



Mount Airy Independent

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Girard College is MLK Day of Service Signature Project

By **PATRICK COBBS**
Staff Writer

This year Girard College, in Fairmount, will host Philadelphia's annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service signature event on January 18, for a reason that is linked to the school's history and is close to the hearts of many area residents.

The private boarding school serves low-income students, the majority of which are African American and female. But that wasn't always the case. Forty-five years ago Dr. King came to Girard to join what would become one of this city's defining Civil Rights struggles – the fight to integrate the school that until then served only white male youth.

"We stayed there seven months and 17 days," recalled Nicetown resident and activist Kenneth Salaam. "At the time it was the longest protest in the United States."

Salaam, or "Freedom Smitty" as he

Continued on page 9



Neighbors who see activity during the night during the next week at Allen Lane Train Station should not be alarmed: a SEPTA contractor will be performing overnight work there as part of the rebuilding of the station. As of press time crews were scheduled to work overnight on January 4-7 and January 11-14 to install platform panels, backfill foundations, perform excavation and install pier caps.

News in Mt. Airy

We Deliver to 17,000 Households in Mt. Airy

- Opinions.....4
- Letters.....5
- Community Calendar6-7
- Education.....10-11
- Weaver's Way12
- Mt. Airy Baseball13
- EMAN/WMAN Meeting.....14
- Business Directory.....13-14
- Classifieds.....15
- Police Briefs.....16

2009: The Year That Was in Mt. Airy – Part 2

September 3

WATCH YOUR SPEED

That's the message the 14th Police District was sending to local drivers. The 14th began a stepped-up watch for speeding drivers along Lincoln Drive, Walnut Lane and Stenton Avenue (notorious for speeding and a high number of accidents) thanks to a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration grant targeted for speed enforcement.

FIX IT, LIGHT IT

At the first ever community meeting held at the Washington Lane R7 train station, residents raised concerns about safety and accessibility at the station to SEPTA. One major complaint: the isolated, dark passage that outbound riders must make along the edge of Awbury Arboretum, and under the train trestle before reaching Washington Lane and Chew Avenue.

September 10

PERSISTENTLY DANGEROUS

The State Board of Education released its Persistently Dangerous Schools list and two Northwest Schools – Germantown High and Roosevelt Middle School – were on it. Good news: Martin Luther King High School was off the list for the first time since it was begun in 2003.

STEPPING DOWN

Laura Siena was winding down her tenure as West Mt. Airy Neighbors executive director and preparing to help transform her family's dairy farm into an organic operation. Siena looked back

at a productive five years that saw WMAN expand its ties with other neighborhood groups to increase its effectiveness.

September 17

FREE SOLAR?

On Wednesday, September 9, members of the Awbury Arboretum Neighbors Association heard a pitch from Urban Eco Electric on free rooftop solar panels the company would install to provide them with electric power. Residents would lease the panels based on their monthly PECO bill, and some were eager to sign up.

FIRE!

When PECO power lines caught fire on Sunday, September 13 on Hortter Street near Lincoln Drive, hundreds were deprived of power while a live wire in the middle of the street blocked traffic.

September 24

BETTER FACADES FOR BETTER BUSINESS

Mt. Airy USA kicked off its Targeted Facades Improvement Program that will fund makeovers to 12 storefronts along Germantown Avenue in the Mt. Airy business district.

RAMADAN ENDS

Thousands of local Muslims marked the end of Ramadan, a month of fasting, prayer and self-reflection, on September 20 in the largest gathering in Vernon Park since the appearance of then-Presidential candidate Barack Obama in 2008.

Continued on page 2

2009: The Year That Was in Mt. Airy – Part 2



The end of the city's mechanized leaf collection service left some residents confused and un-picked-up leaves piling up on some residential streets in November.

Continued from page 2

November 12

HEROES REMEMBERED

Members of the Winfield Scott Hancock Society gathered over the graves of John and Henry Nice at St. Michael's Lutheran Church, 6671 Germantown Avenue, on Sunday, November 8. They were there to honor the service of the two young men who both fell defending the Union at the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863.

PILING UP

A lot of leaves were piled up on Mt. Airy's streets, waiting in vain for the city's mechanical leaf collection service to scoop them up. Some residents apparently hadn't gotten the word that city budget cuts had forced cancellation of the program.

