

PRESS RELEASE

May 23, 2013

ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HOLD THEIR 1st JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

Board Honors Mark Dunec, Jacqueline Levine and Jill Tekel

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held its first annual Jewish Heritage Month Celebration on Wednesday, May 22, 2013, at the Hall of Records. The event was sponsored by Freeholder Vice President Patricia Sebold of Livingston and the deserving honorees were Mark S. Dunec of Livingston, and Jacqueline K. Levine and Jill Tekel of West Orange.



The honorees of the Freeholder Board's inaugural Jewish Heritage Month Celebration, held on Wednesday, May 22nd, at the Hall of Records in Newark, are pictured above: (from left to right) Jill Tekel and Jacqueline Levine of West Orange, and Mark Dunec of Livingston. **PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON**

Freeholder Vice President Sebold welcomed the audience by saying how special the event was to her, “not only because I am the sole Jewish member of the Freeholder Board, but because it also gives us an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the heritage and accomplishments of yet another proud and productive community, the Jewish community, that has enriched the fabric of Essex County for centuries.”

Freeholder Sebold introduced her first honoree, Mark S. Dunec of Livingston, by saying, “I have come to know Mark very well in recent years, and with that familiarity has come great respect for his abilities and intellect.” She also thanked him for his service to the Jewish community and congratulated him for his professional success in the field of real estate.

Originally from Toronto, Canada, Dunec moved to New York City in 1999 to earn his M.B.A. in Finance at Pace University. He began his professional career at KPMG, and then embarked on a very successful career in real estate. His work experience has included employment with Shugard Storage Centers of

West Paterson as a Real Estate Analyst, and then with Lend Lease Americas, Inc., of Parsippany as a Senior Financial Analyst in the Project Finance Group. Currently, Dunec is the Director of the Real Estate Advisory Group for FTI Consulting of New York City, where he manages teams of real estate professionals to assist investors, developers and owner/operators, and where he has worked on complex projects totaling over \$3 billion across the United States, as well as England, Ireland, the United Arab Emirates and Panama.



Mark Dunec of Livingston receives his Commendation from Freeholder Vice President Patricia Sebold, also of Livingston, during the Board's Jewish Heritage Month Celebration on May 22nd, at the Hall of Records in Newark. **PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON**

Since moving to New Jersey, Dunec has also been a very active member of the Jewish community. He has served on the Kushner Hebrew Academy Board of Trustees since 2010, and was also a very active member of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) where he served on its National Council and New Jersey Leadership Council. He was also a member of the Synagogue of the Suburban Torah Center, where he served on the Finance Committee and as President of the Men's Club. Dunec has lived in Livingston resident since 2004 where he resides with his wife, Dr. Caryn Borger, and their 2 children, David and Renee.

Dunec thanked Freeholder Sebold and the entire Board for recognizing his hard work and commitment to public service. He also related a Torah concept he recently studied concerning Jewish dietary laws, and the fact that the stork is listed among 21 birds that are *not* Kosher, even though the Hebrew word for "stork" means "kindness"... a dichotomy rabbis explain by saying that although the stork takes good care of its young, it does *not* share food with other species, "and *that is not* an admirable trait", said Dunec. "Unlike the stork", he continued, "we are here tonight to acknowledge not only the honorees, but also public servants who take time from their families and personal lives to better our local communities, and *that*, my friends, *is* an admirable characteristic."

Sebold introduced her second honoree, Jacqueline Levine of West Orange, as someone she has known "forever, and someone I am so proud to call my friend." "If there is such a thing as being the epitome of a liberal, Jewish, female activist," said Sebold, "then that description certainly belongs to Jackie, because

no matter what the cause during the course of my lifetime, she was right there in the thick of it.” “Jackie Levine has done it all... and we are a better Jewish community, and a better United States of America, because of her.”



Freeholder Vice President Patricia Sebold (right) presents the Board’s Commendation to honoree Jacqueline K. Levine of West Orange during the Board’s first-ever Jewish Heritage Month Celebration on May 22nd at the Hall of Records. **PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON**

Levine began her activism not long after graduating from Bryn Mawr College by fighting against the tyranny of Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950’s. She then immersed herself in the Civil Rights Movement by picketing a Newark Woolworth’s store for refusing to serve African Americans, attending the 1963 March on Washington, and participating in the brutal marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965. She was at the forefront of the anti-Vietnam War movement and also took up various Jewish and pro-Israel causes. A prominent proponent for Soviet Jewry, Levine made a courageous trip to the Soviet Union in 1984 where she was briefly detained by authorities; she was arrested during a protest on the steps of the Soviet Embassy in Washington; and as the national chair of the Mobilization for Soviet Jewry, she brought 250,000 American Jews to Washington in 1985 to protest Soviet policies.

