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Compassion, aid link Sussex, Haiti

Sussex County's roads are well known for their circuitous routes. But many residents may not have been aware of how many twist their way to Haiti until the Jan. 12 earthquake that rocked that Caribbean nation.

As the magnitude of the disaster became apparent stories unfolded of ties to Sussex County citizens.

Jean-Paul Bonnet, a physician with the Skyland Medical Group, has been traveling to Haiti for 14 years to volunteer in clinics and boarded a plane three days after the earthquake to continue his work, putting his practice in Lake Hopatcong on hold.

His eyewitness accounts of the devastation, his thanks for compassion being shown, and his hope for a better tomorrow for Haiti are evident in a moving testimony on Page 1 of today's Herald.

Kittatinny Regional High School teacher Dan Chamberlain was on a mission at an orphanage north of Port-au-Prince with members of the Trinity United Methodist Church in Hackettstown when the earthquake struck.

Professor Anthony Balzano, on sabbatical from his teaching duties at Sussex County Community College, had been scheduled to fly to Haiti the week after the quake to continue a research project there that stretches back 25 years. Though he was unable to travel as scheduled, he still is planning on going.

Edgir Jean, the pastor for the past two years of the Glenwood Baptist Church, and his wife, Katia, are from Haiti and have relatives there ... some found safe, some killed.

Jean's congregation has collected money and goods to assist in relief efforts and is organizing more events funneling assistance through the Red Cross of Sussex County, as are other groups.

Dr. Bonnet has established a Haitian relief fund.

Businesses, schools, clubs and organizations are joining in as well. Athletes and supporters changed a traditional tail-gate gathering before Friday night's game in Sparta to a fund-raiser for the Haitian victims; SussexBank employees held a "jeans day" to collect funds; Rotary clubs have passed the hat at their meetings. These are just a few of the many examples of compassion and sharing emanating from the people of Sussex County.

ON THE WEB: READER POLL

Question

What do you think about the towns that are accepting PSE&G money in return for not opposing the proposed power line upgrade?

Small towns can't stop PSE&G, so they're smart to take the money.	38.6%	141
Those towns are sell-outs without principles.	57.0%	208
Other (please comment)	4.4%	16
Total votes		365

Comments

There is absolutely "ZERO" benefit to New Jersey since the lines will funnel power to New York City, so I'd say "sellout" would be an appropriate label.

WOW!!! You must be an expert (or at least a board member of PSE&G). New York has their own power company, maybe you heard of it — Con Edison.

Towns fighting this are run by old, nonprogressive people living in the past. This is progress, it's 2010. Take the money and improve your town. It's called progress.

Sellouts. They'll be the first towns complaining when the cancer rates start to rise. They not only take the money but will demand higher taxes as well. Small thinking, greedy politicians — just like the White House!

PSE&G must be taking lessons from Obama. If you want them to vote your way, bribe 'em.

Since when does private business payoff a town to get their way? Extortion? Racketeering? Anyone smell a rat?

PSE&G doesn't care about the people. Those power lines are not safe for anyone, especially above Fredon School. Those lines were there when I went to Fredon School and they didn't want to do anything about it then. They just don't care. Money doesn't fix everything.

Your right!, I am an expert, been to all the meetings, done the research, and found out the truth. It's no secret, the lines are in "no way" whatsoever beneficial to the State of New Jersey in any way, shape, manner, or form! Yeah, a few temporary slash and burn build a road here, cut some trees there, but that's about it.

PSE&G: Very well dressed corporate rapists!

If these power lines are harmful to one's health in any way, then I say let the residents block PSE&G in every way! We must protect the health of our children and adults alike! Not any amount of money is worth risking the health of our residents!

Heck I'd take the money too. It's the American Way. Give them the wealth...

Those towns selling out for the \$ are going to regret their decision.

Don't buy a home next to power lines, a quarry, the highway or a go-go bar and you won't have to worry about it. They should also turn off their TVs, get rid of the cell phone and use candles instead of lights while they're at it.

