

July 4, 2009

Patriotic Republicans Read the Declaration of Independence

Mayor Skibitsky and Councilman Foerst speak at Scotch Plains GOP event.

By Cindy Loh

The Republican community of Legislative District 22 was out in force on Saturday for Brookside Park's first ever community reading of the Declaration of Independence. The Fourth of July event was hosted by Martin Marks and Bo Vastine, who both live in Scotch Plains and are Republican candidates for the NJ General Assembly in Legislative District 22, and was co-sponsored by the political activist group Americans for Prosperity.

The inaugural event was attended by several current and former local politicians. Representing Scotch Plains were Mayor Nancy Malool, Councilwoman Mary DePaola, former Deputy Mayor Paulette Coronato, GOP Municipal Chair and former Mayor Bill McClintock, and former Mayor Joan Papen. Councilman Anthony Parenti and former Mayor Lou Jung from Fanwood also participated with Westfield Republicans James Foerst (GOP State Committeeman of Union County and Westfield Councilman) and Mayor Andrew Skibitsky. Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz of District 21 was present, as were representatives from Cranford, New Providence, Plainfield, Warren, Roselle Park, and Rahway.

After an all-American barbecue, a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, and singing of the national anthem, Marks and Vastine introduced the day's keynote speakers. Jay Webber (NJ Republican State Chairman and Assemblyman), Rick Merkt (former candidate for governor and assemblyman), and Steve Lonegan (former Mayor of Bogota and former candidate for governor) reflected on the tenacity of our forefathers, heralded the individual freedoms outlined in the Declaration of Independence, and invited constituents to "take action" and support the Republican platform.

Following opening remarks, 46 New Jersey residents and politicians sequentially read lines from the Declaration of Independence. The youngest reader of the day was American presidential history buff Justin Greenman (9 years old) of Scotch Plains, whose father is Martin's campaign treasurer.

"To have this many people out to participate in the reading of the Declaration of Independence is wonderful—a true celebration of our country," said Scotch

Plains Mayor Nancy Malool. "I can't think of a more patriotic way to celebrate the fourth of July. I wish we had thought of this years ago, and I hope this will become an annual event."

"This is a great way to remind people what the holiday is all about," agreed Westfield Mayor Skibitsky. "It's amazing when you think about what those guys went through in the 1700s. It's incredible to think about their sense of government back then and their bravery against the strongest army in the world."

According to campaign manager Anthony Attanasio, the reading was not intended to be a fundraiser for Marks/Vastine and the \$20 per person entrance fee covered the cost of the barbecue and DJ.