

## **2012 MAYOR'S ADDRESS**

I am proud to report that the state of Mountainside is fiscally sound and is thriving. This is a great community and a lot of people in this room and throughout the community are the ones that make it such a fantastic community. Despite the 2% cap that's been imposed on us, we continue to provide the high level of services that our residents demand and the way we are able to do this is the way we have been doing it for years. We have always looked towards grants from the state, the federal government and the county in order to supplement the monies that we have to provide these services. We are also blessed with a fantastic foundation, the Watts Foundation, which has been very generous to the community and also helps to enhance the quality of life in the community. We are faced with some increased expenses. They range from the assessment we receive from Rahway Valley, utilities, library statutory budget increases, healthcare, and pension contributions. A lot of these costs are the same every household in Mountainside knows of and are forced to meet those expenses. Fortunately, we have gotten some help from the state, mainly through the tool kit. I know that the police are not happy about the fact they are contributing more towards their healthcare and their contributions, but certainly it has helped Mountainside to meet the 2% cap that everyone has to abide by this year. We also have a tremendous number of tax appeals which have decreased some of the revenues we receive, especially from the commercial properties, but that's the bad news. The good news is that we are continuing to share services. We have been doing this well before that was the buzz word that everyone talks about. We have used Westfield Regional Health Department for our health department. We have a good working relationship with the county. They provide us with grants that help us to enhance a lot of our recreation programs. I also have to commend the Council and staff because they are very diligent at looking over the expenses and making sure that they are reasonable and necessary. They are not afraid to question the expenses and it's through all these efforts that we are able to continue to maintain the services that we have now even with the 2% cap on the budget.

Just to go over some of the services and facilities that we have in Mountainside and that are available to everyone. I will start with the pool. This summer was a great summer. The pool was enjoyed by our community. It is the finest pool in the county and the third finest community pool in the state. The library has become the center of community resources for leisure, culture, and information for all ages. We can be proud of our library. I am going to be repeating this a lot tonight, the finest in the county. Mountainside is the finest in the county. Our building department has been working diligently to close out open building permits and turning that information over to our tax assessor so the homes can be properly assessed so that all residents share equally in the tax burden. Our finance department has been working also. Two years ago we had a 4% cap on our tax levy and it went down to 2% and we have done it all the ways that I've already talked about. This is the second year in a row that we have gotten an

audit report that had no negative comments on it, that's something that our staff should be commended for. We are also in the top grouping of municipalities in the state mandated best practices inventory questionnaire. First thing I want to say about recreation is that we have a brand new basketball court at our Lady of Lourdes property in which they just finished installing four more baskets so we have a full basketball court and two other courts that go sideways. This was funded through the county grants, the Watts Foundation and done at very little cost to the borough. Even in the cold weather you can see kids playing basketball, it's a true asset to our community. All our adult and sports programs continue to thrive and expand. We have taken over a couple of the sports programs that were eliminated because of budget problems at the Board of Education so the recreation department is picking up the slack and trying to keep the services at the highest level. We have a community room. This year there were over 675 hours of activities scheduled there. Our engineering department, we continue our ongoing program of resurfacing roads in Mountainside. We have recently done some curb improvements on Beech Avenue. The street was paved by NJ American Water after they did some improvements to their infrastructure. We resurfaced, had curb installation, and storm sewer construction on Pembroke Road, Cherry Hill Road, Maple Court and Peachtree Lane. We currently have done the designs and bids are out for the resurfacing of Deerfield Court and Whippoorwill Way. All of these road resurfacings have been done with existing bond monies or grants received by the Department of Transportation. There is almost no cost to the borough for this continuing project of resurfacing roads. It makes our town look fantastic. Our seniors, we have the senior fitness room upstairs that has had 1,781 visits this past year. They have a coordinated blood pressure screening, health bones classes, fit and healthy program, handyman program and we continue to have a strong relationship with SAGE Eldercare which is a program that provides outreach to frail seniors and seniors who are at risk. I also want to commend the police department for what they do. They know the seniors that they have to check on in bad weather and the storms we had they take the time to do that. We have to look out for our seniors because if we don't, when I go to the senior meetings they tell me about it. I also again want to commend our police, DPW, volunteer fire and rescue squads for the actions and their response during the snow storm, hurricane in August, and pre-Halloween storm. During all of these storms there was access for emergency vehicles and the safety of our residents was never compromised. All of this as a result of, again the efforts of our police department, public works, fire department and the rescue squad. They should all be commended. We also have a number of volunteer organizations in Mountainside that I can't stress enough how much they make Mountainside the great community that it is. Once again, the volunteer fire department and volunteer rescue squad, they keep our residents safe, they provide the fire protection and emergency services at times when people really need it. We also have the volunteer fire company which contributes to the fireworks that we all enjoy at our Lady of Lourdes Church. We have Mountainside Youth Baseball which has been in existence over 50 years. I don't think there is anyone sitting in this room or who ever lived in this town that

hasn't been touched by Mountainside Youth Baseball. It's a great organization and they continue to thrive. We have the Mountainside PAL which has been in existence now over 10 years and they continue to provide programs, sports recreation, and social activities for the youth of our town. The PAL also co-sponsored the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks. One of our newer organizations is the Mountainside Softball Association that provides softball for our young women in this community. We also have a very active cub, boys and girls scouts, and brownie troops in town. The girl scouts were out singing when we lit the tree this year and everyone certainly enjoyed it. Mountainside is a community of volunteers and it is in the spirit of volunteerism in this town that makes Mountainside the community we all love to call our home. I've said on a number of occasions and I guess I repeat it all the time that Mountainside community is sort of like a family. On a day to day basis all the residents don't really like all the residents, but when there's trouble, when there are natural disasters that occur, the Mountainside residents come to help other residents and their neighbors and that's what makes Mountainside in my opinion, the best town in New Jersey.