In the fight against hunger, Levine was a founding member of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. She was also a founding member of the Jewish Fund for Justice, and served as Chair of U. S. Operations and Vice Chair of the national board of directors for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, where she still serves on its board of directors.

Ms. Levine is also a feminist who has held countless leadership positions both locally and nationally, and who encourages other Jewish women to assume their rightful positions as leaders in the Jewish community: she has served on the Executive Committee of the MetroWest Board of Directors for over 30 years; was the National President of the Women’s Division of the Council of Jewish Federations; was the first woman to serve as the National Chair of the American Jewish Congress’s Governing Council; and was the first woman Chair for Soviet Jewry with the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council. In 2000, she was presented a “Woman Who Made A Difference Award” at a ceremony at the Knesset in Jerusalem, which was awarded by the American Jewish Congress to American and Israeli feminists who have profoundly affected the lives of other women.

Jacqueline Levine has been married to her husband, Howard, for over 64 years, and they are the proud parents of three children, Ellen, Stephen and Ned, and the loving grandparents of 6.

Levine thanked the Board and said, “I’m very thankful that I’ve been able to do what I’ve done, and especially thankful to my husband, because obviously there were many days when I was not home, and someone had to take care of the children.” She recalled the seminal speech by Rabbi Joachim Prinz at the March on Washington, and spoke about her long friendship with Freeholder Sebold’s family, including Sebold’s mother, aunt and cousin, the famous “Beat” poet, Allen Ginsberg. She concluded her remarks by saying, “I’m very pleased to be here, and look forward to seeing all of you on picket lines in the future.”

Sebold introduced her third honoree, Jill Tekel of West Orange, as a good friend of many years with whom she has worked on many, many projects. She also noted that she even had the pleasure of teaching Tekel’s son and son-in-law when she was an English teacher at West Orange High School. “Jill, I am so happy to have this opportunity to honor you for all your work on behalf of the Jewish community, and to congratulate you as one of the first honorees of the Board’s Jewish Heritage Month Celebration.”



Freeholder Vice President Patricia Sebold (right) presents the Board’s Commendation to honoree Jill Tekel of West Orange during the Board’s Jewish Heritage Month Celebration held on May 22nd at the Hall of Records in Newark. **PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON**

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Tekel served as President of the Livingston Chapter of Hadassah on two different occasions, and this year was honored as the Chapter’s “Woman of Valor”. She has also been a Board Member of the Northern NJ Region of Hadassah since 1998, chair of its Israel Advocacy committee, and a volunteer and fundraiser for medical research at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. She also served as Associate Director of the Community Relations Committee of MetroWest, as well as Chair of the Advisory Committee and as a volunteer speech therapist for the new Adler Aphasia Center in West Orange. Previously, she served as the Anti-Defamation League’s Assistant Director for NJ, and was the Staff Associate for Community Relations at MetroWest Jewish Community Federation.

Tekel, too, has been a strong advocate for the involvement of Jewish women in public life. Through her efforts with the Center for American Women and Politics at the Rutgers Eagleton Institute, she helped found JWIN (Jewish Women's Involvement in the Political Process), which strives to form a Jewish women's political base and engage the community at large in supporting Jewish women to run, successfully, for political office. She earned her B.A. in Speech Pathology from Montclair State University and her M.A. in Criminal Justice from the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice. She resides in West Orange with her husband, Harvey, and they are the proud parents of Erica and Adam.

Tekel remarked that, "Judaism is a rich language of social justice issues and understanding, and it is a core value and hope that our community can remain concerned about the welfare of each other. We strive to educate ourselves and share that knowledge with our children, and if we lead by example, we surely will succeed."



The freeholders and honorees gathered for a group photo at the conclusion of the Jewish Heritage Month program: (front row, left to right) Freeholder President Blonnie Watson, Mark Dunec, Jill Tekel, Freeholder Vice President Patricia Sebold, Jacqueline Levine and Freeholder Brendan Gill; and (back row, center) Freeholder Leonard Luciano. **PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON**

Rabbi Clifford Kulwin of Temple B'nai Abraham in Livingston offered the opening and closing prayers, and Cantor Perry Fine of Temple Beth Shalom in Livingston sang three musical selections. The program also included welcoming remarks from Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr., and the reading of a congratulatory letter to the honorees from U. S. Senator Robert Menendez. The honorees and invited guests enjoyed a catered reception of light refreshments following the program.

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