



## An MCW Success Story

Below is a letter addressed to MCW's Director of Operations, Khalid Elachi, from a 2011 Youth Leadership Retreat (YLR) Alumnus who used the skills and relationships she developed during the YLR to turn her vision in to reality. Accompanying the letter is an article written about her inspiring work in the Northport Observer.

MCW is so proud to share this story, as it shows we are succeeding at working towards our mission: to empower youth to become agents of change in their communities.

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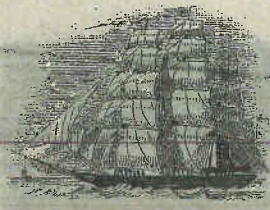
Hello Khalid! Fantastic news!

Thanks to your help, Northport High School's Invisible Children organization raised \$1,300 towards the installation of radio tower network in the remote forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo! I am so grateful and appreciative of your generous advice in hosting an effective fundraiser and collaboration with companies like Ben&Jerry's ice cream. Please read the article attached because I mentioned Miracle Corners of the World when speaking to a local news reporter. Hope you like it and I look forward to your response :)

Sincerely, **Gisele Cesar**  
President of Northport High School Invisible Children S4S



Gisele (front right) at the YLR with other participants



# The Observer

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## Show will benefit Invisible Children

By LISA MANCUSO

Northport High School's Invisible Children/Schools 4 Schools student club, part of an international non-profit relief organization whose mission it is to help children who live in remote villages of Uganda and Southern Sudan that are constantly under seize by rebel armies, is hosting a benefit show Friday, October 28 at Northport High School from 7:30 to 10 p.m.

The evening will feature entertainment by local and alumni bands and performers, including The Founders and The Reflections, food and beverages and a guest appearance by Edi Kalikawe, founder of another charitable organization, House of Grace Leprosy Care Center. Admission tickets are \$7 each.

Senior Gisele Cesar, President of Invisible Children, said the purpose of the event is to continue the organization's mission to raise money to purchase radio towers that help protect villages from rebel army attacks and to raise the student community's awareness about important global issues. The night's performers will include groups from neighboring schools and Ms. Cesar said she hopes their participation will help to bring the message of global awareness to students outside of Northport.

This summer, while participating in a youth leadership conference, Ms. Cesar said she heard Rob Michalak, the global director of Ben & Jerry's speak about the company's  
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**HOT ITEM:** To raise money for its 125th anniversary celebration in 2014, the Northport Fire Department has begun selling a limited edition print of a Jo-Ann Corretti (above) painting of the Northport firehouse on Main Street.  
See story, page 2.  
-Alan Pearlman photo

## Decline in district tax base causes \$12 increase in average school tax

By DAVID AMBRO

The Northport-East Northport School Board voted unanimously Monday, October 17 to set the property tax levy for the 2011-2012 school year at \$131,445,850, which was the amount projected at the time of the budget vote in May.

As a result of continued erosion of the school district tax base, however, the tax rate estimate in the resolution approved by the school board Monday is 31 cents higher than the rate projected when voters approved the budget in May. As a result the average home assessed at \$4,000 will pay \$12 more than had been expected.

At the polls May 17 voters approved a 2011-2012 school budget of \$151,178,758, to be financed with a property tax levy of \$131,445,850 and outside income or \$19,732,908. At the time of the budget vote the school district's assessed valuation—also known as the tax base—was \$81,133,544. Based on that assessment it was projected that the property tax rate would be \$162.20, up \$2.92 or 1.83% over last year's rate of \$159.28. For the average home under that scenario, the property tax bill was going to increase by \$116.80, from \$6,371.20 to \$6,488.

During an interview after Monday's school board meeting, however, Assistant Superintendent of Business Kathleen Molander said the assessed value of the district has decreased since the May budget vote by \$247,219, from \$81,133,544 six months ago to \$80,886,325 now, a sign of continued decline in real estate values. As a result of the eroded tax base,

the tax rate estimated in the resolution approved by the school board Monday is now \$162.51, which will result in a property tax bill for the average home of \$6,500 instead of the original projection of \$6,488.

