

# THE BRIDGE

Connecting the Fair Haven Community

Summer 2005

## GOOD NEIGHBORS

### Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman

Keeping-up with talented teen Ashley Velázquez can be quite the challenge!

**ASHLEY VELÁZQUEZ, A WILBUR CROSS HIGH SCHOOL HONOR STUDENT AND MEMBER OF ST. JAMES' CHURCH IS REMARKABLY SELF-POSSESSED.** Both a winning athlete and prolific visual artist, at age sixteen you sense she is well on her way to accomplishing great things in her life. This friendly, modest, thoughtful, and spiritual young woman stands as a terrific role model for both her contemporaries and her elders. Somehow, she finds time for her many life's passions, yet seems nonplussed by the fast pace she must surely keep to fulfill her diverse personal interests.



Wilbur Cross student Ashley Velázquez briefly relaxing by the track where she works-out with her winning team.

If you ask Ashley Velázquez to tell you about herself, she is truly modest about the things she does and the opportunities she pursues. It seems easier for her to show you a photo album filled with images from her very full life. Talk about organized! Perhaps that is part of the secret of keeping a busy pace filled with a range of academic, intellectual, and athletic achievement.

One would not describe her as boastful, despite being part of the three-time defending champion track team at Wilbur Cross High. Ashley thoughtfully gives credit first to her teammates in the 4 x 400 Meter Relay event. Together the four young women—Amber Edwards, Mahogany Howard, Shaquanna Martindale, and Ashley Velázquez—won the 2005 All State Class LL Division Championship in that event. A natural athlete, Ashley competes in other long distance events including the 400, 800 and 1600 Meter competitions, often running in two or three meets each week during indoor and outdoor track seasons. Ashley is also an excellent soccer player, a sport she started playing at age seven, and was named to the All Division Team as a sophomore.



An abstract work from Ashley's recent exhibit.

Although Ashley is an accomplished athlete, her real love is art, which she plans to pursue as her major in college. Since she can remember, Ashley has loved to draw and paint. Her favorite medium is watercolor, a difficult technique which she finds both rewarding and challenging to master. Ashley recently had an exhibit where she found admirers and buyers for her work.

Thanks to the efforts of her art teacher Mary Confrancesco, Ashley and fellow Wilbur Cross art

students participated this spring in a unique and well-publicized art happening. World famous shoe designer Stuart Weitzman and his artist wife Jane Weitzman—as part of her “A Little Obsessed with Shoes” exhibits which commissions artists to make sculpture out of Weitzman’s shoes—sent the students 30 shoes to modify as they wished. Ms. Weitzman was so impressed with their whimsical work, including Ashley’s “Tunnel of Love” shoe, she invited the class to Manhattan for the day to view the storefront exhibit of their shoe creations. At a luncheon she hosted at the Ritz Carlton, Ms. Weitzman presented a generous check to the Cross art program.

With all she has going, Ashley still manages to stay on the honor roll at Wilbur Cross where she will be a junior in the fall. She really loves school as evidenced by the fact that she has not missed a day since kindergarten. The bilingual Ashley fits many special learning experiences into her life. She participates in creative programs like one through New Haven University in which she co-designed, through

scale models and renderings, an imaginative proposal for a modernization of Yale Bowl. This summer Ashley will attend the Center for Creative Youth program at Wesleyan University, a five-week pre-college program for talented youth to study a variety of creative disciplines.

Faith and family are especially important to Ashley. In the Bible journal she keeps for her St. James' youth cell she wrote, “I believe God wants me to know that at any time in our lives it is just as simple as looking to him and praying to him and knowing that he is caring enough to listen and help.” Joined by her younger sisters Amanda and Alexis, she recently celebrated her “coming of age” in a blended tradition of her Puerto Rican heritage with a family event known as the *La Quinceañera*, similar to the Anglo “Sweet Sixteen” party. Many Hispanic cultures recognize their daughters’ passage into young adulthood at age 15 or 16, with a large, formal celebration. Ashley’s parents, Julio Velázquez and Liz Ramos, long-standing members of the St. James’ community, chose to hold this special family occasion at the church, and it brought dozens of relatives and friends from as far away as Puerto Rico to help welcome her into womanhood.

