

July 21, 2013

The Josephine A. Fiorentino Community Center

Grand Opening Remarks

By

Dr. Lawrence F. G. Fiorentino

I am honored and humbled to be here today at this dedication and grand opening of The Josephine A. Fiorentino Community Center.

If you will bear with me, I want to give heartfelt thanks and recognition to the following individuals and groups. Through their efforts, they made this day a reality!

--To God who has given guidance, strength and will to us all, in this Charlesview redevelopment process.

- To the stakeholders: **St. Anthony's Catholic Church, Community United Methodist Church, Congregation Kadima Torras Moshe** and their representatives on the Charlesview BOD past and present who have dedicated their time and efforts in the unselfish fulfillment of the Lord's work. It was a great honor for me to accept Josephine's director seat on this Board.
- To Chairman, Fr. Frank Glynn, who entrusted me with chairing the Community Center's Subcommittee with my concept, development and vision for this Center.
- To my Community Center Committee and the Community Relations Committee who worked hard and tirelessly in obtaining objectives through strategies with strict adherence to time lines!
- To Peter Roche, Interim Exec. Dir. to the Board for his much valued understanding and help with the beginning concept initiatives of this Center.
- To Jo-Ann Barbour, Exec. Dir. to the Board, who has filled Peter's shoes admirably, and who brings another dimension to this concept.
- To **The Community Builders** and **Moriarty Construction** who have worked with us from the conceptual phase through completion of this great undertaking.
- To the many governmental groups, institutions, their agents and the greater community for standing with us throughout this entire process.
- To **Peabody Properties** who endured transitions, scheduling, advice and support throughout the last few years and supplied me with invaluable community center expertise.
- To my Family, Friends and Neighbors who eagerly and regularly inquired about the progress of Charlesview, who always listened patiently and gave me council over the years.
- To all the community partners, sponsors and the volunteers here today for their invaluable contributions and for anyone or group whom I may not have mentioned, please forgive me.
- And finally, most importantly, my wife, Meredith, who is very much a special person for her enduring support, love and sacrifice, in this Charlesview cause, for the many years that have consumed me and our family.
- Please join me now with sincere thanks, in a round of applause for all.

Background:

Let me tell you a little bit about my Mom:

Josephine was a daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend and confidant. Her faith, family and community were extremely important to her. I'm sure everyone here today was in some way touched by her. If not, I know you will be by today's end.

She lived through the depression, and believed that certain creature comforts were important, pertaining to one's happiness and quality of life. Josephine possessed an uncanny ability to communicate and be understood by infants through 102-year-olds, with love and humility. She was not

one who wanted to be in the public spotlight and deferred those tasks to others who had that desire.

Josephine could convey solutions to problems that presented themselves while working with executives, staff, colleagues, neighbors and public officials alike. She would take strong positions on doing the right and just things, for incontrovertible reasons. She would only step into leadership roles if those could not perform for whatever the circumstance and no one else would serve. She did that unselfishly without complaint or expecting any thanks or praise.

Her career started with a clerical office position in a glass company in New Field, NJ, near her home. During WW II, she volunteered in civilian support, as manager in a Base Exchange at Millville Army Air Field, a pilot training base also in NJ. And later, was asked if she would transfer to Dover Army Air Field in DE, in similar capacity.

After marrying my father, Carmine, a native of Boston and establishing their home in North Allston and raising her family, Josephine had no choice to be one of three rotating Den Mother's of Den 8, Pack 5 Cub Scouts and later a benefactor of Troop 5 Boy Scouts, headed by Bill Roach and Joe Smith respectively, and as her only child, that was a lot of pressure for us both. The scouts were sponsored by our church, St Anthony's right up the street, and played an important part in our community.

Josephine had a stellar career with the Jordan Marsh Co. starting with a part time position as a contingent for the Christmas season. That soon led into a full time Department Mgr., rising through the ranks to Store Mgr. and finally Head of the nationwide mail order division, culminating a 28-year career in retailing.

Over the passage of time, Jordan Marsh was eventually purchased by Macy's Department stores, years after retirement, she remarked to many, "I am not happy with Macy's, due to the lack of sales people, and their displays in total disarray. It has the look and feel of Filene's Basement. This would never have happened at Jordan's!"

She was a great cook, loved her home, especially her kitchen. Serving elaborate multiple course dinners to family, friends and occasional guests that dropped in for a visit. These dinner events would rival any 5 star restaurants. Oh, how I miss those days!!!

How fitting that, in her kitchen, the concept of Charlesview was conceived, born and detailed with Ellie Hollum and Joseph Smith over coffee and confections made from scratch.

She served on the Charlesview Board from its inception as Secretary and accepted the mantle of President and Chairman for over 10 years, until her passing in 2005. Spending so much time at the development and concern for the residents, she would tell people that this was her home away from home. Indeed it was!

She had the vision and influencing factors to instill interest and vigor of this new continuing Charlesview development. In addition she possessed common sense, being practical, observing and blending the skills and talents of individuals to cultivate ideas and bridge relationships to form the basis of organization and development success.

Josephine was honest, fair and gracious to all. Giving sincere thanks and encouragement to everyone she had contact with and was deeply respected. I encourage everyone here today to mingle among us, to learn more about this extraordinary person, through your personal stories and kindnesses that she left us, to be shared.

This Josephine A. Fiorentino Community Center will be an iconic symbol of Charlesview's commitment to the broader Allston-Brighton community, offering unique opportunities to pursue educational,

recreational, social and spiritual enrichment, regardless of income, religion, or ethnic origin. The Center's Mission Statement reflects Josephine's ideals, insight and inclusionary desires. May they be a living part of this Center, well into the future!

In Closing:

What I have been given as a legacy from Josephine and my family is my deep Faith, the Gift of Discernment, Self Reliance, Leadership, Community and Philanthropy.

Josephine instilled excellence in people, expanding horizons, doing things outside ones comfort zone to improve themselves and others, achieving success through perseverance.

In Josephine's memory, I am challenging and charging the Board of Directors, our Ex. Dir., the Sub-committees and the greater community at large, with a lofty goal: To make this Community Center extraordinary, innovative and responsive in attaining excellence, whether in this building or another, by being the very best East of the Mississippi, In perpetuity!

On behalf of Josephine, and The Fiorentino Family, we thank you for this great honor and lasting tribute.

God bless Charlesview, all of you, and this great community. As Josephine would say, with great joy; "Please enjoy this food with the company of others!" Thank you!

* * *