

# A Community Activist All Of His Life

Written By: ANNETTE DE LAVALLADE

In his youth Edward H. Brown, Jr. was one of the few Boy Scouts in America who achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. He still recalls how proud his parents, and the Harlem community where he grew up, were when he reached this highest rank in scouting. This was a pivotal moment in his life. So it is understandable that Ed Brown sometimes measures his accomplishments against his Scout achievements days. And, he has many, too numerous for this article.

Brown, elected in a highly competitive city-wide election in 2002 to a four-year term on the Albany School Board, is the current President of the Albany School Board. In 2005, he was elected Vice President and moved up to President upon the departure of the former President Scott Wexler. Brown has been elected to various high level posts and positions since he was in Junior High School.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and History and earned a Master degree in Public Administration from Syracuse's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. He continued his education at Harvard University's School of Public Health. While in high school, he was a community activist and was elected President of the Harlem Hi-Y, a delegate to the National YMCA Conference and worked on the campaign of Robert F. Kennedy's senatorial race in 1964.

While in college he was a founding member of the Student African American

Society in 1967, the founder of the Martin Luther King Memorial Library in 1968 and the prime mover of the African-American Studies Program in 1969. After graduating, he founded the Friends of Syracuse Minority Alumni Association in 1975. The changes were significant and had a lasting impact on the body politic and culture of Syracuse University that continues to benefit its students today.

In the early 1970s he served as the Director of Political Affairs for the national office of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). In 1976, Brown became directly involved in politics and was a candidate for the New York State Assembly from Central Harlem. Although that race was unsuccessful, he continued his quest to contribute as a public servant and ran successfully for a seat on the Albany School Board.

His current community service includes being Co-Chair of the Black History Month Creative Expression Contest for the past 8 years, which is a joint project with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. He is also a board member of Big Brothers Big Sister and One Hundred Black Men. Brown has worked for the past 30 years as a federal, state and municipal health administrator. At the end of the 1990s he was selected to become a Management Fellow at the New York State Department of Health.

On several occasions Brown has stated, "I am committed to eradicating the academic achievement gap between black and white students in high school graduate rates by the end of this decade. The majority, two-thirds, of the

Albany School District's student body are African-Americans. It is unacceptable for this majority to lag so far behind their peers in academic achievement." Ed goes on to say "I ran for the school board because I have a deep-seated

belief in the innate ability of all children to learn. The most important challenge of our district is to bring out excellence from every student who crosses our threshold, regardless of their demographic background".

Brown has high expectations for the teaching staff in the district and expects them to rise to this challenge in the near term by producing significant progress in academic outcomes during the 2005-06 academic years. For Brown, more important than the new state-of-the-art facilities (schools newly built or renovated), is the critical necessity for success in the delivery of an excellent education to the at-risk student population. He continued, "The energy so rightly devoted to the maintenance of our highly successful honors and Advanced Placement Programs must become more universal and widespread throughout the school district."



Edward H. Brown, Jr. President, Albany School Board

In his remarks at the recent grand opening of the new Myers Middle School, Brown said that he "envisions a day, in the not too distant future, when the public school system of Albany becomes a radiant beacon of light that acts as a strong magnet, in attracting new families to our city, who will be fighting to get their children in our superb middle school system."

Brown and his wife Wilhelmina regularly attend the St. George's Black Catholic Apostolate Church and Macedonia Baptist Church in Albany. Ed is also a member of the famous Abyssinia Baptist Church in Harlem. His membership there and being a sponsoring member of the Schomburg Museum Collection has kept him in touch with his Harlem roots even though he has been a homeowner and resident of Albany for the last 25 years.●