### † St. James' Response Card Please, let us hear from you!

- I would like to make the following comments on this issue of *The Bridge*:
- I would like to request prayers from the church for the following:

- I would like a pastoral visit from the church.
- I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the ministry of St. James' Church in Fair Haven. Enclosed is a check for the following amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name:  
Address:  
Telephone:  
E-mail:

Please clip and mail to: St. James' Church, 62 East Grand Avenue, New Haven, CT 06513 (Or, better yet, drop it by the church office anytime. We'd love to talk to you.) **Thank you!**



HISTORICAL HAVEN

## YE OLDE MASS TRANSIT: THE ROOTS OF RUSH HOUR

In the years preceding the Civil War, Fair Haven grew quickly along with the other villages surrounding New Haven, the center of manufacturing in New England. Despite the rapid development, transportation between Fair Haven and the other towns nearby was still limited primarily to foot, horseback or boat. Roads were only just beginning to be developed, and the first public transportation appeared on the few paved streets.

Charles King ran Fair Haven's first such service, **King's Fair Haven Omnibus**, carrying passengers between the old King's Hotel on Grand Street near the Dragon Bridge (now Grand Avenue) and the railroad station downtown. The horse-drawn carriage traversed hourly between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. for a three-cent fare.

Recognizing the potential in public transit, a consortium of local businessmen received a charter in 1860 to build a horse car line connecting Fair Haven and Westville, and in October of that year, the **Fair Haven & Westville Railroad Company** began construction. The company sold shares of \$25, raising \$100,000 for the rail project with plans to connect other parts of New Haven once the initial line was done. On the last day of April 1861, the first trip ran on the partially completed system to the corner of Chapel and State Streets. The following week regular service began with a five-cent fare. By summer, ridership was close to two thousand passengers daily and the FH&W Railroad employed ten railcars, forty horses, and twenty-two workers. The fourteen conductors and drivers each received \$1.75 per day, while the lowest paid workers—the stable hands—earned only about 50 cents.



From the start, problems ensued. The first rails—made of five-inch wide flat iron—were laid in the cold of winter, but the construction company did not consider the contraction of the metal and so later needed to shorten the misaligned lengths. Another unforeseen problem was that rails would lift up from the weight of the cars, causing them to catch and damage passing wagons and carriages. Fully loaded cars also proved to be too much for a single horse on even slight inclines and helper teams were soon employed. Service was not ideal, as in winter the cars were cold and smelly, and ten inches of straw on the floor was the method for keeping feet warm on the long rides. Kerosene lamps presented a hazard, and fires were common. A shortage of workers during the Civil War made good help hard to find and service suffered due to rude and unreliable personnel. In addition, the horses, who were essential to the whole operation, presented their own unique problems. Despite the conscientious care received, they still were not immune from diseases plaguing the equine population throughout the country.

For eighty-seven years, the Fair Haven & Westville Railroad continued to expand, improve, and innovate—overcoming the many challenges to service, reliability and profitability. In 1894, the system electrified, eliminating the need for horses. By the time the New Haven Railroad took over in 1904, the FH&W served nearly seventeen million passengers making it the country's largest such system in its day.

*The following sources were the basis for this article:*  
*The Fair Haven & Westville Railroad* ©1997-2005 by Morley J. Kelsey  
*Fair Haven. A Journey through Time* ©1976 by Doris B. Townshend  
The Shoreline Trolley Museum website: [www.bera.org](http://www.bera.org)

RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

## Nurturing Children in Need

For nearly 40 years, **Youth Continuum** has offered help and support to at risk youth here in Fair Haven and 21 other towns in the greater New Haven area through its innovative and comprehensive community programs. With certification from the *Council on Accreditation* and funding from public grants, private foundations, corporations and donors, Youth Continuum uses its annual six million dollar budget to help more than 2,000 young people each year who are in need of shelter, support, education, training, counseling, and other critical needs. Youth Continuum was founded in 1966 and licensed two years later as the nation's first *Training and Research Institute for Residential Youth Center*.

