

Several prominent members of the community came out to support the students, including Board of Supervisor member Ken Reed, School Board member Thomas Reed, Town of Leesburg Mayor Kristen Umstatt and Congressman Frank Wolf, who served as keynote speaker.

Wolf told of his adversities from childhood and being teased as a stutterer and poor student. He told the students their adversity would determine their success, rather their character and ability to overcome.

"Do not be afraid to take on tough issues," Wolf told the students.

The Beat the Odds program will hold a special event June 13 at the Tally Ho in Leesburg from 5 to 7:30 p.m. The event will serve as both a fundraiser and an opportunity for the community to hear the stories from this year's winners.

[From the Leesburg Today, May 24, 2013]

**BAR AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS TO HELP STUDENTS CONTINUE BEATING THE ODDS**

"Everything has a way out. You have the choice to keep going."

Those were the words of Vineetha Thekkel, a graduating senior at Tuscarora High School, but it was a message shared by all four students awarded scholarships through the Loudoun Bar Association's Beat the Odds program during a ceremony at the historic courthouse in Leesburg Thursday night.

In its ninth year, the program provides financial support to college-bound students who have overcome remarkably challenging, often tragic circumstances. The annual awards ceremonies—attended by relatives, teachers and members of the Bar—are known for their emotional rollercoaster ride of pride in the students' accomplishments and sadness at the situations the teens lived through. The tales bring tears to the eyes of even the most experienced lawyers in the room. The wider public will have the opportunity to hear the stories of this year's honorees and past scholarship winners during a special June 13 event at the Tally Ho Theatre in Leesburg.

This year's winners, while coming from decidedly different backgrounds, told similar stories involving domestic violence, financial struggles and lost youth.

At age 14, Jonathan "Cory" Dickey said he stopped his alcoholic father from choking his mother and then had to start working to support her and his siblings when his father left. "Dad got off easy," the Loudoun County High School senior said. Food stamps and Social Security benefits for his mother, who is unable to work because of a medical condition, helped, but not enough to hold off a foreclosure. His hard work has paid off with a chance to continue his education in college. "It's going to help me in so many ways," he said of the \$2,000 scholarship award.

Park View High School's Shannon Hayes' parents divorced when she was 8, after her mother felt that her father's alcoholism made it too dangerous to live together. Two years later her mother became ill and her father returned to help. Although the relationship with her father healed and a strong bond was formed, he died when she was 12. "He was my best friend," Hayes said. It was her father's wish that she succeed that has inspired her to peruse a degree in biochemistry at Penn State and a career in genetic engineering. "He is with me everyday. He is my angel."

Thekkel said she flew to the U.S. March 18, 2009, with her deaf father and a mother who did not speak English. It was at the airport making phone calls to try to find a ride where the then-13-year-old realized, "I had to be the adult in the family." Once settled in

a Leesburg townhouse, she went around to area businesses to collect job applications for her parents who now work three jobs. Although the halls of Tuscarora High School presented a completely new experience for the first-generation immigrant, it was at school where she found support from teachers who understood the challenges she faced.

"I loved going to school. That was the only place where I could stay away from the tough times," she said. "I was forced to become an adult at a very young age." With the help of her \$2,500 scholarship, she will attend Mount Vernon Nazarene University in Ohio with the goal of working as a missionary doctor.

Loudoun County's High School's Leanna Moron received the largest scholarship—the \$6,000 Beat the Odds Award. She described her story as "complex," involving family financial struggles, a foreclosure, alcoholic and abusive family members, "and tremendous heartache and pain."

At times life may seem too challenging and hopeless, she said, but with determination you can get through it. She found education as "a way out" and will graduate in the top 10 percent of her class. She will pursue a nursing degree at Penn State.

Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judge Pamela L. Brooks led the ceremony and U.S. Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-VA-10) was the keynote speaker, telling students of his struggles growing up in Philadelphia as a picked-on, stuttering youth and poor student. He urged them to continue to be willing to pay the price to do the right things and to thank God for the adversity that helps make them better people.

Attorney Matt Snow, co-chairman of the Bar's Beat the Odds Committee, encourages residents to attend a special forum at the Tally Ho, 5-7:30 p.m. Saturday, June 13, to gain a better understanding of the program and the impact it is having on the lives of the students. Attendees are advised to bring tissues to wipe away tears; and may bring their checkbooks to support the program.

