rated Oakland 43rd (overall) and our recreation programs 9th in their article "50 Best Places to Raise Your Kids" for having the best, most affordable recreational programs in the entire United States. What an incredible achievement, we all owe congratulations to our hundreds of dedicated volunteers for making recreation the success it is. Oakland is quite unique, in that we are the only town in the area that does not have a paid Recreation Department. Other than Summer Camp, all of our Recreation sports and programs are run completely by volunteers. The nine Recreation Commissioners are appointed by the mayor to serve in staggered 5 - year terms. The Commissioners are responsible for developing, managing and implementing all of the various programs including all field scheduling, rules and regulations and equipment purchasing, etc.

The Recreation Commissioners, coordinators, directors and hundreds of volunteer coaches offer a variety of programs to Oakland's youth from kindergarten through high school and even adults, including Baseball, Golf, Softball, Football, Cheerleading, Roller Hockey, Basketball, Soccer, Wrestling, Tennis, Adult Sports, and a Program specially developed for our Special Needs Children. We also run our Summer Camp Program, which was voted runner up for best camp in Northern New Jersey last year by the local newspaper, which considered all camps including private.

This has been a busy couple of years for Recreation. We have created a web site www.oaklandrec.com. There you can find all up to date information about recreation, including field closings, schedules, contacts, field permits etc. The very busy site averages over 6,000 hits per month. We are happy to announce that all of our more than 400 coaches have been certified in the Rutgers Coaches Safety Certification Program and had complete background checks.

Recently, we were able to complete many projects, including resolving safety issues such as the installation of on-deck batting cages for all fields. We also installed 70' foot high steel poles and safety netting around 5 fields to protect players, coaches and spectators from hazardous foul balls. We refurbished both the outfields and infields of various fields including new top soil and sod, added a new sprinkler system to field #9 funded by the Sports Association of Oakland. With the help of James Construction (Potash family) and

their heavy equipment including a bulldozer we were able to level grade and completely refurbish field #2. This is the sixth field they have voluntarily renovated over the past few years. The Lorraine Murray field was rededicated this past year, complete with a new scoreboard courtesy of the Oakland Fathers Club and refurbished infield and much needed drainage. All of these projects valued at over \$250,000, were done with absolutely zero tax dollars! Some of the funds came from a trust account funded by a capital fee included in our sports sign up fees, and field rental fees, the remainder came from monetary donations, as well as donations of labor and materials.

We are indeed excited that the tennis court construction project is now completed. The courts represent an integral part of our recreations infrastructure and are enjoyed by many residents both young and old alike. This amazing project was completed utilizing over \$349,000 in county and private grants as well as contributions from the Recreation Commissioners trust fund.

We have two exciting projects in the works and are in the process of applying for grants to help fund them. The first project is a new ADA compliant playground surface for the age 5-12 year old playground and new play equipment for a 2-5 year old toddler playground expansion.

A concept and design plan for a walking, jogging, bicycling, wheelchair path throughout the complex is also in the works. This would be a wonderful addition to the recreation complex. It would be a much sought after safe, level surface for people young and old to enjoy throughout the year. Initially we are looking to install an asphalt surface to almost a mile of area within the complex weaving in and around the ball fields and parking lot perimeters. The path will also lead you down to the Ramapo River for quite a scenic view. We are proposing rest stops along the walk with benches, lighting, beautiful landscaping and areas with exercise equipment strategically placed throughout for a cardio circuit. This will prove to be a magnificent project suitable for all residents from the youngsters learning to ride bike to our seniors out for a relaxing stroll to people confined to wheelchairs and scooters.

With these projects in mind we welcome any and all volunteer efforts and donations. If you have a special skill or trade, and would like to volunteer please contact any of the commissioners on our website or wagoners@optonline.net.

