

Wildes talks, meets people, talks more

BY MELISSA L. MAGYAR
Of Suburbanite

If you were tired after reading about what Michael Wildes does at his law firm in New York City, in the first part of this story last week, wait until you see what he does during the rest of the day as mayor.

On the way home a drive through scenic Central Park would offer a period of relaxation to most people, but not Wildes. It is then that he changes roles from immigration attorney to mayor. He returns phone calls from constituents and other leaders in the city as he listens to his EMT radio, which is now tuned to the channel used by the Englewood police and fire departments.

He makes himself available to everyone and freely hands out his e-mail address and cell phone number. On any given night, the mayor has numerous appointments with people who want to voice their concerns or are looking for help. He tries to keep the meetings short, about 15 minutes each, but with enough time to listen to his constituents. Wildes meets with people to discuss anything from political issues to community projects to concerns about the schools and city government. He listens to the residents and gives them his full attention. People are not running in and out of his office and phones are not ringing off the hook like they do during the day at his office.

After his mini-meetings, he is on his way to a city meeting or a community event. Or sometimes he is heading to two meetings and different community events all in one evening.

Wildes has no problem stopping by events throughout the city that people have asked him to attend. In fact, on his Web site he has a page that people can request a visit from the mayor at a community event or a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new business.

Beyond the meetings and other events, Wildes spends Friday afternoons in Englewood. During this time, he visits schools, senior citizen centers and any other events, meetings or interviews he has scheduled.

On a few different occasions, I covered stories when the mayor visited schools in the city. He tells the children that as mayor, he is always available for them and their families. He also stresses the importance of education and tells the students that they are future



STAFF PHOTO BY MICHAEL KARAS

On the way home from his law office Michael Wildes turns to his role as mayor of Englewood.



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Englewood Mayor Michael Wildes presides at a wedding in City Hall. The happy couple are Bibi Sadia Ibrahim and Asim Ansari Ali.

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Northern Valley Suburbanite
February 23, 2005

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Northern Valley
SUBURBANITE
300 Knickerbocker Road, Suite 1200
Cresskill, N.J. 07626-1343
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Northern Valley Suburbanite publishes every Wednesday. Offices are located at 300 Knickerbocker Road, Suite 1200, Cresskill, N.J. 07626-1343. Average circulation verified by Certified Audit of Circulation. Subscriptions: \$65 per year via

standard mail. Single copy: 25¢. Postage paid at Closter, N.J. 07624. Postmaster: Send address changes to North Jersey Community Newspapers, 35 Woodland Ave., Westwood, N.J. 07675-3113.

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^S₁₄ Mayor enjoys performing weddings too

WILDES

FROM PAGE 3

mayors, presidents, doctors, lawyers and teachers and it all begins "behind the desk you are sitting in."

As a mayor, Wildes has the authority to marry people. He said many of the couples he marries at city hall show up in gowns and tuxedos complete with bridal parties.

When visiting the schools, he always mentions that marrying people is one of the best parts about being mayor.

His office in the city and his political office in Englewood are filled with photos and memorabilia of his family.

One of the roles of the mayor of Englewood is to sit on the planning board and vote on the developments that will impact the city. He also appoints the board members.

The day Michael Karas, staff photographer, and I spent with him, Wildes came back in to Englewood and had a list of events and meetings he needed to attend. To him it was just another part of the job he has as mayor.

"I've always been involved in something," Wildes said about his on-the-go lifestyle.

We arrived in Englewood at 4:30 p.m., which was early for Wildes to be back from work. At 5:30 p.m. he headed off to interview a candidate for the position of municipal judge. From there he stopped at a fundraiser at the Englewood Field Club for tsunami relief efforts. Between the fundraiser and the planning board meeting that night, he attended appointments he had with residents who wanted to discuss their concerns.

His last scheduled task for the day was the planning board meeting. As it got underway Wildes ate his dinner from Panera's Bread out of a brown paper bag as he listened to the applications before the board.

When the planning board meeting ended residents approached Wildes as he tried to exit the courtroom talking to him about issues they have or events they would like him to be at or something they need help with, just as they do at council meetings and other events. He listens to them as he makes his way out of the building and offers them help or tells them to get in touch with him to continue the discussion.

Once he has made his way through the crowd, Wildes heads home to continue his day as a husband and father.

He said he makes it a point to



STAFF PHOTO BY MICHAEL KARAS

At home Englewood Mayor Michael Wildes takes on his family role, helping his daughter, Jaclyn, 4, wash ink from a inkwell pen off her hands at the kitchen sink. His daughter Lauren Ruth, 9, dries her hands in the background. The family was preparing for the Sabbath.

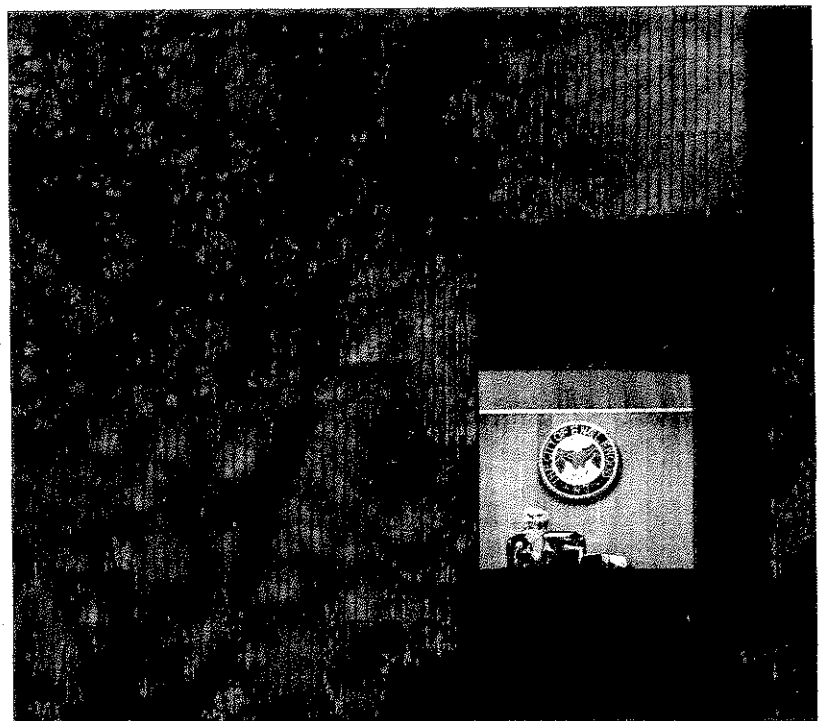
spend time with his children either before he leaves for work or when he comes home. At different events throughout the city, it is not unusual to see his wife, Amy, and their four children there to show their support.

A constant factor throughout his day is his family. His office in the city and his political office in Englewood are filled with photos and memorabilia of his family. In his political office you can find photos of his wife, children and parents throughout the room. He keeps in touch with them throughout the day and makes sure he remains a strong presence in their lives.

Wildes is the only Orthodox Jewish mayor of a municipality in the United States. That is a fact he is always proud to share with people. He is observant of his religion and it is not unusual to see him walking through Englewood or along Route 4 with a police escort to attend events on Saturday.

He is a man constantly moving with a support system - his wife and others who offered their help. Anita Sniderman, his executive assistant, and R.J. Clemor, his constituent liaison, help him keep on task and take care of issues that arise in the city when he is not around.

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STAFF PHOTO BY MICHAEL KARAS

Volunteers and officials like Mayor Michael Wildes participate in an evening planning board meeting in the council chambers/courtroom next to the police station on South Van Brunt Street.