

Greenburgh band, Atlantic Starr, honored with street naming

Reece Williams, For The Journal News Published 1:45 p.m. ET June 9, 2017 | Updated 2:35 p.m. ET June 9, 2017



(Photo: Reece Williams/For The Journal News)

Atlantic Starr is Greenburgh homegrown, through and through. And now anyone who lives here, and those just passing through, will know it, regardless of generation, or musical taste.

On Monday, Greenburgh honored the chart-topping R&B group by renaming a section of Old Tarrytown Road — between Knollwood Road and Hillside Avenue — Atlantic Starr Way.

“This is a success story that must be celebrated,” said Town Clerk Judith Beville, who helped orchestrate the renaming and Monday’s celebration.

[MOVIES: Meet real-life Megan Leavey; Rockland native. Marine](#)

[\(/story/entertainment/movies/2017/06/02/megan-leavey-sgt-rex/354816001/\)](#)

[MUSIC: Grace VanderWaal helps Ramapo music group: An editorial \(/story/opinion/editorials/2017/06/08/grace-vanderwaal-shares-joy-singing-east-ramapo/380008001/\)](#)

Six of the group’s founding nine members — all Greenburgh natives, and Woodlands High School graduates — attended: percussionist Porter Carroll Jr.; vocalist, Sharon Bryant; vocalist and guitarist, David Lewis; lead vocalist and keyboardist, Wayne Lewis; trombonist and percussionist, Jonathan Lewis; and trumpeter, Duke Jones.

Atlantic Starr formed in the 1970’s out of three separate Woodlands High School student bands: Newban, Unchained Youth, and Exact Change.

Carroll, Jonathan Lewis, and Jones were founding members of Newban. Bryant joined that group in 1975 from Exact Change. Wayne and David Lewis followed in 1976 from Unchained Youth.

The group — then Newban — committed to a strict practice schedule.

“[We practiced] 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., five days a week,” Carroll told the Journal News in an interview on Thursday “Most of our rehearsals took place at my mother’s house on Prospect Avenue [in Greenburgh].”

“We had all had decided against college and the pressure was on us,” he said.

Carroll’s mother was a domestic laborer. She would often wait for the bus at the corner of Hillside Avenue and Old Tarrytown Road, which now bears the group’s later name.

She introduced the band to Glen Friedman — for whom she worked — a publisher at CBS Music in Los Angeles, and a Woodlands High School graduate.



Six of the original nine members of Atlantic Starr – all Greenburgh natives – gathered at Greenburgh Town Hall on Monday to be honored; the town renamed a section of Old Tarrytown Road, “Atlantic Starr Way.” From left: Jonathan Lewis, Davis Lewis, Sharon Bryant, Wayne Lewis, Porter Carroll, Jr. Not pictured: Duke Jones. (Photo: Reece Williams/For The Journal News)

In 1977, Friedman, impressed by their sound, invited the band to Los Angeles to play at the 20th anniversary celebration of legendary R&B group, The Spinners.

Most of Newban piled into a van and trekked cross-country, intending not to leave L.A. without a record deal.

“We had \$385 in cash, and one credit card,” Bryant told The Journal News on Thursday. “I packed a bag. We were staying in terms of trying to get a record deal, without knowing how long it would take.”

The van ended up breaking down in Utah before finally reaching Los Angeles, and the Beverly Hills Hotel, the site of the anniversary celebration.

“We played for the Hollywood elite that very night,” Carroll said.

For the next year, the band played local gigs, recorded music, and worked to fund their collective dream of signing a record deal.

VIRTUALLY THERE SEASON 2



Three new virtual reality adventures each week.

Watch Now
(<https://www.usatoday.com/section/global/virtuallythere/>)

“We never took money,” Carroll said. “We put it all back into the band.”

With help from their manager, Earl Cole of White Plains, the band put together an alphabetized list of music labels to pursue.

“We never got out of the A’s,” Carroll said.

After a year-and-a-half in Los Angeles, the group auditioned for, and signed a five-year exclusive contract with A&M Records — among the most influential independent recording labels of the time, to which Joe Jackson, The Police, and Peter Frampton were signed — and renamed themselves Atlantic Starr.

The band went on to record three albums with A&M, featuring such chart-topping hits as “Stand Up.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAalj9I5IV0>) on the band’s self-titled debut album, and “Secret Lovers.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oe2UXqFo0DY>) on 1987’s “As the Band Turns.”

Legendary producer James Carmichael later worked with the band on some of their biggest hits, including “When Love Calls,” “Circles,” and “Touch a Four Leaf Clover,” all of which combined to solidify Atlantic Starr as an R&B super group.

“He had enough foresight to produce music that would be relevant forever,” Jonathan Lewis said on Thursday about working with Carmichael. “He was creating timeless pieces of music. You’re playing those songs now, and people are still as excited as they were almost 40 years ago.”

The band’s biggest hit, 1987’s “Always” peaked at number one on both the R&B, and pop charts, serving as the crossover success they had long sought.

By this point however, Carroll and Bryant had left the group to pursue solo careers.

The band continued to tour around the world: Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, England, Germany, across the United States, and a host of other countries.

But, their foundation had always been, and will always be Greenburgh.

“Greenburgh is the origin,” Jonathan Lewis said. “It’s the beginning. It’s where the chemistry is. We really put Greenburgh on the map.”

“It never would’ve happened without the hard work done here,” Carroll said.

“Greenburgh is community,” Bryant said. “The epitome of ‘it takes a village.’”

The band members said that Monday evening’s ceremony touched them deeply.

“I loved what happened the other night,” Carroll said. “It felt like home. It was just down-to-earth recognition that everyone can be as great as they want to be, if they want to be.”

Read or Share this story: <http://www.lohud.com/story/news/2017/06/09/greenburgh-band-atlantic-starr-honored-street-naming/383680001/>

