

Some Fresh Ideas to Welcome 1999 / What movers, shakers hope to see come true to ring in this new year

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Text:

THERE'S A PROMISE that comes with the changing of calendars, tossing out 1998 and opening up 1999. In that spirit, these prominent Long Islanders offer their resolutions for the fresh start that comes with the New Year:

Shelter Island Supervisor Gerald Siller said his resolution is to continue making improvements to his small island.

One of the first things on his agenda: Move town hall out of the small brick building it has inhabited since 1932 and into a larger building right next door. "We've outgrown it tremendously," Siller said of the town center. But not so much that the supervisor doesn't answer the phones himself on occasion.

In all, 21 projects are on the table for 1999, Siller said, and that's unusual for Suffolk County's smallest town, of 2,200 year-round residents. -- -- --

The ranking doctor of the beleaguered St. John's Episcopal Hospital in Smithtown said he resolves to remember the importance of the past.

Dr. Augustus Mantia, physician executive of St. John's, said his New Year's resolution is "to have the Hippocratic oath bronzed and put in my office as a constant reminder that we will sustain the enormous progress we've made in the last several months . . . "

The hospital came under fire in May when government investigators issued a scathing report on health care there, criticizing such things as staffing levels and cleanliness. The U.S. Health Care Financing Administration last month told the hospital it is no longer in danger of losing Medicare and Medicaid financing because it has made significant improvements in the quality of care since the report was issued. -- -- --

Al Haaj Ghazi Y. Khankan, director of interfaith affairs for the Westbury Islamic Center, said his resolution is to work to get the news media to stop associating Islam with terrorism.

"The term `Islamic terrorism' has been so much abused and misused, as if terrorism has a religion," he said. "If Jews or Christians do a terrorist attack, we do not call it Jewish terrorism or Christian terrorism . . . terrorism is terrorism." -- -- --

This was a tough year for Long Island farmers, with prices low for crops such as potatoes, according to Joe Gergela, executive director of the Long Island Farm Bureau.

Lower profit margins threaten the financial solvency of East End farmers, he said, and that's why he made his New Year's resolution to "work even closer than we have with the state legislature and the congress to take steps to insure that our farms are profitable."

Gergela said that even though East End farmers were "blessed" with the passage of the Farm Preservation Act referendum in November, which will allow millions of dollars to be allotted to buy farmland for the next 10 years, if the business environment doesn't improve, he said, "we're gonna have a lot of open space but not too many farmers." -- -- --

One perennial resolution for the perennially busy is to take time to smell the perennials . . . er, roses.

David Kilmnick, executive director of Bay Shore-based Long Island Gay and Lesbian Youth Inc., said his resolution, like many other Long Islanders' this New Year, is to make an effort to appreciate his work more.

"I tend to overextend myself, and through my work I meet many great Long Islanders, and I want to take the time to really appreciate the people that I'm meeting and the experiences that I'm having."

Kilmnick has been busy lately. In addition to helping stage vigils in remembrance of slain University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard and sponsoring weekly meetings for gay and lesbian teenagers at LIGALY's Bay Shore location, Kilmnick has lobbied for state hate crime legislation and counsels threatened gay and lesbian teens and young adults one-on-one.

But Kilmnick's New Year's resolution wasn't all business. "It wouldn't be bad to meet the man of my dreams," he said. -- -- --

Brookhaven National Laboratory director John Marburger said his resolution is to "be more responsive to the community if we can. We need to shorten the amount of time it takes to be responsive."

He is referring to criticisms from neighbors, especially after the lab discovered at the end of 1996 that water laced with radioactive tritium had escaped from a holding tank into the ground beneath the lab. The Upton lab came under fire for the way it handled that criticism.