What happened in Massachusetts ... and Virginia ... and New Jersey ...

COLUMN: GREGORY J. RUMMO

What bothered me the most about candidate Barack Obama was the revelation of his attendance at a church whose minister preached hate-America sermons on a number of occasions. Obama ultimately threw him under the bus and the largely un-churched mainstream media ignored it as a non-story.

But for a faithful churchgoer like me, it was really everything I needed to know about the man. A church is not a building per se but an assembly of people. You attend a specific church because you like being there. It is a place where you learn more about your faith, where you worship God corporately and where there are opportunities to serve the local community.



GREGORY J. RUMMO

It is above all the place where you choose to have fellowship with like-minded people. And the Obamas were members of this church for two decades.

This warped theology of "Goddamn America," to quote one of his pastor's oft-repeated sermon sound bites, played a part in shaping candidate Obama's ideology.

To him, the American system was unfair to minorities. It was a bully aggressor nation under George W. Bush. Fairness was not equal opportunity but equal outcome. The wealthy should be forced to share their wealth with the poor through a punitive tax system.

This was all couched in one word — "change" — and many people fell for it.

Barack Obama was elected to the presidency for many reasons. There was strong anti-Bush sentiment, mirrored by the nominating committee that made its decision to award Obama the Nobel Peace Prize only 12 days into his presidency. There was the racial component — African-Americans voted for him in huge numbers.

Independent voters were willing to give him a chance. As long as one

ignored his voting record in the Senate, he got away with campaigning as a moderate promising an open, transparent government and a new age of accountability. He talked about reforming health care, a middle class tax cut, a fiscally responsible government that would fix the economy and restore jobs. He said he'd bring the soldiers home from Iraq and that he'd close GITMO.

And John McCain ran an anemic campaign.

But something happened along the way to Election Day 2009 that has continued to gain momentum across America, erupting Tuesday in Massachusetts where a Republican beat a Democrat in the race to fill the late Ted Kennedy's seat in the U.S. Senate.

How did this happen? How could the man who won the presidency with such a huge margin in the popular vote and with a Democratic House and Senate fail to deliver on just about everything he promised? And why has he become, the incredible shrinking president, sinking in the polls to the point where his unfavorable ratings are higher than his favorables?

The answer is simple: Liberalism laid bare for all to see. In the spirit of "Don't Tread on Me," a majority of Americans have finally reawakened to see what Barack Obama is all about. They are scared and they are angry.

When he assumed office, he was quick to remind the opposition party, arrogantly and at every opportunity that "we won."

In the style of Venezuela's president, Hugo Chavez, he nationalized two-thirds of the U.S. auto industry and the banks.

There was his World Apology Tour for America under his predecessor, which now appears to have sent a signal to Iran to ignore us and for al-Qaida to assume we are again fair game despite Obama's stunning epiphany that there is evil in the world made during his Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Time right for High Point proposal despite economy

This letter is in response to the open letter to the Board of Education of the High Point Regional High School Jan. 20, and to all others that don't understand, or are misinformed about what they are voting for. I am not on, and this is not from, the Board of Education.

I believe the decision to bring this "proposal" (it is not a budget) to a vote at this time is a responsible one. Yes, the economy is in bad shape, and times are difficult for many of us, but if you look at some of the facts you should agree:

At this time, we can get 33 percent of our money back from the state. If we don't use it, someone else surely will. There are existing bonds that will be ending, which is why the per household impact is so low. I work in the construction field. Right now, there is so little work available that contractors are bidding work at, or almost at, cost. We can get more work done now for a lot less money than we can in a good economy.

Visit your High Point High School! You will see a building and grounds that are well taken care of by a staff with pride in what they do. Many of the items in the proposal are needed to keep up with an aging facility. If left alone, they will need to be addressed later, when they are in worse shape, and at a greater cost.

Some items are needed to bring our school up to date. This allows our students to receive a quality education. They will be able to enter their higher education or the work force as a greater asset. Quality of schools is directly proportionate to value of homes.

