

Northern Valley Press

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STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

In Englewood, the Bergen Family Center joined multiple generations for a special celebration.

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FEBRUARY 26, 2018

ENGLEWOOD

CITIZENS CRITICIZE ROAD CLOSURES

Controversial move to ban bridge traffic draws rebuke

BY MICHAEL OLOHAN
OF NORTHERN VALLEY PRESS

Dozens of disgruntled Englewood residents waited on line at the Feb. 20 city council meeting to criticize Leonia's month-old road closures directly to Mayor Judah Zeigler, some imploring him to end the closures and let residents travel freely between towns.

Zeigler sat at a front table, took lots of notes, and listened patiently as an hour-long parade of neighbors spoke. Several times, Council President Wayne Hamer asked residents to address him and not Zeigler.

While addressing complaints, he noted Fort Lee appeared "happy" with reduced traffic on its streets, while Teaneck and Palisades Park had "no issues" with the 60 street closures enacted by Leonia to reduce traffic traversing the borough on its way to and from the George Washington Bridge.

The street closures were enacted Jan. 22 for nine hours per day, seven days per week, from 6-10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Zeigler said no \$200 summonses for violating the closures had been issued by Leonia police since the closures began.

Opposed to closures

"Nothing short of eliminating Leonia's ban on 60 streets, nine hours a day, seven days per week is what we stand for. Leonia chose to stand alone. We cannot stand with

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TO EDUCATE AND INSPIRE

Veteran's nonprofit aimed at city's youth



Teens from the "Man Up" group hang out together. This boys-to-men leadership development group is just one element of the Englewood-based Disabled Combat Veterans Youth Program.

BY HILLARY VIDERS
SPECIAL TO NORTHERN VALLEY PRESS

Dion Cucuta of Englewood has led stellar careers in three distinct fields: the military, culinary arts and community service. Now, the father of eight has brilliantly managed to hone skills from each of these arenas to create a mentoring program for children and teens in the city and surrounding areas.

PHOTO BY HILLARY VIDERS

Called the Disabled Combat Veterans Youth Program, it's a holistic organization that promotes community engagement, mentoring and spiritual growth. In 2014, the group was granted nonprofit status.

Back in 1977, Cucuta attended Johnson & Wales University with the Department of the Navy and was assigned to the Second Marine Division,

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BRIDGING GAPS

Seniors at CareOne at Cresskill received a visit from a group of civic-minded high school students.

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CRESSKILL

RESIDENTS RAISE TAX CONCERNS

Increasing valuations trouble some home owners

BY MICHAEL OLOHAN
CORRESPONDENT

A handful of residents dissatisfied with new and higher 2018 property reassessments appeared at the Feb. 21 council meeting and were advised to speak with a representative from the appraisal company by the mayor.

Mayor Benedict Romeo told about 10 property owners who appeared upset with higher property assessments to first set up a meeting with Appraisal Systems, Inc. of Glen Rock, to discuss the assessment and present their case. Letters spelling out the new reassessment values were mailed Feb. 12 to property owners.

Last summer, the borough hired Appraisal Systems, Inc. to do a "rolling reassessment" of properties, with 100 percent of properties being reassessed for 2018, and each following year 25 percent of properties will be reassessed to keep market values up to date.

Borough residents dissatisfied with their new property reassessments should make an appointment to meet with the

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Back in time...

In 1913, Tenafly residents were driven to madness by the sound of chimes.

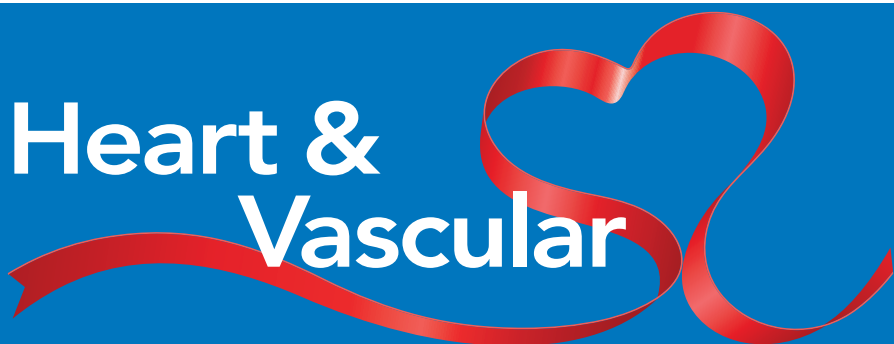
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ENGLEWOOD
HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER

National leaders.
Local address.

