



OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISOR
TOWN OF RAMAPO
237 Route 59
Suffern, New York 10901
(845) 357-5100 Fax: (845) 357-3877

Christopher P. St. Lawrence
SUPERVISOR

Ramapo To Hold Unity Forum

December 4, 2007

Recently Harvard Political Scientist Robert Putnam released the results of a massive study based on interviews of nearly 30,000 on the impact of diversity on a community. Putnam, surprising to many, concluded that the greater the diversity in a community the less civic engagement took place, i.e. voting, volunteering, and neighbors trust one another about half as much as they do in most homogeneous settings.

“People living in ethnically diverse settings tend to hunker down – that is to pull in like a turtle Putnam writes.” In identifying this trend his analysis runs contrary to the predominant theory that more time spent with people of other backgrounds leads to greater understanding and harmony not conflict.

While not completely subscribing to many of Professor Putnam’s conclusions, I nonetheless feel that his study underscores the challenges created by diversity, in particular for elected officials. Diversity to me has enhanced productivity and innovation particularly in the private sector. Creative tensions can spark dynamic discussions, and generate solutions that elude people in homogenous settings.

In Ramapo we have always considered diversity to be an asset, and not a liability. However, Ramapo is no different than countless communities nationwide that are facing the challenges of unpopular federal mandates, contrary wants and needs of local constituencies, dwindling greenspace etc. Now is the time for our community to engage in a meaningful dialogue that will enhance understanding, and develop collaborative strategies that will benefit all Town residents. I expect that my upcoming Unity Forum will bring together the Mayors of all Ramapo’s Villages, Town officials, and all residents sincerely interested in addressing our mutual concerns. In the words of Bernard Baruch, “we did not come over on the same ship, but we are all in the same boat now.” Mayor Brian Miele has agreed to act as the Co-Chairman of our Unity Coalition. I will be announcing the specific details of our Unity Forum next week. Your willingness to take part in our discussions is both welcomed and encouraged by me.

Big Screen Classics – Saturday, December 8th – “**Charade**” (1963) starring Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn. Pre-show organ concert with Jeff Barker at 11:00 AM and the feature film at 11:30 AM at the Lafayette Theater in Suffern.

Concert – Featuring “The Magic Touch” Music of the 50’s and 60’s – Sunday, December 16th – 7:00 PM until 8:30 PM at the Ramapo Senior Center, Route 202 & Mayer Drive, Montebello – Free Admission for Ramapo Residents

New Year’s Eve Events – Alcohol Free “Family Fest” at the Joseph T. St. Lawrence Community, Health & Sports Center, 115 Torne Valley Road, Hillburn. Live Band, Dancing, DJ, Recreation Activities, Trivia Contest, Times Square on the Big Screen – December 31st – 9:00 PM until 1:00 AM. Free Admission to Rockland residents. For further information call Parks & Recreation at 357-6100.

Senior Citizens New Year’s Eve Party – Town of Ramapo Senior Citizen Center, 319 Route 202 & Mayer Drive, Montebello. DJ, Dancing, Buffet Dinner, Party Favors – Cost: \$35.00 per person. For further information call Parks & Recreation at 357-6100.