A Word About Bottled Water - From the Oakland Environmental Commission

Did you know that bottled water can cost as much as 1500 times as much as drinking the same amount of tap water? Did you know that of the estimated 36 Billion water bottles sold in the US every year up to 80% are not recycled and end up in rivers and land fills? Additionally, there has been much discussion in the news media recently about how some bottled water is actually just treated tap water. If you are going to drink tap water anyway, shouldn't it be from a source that is tested to be safe? All residents should have received the recent test results from Oakland wells showing that our tap water meets or exceeds all federal standards. With all of that information, it's no wonder why tap water is the economical and ecological alternative! To promote the use of Oakland's tap water, the Environmental Commission gave away free re-usable water bottles at the recent Town Carnival. These bottles, (which were donated by one of the Commissioner's employers) were made with the latest health conscious technology and are certified to be "BPA (Bisphenol A) free" and made with a food safe resin Polyethylene terephthalate (PETE) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyethylene_terephthalate>.

If you want more information about any of these items, please contact the Oakland Environmental Commission at the following email address: OaklandEC@gmail.com

News From Oakland Schools

The Superintendent's Message

Dear Members of the Oakland Community:

Last September, our 2008/2009 school year opened smoothly with enthusiastic students, new teachers, revised curriculum and improvements to our school buildings. As soon as faculty, staff and students were acclimated to their work, the District began to prepare for the State's review of our schools. Throughout the fall, we both learned about the new State inspection requirements and prepared to demonstrate that Oakland is indeed "a learning community committed to excellence."



This spring, we received the results of the State's review, and the Board of Education is pleased to report to the residents of Oakland that the Commissioner of Education designated our District "as a high performing district." Therefore, the Oakland School District has been certified "to continue operation as a public school district in the State of New Jersey for a period of three years or until the district's next QSAC review." (More detail about the QSAC results are contained in an article in this *Crossroads*.) We thank our community for your support of education, our schools, and our students and staff. School districts don't achieve excellence without the nurturance and strong endorsement of the communities in which they perform their work. In Oakland, we deeply appreciate how highly community members prize education and children. Working together, we continue to build a learning community committed to excellence.

During this school year, our students and teachers have challenged themselves to reach new heights. Daily, we have been amazed at what has been achieved. In this edition of *Crossroads*, we are providing a glimpse of the activities that occurred in our schools and the high achievement of our students. We hope that, as you read these articles, you, too, will feel the pride that the Board feels on a regular basis.

Although the summer months have come, our schools are still incredibly busy as a variety of summer programs are enriching student learning. Furthermore, our custodial, grounds and maintenance staff are working hard on a variety of projects to ensure the safe operation of our schools and to better service the Oakland community. Some of these projects are entailed herein. Additionally, on inclement summer days, one will find the Recreation Department Summer Camp operating in our schools.

As August approaches, we hope that all enjoy "the lazy, hazy days of summer."

Be assured that, come September, The Oakland Public Schools will be spotlessly clean, and prepared to welcome our students for another very successful year.

With best wishes,
Dr. Richard G. Heflich
Superintendent of Schools

8th Grade Class Trip

Members of the Valley Middle School 8th grade class, travelled to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for an overnight trip in Early June. Students visited the New Jersey Adventure Aquarium in Camden, the National Constitution Center, the National Liberty Museum and the Philadelphia Zoo. Among the experiences were guided tours of the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall as well as a Ride the Ducks sightseeing tour of the historic city. The trip served both as a culminating activity for the 8th grade American Studies course and a celebratory farewell for our graduates of the Class of 2009.



Valley Middle School
Philadelphia 2009
8th Grade Class Trip

The State's Review of School Districts: QSAC

Recently, the State determined that its public schools should undergo a more comprehensive and more frequent review process. Thus, the Quality Single Accounting Continuum, (or QSAC, as it is more commonly known), was introduced in New Jersey. This new evaluation of school districts, (not applicable to independent or parochial schools), shall occur every three years and is intended to measure each school district's achievement in Governance, Fiscal Management, Curriculum and Instruction, Operations, and Personnel.

After much preparation and the accumulation of the voluminous paperwork required for the State review, our District was visited by State monitors on November 17 and 18, 2009. One team of officials assessed Fiscal Management, Facilities, and Governance. A second team evaluated Personnel, Instruction and Program, Operations, and other aspects of Governance.

The State team was welcomed to Oakland by the Board of Education, the VMS Student Council President and Vice President, the QSAC team, and faculty and staff. A power point presentation of the District provided an overview of the Oakland Schools and greetings were given by Grade 8 students Ivan Rudd and Andrew Scerbo.

