



## A challenge to our youth

Summer is here! First, I want to congratulate all the graduates out there. Whether you will be moving up in one of our great schools, going off to college or beginning your career, this is a very exciting time in your life and I wish you nothing but the best.

I also want to remind everyone that since school is out, more and more of our youth are taking to the streets on foot, on bikes, on scooters and skateboards. So please, drive carefully.

A special thanks to Harrison Avenue School's fourth grade classes for visiting me in Town Hall. As part of their studies, these curious students came to Town Hall in search of the ins and outs of Harrison's government. Their curiosity and wonderment grew into such enthusiasm as they sought to learn about each part of our democracy. During these visits, I was reminded of my time on the Board of Education. I emphasized then, as I do today, the importance of history and civics lessons in the classroom. Today, much emphasis is placed on math and science — while, in my opinion, the study of who we are sometimes takes a back seat. I want to change that.

Since taking office in January 2008, I have been invited to speak with students not only here in Harrison, but also throughout the state about my role in government. I am always amazed at the questions I am asked and the sheer inquisitiveness of each student. Students want to learn more about history and government, especially when given the chance. With that said, I am giving our resident youths a chance during the upcoming summer months: I am challenging them to take part in a very special project I am offering. For those students in fifth grade through seniors in high school, the challenge is to choose a history or civics topic and study it. It can be the history of our town, the most recent presidential election, or the role of state or federal government. Be as creative as possible, and remember, this is not a competition; your project will not be judged, but it will be on display to all of our town residents and visitors, so be sure to put pride in your work. For assistance and insight, visit our town's libraries and the History Center. You are even welcome to use resources from my office at Town Hall.

When you are done with your research, create a project that shows off your hard work. If you choose to make a report (no more than 500 words), I will submit it to our Historical Center as part of our town's history. If you choose to get together with your friends and make a video (no more than 7 minutes), I will air it for you on Channel 75! If you choose to make a diorama or poster, I will display it for you in Town Hall. Sharing your project with your fellow Harrison residents not only makes your hard work even more worthwhile, but it also allows you to make your mark as a town citizen.

Any student who chooses to accept my challenge should give me a call at my office at 914-670-3030 and let me know your topic and project. In order for me to display the projects all together, they must be received by Labor Day, Sept. 7, 2009. In order to be fair, this challenge is open to all residents from fifth grade to high school seniors.

Keep in mind that this is not a competition; but rather, a challenge to expand your knowledge of who we are. Everyone will be a winner because everyone will have a chance to learn and show off the fruits of your labor. So for now, Have a great 4<sup>th</sup> of July and...Excelsior!

Kudos to any student who knew that as the New York state motto meaning, "Ever Upward!"

*Joseph Acocella is the town clerk of Harrison. He welcomes your ideas on this and all issues by encouraging you to e-mail him at [ajacocella@harrison-ny.gov](mailto:ajacocella@harrison-ny.gov). Read his blog by going online to [www.TheClerksClorner.blogspot.com](http://www.TheClerksClorner.blogspot.com).*