You list the turf field as a "want." If you look at the facts, you will see this is not true. The current field is aging and needs work. To replace it with a turf field may cost a little more up front. Maintenance on this field is far lower than a grass field — no mowing, no re-seeding, and no fertilizing. It would be usable for more different sports, not just football. This will lessen the need for additional fields. It can be used sooner after rain, without causing damage like a grass field.

All of the elected representatives on the Board of Education are available to answer any questions that the people they serve might have. I urge everyone to be informed, and to get out and vote on Jan. 26. I fully support this proposal.

Mike Fox
Frankford

High Point's needs/wants don't warrant new debt

While I strongly urge the registered voters of Branchville, Frankford, Lafayette, Sussex and Wantage to exercise their rights on Tuesday, Jan. 26, I also strongly urge them to fully consider the ballot question and make a thoughtful decision before casting their vote regarding the High Point Regional High School Referendum-Bond Proposal.

Nationwide, on a professional sports and college level, and statewide, on an individual school district and municipal level, the jury is still out regarding the safety, life expectancy, cost effectiveness and environmental impact of artificial turf fields versus natural grass fields. It is more than a shame that installation of an artificial turf field is not a separate line item on Tuesday night's ballot.

While I would never object to required and necessary school building improvements and renovations, I have to wonder why replacement and upgrades to the existing facilities (i.e., roof, bleachers, windows and doors, gym floor, tennis courts, electrical service, science labs, etc.) would not be normal and anticipat-

ed expenditures with the costs calculated into the school budget on an ongoing basis. Isn't that exactly what a budget by definition is designed to do?

Many, if not all, of the needs/wants in the proposed facilities renovation project are improvements and/or upgrades to the existing facilities, all of which may very well warrant additional replacement or further upgrades before this impending debt is retired 20-plus years from now.

None of these needs/wants are remarkable or extraordinary, as the cost of building expansion to accommodate additional classroom space for academic programs would be, to warrant new bond debt.

Karen Merritt
Wantage

Maintenance needed to retain school's value

I think it is very unfair to claim that High Point Regional High School's Board of Education does not have a sense of reality to the economic climate of the nation. It is precisely their sense of reality that led them to put this proposal together for H.P.R.H.S.

Like a home that needs maintenance to retain its value, so does our school to maintain its value for our students. The majority of the items requested will need to be done either way. It makes economic sense to do them when the costs are down and the money is available. Our last loan payment on our current debt is in June of this year. By passing this referendum we will get all the maintenance done on our students' home without any further cost to the taxpayers. It will be status quo, but with all the upgrades.

As far as the athletic renovations are concerned, if you have traveled with any student to another school for sporting events, you know that we are behind in our athletic facilities. I am not just talking out of the county, but in the county as well. H.P.R.H.S. has had many opportunities for students to work towards scholarships in many areas. So just like the upgrades to the science lab and the auditorium, the fields and track need to be upgraded, too.

Our tennis courts are inadequate for other teams to come here and play. We play field hockey on a field that is uneven dirt and grass. Our track is wearing out and a turf field would benefit four different sports, as well as our physical education programs. Because of the P.E. element the state is funding a generous portion of the field.

We can all be very proud of how the H.P.R.H.S. students excel throughout the state, as well as nationally, in so many areas — technology, science, sports, community service, the arts and much more.

Vote yes for the referendum on Jan. 26 and let's keep their house in the condition those students deserve to live in to continue to succeed.

Deb Kohle
Wantage

Weighing in on High Point and school boards

I am writing with regard to the special election funding proposal for the failing High Point Regional school district, set down for decision Jan. 26; Faye R. Kangas's letter to the editor on Jan. 20; and the lead article on Jan. 21 regarding the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Initially, it should be noted that this is the same school district that recently failed to meet the very low standards of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Mrs. Kangas's letter adroitly sets forth the reasons why the electorate should

Our enemy, emboldened in Afghanistan and regrouping in Yemen, is again posing a real threat not only abroad but here in the U.S. The underwear bomber who managed to sneak past all security checkpoints and almost bring down a commercial airliner over Michigan on Christmas Day was a frightening reminder of 9/11.

