

NEWS



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03-02-11 THIS WEEK IN ORANGE COUNTY BY EDWARD A. DIANA

Early last year, the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced that their Hudson Valley Resident Agency had outgrown their office space in Goshen. Since that time, in fact even before that announcement was made, I have been encouraging the FBI to relocate their Hudson Valley office to the City of Newburgh – where their presence is so desperately needed.

I was profoundly disappointed to learn this week that the FBI is not even considering locations in the City of Newburgh for their new field office. The closest they may get is nearby New Windsor, most likely at Stewart Airport. Worse yet, the FBI has admitted that congressional district boundaries influenced this decision. This is about the safety and well-being of the residents of Newburgh; political districting should play no role in this critical issue. Truly, this sheds a dim light on our City of Hope.

Because the City of Newburgh believes so strongly that FBI presence will make a difference in combating the drug issues and gang violence plaguing their community, they have even offered to make city-owned space available to the FBI. Despite the encouragement from my office, my colleagues in government, and innumerable community leaders, the offer of space, and the clearly demonstrated need, the FBI says they will not move to the City of Newburgh. Please join me in letting President Obama and FBI Director Robert Mueller know why an FBI presence in Newburgh is crucial to our public safety. Send your letters to: President Barack Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20500 and Robert S. Mueller III, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, 935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20535.

Thankfully, there are others who believe that concerted effort and commitment to Newburgh can effect positive change, including members of the FBI. Since last fall, the FBI InfraGard Unit has worked diligently with our County's Social Services Department and the Newburgh police to maintain a strong anti-gang focus on disengaged youth who need services and support the most. A direct result of this collaboration was the opening of the Center for HOPE at 280 Broadway in the heart of Newburgh. The Center invites at-risk youth to participate in educational and recreational activities from which they are generally excluded due to their at-risk and/or economic status and offers a safe environment, especially during the critical after-school hours. Programs include tutoring, music, dance, boxing, and art, provided in partnership with many of the County's non-profit service organizations.

Another important initiative with a goal of giving Newburgh youth options and stemming the tide of violence is the public/private effort that has resulted in the Newburgh Armory Unity Center. The Unity Center Project, under the watchful eye of its primary benefactor and Newburgh advocate, Mr. William Kaplan, has transformed the armory into a community center for the people of Newburgh. It offers space for athletics, performances, community meetings, and so much more.

The success of these two important projects reaffirms my belief that the FBI will make the greatest difference in the City of Newburgh by establishing strong presence in the City. The number one crime-prevention tool is VISIBILITY, VISIBILITY, VISIBILITY. This will send a clear message that the federal government, like our local officials, is committed to positive change in this once great Queen City on the banks of the mighty Hudson.

Until next week, wishing you good health and happiness.
Edward A. Diana
County Executive