

MOUNT VERNON VOICE

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VOICE Seeks Support for Better Fields

By STEVE HUNT

Staff Writer

At Mount Vernon Woods Park Carla Claire told a small crowd which included Lee Supervisor Jeff McKay and Fairfax County Park Authority board member Ed Batten that all she wants is a safe place for her three daughters, Carla, 17, Daniella, 6, and Alejandra, 3, to play.

"We need your help," Claire said.

At Muddy Hole Park a couple of miles south, Ricky Hairston, coach of the Fairfax County Colts football team and manager Crystal Compton pointed out the poor condition of the field where the team practices.

"I hope you see what we see," Compton said.

Hairston said that there are holes in the field causing players to twist their ankles and noted that as there is no picnic pavilion there, that whenever there is lighting the players have to scatter to cars for safety.

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Staff photo/Steve Hunt
Carla Castro-Claire, left, with her mother, Carla Claire, in blue skirt, and sister, Daniella, along with Leah Tenorio, right, spoke to the crowd at Mount Vernon Woods Park about the need to upgrade conditions there.

Math SOL Scores Drop Dramatically

By STEVE HUNT

Staff Writer

The good news is Fairfax County Public Schools students continue to pass the Virginia Standards of Learning tests at a high rate in English, Reading English, Writing, History and Social Science, and Science, according to preliminary data released last week by the Virginia Department of Education.

The not-so-good news is that in mathematics scores dropped.

FCPS officials were not surprised with the decline in math scores, blaming the drop on the implementation of new standards and assessments.

And, even in mathematics, FCPS pass rates surpassed the state pass rates in every grade level with FCPS officials noting that students' pass rates exceeded state pass rates by 17 points in grade 7 mathematics and by 16 points in grade 8 mathematics.

FCPS pointed out that the drop in 2011-12 mathematics scores is similar to what happened during the 2005-06 school year when mathematics SOL assessments were added to grades 4,6, and 7.

"FCPS scores showed a noticeable decline that year, but FCPS teachers and students met the challenge and test scores quickly rebounded in the following years," FCPS stated.

On Sept. 12, school, division and state report cards and related summary data will be available from the VDOE.

The Virginia Board of Education revised and strengthened Virginia's mathematics standards in 2009 in an effort to better prepare Virginia public school students for the challenges of the first year of college or meaningful entry-level employment when they graduate from high school, according to FCPS.

SOL mathematics tests administered during the 2011-12 school year were the first to reflect the increased rigor of the new standards, according to FCPS.

In Algebra I, students in FCPS achieved a pass rate of 85 percent; 41 of the 50 FCPS schools, for which scores were reported, achieved pass rates of 70 percent or higher with 33 of these schools achieving pass

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Name Change Highlights Progreso's Mission



Staff photo/Steve Hunt

Cristina Schoendorf, executive director of the Progreso Literacy and Citizenship Center, formerly Progreso Hispano, spoke to supporters at a "Friend Raising" event Thursday night in Mount Vernon.

By STEVE HUNT

Staff Writer

In 1999, Father Jesus Navarrete and Leah Tenorio of Good Shepherd Catholic Church realized a need in the growing Hispanic community to foster a spirit of solidarity and support.

From that desire to help Hispanic immigrants living in the Richmond Highway corridor not only survive but thrive came Progreso Hispano.

And now, for more than a decade the organization has been doing just that and living up to its motto of "Providing the tools for full participation in U.S. society."

However, recently the leaders of the non-profit organization including Tenorio and executive director Cristina Schoendorf, felt that many in the community may not have understood what Progreso Hispano is all about.

To that end, the organization is now known as Progreso Literacy and Citizenship Center.

"Changing our name is a really big deal," commented Schoendorf. "It's very exciting."

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Staff photos/Steve Hunt

In photo left, Fairfax County Colts football team head coach Ricky Hairston spoke about the poor condition of the field at Muddy Hole Park. Beside him is team manager Crystal Compton. Above, young football players run through drills at Muddy Hole Park.

VOICE Brings Diverse Groups Together to Seek Change

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Todd Johnson, division director for park maintenance with the park authority, said some smaller issues may be able to be addressed there, but long term improvements, such as those re-grading the field, would require funding from a park bond.

Claire, Hairston and Compton were among the speakers at an event Wednesday evening organized by VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement) to tour what the organization terms as “inadequate fields in the Route 1 and Mount Vernon areas.”

The tour included Muddy Hole and Mount Vernon Woods parks, as well as the fields at Mount Vernon High where dozens of young athletes and parents met to discuss the fields’ conditions.

VOICE, which held a meeting in June which attracted hundreds of supporters, is requesting that a portion of the upcoming \$75 million Fairfax County park bond be used to improve the athletic fields.

At Mount Vernon Woods, Linda DeLeon noted that many families with thousands of young children live in the area and there is not enough green space close to their homes.

“That’s the reason we’re here today,” she said.

Leah Tenorio, with Good Shepherd Catholic Church’s Hispanic ministry, said it’s important to children to have access to sports activities close to their homes -- and there is already a great pent-up demand for it.

At Mount Vernon High, McKay addressed the crowd, saying that in a way “it’s a good problem to



In photo left, Linda DeLeon spoke about the need to upgrade the field at Mount Vernon Woods Park. Above, Lee Supervisor Jeff McKay addressed a large crowd at Mount Vernon High School. Beside him are Rick Genuario, left, co-president president of the West Potomac Wolverine Athletic Booster Club and Michael Gailliot, president of the Mount Vernon High Athletic Booster Club.

have” in that some many young people and their parents are working to have safe places for them to recreate close to their homes.

McKay grew up in the area and has many fond memories of playing on those fields himself as a boy.

However, McKay explained that over the years the parks became underutilized and the park authority, while still conducting general maintenance, had to put its resources elsewhere.

Now, the demand is back, and as McKay said, “we’ve come full circle.”

Batten, the Lee representative on the park authority board, said he is committed to doing what he can to re-prioritize resources and praised the people for coming together and calling attention to the need.

“We are on your side,” Batten said.



Young people addressed the crowd at MVHS about the need for improved playing fields at the school.