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also publishes
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Editorial

September 11 Ceremonies Must Be Permanent

Listen closely enough each year as the summer draws to a close and we approach another Sept. 11 and someone, somewhere is asking how many more years is the country going to halt its business to commemorate one of the darkest days in the nation's history.

How many more years are they going to read the 2,752 names of the people who died at the World Trade Center site? Or honor those who died at the Pentagon or in Pennsylvania.

Or why are municipalities stopping their day, when some didn't even have any residents who perished.

How many more years? As long as there is a United States of America there should be Sept. 11 ceremonies. Certainly in New York. They needn't be long, elaborate or expensive. No one is advocating a holiday or a day off from work. No one is forcing anyone to attend a ceremony, or listen or read the news accounts of the day if they don't care to. But the importance of scheduling a short but meaningful event, similar to what many towns and villages did last weekend

locally, forces people to pause, re-examine their priorities and what's truly important in life.

To stop Sept. 11 ceremonies at some point would, of course, be an affront to the victims and their families who will live the remainder of their years with that scar. But even if someone was lucky enough not to have known someone personally who died that day, confining the day to the textbooks and the already yellowing newspaper pages, not only makes it easier to forget the victims but also to forget the future challenges and sacrifices we face as a nation.

Start scrapping the ceremonies now and in a few more years the day would have less significance for an increasing number of our citizens. Already, anyone younger than 15 years old probably has no recollection of Sept. 11, 2001. In less than 10 years, only adults will have a memory.

There really aren't many duties for us as Americans. Most of us don't vote, even though it only takes a few minutes a year, and we look to make excuses to get out of jury duty, even if that's no more than once a

decade for most. Once Memorial Day was shifted to the last Monday in May nearly 40 years ago, fewer Americans know the actual date of the observance, only that it's the day to start filling the swimming pool.

Last Friday night at the Ceremony of Remembrance in Mount Pleasant, County Legislator John Nonna in remembering firefighters Charlie Garbarini and Mike Lyons, two town residents who died on 9/11, correctly said that we have responsibilities that we must not shirk.

"Tonight we are fulfilling our promise to Charlie and his family, to the Lyons family and to all who had perished in our town. We will not forget them."

As We Turn Three, a Thank You

With The Examiner reaching its third birthday on Saturday, we wanted to once again thank our loyal readers and advertisers for such phenomenal support since our launch three Septembers ago. There would be no Examiner, of course, if it wasn't for all of you. Our most deeply felt gratitude.

Textbook Sticker Shock Doesn't Have to Be Shocking

By Thomas P. DiNapoli

Most families know how daunting the cost of college is. But every year around this time, college students face another sticker shock: the cost of college textbooks. New York college students in the state university (SUNY) and city university (CUNY) systems can expect to pay as much as \$4,000 or more for textbooks over the course of a four-year degree program. That's enough to price some students right out of a college education.

Last year I released a report on textbook pricing that highlighted the savings students could realize through alternative methods for purchasing college textbooks. The report found that at a sample of SUNY and CUNY campuses, students could save an average of \$245 a semester by buying books online. A first semester 2009 freshman sociology major at SUNY Bingham-

ton would have spent \$690.65 on textbooks at the campus bookstore, but only \$413.85 online. Other academic majors could save even more.

Of course, many students can't shop online for books because of late posting of course listings and the lack of accurate book identification information. Many courses require the newest editions of textbooks, even if only minor revisions were made to the book.

College students need a break. No one should ever have to delay or drop out of college because textbooks cost too much, especially when there are ways to cut those costs.

Here are some small steps to help save college students big bucks:

- Colleges should post a full course listing with required textbooks on their websites at least six weeks before classes start;

- Posted textbook lists should include the specific ISBN of each textbook, along with the title, author edition and publisher and the campus bookstore price;

- Colleges should provide the same information for acceptable alternatives to the required textbook version; and

- Professors should limit textbook edition changes to allow for the purchase of used books.

Every college in the state should be doing everything possible to help students save money, including giving them the opportunity to shop around for books. For students and their parents, every dime counts, especially when saving money on books could be the difference between completing or dropping out of school.

Thomas P. DiNapoli is New York State comptroller.

Contrary to Popular Belief, All Credit Scores Are Not Created Equal

By Tracy Becker

More than a week ago I received a phone call from a very upset homeowner who lives in Pleasantville. The homeowner had pulled his credit at an online site and his score came up as a 724.

A 724 Fico score is very good and his banker had told him he would need above a 720 for the better rate. Since he had heard when lenders pull credit it hurts the score he decided to go directly to a site online to avoid a score reduction. He wanted to make sure a few months prior to getting the loan that his score was at its best. He was very pleased with the 724 score.

Once he was ready he applied for the loan with his banker. To his surprise, when the lender pulled his reports, his score came up at a 685. He could not understand what happened and was quite

frustrated with the discrepancy in scores.

This happens all the time to consumers and professionals. Most consumers do not realize there are many scores available and the score used for a mortgage could be very different from the score they buy online.

Scoring is a profit generated business. As credit becomes more of an issue, the credit scoring industry is becoming more competitive. This is why there are an increasing amount of different scores. Most of the sites online do not advertise that they sell different scores than Fico because they know they will lose business.

The credit scoring business has been in effect a monopoly run by Fico (Fair Isaac and Company). Fair Isaac provides a risk score tabulated by using the information on your Equifax, Trans Union and Experian credit reports. (Equifax, Trans Union and Experian are the three major credit bureaus that compile information on all of us across the country.) Fico is a separate company from the reporting agencies and uses their information to produce the Fico score used by banks, insurance companies (car, homeowner, life and more), realtors, collection agencies, mortgage brokers, car lenders, boat lenders, employers, landlords, credit card companies, and the list goes on.

The Fico scores range from 300 to 850. A good Fico Score would be 720 and a great score would be above a 740. Fico also offers their score to the general public

for a fee.

The three credit reporting agencies offer their own scores (for educational purposes) to the general public. These scores are called Plus scores, National Risk scores and more recently there has been the Vantage Score created by Experian.

The Plus scores range from 330 to 830 and are usually 40 points higher than Fico scores. The Vantage Score ranges between 501 to 990 and has a letter rating as well. When you order your scores from sites online such as annual credit report.com or free credit report.com (if they don't say Fico scores) they are usually around 40 points higher than Fico. The Vantage score was not only created to educate the general public but intended to compete directly with Fico by selling to lenders as well. To give you some insight into the numerical difference between the Vantage and Fico scores, if all things were equal a Fico score of 750 would translate into a Vantage score of 901!

Complex isn't it? It is complicated but hopefully you have a little more insight into the variety and differences of numerical scores. It is very important to find out exactly what score you have ordered and if it is the same as the one your lender is using. If not, you are comparing apples to oranges and you may think you have a much higher score than you actually have.

Tracy Becker is president of North Shore Advisory, Inc., a credit restoration and education company with offices in Tarrytown.

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