



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

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Mayor's message: Looking at the last year and hopes for 2009

January 07, 2009 - Rhode Island

At this time of year, we often reflect on the past and look forward to the hope and promise that each New Year brings.

Certainly, this year has been difficult for many who have lost their jobs, fought to keep their home or sacrificed to ensure that their families were warm and nourished. Others are grieving unspeakable loss, have health concerns of their own or are the main caretakers for others.

Yet even as they may have struggled, the citizens of Warwick have inspired me. Their collective spirit of compassion, of friendship, of community and of concern for others has remained strong and unwavering.

This enthusiasm was evident in February, when hundreds braved chilly weather to help Extreme Makeover: Home Edition build a new home for the Silva family, who led countless individuals to consider adopting or fostering children. It was present at Little League fields, in local boardrooms and in classrooms, where even those on tighter budgets found ways to donate food, clothing and toys to ensure a more enjoyable holiday season for those in need. It could be found at spaghetti suppers, where family, friends, neighbors and strangers came together to raise money for families who had suffered the devastating loss of a parent. And it remains steadfast as we support our military men and women, who are giving up so much for us.

Our employees, too, have made me proud. Together, they accomplish great things for our city, and several have earned special recognition for their efforts: tax assessor Ken Mallette received the Sherry Vermilya Award from his peers for "outstanding service to the assessment profession"; our police department's SWAT team was the first in Rhode Island to be certified by the Police Officers' Commission on Standards and Training; the efforts of our Lead Hazard Reduction staff earned the program a "best practice" award from the United States Conference of Mayors/DuPont-Cities United for Science Progress; Susan Folco received the Tourism "Employee of the Year" award from the Rhode Island Hospitality Association; and Gwin Cox, Jr., of our Sewer Authority, earned the Operator of the Year Award/ Rhode Island from NEWEA.

On other fronts, Warwick was the first community in Rhode Island to develop a comprehensive 10-year plan to end homelessness, we remain top in the state for recycling, and, after years of effort and negotiation, we secured the deed to a mile of spectacular shoreline for public use at Rocky Point. Our bond rating remains strong, and we've realized hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of savings by restructuring departments. We continue to lure new businesses here - from national companies to small, family-run enterprises - and our non-profit agencies remain important partners in our shared goal of caring for the most vulnerable in our society.

There is no doubt that 2009 will bring its share of challenges, but I have every confidence that our community, together, will weather them all successfully.

My best to you for a joyous, prosperous and healthy New Year.

Scott Avedisian is the mayor of Warwick.

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