

Bloomfield Life

Bloomfield, N.J. — Thursday, January 12, 2012

BLOOMFIELD EDITORIAL

Keep King's dream thriving

Hard to believe, but it has been almost 50 years since Dr. Martin Luther King's renowned "I Have a Dream" speech. Had he been alive, he would be 84-years-old.

King would be "impressed by the forward movement" the country has made since his assassination, writes Rita Reynolds, an assistant professor of African-American history at Wagner College. But he would also be the first to say there is much more needed in the 21st century to improve the lives of minorities here, Reynolds says.

In Bloomfield, the New Light Baptist Church will honor his legacy with its yearly tribute to King. It will be a day of somber reflection, memories, and celebration all rolled into one. The tribute will be held at 4 p.m. Monday at the Davey Street church. Bloomfield Life urges any and all residents to attend this occasion.

Monday will be the 10th year the township has officially celebrated the federal holiday. It will be the seventh year it's been held at New Light. A decade of the MLK celebrations makes this service even more special. The Rev. Deborah L. Spivey, interim pastor of St. Paul's Baptist Church in Montclair, will be the keynote speaker. We're excited to see what incites she can offer during her speech.

The Rev. Shawn Hall will also direct the newly formed Community Choir at Monday's celebration. It will consist of singers from churches throughout Essex County to honor King. That promises to be a moving performance.

Having an official observance of the holiday proved to be a difficult one, Councilman Bernard Hamilton correctly noted. The New Jersey State Supreme Court ruled in 1975 the state must provide a paid holiday in honor of King. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill establishing the third Monday in January as the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday.

But up until 11 years ago, the town did not stop to properly reflect on King's achievements. It truly was business as usual.

"Not only was it business as usual at Bloomfield Town Hall, but all of the schools in town were in session on a day when most of America was off in tribute to Dr. King," he recalled. "Right then, I decided to do everything in my power to see that Bloomfield honor Dr. King

Thankfully that was rectified and King is rightly recognized in Bloomfield for his history-making world views.