November 19

MT. AIRY SPEAKS OUT

Around 100 local residents turned out for the first Community Café at the Sedgwick Theater that was sponsored by Neighborhood Networks and Marching for Change. They were there to share their views on health care, recycling, city services, safety and more.

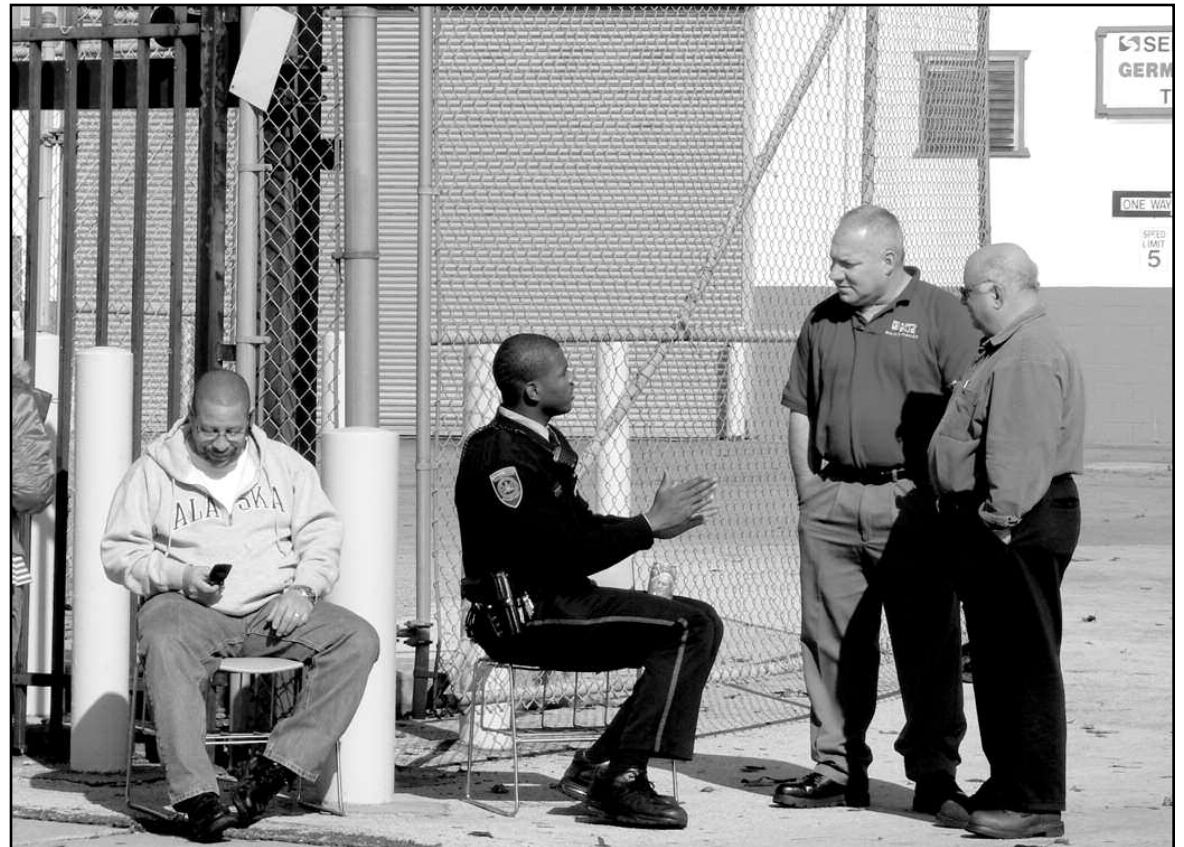
SHOWDOWN TIME

Germantown High's Bears and Martin Luther King High's Golden Cougars prepared for their Thanksgiving Day football showdown at Benjamin Johnson Field. The annual rivalry sported something new this year: female player Michelle Grace playing for the Bears.

November 26

YMCA REHIRES FORMER DIRECTOR

The board of the YMCA of Germantown, closed to the pub-



A handful of workers manned the picket line at the Germantown Avenue SEPTA bus yard at Germantown Avenue and Westview Street on November 3 as the Transport Workers Union Local 234 went on strike, taking more than 5,000 workers off the job and stopping service on routes across the city, including the busy Route 23. The strike was quickly settled but not before inconveniencing untold thousands of SEPTA riders.

lic for nearly a year and a half after a 2008 flood, voted to hire former director Pete Smith to help get its community programs up and running again.