**INTRODUCTION OF THE ASSESSMENT ACCURACY AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2013**

**HON. THOMAS E. PETRI**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, June 3, 2013*

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, as Congress considers the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act this year, we have an obligation to listen closely to the students, parents, and educators that we represent to ensure that our efforts result in responsible and pragmatic improvements. While we have made great strides in the areas of assessment and accountability over the last nine years, this reauthorization provides a critical opportunity to learn from our experiences and fine-tune the law.

One example of a lesson my constituents have learned, and have vigorously shared with me, is that we should be encouraging states to move towards better assessment models. As I have met with educators over the past several years, one of the primary concerns that I have heard is that the state assessment fails to provide information of value to educators and administrators. Even more disturbing, it often takes four to six months before scores are returned to schools, which leaves little or no time for teachers to use the infor-

mation to address student performance before they advance to the next grade.

However, I believe there is a sensible solution that Congress can adopt to address these concerns and give states more options in assessment design. Today, working with Representative G.K. Butterfield, I am introducing the bipartisan Assessment Accuracy and Improvement Act of 2013 to give states the option to use adaptive testing as their statewide assessment measuring reading, math, and science to fulfill No Child Left Behind requirements. I believe that this legislation will give states the ability to truly track the academic growth of every child and provide more accurate information to teachers, parents and school administrators through the use of an adaptive test.

For those who may be unfamiliar with adaptive testing, it is a test that changes in response to previously-asked questions. For example, if a student answers a question correctly, the test presents a question of increased difficulty. If a student answers incorrectly, the test presents a question of decreased difficulty. As you can see, an adaptive test customizes itself to a student's actual level of performance with a great degree of accuracy.

Giving states the flexibility to use an adaptive test and to ask questions outside of grade level will improve the accuracy of student assessment and enable educators to target appropriate instruction for each child based on performance at, above, or below grade level. In addition, using an adaptive test over time will allow accurate measurement of the performance growth of each individual student.

In Wisconsin, hundreds of school districts currently use their own funds to participate in adaptive testing in addition to the state assessment required by NCLB. Educators and administrators appreciate the diagnostic information it yields and the efficiency that it provides. I believe that school districts nationally are already "speaking with their wallets" by spending scarce resources to voluntarily participate in this testing because it provides valuable information that the state assessment does not.

Mr. Speaker, adaptive testing is one of the keys to putting the 'child' back into No Child Left Behind. I hope that our colleagues will join us in this pragmatic and responsible improvement to the law as we work towards a bipartisan reauthorization this year.

**RECOGNIZING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHARLESTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**HON. JIM GERLACH**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, June 3, 2013*

Mr. GERLACH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Charlestown Historical Society on the occasion of its 40th anniversary.

The Charlestown Historical Society was founded in 1973 at the home of Ms. Betty Stonorov to discover and maintain the rich historical heritage of Charlestown Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania. The Society currently boasts over 160 members and is led by President John W. Pittock, who has served in that capacity since 2007. The Society meets

at the historic Wisner-Rapp House, which was built in 1835 by Revolutionary War soldier Jacob Wisner.

The Charlestown Historical Society has supported the preservation, repair and stabilization of the Woolen Mill, which was established in 1725 and acquired by the Township in 2002. In 2011, the Society published a book entitled "Historical Sketches of Charlestown" which highlighted the historical roots of the Township. This book contains the original manuscript written in 1943 by resident Harman D. Rees and includes additional sketches and art by Charlestown Historical Society members and Township residents.

Mr. Speaker, in honor of its 40th anniversary, I ask that my colleagues join me today in recognizing the Charlestown Historical Society, Chester County, Pennsylvania, for its contributions to exploring and maintaining the rich historical heritage of Charlestown Township.

#### OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

##### HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 3, 2013

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was \$10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is \$16,738,821,943,986.12. We've added \$6,111,944,895,073.10 to our debt in 4 years. This is \$6 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

##### HON. KEITH ELLISON

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 3, 2013

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, on May 14, 2013, I inadvertently missed rollcall vote No. 146, had I been present I would have voted "yes."

#### CELEBRATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF FIREMAN'S FUND INSURANCE COMPANY

##### HON. MICHAEL G. GRIMM

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 3, 2013

Mr. GRIMM. Mr. Speaker, on June 11, 2013 the Fireman's Fund Insurance Company will celebrate their 150th anniversary at the New York City Public Library on 42nd Street. Originally founded in San Francisco, California in 1863 with a mission to assist the widows and orphans of fallen firefighters, the Fireman's Fund grew into a national company with significant size operations in New York City and other locations throughout the United States.