In late spring, the Commissioner of Education formally determined that Oakland is a *high performing school district* based upon the monitors' assessment of the District in each of these five areas.

Specifically, with a maximum possible score of 100 in each category, the State rated Oakland as follows:

Fiscal Management	=	98%
Governance	=	100%
Instruction and Program	=	91%
Operations	=	98%
Personnel	=	100%

We are proud of the support and hard work of all during the State review process.

Safetytown/2009

Each summer, the playground at Heights School is transformed into an innovative arena called *Safetytown*. This special program welcomes preschool children prior to their entry into Kindergarten for the purpose of learning about the principles of safety so that they might get a jump start on how to best take care of themselves. It also affords the children the opportunity to meet one another and make new friends before entering our District's kindergartens in the Fall. The program has always epitomized the adage, Children First. The program is collaboratively sponsored by the BOE and the Mothers' and Fathers' Club of Oakland, as well as the Oakland PBA and the Municipal Alliance.

Safetytown has been in operation in Oakland since 1985. In 2001, the program was revisited to determine if the course content was meeting the needs of the children entering *Safetytown*. As a result, several new pieces were added to the *Safetytown* Program to bring it forward into the 21st century. The new program components include: anger management, peer relationships and how to deal assertively with bullying, playground safety, a mini-lesson on nutrition, and thematic story time.

The children enjoy the additional components and we have asked that their parents/guardians, as the children's primary educators and role models, continue to reinforce the concepts of *Safetytown* at home. Each Safety Towner receives a diploma as a remembrance of their successful participation in the *Safetytown* at the program's conclusion.

Volunteers from Valley Middle School and Indian Hills High School annually assume the responsibility of becoming *Safetytown* Leaders and Village Managers. These young adults are the foundation and backbone of *Safetytown* Program. They are the role models that the children look up to. These young people are in charge of the children and gently guide them through the course of the program. For eight days, these emerging leaders volunteer because of their love for children and their commitment to the spirit of community service.

In addition, we have been very fortunate to have acquired the talents of two of the consummate professionals in our district to serve as *Safetytown* Coordinators. Both Ms. Moscato and Ms. Kuhn, teachers at Heights School, work diligently to make sure that the children would maximize experiences. These teachers also oversee, care for, and nurture the young adults who take on the responsibility for guiding the children through *Safetytown*. and are commended for their community service.

Also interacting with the children is Police Officer Mark Piercy, Oakland's juvenile officer, who we publicly commend for the time, effort, and energy that he devoted to the success of *Safetytown* and our Summer Programs Nurse, Michele Wall.

As a final note, in Oakland we value our children as our number one priority. Children are an inspiration; each holds promise for our future. They supply us with endless rays of energy, enthusiasm, warmth, and hope - to keep us going. *Safetytown* helps ensure that our children's future will be bright and safe.

Ms. Barbara Ciambra, Principal
Heights School/*Safetytown* Liaison

A team of eight eighth graders from Valley Middle School, Oakland, New Jersey, earned an Honorable Mention in the New Jersey State Bar Foundation's 2009 Law Adventure Competition. Since October, Annie Elfers, Nikki Felice, Dan Hysell, Ryan Kennelly, Hayeon Kim, Sara Kiter, Megan McPhee, and Alexandra Piano, with the guidance of their teacher, Ms. Jeanne Schulze, researched and wrote this year a civil case entitled, "Food Fight". The team had expert help from Ms. Carol Russek, Esq., who was the group's volunteer attorney/mentor. Ms. Russek devoted many hours working with the students and taught them to think and write as lawyers do. In their case, the students explored the question of discrimination against businesses and persons of Middle Eastern descent in a post 9/11 New Jersey. Ethnicity is a protected category in the NJ Law Against Discrimination.

One hundred seventy-four schools were entered in the Seventh and Eighth Grade category. Only sixteen of those schools received an award. Cases were judged on these criteria: how well the entry promotes understanding of the law and our justice system; focuses on the theme provided; and follows the Law Adventure rules and procedures. The quality of the writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling also entered into the determination of the winners.

The Oakland Department of Health including Ms. Deborah McGrath and Mr. Robert Jernick, Pomptonian Food Services' Ms. Brenda Hartley, and Social Studies teacher and attorney Mr. Thomas McGoldrick provided the students with additional expertise on the subject of restaurant inspections and discrimination.



