

New Year's Day Message from Mayor Robert H. Conley

January 3, 2018

Thank you to Mazher Ahmad of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Central Jersey for your invocation. Thank you to our Police Honor Guard for the presentation of colors, Scout Troop 7 for leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance and Elizabeth Monkemeier for singing our National Anthem for the second year in a row.

Welcome to the Vitale and Hoover families. Carmela Vitale, welcome to another term serving the residents of Madison. Welcome to John Hoover as you take your dedication as a Madison volunteer to the Madison Borough Council. Welcome back to our returning Council members; Astri Baillie, Ben Wolkowitz, Pat Rowe and Maureen Byrne.

Welcome to our visiting dignitaries; Assemblyman John McKeon and Assemblywoman Mila Jasey and Chatham Borough Council President Len Resto and Councilman Thad Kobylarz. Welcome to our residents, Department Heads and all Borough staff in attendance.

As we look forward to the new year, let us take a moment to remember a few of those we lost in 2017. People who worked to make a difference in our community.

Sally Ann Barylick, a 50-year volunteer for the Madison Ambulance Corps who made calls as a first responder until she was 82 and continued to volunteer for the Corps until she was 95.

Joe Chiarolanzio, co-owner of Romanelli's Italian Eatery. It evolved from the small storefront operation on Main Street to the restaurant on Lincoln Place. It was his investment in the property that was then the Lincoln Garage that revitalized the east end of Lincoln Place.

Pat Sarasohn, a 41-year resident of Madison who gave 23 of those years to the students of Madison by serving on the Board of Education, including many years as Board President.

Bo Serillo, a big heart, great sense of humor and always there to help others. For 22 years, he was here for the Borough of Madison, on the job at DPW, with a big smile representing our town so well.

Antoinette "Toni" Chiarolanzio, who with her husband, Joe , opened CJ's Deli in Madison in 1970. The couple operated it until they sold it in 2001. The business is still thriving today in the hands of their nephew, Johnny Blair.

Fire Chief William G. Prentiss died at the age of 92. Bill joined the Madison Hook and Ladder Company in 1960 as a volunteer, was later hired as a full-time firefighter in 1962, and rose through the ranks to become Chief on May 1, 1986. He retired as Chief on June 20, 1989.

Two-term Councilman Bob Sylverstein, who served Madison from January 1, 1989 until December 31, 1994.

Bill Hawkins, YMCA CEO from 1981 to 1995, leading the Y from financial challenges to become the leading provider of childcare and youth programs for the community. And on a personal note, he was my mentor, providing the guidance that enabled me to be where I am today.

Robert Ryan, representing the greatest generation of the many generations of Madison Ryans. He was a decorated World War II veteran, serving aboard the USS Franklin (CV-13) and was a survivor of an attack on the ship where more than 800 crew members were lost.

Al Chiarolanzio who opened Alfred's Sport Shop in 1960, which continues on Main Street after three generations of Chiarolanzios passed it onto the current owners. The success of his store helped define downtown Madison.

Each of these people made their mark in our community. Please take a moment to reflect on their lives, along with others who we lost over the past year.

Let us not forget two who have moved from Madison, Judy Mullins and Bob Landrigan.

Judy saw a challenge and worked for a solution; first to establish what is now the Shade Tree Management Board and then provided a funding mechanism through the creation of the Friends of Madison Shade Trees.

Bob Landrigan's time in Madison was defined by volunteerism. When he and his family settled in Madison, he saw volunteering as the best avenue to community.

Let us be inspired by their service and that of other volunteers. Take a few moments to think about your special Madison volunteer. They may be someone up here in this room, a member of one of the Borough committees or boards, someone sitting next to you. Maybe a volunteer you met among the hundreds on May Day or a family of volunteers like the Totos, who put their special touch on Madison. Or it could be a PTO volunteer, a youth sports coach, a volunteer first responder with our Fire Department or Ambulance Corps. Or maybe the smiling auxiliary police officer assisting at the Farmers Market, Bottle Hill Day or a parade. Think about your favorite Madison volunteer, someone who has helped make us a better community.

President George W. Bush, in his first inaugural address challenged all Americans to be "citizens, not spectators – responsible individuals, building communities of service and a nation of character". Let us take this a step further by being citizens and neighbors to each other.

Anyone who has gone through communication training has probably heard the advice, "We were given two ears and one mouth because we should listen twice as much as we talk." That was before Twitter and Facebook, which probably spawned the concept that yes, while I have two ears and one mouth I have ten fingers, so you do the math and I will Tweet to my heart's desire. We are better than that so let us show the world that Madison is different. Take a break from social media, talk to your neighbor when something is bothering you; welcome a new family in town with a warm greeting and handshake; share your Madison story with a stranger; and remember to listen as we were all shaped by our different life lessons as we grew up.

President Obama had great words of wisdom in his farewell address; "At a time when our political discourse has become so sharply polarized - at a time when we are far too eager to lay the blame for all that ails the world at the feet of those who happen to think differently than we do – it's important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we're talking with each other in a way that heals, not in a way that wounds."

And Ronald Reagan also had great advice for today's politically divided world; "The person who agrees with you 80 percent of the time is a friend and an ally, not a 20 percent traitor."

Let us make this our challenge for 2018, to build on our great sense of community in Madison by appreciating our unity, diversity, generosity, compassion and decency, all with civil discourse and respect for each other, but especially for all the volunteers in Madison who make this a special place.

Thank you and a Happy and Healthy New Year to all.