

# South Orange/Maplewood COMMUNITY COALITION *on Race*

ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS 2001



Robert A. Marchman

**W**e must come to understand that tolerance is but the first step in the journey of embracing our neighbors with open arms of acceptance — a journey whose conclusion will result in a substantive gain for all.

It has been a distinct privilege to serve as chairman of the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race during 2001, my first in the position after taking the reins from our first chairman Fred R. Profeta, Jr. Fred's commitment, dedication and leadership paved the road of success for the Coalition in its formative years. I have, in partnership with our Executive Director Barbara Heisler Williams, worked to build on this foundation of success to ensure the future viability of our organization.

We are continually asked, and we keep in the forefront of our discussions regarding programming, two questions: why the need for a group such as the Coalition; and what value-added does the Coalition bring to the community? To understand and appreciate the work of the Coalition it is useful to look back at the circumstances regarding our creation and our work since our formation.

First, the answer to "why the need" for the Coalition. In 1996, residents of South Orange and Maplewood came together to dialogue and develop constructive solutions to deal with the perception that our two towns were in an 'irreversible' downward spiral. This negative perception was fueled by stagnant property values, perceived white flight and a belief that the quality of our school system was in decline. Discussions among a selected group of concerned residents lead to the formation of the Racial Balance Task Force—which subsequently became the Coalition. The two town municipalities fully funded the group initially. The Coalition adopted as its goals the development and implementation of three key strategies: to promote strong and sustained robust demand by all racial groups for housing in every area of our community, to take pro-active steps to ensure the involvement of persons of color in the civic life of our community, and to promote dialogue and understanding on race related issues. Though we've made progress, these areas continue to present challenges to our

community and hence the continued need for the existence of the Coalition.

The next question to address is what value-added has the Coalition brought to our community. Over the past five years we have seen a renaissance in our two towns through several efforts, including the Coalition's, such as: an aggressive marketing program to tout our communities through targeted media outlets; working with local realtors to promote all aspects and neighborhoods of our two towns; tours for potential buyers interested in purchasing homes in our community; working with neighborhood associations and other civic organizations to promote more inclusiveness; the sponsorship of planning ahead workshops for parents of middle school students, and the hosting of forums and guest speakers to discuss race related issues. Clearly, the Coalition has paid out a major return for those who have supported the group financially and otherwise.

As we move ahead the landscape remains even more challenging for the Coalition.

We must all work harder to understand and respect one another in this world forever changed by the tragic events of September 11, 2001. We must come to understand that tolerance is but the first step in the journey of embracing our neighbors with open arms of acceptance—a journey whose conclusion will result in a substantive gain for all. As then Secretary of State DeForest B. Soaries, Jr. noted in his October visit to our community as a guest of the Coalition:

"It is easy to stay ignorant and in our comfort zone, but the benefits are so much greater when one goes beyond their comfort zone. If we appreciate the potential that life offers, we can form new relationships and new approaches [to dealing with the difficult issues of race]".

The Coalition's Trustees, program staff, and hundreds of dedicated volunteers will continue to work toward a successful completion of the journey.

**ROBERT A. MARCHMAN, Chairman**

# A Year in Review

## JANUARY

Robert A. Marchman begins his term as Chairman of the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race Board of Trustees, succeeding Fred R. Profeta, Jr. who served as the Coalition's first Chairman.

## FEBRUARY

**FEBRUARY 7** The Schools Committee hosts its second 'Planning Ahead' workshop for parents of incoming CHS students.

## MARCH

**MARCH 1** Barbara Heisler Williams returns to the Coalition as Executive Director, succeeding Estelle Greenberg who served for the preceding 13 months. Ms. Heisler Williams brings aboard Nancy H. Richardson in a part-time volunteer support position to join the Coalition's part-time Assistant Director Sheila Belt, who focuses on outreach.

Maplewood and South Orange are spotlighted in a feature article in *Art Times*, sparking numerous requests for information packets from artists interested in living in this creative community.

South Orange's Sloan Street and South Orange Ave. development are featured in *Urban Land* magazine, read by municipal planners nationwide. Both features were

spurred by the efforts of the Coalition's Marketing Committee.

**MARCH 31** Trustees meet in an all-day retreat to review annual goals and progress

## MAY

**MAY 6** The Coalition is the beneficiary of a community-wide concert entitled "Voices in Harmony". Featuring a full orchestra and the voices of over 200 local voices, the concert draws a full house and loud applause.

**MAY 9** The Touring Committee and Realtor Advisory Committee joined to offer a tour to realtors in neighboring communities—to introduce them to the delightful neighborhoods of South Orange and Maplewood.

## JUNE

The efforts of the Marketing Committee hit "national pay dirt" once again, with features in *This Old House Magazine* and *Victorian Decorating Ideas*.

## JULY

**JULY 3** On the eve of Independence, the Interfaith Outreach Committee brought together an interfaith gathering of clergy and residents to explore and rejoice in the significant work in this community.

The Celebration of Vision draws young and old alike in readings and song.

## SEPTEMBER

**SEPTEMBER 4** The Coalition's Ordinance Review Committee addresses the Maplewood Township Committee regarding its 2000 report on zoning violations. A similar report was prepared for the Trustees of South Orange Village.