## YouthContinuum

Among the important services provided by YC are its two long-term residence programs: Forbes House and Uno House. The two group homes allow about 60 adolescents referred from the CT Department of Children and Families each year to be sheltered in a supportive, nurturing environment with the goal of independent living.

At Cleary House, YC's emergency shelter, nearly 100 children ages twelve and under are cared for each year in a healing and home-like environment. Children from across the state stay, on average, 45 days with the ultimate hope of family reunification.

One of their innovative programs is HOSTS (Helping Our Society to Survive) where staff members work with 50 youth per day through street outreach and a therapeutic drop-in center for homeless and runaway youth. Through HOSTS, approximately 480 clients are referred each year for shelter or transitional living care.

To learn more about YC programs and how you can help, please call at (203) 562-3396 or visit their website at: [www.youthcontinuum.org](http://www.youthcontinuum.org).

## Pastoral Reflections

### A Message to Those "Coming of Age"



BY THE REV. GEOFF LITTLE  
PASTOR, ST. JAMES' CHURCH

I love doing the *Quinceañera* service at St. James'. With all the preparation the kids put into the ceremony, the tuxedos and the dresses and the endless practice walking down the aisle (it's just like a wedding!), I know that when it comes time for my ten-minute homily I have their attention.

Here is the message I delivered to Ashley Velázquez and her friends on the occasion of her "coming of age" celebration:

In our Gospel reading from Luke today we heard the story of Mary, a young woman probably about your age, Ashley. She receives a message from God through the angel Gabriel.

The message to Mary, and to all of you, is threefold. First, you have *preference* from God. "Do not be afraid,

Mary, you have found favor with God" (1:30). When Jesus died on the cross and rose again from the dead he restored the possibility of favor with God for everyone in the world. All we need to do is respond to Jesus with our faith: trust in him with our very lives and serve him as our Lord. For his part, Jesus will be trustworthy to all of you whom he favors.

Second, you have *purpose* from God. "You (Mary) will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus" (1:31). Just as God had a specific role in life for Mary, to bring the Son of God into the world, he has a specific purpose for your life, Ashley, and to all of you here. Our task is to remain in prayer and the Bible's teaching in the fellowship of the church to find out what that purpose is, and then carry it out with God's help.

Third, you have *power* from God. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you (Mary), and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (1:35). God never leaves us alone to carry out our life's purpose on our own. We who follow Jesus have the Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus in our hearts, to guide us and comfort us and make up for everything we lack.

So, Ashley, as you move into young adulthood I urge you to do so in God's good company. He loves you even more than we do. *Happy birthday!*

## Family Matters

### Poiema—A New Ministry for Teens in Fair Haven

BY BLANCA R. LITTLE  
TEEN MINISTRY DIRECTOR  
ST. JAMES CHURCH

Do you know of a teenager who needs some direction and a sense of purpose in life? Who doesn't? At St. James', teenagers now have a place to let their creative juices flow, talk about relevant issues in their lives, and learn how God's saving grace can fill their lives.

We are calling our new teen ministry *Poiema*, the Greek word in the New Testament for "workmanship" and the origin of our English word "poem." The apostle Paul wrote, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (*Ephesians 2:10*). Our basic message is that we are each one of us a poem of God bringing our own unique rhyme and verse into the world.



Our new teen ministry meets on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sundays of every month from 12:00-1:15 p.m. We have our own air-conditioned *Poiema* room in the church building. All teenagers, ages 13-18 are welcome. If you have any questions, please call Blanca Little at 203-467-6083.

Created for the Fair Haven community by

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**THE BRIDGE SUMMER 2005**

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## COMMUNITY AND CHURCH CALENDAR SUMMER 2005



**Services every 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays**

**10 AM:** Sermon and Holy Communion, English language.  
**12 NOON:** Sermon and Holy Communion, Spanish language.

**Service every 1st Sunday**

**10 AM:** Sermon and Holy Communion, bilingual.  
Community lunch after the service.

**Boy Scouts:** Mondays 7-9 PM, St. James' Church.

Call Bill Mason at (203) 469-0786

**Mary Wade Alzheimer's Support Group:** every 1st Wednesday, 7 PM, 118 Clinton Ave. Call 203-562-7222

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