NEW COURTLAND REVISIONS

In a meeting sponsored by West Mt. Airy Neighbors and the Duval Improvement Association, New Courtland Elder Services presented revisions to its plans for a five-story Independent Living Facility at Greene and Johnson streets. Among the revisions proposed were expanded parking spaces for the residents

Continued on page 8

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2009: The Year That Was in Mt. Airy – Part 2

Continued from page 3

to cut down on possible congestion in the neighborhood. WMAN's Zoning Committee later voted not to oppose a needed zoning variance for the site.

December 3 FUNDS FOR FOW

A \$780,000 grant from Merck & Co., part of a settlement resulting from a 2006 toxic chemical spill at the company's Montgomery County plant, to the Friends of the Wissahickon will enable to the FOW to expand its efforts to restore damaged areas of the creek and its watershed. The FOW's work will target five creek sites damaged by sedimentation.

OK – ON CONDITION

East Mt. Airy Neighbors decided not to oppose the reopening of the Corner Deli at 6645 Germantown Avenue but first required a lengthy list of conditions from its owner in order to cut down on nuisance behavior at the corner, which included drug activity and loitering. The Zoning Board of Adjustment later OK'd the reopening of the deli, which had been shut for years as a result of complaints and action by neighbors.

December 10 WE SWEEP

The top three prizes in the



East Mt. Airy Neighbors decided on November 30 not to oppose the re-opening of the Corner Deli at Germantown Avenue and Hortter Street but only after attaching a long list of conditions designed to cut down on the nuisance and criminal activity that had once swirled around the location.

Empowerment Group's "My Block My Business" city-wide competition all went to Northwest businesses, including Mt. Airy's Trolley Car Diner and Philly Electric Wheels. The competition is aimed at highlighting small businesses as community pillars.

#9 TO CHARGE

Health Center #9 serving Northwest Philadelphia announced that it would begin charging all uninsured patients for services. The alternative, said city officials, would be to close down some or all of the city's health centers because of budget constraints.

December 17 A PLACE TO PARK

Agreements between the Mt. Airy Business Improvement District and both the Germantown Home and Valley Green Bank on the use of their parking lots meant that parking congestion in the Mt. Airy business district was on the road to improvement.

A HERO'S WELCOME

When Lt. Aaron Booker of Mt. Airy returned home from deployment in Iraq he was met at the airport not only by his family but was surprised by a "hero's welcome" by members of the groups Warriors Watch and A Hero's Welcome.

December 24 BACK IN ACTION -



The area saw three snowfalls in December, with a really big one on December 19-20. More than a foot of snow fell across the Northwest, forcing some residents to take unusual measures to get around, including Andi Hochman of Mt. Airy, seen here making her way up Germantown Avenue on cross country skis.

GRADUALLY

At its first official membership meeting in many months, the Y's Board of Directors announced plans to have a phased reopening of the facility beginning in March 2010, with programs coming back in action in phases as the facility is repaired.

AVENIDA MEANS 'AVENUE'

The latest arrival on the Mt. Airy Restaurant scene was appropriately named – Avenida is Spanish for "avenue." The new restaurant, operated by Edgar and Kim Alvarez, will feature Latin-

themed cuisine at Germantown and Gowen avenues, the site of the former Cresheim Cottage café.

December 31 JUNCTION ON HOLD

Political and budgetary disputes at the state and federal levels were forcing SEPTA to postpone its planned multi-million-dollar renovation of the Wayne Junction transit hub, disappointing those who had hoped to see renovation used as a springboard for development in the area.

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Recycle Your Christmas Tree

The Mt. Airy Business Association, along with partners GRINCH (Green in Chestnut Hill) and the Allens Lane Art

Center, will hold a Christmas tree recycling event on Sunday, January 10, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., at Allens Lane Art Center, 601 West Allens Lane

Trees will be chipped into a pile which will then be available in the spring as free mulch. Why? Because it's the right thing to do. Trees are just like any other trash that gets sent to landfills and becomes pollution. By chipping the trees and re-using the mulch, you are helping to save our precious planet.

We are asking a \$5 donation to help cover our costs.

Please contact Kim Miller, executive director of the Mt. Airy Business Association, at 215-242-0777 or kim@mtairybiz.com if you have any questions or if you would like to volunteer to help that day.

The Mt. Airy Business Association is committed to sustainability and offers community programs to help create and promote a more sustainable Mt. Airy.

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