

Next issue
October 10

The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044



Margery Rubin

Moment of Victory A participant in FDR Day exults in a moment of achievement. This year's event was a revival of an Island tradition. More of Marge Rubin's pictures of the day appear throughout this issue.

On a Perfect Saturday, FDR Day Returns to RI

by George Rubin
photography by Margery Rubin

It was warm and clear, perfect weather for FDR day on Saturday, September 12, on Roosevelt Island. A time to celebrate and honor many of the accomplishments of those who are physically challenged. Among the many booths along Main Street were those related to Health Care and the Health Sciences. You could get your blood pressure checked or learn what constitutes a healthy diet. Others had beautiful jewelry, African art, and hand-made knitted hats. There was an exhibit of art by Coler-Goldwater patient residents. You could have your face painted by a Dan the Magic Star Clown, and get a friendly hello from Sam Brown at the Cabrini table.

At the Field events our physically challenged community had a chance to participate in hoop shooting, wheelchair races, frisbee toss, wheelchair obstacle course, dart throw, bowling and other games to prove to themselves *We can do it!* I watched James Roscoe, who is blind, bowling and putting golf balls. Volunteers everywhere were doing every type of chore, serving water and food to the participants, running the games, giving encouragement to everybody.

In the afternoon at the Manhattan Park Theater Club, there was a presentation to those who had won in competition. The official presenter was NYPD Detective Steven D. McDonald. He spoke about President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and how he overcame his disability to become President of the United States. Detective McDonald, living with his own disability, should inspire all of us.

The winners were: Male Sportsmanship, Al Holliday; Female Sportsmanship, Mabel Waller; Best Male Athlete, Adolph Johns; Best Female Athlete, Anup Malilre.

See **FDR**, page 6; **photos** throughout issue



Jean Waller

RIRA Puts Self-Government Query On Its November Ballot; Seeks Common Council Candidates

Shall the present governance of Roosevelt Island, consisting of political appointees, be replaced by a popularly-elected Board of Residents empowered to hire professional management, as proposed in legislation introduced in the New York State Legislature by Assemblymember Pete Grannis?

That question will appear on the ballot November 3 in the elections for the Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA), the community's only representative body elected Island-wide.

The Grannis legislation, endorsed in draft form by the RIRA Common Council a year ago, is the centerpiece of the new Drive for Democracy, which is aimed at its passage.

At the same time, RIRA's election committee is seeking nominations for President and Vice-President, and for delegates to its Common Council, all of whom will be elected in the November 3 balloting.

Patrick Stewart, current President of RIRA, has filed for re-election. At press time, his was the only nominating form received.

All residents of the Island over age 18 are eligible for the elected positions, and to vote in the RIRA election, whether U.S. citizens or not. The only requirement is some proof of residence, such as a phone or credit card bill carrying the resident's Island address, or other documentation of residence.

Nomination forms for the RIRA posts are now available at Roosevelt Island Housing Management, Public Safety, and RIOC, and will also be on hand at other locations to be announced. A copy is on page 3 of this issue.

A Candidates Night will be scheduled the week of October 18, and nominees wishing to speak on

that occasion are required to have their forms in by Friday, October 16. Nominations will remain open, however, until October 26.

In addition to President and Vice President, 26 Common Council positions are up for grabs. Election districts are grouped by residential buildings for the RIRA election, with the following distribution of the Council seats:

546 Main Street, 2 seats
Eastwood, 7
Rivercross, 3
Island House, 3
Westview, 3
2 River Road, 1
4 River Road, 1
10-40 River Road, 8

Residents with questions about the nominating and election process can call (212) 308-0479.

Vass Will Head Island's "Drive for Democracy"

Ron Vass will head Roosevelt Island's new Drive for Democracy.

The pioneer resident, who quit the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation three weeks ago and blasted RIOC President Jerome Blue in his letter of resignation, will spearhead the movement to secure passage of self-government legislation for the Island. That bill, presented to the legislature by Assemblymember Pete Grannis, would eliminate RIOC and its Board of political appointees. In its place, there would be an elected Board of Residents, who would then hire professional management for the Island.

The Drive for Democracy will be a prime topic at the Monday night (September 28) meeting of the Island's Maple Tree Group, which drafted the Grannis legislation and secured the Residents Association endorsement of it a year ago. The group meets at 7:30 at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.



Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com

Puddles without rain Standing water on Main Street indicates an under-street leak and accompanying erosion. Residents Association President Patrick Stewart cites the condition, which has existed for several weeks, as symptomatic of neglect of infrastructure by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. Stewart's column (page 3) this issue deals with deterioration of the landmark Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

MTA May Be Taking Serious Look at Tram

The MTA appears to be taking a careful look at the condition of the Island's Tramway, possibly as part of consideration of a takeover long urged by Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation President Jerome Blue.

Last week, a team of consultants from Parsons Brinkerhoff, the engineering firm, started the examination, apparently considering maintenance requirements, ridership, and operating expenses in a study estimated to cost \$50,000 or more.

The subsidized proportion of Tramway operations (the part not paid for by rider fares) is far lower than the MTA's overall system, and far lower than most mass transit in the United States, but Blue has pointed to its operating deficit as a

burden on his attempts to achieve break-even budgeting for the Island. He has failed to negotiate an agreement with the MTA to include the Tramway in the "one city, one fare" Metrocard.