But this man will be tried in a U.S. civilian court and afforded all the rights of a citizen under our Constitution as will Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the 9/11 mastermind courtesy of Obama's Justice Department under Attorney General Eric Holder — another liberal ideologue.

A stimulus bill that was promised to keep the unemployment rate under 8 percent has been a failure as 10 percent of Americans are still without jobs.

Last summer when the so-called health-care opposition tea parties were at their fever pitch, Democrats not only ignored their constituents but also denigrated them.

Obama's response has been to try every sick, behind closed doors manipulation including an initial attempt to rush health-care reform through Congress before anyone had read the bill.

And the same shills in the mainstream media who never bothered to learn who this man really was — a community organizer with several months experience in the U.S. Senate — continue their appalling performance of giving the man a free pass.

What happened in Virginia and New Jersey on Election Day last November and in the special election Tuesday in Massachusetts may not be the next conservative revolution in America.

But I'll take a renaissance of true populist Americanism along with the rejection of Obama's socialism as a big step in the right direction.

Gregory J. Rummo is a businessman, journalist and the author of "The View from the Grass Roots" and "The View from the Grass Roots — Another Look." Contact him at GregRummo.com

give a resounding "no" to this budget. It is patently obvious that the failing school district has deliberately sought to obfuscate perhaps some needed repairs with non-essential items, such as improvements to athletic facilities, which include resurfacing of existing tennis courts, and the construction of two new tennis courts. Wonderful! The students will graduate knowing how to play tennis, but won't be able to add, subtract, multiply or divide without using a calculator.

Speaking as a former school board president, I cannot for the life of me see how over \$13 million of improvements are remotely "essential." As Mrs. Kangas so eloquently stated, many of the items in the proposed project are "wants" and not "needs." Instead of improving the standards of education, particularly in the field of mathematics, this board is trying to give the high school all the trappings of a luxury hotel.

In another vein, I have always failed to see why we need this plethora of local school boards wasting hundreds of millions of dollars, when one county school board would suffice.

The New Jersey Herald's lead article in the Jan. 21 paper regarding the New Jersey School Boards Association presents a ray of hope for strapped taxpayers. During my tenure as a school board member, vice president and president, I found that association to be totally useless. During this time of taxpayer frustration, with New Jersey having the highest property taxes in the nation, coupled with a high unemployment rate, the audacity of the High Point Regional school district's attempt to saddle the electorate with additional taxes should be met with a resounding "no" vote on Jan. 26.

Harry Dunleavy
Augusta

High Point projects will only create more debt

For most of us, making the final payment on our mortgage is a reason to celebrate. Elimination of debt is something we strive toward. It is odd that to the "education elite," paying off debt is nothing more than an excuse to take on new debt.

The High Point Regional High School District will be retiring its multi-million dollar debt soon. So now they want to spend yet another 13 million of your hard earned dollars and they claim that this will actually "save" you money. What is most disturbing about this new plan to personally tax your family an additional \$1,600 is that they want to use it for such "necessities" as artificial turf on the football field and two new tennis courts (we already have three). Are they running a school or a country club?

While we will be paying back these millions, with interest, for 25 years, it should be noted that according to the New Jersey Work Environment Council, the life expectancy of artificial turf is 10 years. We will be paying for 15 years on a field that no longer even exists. It is as insane an idea as financing the family car for 50 years.

At a time when some of us have lost our jobs and most live in constant fear of facing a similar fate, when families face personal bankruptcy and a record number of homes are in foreclosure, it is the height of arrogance for the school to demand even more of the little that we have left.

Please protect your family's future and take a few minutes on this coming Tuesday, Jan. 26, and cast a no vote on this costly unnecessary extravagance.

Michael A. Garrett
Wantage

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