Ms. Molander said the school board's responsibility is only to set the total tax levy and that the tax rate is a product of the assessed value of the district as determined by the tax rolls established by the Town of Huntington. She said the assessed value of the district can still change further between now and when the tax bills go out in January and the final 2011-2012 property tax rate might be different than the amount cited in the resolution approved by the school board Monday.

According to a resolution approved by the school board Monday, the district ended the 2011-2012 school year with fund balance—also known as surplus—of \$9,520,861, of which the board voted to apply \$3.5 million as a 2011-2012 revenue to hold down the property tax levy. The remainder of the fund balance, \$6,020,861 will carry forward to the 2012-2013 budget.

*(Continued on page 12)*

859  
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# Low interest nets windfall in school budget

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School district property taxes for the 2011-2012 school year are not collected by the town until January, therefore, the school district must operate between now and January on borrowed money in the form of short-term tax anticipation notes (TANs). During Monday's meeting School Board President Steve Waldenburg, Jr. announced that the district had gone out to bid for \$50 million in TANs and received nine proposals, the lowest of which was from TD Securities. According to Mr. Waldenburg, the interest on the bonds is 1.5% but because the school district has a top credit rating it received a premium that reduces the rate to .276%.

From the audience, Dr. Nina Dorata, a constant critic of the amount that the school district has been amassing in fund balance and reserve accounts, asked how much the interest will cost the district and how much was allocated in the budget. Ms. Molander said at .276% interest on the TANs will cost the district \$58,650 and that the budgeted amount in the 2011-2012 budget for TAN interest is \$1,237,500 based

on a projected interest rate of 2.7%, ten times that of the bid. She said the difference will be applied to the 2012-2013 fund balance.

Dr. Dorata said that it has been three to four years now that the district has been overestimating TAN interest in the budget. She said that

## Fundraiser October 28 to support Invisible Children

(Continued from page 1)

charity work around the world. She felt inspired by his words. She spoke with him about Northport High School's commitment to Invisible Children, and eventually the corporation agreed to sponsor the upcoming benefit. They arranged for Scoop Shop in Huntington to donate tubs of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream. In addition to the ice cream company, other local and corporate sponsors - Copenhagen Bakery, Starbucks, Dunkin' Donuts and Red Mango - are on board to support the benefit concert. (The admission price includes unlimited refills on all refreshments, as long as supplies last.)

But food and entertainment is not only what the evening is about, said Ms. Cesar. The

given the district's positive credit rating and the very low interest rate in the current economic climate, the district should reduce the amount of the TAN interest in the school budget. "I just don't understand the logic," Dr. Dorata said.

Mr. Waldenburg said that

Ms. Molander does not pull a number out of the air, and the interest rate for TANs when the budget is prepared is based on the advice of financial advisors. He said Dr. Dorata would like to see the district's reserves depleted to zero, which would hurt the credit rating and driving up

interest costs.

Dr. Dorata refuted the school board president's assessment. She said reserves should be adequate, but she reiterated her position that perpetuating a significant over-budgeting TAN interest is unfair to the taxpayers.

guest speaker, Edi Kalikawe, who has appeared at a previous Invisible Children fundraiser at Northport High School, will speak to the audience about her mission, House of Grace. "She is integrating her message and the message of Invisible Children, which is to provide the opportunity for education to these children," she said. "These orphans don't have much hope; they don't see why education is important or how it can change their lives."

Ms. Kalikawe, who is from Tanzania, East Africa, but now lives in New Jersey, is also trying to rally students to join her on a mission to her homeland in 2013 to help build a school in the leprosy care center. Asked if she was planning on being part of that future mission, Ms. Cesar

said she would love to but it may take some convincing before her parents agree to the trip. In the meantime, Ms.

Cesar will continue to do what she can here in Northport High School for the Invisible Children.



**MARITAL MILESTONE:** Anne and Ben Santorello of Northport celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Anne, a homemaker and lifelong Northport resident and Ben, who is retired, were married on August 12, 1951. They have two children, Gary and Linda and one granddaughter, Jennifer. A family dinner was held at Jonathan's Ristorante in Huntington.