Heart &
Vascular



FROM PAGE 1

Special Forces. He served on the USS Kennedy aircraft carrier, where he cooked for up to 7,000 hungry Marines.

In 1981, during his second tour of duty, Cucuta was injured while on a patrol mission in Japan. On Sept. 30, 1983, he was honorably discharged from the Marines, after which he began working as a chef in top restaurants in New Jersey and New York. At the Park Avenue Cafe, a four-star restaurant, he worked alongside celebrity chef David Burke.

Cucuta now serves as the president of the Disabled Combat Veterans Youth Program, or DCVYP. He says that their mission is “to provide our youth with a community of male and female role models who listen, accept and encourage them to become good men and women. We give boys and girls the opportunity to make conscious choices about what kind of men and women they want to become. We offer hope, support and guidance on their path to adulthood.”

Stephanie Cucuta, Dion’s wife, also plays a central role in the program. Besides leading workshops and working one-on-one with students, she is a role model for young women. Stephanie is a volunteer and mentor for Catholic Big Brother/Sisters and she has headed a mentoring program at A Better Bronx For Youth, a nonprofit organization based in the South Bronx, N.Y. She was also a mentor at Citibank, where she has been employed for over 20 years as an executive assistant.

The DCVYP holds three main workshops on a regular basis: “Man Up,” “No Boys Allowed” (led by Stephanie) and “Culinary Cadets.”

According to Dion Cucuta, “The goal of these programs is to develop young men and women who understand the importance of positive and critical thinking, responsible personal conduct, respect for self and others, educational achievement and cultural enrichment.”

“Man Up” is a boys-to-men leadership development program that is designed to teach, train and mentor young male adolescents from Englewood and the surrounding communities. “No Boys Allowed” is a program with similar goals for girls.

The “Culinary Cadets” program instructs students in the art of cooking. These classes are held in



Mount Calvary Baptist Church Pastor Eddie Spencer IV (back row, center) welcomes everyone to the church for the youth program.



From left: Dion Cucuta and facilitators Delores Collier and Daniel Creighton help set up a buffet lunch.

the cafeteria of the Janis E. Dismus School and the kitchen of the Mount Calvary Baptist Church. Culinary cadets learn to cook, calculate measurements and work together as a team to develop new skills and time management.

The Disabled Combat Veterans Youth Program also includes two workshops, “Together We Serve” and “Career Day.” In “Together We Serve,” military professionals and non-profits come together to give back through workshops, mentoring and other activities with youth and others. During “Career Day,” professionals from all walks of life explain the requirements of career growth and the importance of education.

A day of education and inspiration

On Feb. 17, a three-hour Disabled Combat Veterans Youth Pro-

gram was held at the Mount Calvary Baptist Church. After a welcome from Pastor Eddie Spencer IV, Dion and Stephanie Cucuta and five facilitators supervised a group of 14 boys and girls ages 7 through 17.

The day’s agenda began with a workshop in which the students finished working on posters that they had been making. Each student had been asked to create a collage honoring a famous black person. Among the figures that the youngsters chose were Malcolm X, Whoopi Goldberg, Prince, Michael Jackson, Harriet Tubman and Janet Jackson.

At noon, special guest speaker Jason Juxon-Smith gave a presentation on Black History Month. Smith has a psychology degree from Kean University and is vice president of the Urban League for Bergen County Young Professionals.

Rather than a lecture, Smith led



Jason Copeland, Dorian Martin and Storm Giles with team leader Stephanie Cucuta.



Students display the role model posters that they made in the youth program.

a lively interactive discussion that began with students tossing a football to each other. After catching the ball, each student recited his/her name and school grade. Anyone who “dropped the ball” had to state a fact about Black History Month.

Smith asked each student why black history is important and he interspersed facts with questions. A dozen parents were also at the program, and they eagerly joined in the discussion. Their comments gave the youngsters an eye-opening perspective on how different black community life was 50 years ago compared to today.

In the course of an hour, Smith related a wealth of information in a lively and entertaining format. He continually stressed the importance of respect, accountability and higher education. He also encouraged everyone to do

volunteer work to help other members of the community and to use their vote to implement changes that are needed in society.

Smith’s takeaway and challenge was, “What can I do to improve the quality of life now?”

After the presentation, everyone enjoyed a buffet lunch and an array of baked desserts, many of which were made by parents of students in the youth program.

The final activity of the day was the presentation of the posters. Each student held up his or her poster and explained why the person in it was chosen.

At the conclusion of the day’s program, students as well as parents said that they are looking forward to upcoming events of the Disabled Combat Veterans Youth Program.

SUDOKU

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you’ll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here’s How It Works: Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

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			1		5	2		3
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