The Fireman's Fund has played an important role in New York's history with the company insuring, among other things, Charles Lindbergh's Spirit of St Louis flight from New

York to Paris in 1927, the construction of the Radio City Music Hall during the 1930's and the World Heavyweight Championship Fight between Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali in Madison Square Garden. More recent work of note has been the company's tremendous response efforts to the 9/11 World Trade Center Tragedies, and its excellent work in coming to the assistance of those who suffered damages to their homes and businesses during the 2012 Hurricane Sandy disaster.

Over the last eight years the Fireman's Fund Heritage Program has provided over \$30 million in grants to Fire Departments throughout the nation, allowing them to purchase safety equipment and training services that might otherwise have gone unattended during this difficult time of constrained public spending. Closer to home, the company has given \$630,000 to New York City and another \$1.2 million to the rest of New York State. Furthermore, on June 12, 2013 at a public ceremony, the Fireman's Fund will present checks awarded under the auspices of three of its major insurance agents that total more than \$60,000.

New York City has always played a prominent role in the United States and international insurance business, and we are pleased that the Fireman's Fund and its affiliated companies have chosen to be in lower Manhattan providing quality jobs and excellent risk management services to America's businesses and families.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize the Fireman's Fund today and we commend the company and its employees for the valuable services they continue to provide. In our transitory times, 150 years is an impressive feat and we extend best wishes for the continued success of the company. May it grow and prosper, bringing with it the company's generous legacy of assisting the firefighter whose daily lives are dedicated to our own personal safety.

#### HONORING CAPTAIN DAN JOHNSON

##### HON. DANIEL LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 3, 2013

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Captain Dan Johnson on his installation as Post Commander of the Johnson-Phelps VFW Post 5220 in Oak Lawn, Illinois. As a decorated veteran, a dedicated citizen, and a loyal patriot, Captain Johnson continues to serve his community and his tireless dedication deserves our recognition.

An active member of the United States Army since 1992, Captain Johnson has served in Iraq and Afghanistan, as a Platoon Leader and on Security Forces Assistance Advisor Teams. He has earned 17 awards, including the Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Bronze Star.

Captain Johnson is a resident of Oak Lawn, Illinois, so I am especially proud to have such a committed serviceman from the 3rd Congressional District. I am confident that his leadership will be an asset to the Johnson-Phelps VFW Post 5220, and thank him for his service and commitment to his fellow countrymen.

Today I stand and ask you to join me in honoring Captain Dan Johnson on his new po-

sition as Commander of Johnson-Phelps VFW Post 5220.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF JIM HANSEN'S RETIREMENT

##### HON. ERIC SWALWELL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 3, 2013

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize Jim Hansen, principal of Amador Valley High School in Pleasanton, California. Jim will be retiring this year after serving the East Bay as both a principal and a teacher for over three decades. I benefitted personally from his thoughtful leadership when I was a student at Wells Middle School during his time as principal there.

Jim was born and raised in the East Bay, where he attended St. Joseph's College High School. After high school, Jim worked his way through college where he held positions as a gardener, maintenance man, and many interesting jobs. He went to school at University of California, Berkeley, where he majored in history.

After earning his bachelor's degree, Jim took his first teaching job at St. Clement's School in Hayward, where he taught sixth grade science and physical education. While Jim was teaching at St. Clements, he also coached the Pleasanton Valley swim team. Jim then began teaching at St. Elizabeth's school.

Jim transferred to Village High School in the Amador Valley Joint Union School District, teaching English to freshman and sophomore students. While teaching, Jim attended San Francisco State University, where he received his Master's degree in Education Technology. He later received his Administrative Services Credential from California State University, Hayward.

In 1988, Jim became the principal of Valley Continuation High School in Dublin, while also serving as vice principal for Wells Middle School. Jim has also served as principal at Dublin High School, Wells Middle School, Harvest Park Middle School, and, most recently, at Amador Valley High School.

Today, Jim resides in San Ramon, where he has lived with his wife, Judy and children, Kelly, Kevin, and Brian since 1986. Jim's service to the East Bay as both a teacher and administrator will be remembered for his openness and accessibility to both students and parents. I wish Jim the best in his retirement.

#### HONORING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VILLAGER

##### HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 3, 2013

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to the 60th anniversary of The Villager. Born to give neighborhoods in Saint Paul, Minnesota a voice, the Villager is a local newspaper dedicated to covering Highland Village and other neighborhoods. Since 1953, the Villager has served as an important source of news to its loyal readers. Today it continues