The group performed their original mock trial Food Fight in front of a jury of students at the New Jersey Law Center in New Brunswick, NJ, on May 27, 2009. Their Honorable Mention Award speaks volumes about how well our students demonstrated their abilities.

Law Adventure Grade 8 Students, pictured at the competition with their teacher, Ms. Jeanne Schulze

THRESHOLD HELPS STUDENTS PREPARE OVER THE SUMMER

Teachers walked out into the season of summer, looking forward to a vacation that might include recreation, trips to the Jersey shore or family visits across the country. For some staff members, however, the initial break after the school year was no more than a weekend.

To assist children in strengthening both reading and math skills, Dogwood Hill School opened its doors to more than thirty children from across the district on Monday, June 29. The Threshold Program is designed to assist children entering first and second grade who could benefit from additional, small group instruction and reinforcement of their basic skills.

Mr. William Kobb and Ms. Antoinette D'Ambrosio are Reading Specialists with the Oakland School District, and Ms. Debbie Gostonski and Ms. Tracy Nabba are certified Teachers of the Handicapped. These professionals work with the children in small groups to meet their individual needs and to strengthen their foundations of reading and math skills.

The program is coordinated by Dr. Camille Cabezas, Director of Student Personnel and Special Services. The program runs for the month of July. The teachers then invite the parents in to discuss the work that has been accomplished. The general education teachers who receive these students in September are also informed of the progress that was made over the summer weeks.

Dr. Cabezas explained that the program has evolved over the years. "The students," Dr. Cabezas explains, "practice the benchmarks for their grade levels in a way that's fun for them, but still very intense." Children rotate to have time dedicated to both language arts/literacy and mathematics. "So, when they come back in September," Dr. Cabezas continued, "they're better prepared for their new grade level."

Legacy of Liberty YouTube Video Contest

Six Valley Middle School students, Annie Elfers, Nikki Felice, Hayeon Kim, Sara Kiter, Megan McPhee and Alexandra Piano won Honorable Mention in Law Day 2009 *Legacy of Liberty YouTube* Video Contest, sponsored by the New Jersey Bar Foundation, Young Lawyers Division. The contest utilized the theme: *A Legacy of Liberty: Celebrating Lincoln's Bicentennial*.

In February, Ms. Jeanne Schulze's Grade 8 Workshop class was busy creating the script for their Law Adventure case, also sponsored by the New Jersey Bar Foundation, when she presented them with a new challenge, *The Legacy of Liberty YouTube* Video Contest. The contest required students to create a video, three minutes or less, which demonstrated their understanding of the Legacy of Liberty of Abraham Lincoln. After brainstorming, a group of students decided to form, with their hands, the letters of words they associated with Abraham Lincoln, such as equality, liberty, peace, freedom and USA, letter-by-letter. They also wanted to showcase President Obama as part of that legacy. One of the students, Sara Kiter, used photoshop techniques to enhance each letter, putting them together into words, adding them to iMovie and setting everything to music.

The group won one of only two Honorable Mentions in the Middle School Division and a \$50 iTunes gift card. They were invited to visit Trenton on May 1, to take part in Law Day ceremonies and receive their award from New Jersey's Attorney General. They received another invitation to again visit Trenton on June 24, to meet Governor Jon Corzine at New Jersey's 345th birthday celebration. Please view the video at www.njbf.org.

CELEBRATE NEW JERSEY

Oakland's Grade Four students participated in Celebrate New Jersey, a statewide essay contest in which pupils had the opportunity to learn about New Jersey's diverse population, history, places and events! From 11,000 enrolled students statewide and 1,200 submitted articles and projects, the following ten of Oakland's student authors were selected to receive the Celebrate New Jersey Best of the Best Award for 2009. Sadie Hildebrandt, Kyle Sears, Dahiana Arenas, Valerie Shwalb, Lindsey Shelkin, Abby Maimone, Chris Lange, John James Bukovec, Anthony Tucci and Shirley Lo. These students were recognized at a special awards night on April 30th at Montclair State University. In addition, their articles may be published on the Celebrate New Jersey website located at www.celebratenj.org.

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