

Mayor's Column

June 25, 2018

Many a day, I rush home to catch my favorite TV show, Jeopardy, and manage to get there often with minutes to spare. As a result, I frequently catch the very last segment of ABC Nightly News called Made in America. It features a company/individuals helping out their fellow mankind often in ways that are profoundly inspiring.

Just in the past month, initiatives that have crossed my desk have truly qualified as Bronxville's version of Made in America.

As example, Ms. Vise's pre-K class at the Reformed Church Nursery School heard about our Giving Garden and the plight of hunger in Westchester of children just their age. They decided to have a bake sale and donate all the proceeds (over \$500!) to buy plants and supplies so other youngsters would receive fresh vegetables.

Mr. Justin Chao's third grade at the Bronxville School became very concerned about fair trade, particularly as it affects the production of cocoa/chocolate with the attenuating use of child labor. Designed to create sustainable incomes for farmers and their families, the practice of fair trade commits farmers, buyers and manufacturers to not grow or purchase cocoa that was harvested via child and slave labor. The third graders did extensive research – as example in the Ivory Coast 109,000 children engaged in child labor for the production of cocoa. They forwarded me a petition, their impressive research and asked me to share with our local merchants who may not be aware of what kind of chocolate they are purchasing to sell. The effort, clarity, concern for their fellow youngsters who literally live continents away, and their advocacy was beyond impressive.

Students in both the Bronxville Middle and High Schools gave a concluding presentation about a science initiative based on studying the water quality of the nearby Bronx River. Varying in complexity based on age, the students presented very persuasive data sadly proving how unhealthy our river is for fish, plants and any recreational use. I know their hope is that projects like theirs will shine the light on the need for an environmental clean-up. I took copies of some of their reports so I could be a partner in advocacy. Again, a very professional and analytical evaluation voicing their concern about the sustainability of the environs in which they live.

On the same theme of environmental stewardship, Bronxville High School students Barrett Dollar and Sophia Sulimirski presented their research on the long term environmental effects of the continued use of plastic bags in our stores. They circulated a petition gathering over 3% of the adult Villagers to support their cause, just on a first try. Their research was very extensive and persuasive. As example, the United States alone generates approximately 380 billion plastic bags each year. Extrapolating down to our Village level, Bronxville residents use two and a half million bags per year, with only 1% of bags recycled nationally each year. In Washington DC, a five cent plastic bag tax has contributed \$10 million to cleaning up the

Anacostia River and in California, which enacted a total ban, beach pollution was halved. The Village Board of Trustees will be working with these young women going forward to determine what is best suited for our Village.

The Boulder Ledge Garden Club, too, wanted to make a difference that would benefit all Villagers. Noticing the empty tree pits in the Business Districts due to storms or tree disease, they donated \$5,000 of their own funds and canvassed Villagers receiving an additional \$5,000 plus. So when you see beautiful new trees replacing unsightly stumps in our downtown, it will be thanks to the foresight and concern of Boulder Ledge.

Our Bronxville Giving Garden will also be looking for local donations to increase our yearly output of fresh vegetables from an impressive 250 pounds of vegetables in just our first season of growing. The produce goes to serve all our neighbors hungry and in need. One resident saw the effort being made at the Garden first hand and immediately dropped off an unsolicited check.

On a monthly basis, our Bronxville Senior Citizens members bring cereal, soup, socks and even pajamas when they learn of a need in one of our neighboring communities.

Every age group in our Village is generous and philanthropic. Our Village, though small in size, is big in heart and it is beyond gratifying and reassuring that the spirit of giving and environmental awareness is learned so early and then sustained through a lifetime.