

**Remarks on Receiving the Carl Verdi Community Pride Award
Presented at the November 3, 2011, Board of Education Meeting**

Thank you very much.

I want to start by giving you a brief update on some of the local projects we've been pursuing. I hope you've seen the new Community Crossroads sign at the intersection of RTs 25 and 21 on the Longwood Library property. This is an updatable sign that both LYSA and the BOE will be able to use. The planting bed will be added to and there's also a plan for solar lights for the sign. Later this month, The Alliance will be debuting a new logo and website, thanks to one Brendan Bailey, and a Facebook page. We also have successfully installed a new locking community bulletin board sign at Bartlett Pond Park. We will inaugurate this sign when we host our annual Veterans Day Commemoration next Friday, on 11/11/11 at 11. Please join us.

A few days before that, the TOB will be submitting their revegetation and invasive species management and prevention plan to the Pine Barrens Commission for the western half of the park. The commission will require the Town to implement the plan this spring, which should put us on course for substantial improvement there in time for Memorial Day and our next veterans' monument dedication on Saturday, June 16, 2012. This will be, we pray, the final monument for Longwood's service people; it will honor those who served from the start of Operation Desert Storm through the present day. We look forward to working with you to create a memorable event we're calling "Thanking Every Hometown Hero."

Now, speaking of heroes, it is such an honor to be joining the ranks of the three previous recipients of the Carl Verdi Community Pride Award. I'm so glad Tommy Lyon, Paul Infranco and Carl himself are here with me tonight to celebrate. They have devoted so much of their lives, both professionally and voluntarily, to making Longwood a place to be proud of. In so doing, these guys set the bar very high – and each of them helped push me over the top more than once in recent years. They, and several more of you around the room, also kept me from jumping into Bartlett Pond a few times. Thanks for that, too, because there's a huge snapping turtle in there that I don't need to meet!

This is Board of Education Appreciation Week. Thank you all for your work to make Longwood a great place to live and learn. I've known many of you for a long time and I think we do a good job of encouraging, occasionally correcting, and always improving one another's efforts. The roots of my Longwood volunteerism are in the PTA. Some of my best memories involve driving all over the district with Ellen Kushner, our van full of mother's day plants, or wrapping paper, or her actual freezer, full of ice pops! I remember working with Genine Schwinge after 9/11 to raise funds and comfort a number of families who lost loved ones. A decade before that, I remember meeting Maureen Silvestri, who insisted—through several of my tearful phone calls over the years – that I never give up on Longwood. She was right then just like she's right now.

And someone else who's always right is the person who gave me my start in the PTA by her own example of volunteering, my Mom. As I've said before, "Whatever I am today, Mom, it's all your fault!" I of course want to thank my wonderful husband Frank, aka "Mr. Bailey", for his constant support and wonderful sense of humor. And thanks for a never ending education from our two sons, each of whom benefitted far more than they're willing to admit from their Longwood years. The very happily employed and college-loan-already-paid-off Brendan is here tonight. Although our older son Trevor could not make it here from Hollywood, he sends good wishes back home, especially to Mr. Verdi, who plucked him out of relative obscurity years ago for the Main Event at the Middle School.

I would not be here tonight without the help of so many of you whom I've been privileged to work with and come to love along the way. From civics and church and scouts and schools, thank you all for being part of my community pride.

--Gail Lynch-Bailey, 11/3/11