

Volunteers honored at Milan Community Day



In addition to an awards presentation honoring residents for their longtime service to the town, Milan's Community Day featured fun activities such as a pie-eating contest (right) and tug-of-war (above). Top: Children 'tackle' the Candy Man, Rocco Mancini to grab sweet treats. Photos submitted by Dave Byrne

During Milan's Community Day festivities on Sept. 24, three residents received awards for their longtime volunteerism in the town.

"Keith Wheeler and Jay McCaughey started working on Rec Park when it was only a sand-lot baseball field with backstop and dugouts, nothing more," said Town Councilman Dave Byrne. "Jay and Keith had a vision for making the Rec Park a beautiful place that could be enjoyed by Milan residents and they worked tirelessly until they achieved that."

During the presentation Byrne also praised former Recreation Committee Chairwoman Jackie Reynolds for her diligent work in helping to make that dream a reality.

Wheeler and McCaughey raised more than \$10,000 for various improvements to the park, including a new backstop and softball field, fencing around the park's perimeter, renovations to the dugouts and many more projects.

High-school student Allison Diaz

received a plaque for her "unwavering dedication and selfless service as a Milaner." Allison has been active for several years with the Milaners Youth Group, a community service-based youth group started by Byrne four years ago, and was instrumental in building the town trail, conducting annual community service projects and food drives and helping with Community Day.

After the awards ceremony, Town Supervisor William Gallagher dedicated the concession building to Milan's combat veterans.

"This building was built by local volunteers and is a testament to the generosity, commitment and industriousness of the people of this town," stated Gallagher, reading a proclamation. "May this be a place where the citizens and families of Milan enjoy the freedoms that our combat veterans have secured for us and always remember their great sacrifices."

The day also featured activities and entertainment for all ages.



Major funding for farmland protection announced

An official from the U.S. Department of Agriculture was set to join Scenic Hudson, Dutchess Land Conservancy, state officials, Town of Red Hook officials, other public officials and local farmers this past Monday to announce a major initiative to preserve Hudson Valley farms.

The announcement, scheduled to take place as Northern Dutchess News went to press, was made at the 87-acre Northwind Farms in Red Hook.

The initiative is part of Scenic Hudson's ongoing, collaborative Saving the Land That Matters Most campaign, which seeks

to protect lands of the highest agricultural, scenic and ecological importance throughout the Hudson Valley. It provides the farmers with funds they can invest in the viability of their agricultural business operations. The farms supply fresh, healthy produce and meats to consumers via local and New York City greenmarkets and direct sales to homes and restaurants.

Farmland is essential to sustaining the region's \$800-million agricultural economy and \$4.7-billion tourism economy. It also plays a critical role in providing wildlife habitat.

Cahill introduces Flood Assessment Relief Act

Calls on State to pick up local share of recovery costs

ALBANY—Assemblymember Kevin Cahill (D-Ulster/Dutchess) has introduced the Flood Assessment Relief Act of 2011. The bill (A8634) gives counties damaged by Tropical Storms Irene and Lee the option, after first consulting with local governments, to adjust property assessments to reflect the actual value of homes that were severely impacted by the floods.

Cahill also called on the state to assume the local share of FEMA related recovery costs and assist municipalities with their rebuilding efforts.

"This legislation is about providing communities with the opportunity to come together as neighbors to give relief to the victims of the devastation brought about by Irene and Lee," said Cahill. "The bill would give local governments the option to avoid adding insult to injury for taxpayers, who have already lost so much, by ensuring that their property will be fairly taxed."

Cahill praised local governments and volunteers for their efforts to get homeowners and businesses back on their feet and called on the state to assume recovery costs not covered by FEMA. The expenses associated with the floods have created enormous strain on many municipalities,

especially those in the Catskills.

"Many of the areas hit hardest by the flooding have recovered at a remarkable pace thanks to the tireless efforts of local officials, utility workers, residents and volunteers," said Cahill. "New York State cannot afford to leave those communities at risk and force residents and businesses to exist under a constant state of fear over repetitive floods and other dangerous conditions. The state needs assume the local costs and dedicate the resources necessary to ensure waterways are being properly managed in order to limit damage from future events."

Given the frequency and magnitude of the flooding that has impacted the region recent years, Cahill said that government must work together at all levels to overhaul flood mitigation, response and recovery plans.

"Aid and assessment relief are appropriate responses to the immediate challenges facing flood victims, but we cannot afford to ignore the long term implications of the extreme weather patterns we have been experiencing," said Cahill. "As rebuilding efforts go forward it is important that vulnerable communities take the rational and appropriate steps necessary to protect flood prone areas and limit future damages. The state should be there every step of the way to offer its assistance, guidance and expertise."

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RENTAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR HURRICANE VICTIMS

New York State storm survivors who lost their home because of damages caused by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee may be eligible to receive rental assistance, the New York State Office of Emergency Management (NYSOEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced.

Residents should first apply by calling the FEMA Helpline at (800) 621-3362, TTY (800) 462-7585. Multilingual assistance is available by phone. Lines are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week until further notice.

Applicants can also register online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov or with a Smartphone at m.fema.gov. The deadline to apply is Oct. 31.