

## Political Update

By Nina Albano Vidmer

The first woman mayor in the Village of Harwood Heights is Margaret “Peggy” Fuller, elected in April of 2005. Mayor Fuller’s commitment to the community, her strong sense of values, combined with her willingness to work hard for the public good, have made her a shining example of excellence in the Italian community.

Fuller’s development plans to invigorate the village include a revitalization of the downtown and Lawrence Avenue corridor is already in the works. She has been busy this past year overseeing redevelopment that will make Harwood Heights an even better place to live and work, including a new streetscape, pedestrian walkways, parallel parking, new housing options, retail and dining components within walking distance for everyone to enjoy. “My focus is to bring the village into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century while keeping taxes low...there’s going to be a lot of positive change in our village,” says Fuller. A new and improved village web site is also in the works.

Looking to make village government more accessible to its citizens, Fuller first became interested in municipal government in 1996. Fuller was first elected Trustee in April of 1999 and re-elected in April of 2003. She was chairperson of the Ordinance and License Committee and a member of the previous Forestry/Cable, Building/Public Works and Sewer Committees. For two years she was a member of the Finance and Water Committee before moving over to the Forestry/Cable Committee. She also served on the Community Development, Forestry, Information & Technology Committees.

“We call Harwood Heights a small village with big opportunities. It’s very close-knit community and great location for people to live close to where they work and with the benefit of public transportation,” says Fuller.

While a trustee, Fuller chaired the newly formed Harwood Heights Historical Committee, a founding member of the Committee for a Better Harwood Heights, and served as the Chairperson since its inception in March, 2000.

Fuller also served as an area director of the League of Woman Voters and has been an active participant in many youth and community programs throughout the years. She has been a member of the St. Eugene Athletic Board. Among her other volunteer activities, she coached and coordinated various local athletic programs.

In 2000, Mayor Fuller received the "Citizens Initiative Award" from the Citizen Advocacy Center at a reception at the College of DuPage. She was presented with this award for her significant and informed civic participation and by her example inspired others to build their communities. The award was created to recognize citizens who act as catalysts for more citizen participation in the democratic process.

Fuller also received certification from the Academy for Municipal Excellence, a partnership with the Illinois Municipal League and the University of Illinois. She will be honored this year by the Italian American Executives of Transportation.

Margaret "Peggy" Fuller has been an area life long resident. Born Margaret DiNatale, she was raised in Norridge. Margaret's Father, Frank DiNatale was born in Cellamare, Italy, and her mother, Mary Cinquino, was born in Valenzano, Italy. They immigrated to the United States as teenagers, and married, became citizens and raised four children. Fuller attended Divine Savior Grammar School, Ridgewood High School, Triton and Harper Colleges. Her studies included accounting and data processing. She attributes here strong work ethics to the examples set by her hard working parents.

Peggy Fuller and her husband, Marty, a successful small business owner, have lived in Harwood Heights since 1982 and have raised two children, Natale and Sam. Natale spent a college semester in Italy where she visited her grandparents home towns' and experienced the Italian culture with relatives in Bari.

This column is written by Nina Albano Vidmer, executive director of the Italian American Political Coalition. To submit information, please fax to 708-401-0360 by the first of each month for consideration in the following month's issue.