## OCTOBER

**OCTOBER 1** New Jersey Secretary of State DeForest B. (Buster) Soaries, Jr., invited to discuss race relations and integration efforts in our state, states that he had to come to "...know what kind of people are these who take time to talk about race? I wanted to know about what kind of people would be intentional to talk about things that have caused riots and plagued our country since its inception." He concluded, "We won't solve the racial problems in the state or country if the first time we meet is in a crisis and the media is defining the issue," he said. "That's what you are doing here, sitting down and talking," he told the group. "That's how you solve problems. We need people like you in this country to talk about difficult things when it's not popular."



Maplewood Mayor Vic DeLuca welcomes realtors from Maplewood, South Orange, and neighboring communities to the Coalition's Community Tour for Realtors.



Coalition Trustee Kathy Flaxman talks to residents about neighborhood associations at the October Annual Meeting.

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Chairman

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David Bressen

Victor DeLuca, ex officio  
Katherine Flaxman  
Nancy Grant

Jeff Gruenwald  
Dr. Diane Hughes  
Celia King, ex officio

In partnership with the Maplewood/South Orange Adult School, the Coalition kicked off the Two Town Study Circles Program. In the first round of the Two Towns Study Circle Program, twenty residents participated in two circles over a period of six weeks. Each study circle discussed the same issue, Race and Racism, seeking solutions for our community. At the end of the round of study circles, participants came together in a community meeting to work together on the action ideas that came out of each study circle.

**OCTOBER 30** The Coalition's Annual Meeting featured Daniel Lauber, author of "Racially Diverse Communities A National Necessity" who brought information about pro-integrative efforts nationwide. A local panel spoke more about the work being done right here in Maplewood and South Orange.

**NOVEMBER**

The Coalition revamped its website, now drawing in excess of 500 visitors per month. The new site is visually enticing and chock full of information for those considering moving to our two towns. Additions provide a News and Events page, online access to the Coalition's newsletter, an avenue for

finding out more or joining a Coalition committee, and a way for community members to sign up for email notification of Coalition activities and events. [www.twotowns.org](http://www.twotowns.org)

The Coalition thanks Sheila Dunn Belt for her two years of service as Assistant Director, and welcomes Audrey Rowe to its program staff.

**NOVEMBER 12** The Neighborhood Association Network of the Community Coalition presented its third annual Open House showcasing local preschools and providers of daycare and aftercare.

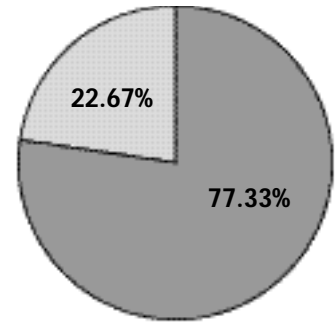
**NOVEMBER 17** The Coalition, through its SOMA ArtNet, joined in support of "Art From the Heart A Community Responds Through the Arts" raising funds for the local families affected by the September 11 tragedy.

**DECEMBER**

**DECEMBER 16** The Coalition joined with the South Orange Public Library and Maplewood Memorial Library to host speakers on "Attack on America". Palestinian-born sociologist Nabil Marhood addressed the political context of the attacks, Anisa Mehdi provided her perspective and joined Dr. Marhood for the Q & A exchange with the audience.

**Expense Summary**

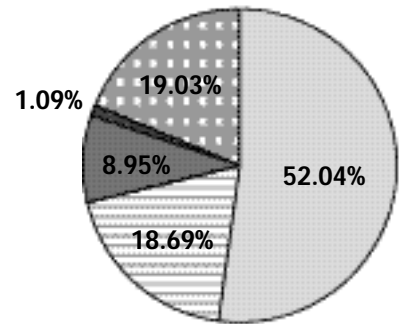
■ Program Expenses  
 ■ Operating Expenses



**TOTAL \$187,119.00**

**Income Summary**

■ Gifts Received  
 ■ Township of Maplewood  
 ■ Village of South Orange  
 ■ From Reserves  
 ■ Interest Income



**TOTAL \$187,223.00**



Study Circles facilitators Charlie Bibbins and Suzanne Lee at the planning session for the fall circles.



Clergy and Interfaith Outreach Committee members enjoy the "Celebration of Vision."

Mary Kinnery  
 Anselm LeBourne  
 Elizabeth McMahon

Nonie Murphy  
 James Nathenson  
 Dr. Phylis Peterman

Ken Pettis  
 Christopher Reggio  
 George B. Robinson  
 Mark Becker, ex officio

Arthur Taylor, ex officio  
 Dr. Dawn Williams  
 Meredith Sue Willis  
 Dia Woodard

**PROGRAM STAFF**  
 Barbara Heisler Williams,  
 Executive Director

Nancy H. Richardson  
 Audrey Rowe

Private gifts made up 52% of our funding in 2001. The trustees thank the following generous individual, organizations and foundations for their financial gifts and their vote of support for

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Your generous gift will help the Coalition's work continue. The South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race is dedicated to preserving our two towns as communities of choice for all, regardless of race. Please support the Community Coalition's activities by sending us a generous donation.

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 P.O. Box 1309,  
 Maplewood, NJ 07040.

\$25     \$50     \$100

\$500     Other \_\_\_\_\_

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