

New Castle Residents Portrayed in Library Exhibit

By Abby Luby

Getting involved in your community just got a boost from our new president, Barack Obama. Reflecting that local energy is Robert Fine's current photography exhibit, "Portraits of New Castle," at the Chappaqua Library.

Although redolent of the portrait gallery at the Smithsonian's Hall of Presidents, these aren't just your usual headshots; they are large, almost life-sized digital images of New Castle folks whose lives are about giving back.

Lining the library's long gallery hall are 19 images framed in 60-inch long rectangular panels, which are less formal photographs and more portals for local merchants, firefighters and journalists to step through, witness library patrons while reminding us of the close-knit community.

"It's as if these people are actually visiting us for a month or so," said Library Director Pamela Thornton. "They are part of Chappaqua and they are recognizable. They give of their lives to the community."

Greeting us on both sides of the hall is Chappaqua Fire Department Chief Russell Maitland first wearing full chief regalia, then donned in heavy, yellow firefighting armor. Music educator Janet Angier meets us with a resolved, determined gaze, while Tony Veshta, owner of Mario's Pizzeria, blithely holds a pizza box.

Shackled with ruler and paper is the steadfast architect, Chuck Napoli, the casual stance of Councilman Mike Wolfensohn offers a small 9/11 pin on his lapel. Smiling publisher Grace Bennett gracefully holds "Inside Chappaqua" in one hand, pen at the ready in the other. The highly dedicated troika of NewCastleNOW.org, Christine Yeres, Ann Marie Fallon and Susie Pender cheerily huddle together and Chappaqua



Some of the "Portraits of New Castle" taken by photographer Robert Fine featuring a diverse group of residents who help make the town a special place.



ABBY LUBY PHOTOS

Orchestra conductor Michael Shapiro is poised to give a downbeat.

These portrait profiles emerge from a white backdrop, allowing us to focus on just the person.

"All of these photographs show us a layer of their life and reflect what they do," Thornton said. Prior to the show, the library's theater became Fine's makeshift studio for three days, she explained, adding that at first people who were being photographed seemed a bit self conscious. "But they came in and they got into it."

Thornton said that before the photographs were mounted the library staff wasn't sure what the hall would look

like. "But when all the photos were up there was a real 'Wow.' The kids especially seem to gravitate to (Maitland)," she said.

Following the show's opening two weeks ago, comments in the gallery sign-in book praised Fine for capturing the essence of notable locals. "You brought the soul out of each one," reads one comment and "Wow, great photos of great people" says another.

When the show comes down off the walls at the end of this month, there will undoubtedly be a feeling of emptiness, intones Thornton.

"They have a presence here and we will miss them," she said.

"Portraits of New Castle"
Photographs by Robert P. Fine

Through Feb. 28 at the
Chappaqua Public Library Gallery,
195 S. Greeley Ave.

For more information call
914-238-4779. The gallery is open
Monday through Thursday
9 a.m. to 8 p.m.



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