Initially, plans were made to shut down the Tramway four hours daily, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. next Monday through Friday, for the engineering study. At press time, it appeared service would instead be cut back to hourly from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The Residents Association has taken positions against an MTA takeover of the Tramway, in the belief that loss of control might ultimately lead to a Tramway shutdown or cutback, and citing the system's ability to produce a profit once Southtown is built.

Pages of Thought and Opinion

Thanks

I am back, like it or not. First, I would like to say thanks to the many people who took the time to stop by my wheelchair on Main Street or to phone to ask how I was feeling and/or when I might be writing again. This column answers both.

More thanks

Gratitude is also due to those who planned and carried out the FDR Day observance here. We “wheelies” were feted, fed, and had lots of fun. The Day was sponsored by Coler-Goldwater Hospital and Auxiliaries, Roosevelt Island Housing Management, Manhattan Park, and Rivercross, as well as other generous contributors.

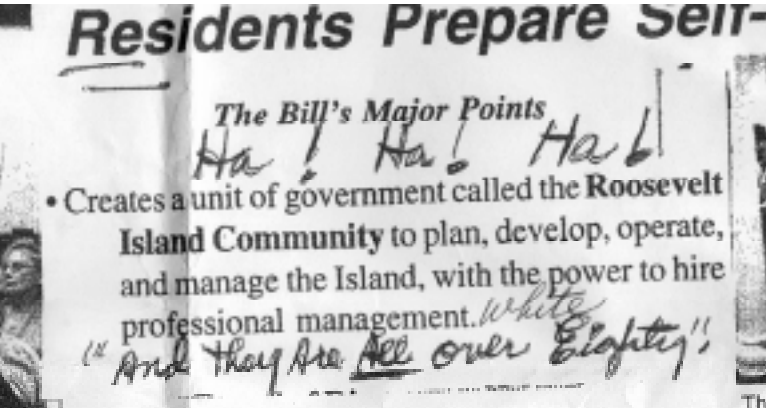
Still more thanks

These words of our President may be the most overlooked of his recent utterances, but to me they aroused hope for those of us who live here. In a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, he said, “...With more than half the people in the world living under governments of their own choosing, more than half of the villages in the one million villages in China even now selecting their own governments... We think the trend is inevitable and irreversible....”



No thanks

When *The WIRE* came out two weeks ago, someone decided to help our circulation by reproducing one of the headlines and two pictures from the front page, then distributing the copies



around the Island. Several people reported to me the name of a culprit, and were kind enough to bring me the copies they had removed from the kiosks. How insulting to those elders pictured by us were the comments scrawled on the reproductions!

Muchas Gracias

Two of the Island’s most popular and civic-minded residents will celebrate their 25th anniversary on October 20. They are Sammy and Lillian Rodriguez, who moved here on September 1, 1975, from The Bronx. We’ll have more to say about this duo after they return from a celebratory trip.



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Roosevelt Islanders are gathering these days to lend their minds to the discussion of what it will take to change this community’s governance – from mismanagement by political appointee – to a democracy.

Some are wildly enthusiastic. Some have reservations, but want to see the Drive for Democracy succeed.

Some doubt. **What follows is for those tempted to doubt, or those attracted to the sidelines.**

If we do nothing, we will achieve nothing.

If we dream small, and work small, the rewards will be small – at best.

If we dream large and work hard, we may receive the reward of success, but even without it, we will have the great reward of an attempt well-made.

This thought, from some anonymous wise mind, puts it on the line: ***The minute you settle for less than you deserve, you get even less than you settled for.***

What we deserve, of course, is nothing less than the residents of every other democracy in the world: Electoral control over those

island observer

who govern us and the circumstances of our lives.

The legislation produced by the Maple Tree Group and put before the State legislature by Pete Grannis is shaped to provide us just that. It does not answer every question about how this community will be managed under a competent administrator hired by a democratically-elected Board of Residents. It does not offer a fully secure path through the thicket of the future. It does not guarantee we will not fail.

But it puts government where it belongs in a democratic society: In the hands of the people, and those they elect.

It removes the daggers of patronage politics and misplaced loyalties from our backs.

It allows us the opportunity to succeed, or to fail, on our own terms, working together as a community, overseeing a structure of government instead of living under incompetent management whose priorities have nothing to do with the quality of life on Roosevelt Island.

Self-government, and the Drive for Democracy, are the flags around which we must now rally, if we are to be true to our own traditions. Of those traditions, let us remember that the Founding Fathers had no crystal balls, and they had much cause for worry and doubt. Yet they dared what we must dare: To go forward in confidence that, in the democratic tradition, we will find the way. We must dare to rule ourselves and our own community.

To do it, we must meet the challenge that is placed before us at our time in history. It is small, compared to what the Founding Fathers faced, but for us it is large, both in the scale of the dream and in the effort it will require to achieve the dream, and then to participate in the management of our community once the dream is real.

Fail to dream? We must not. Instead, we must stand, lock arms, move forward together and find the way. And work hard, so that when we succeed, we will know that we own the success as our creation. Or if we fail, to know that we have dreamed large and failed at something worth the disappointment we will feel.

See you at the Maple Tree Group, Monday night, 7:30, at the Chapel.

DL

Letters

Dear Editor:
This is about

Dear Editor:

This is about why we need real Police. Public Safety doesn’t really help us in the way real Police would. Real Police would stop drug dealing on the Island and these recent attacks on other people. Real Police are tougher because they have guns. Guns are the only thing that can scare drug dealers.

March Willam Thomas MacDermotRoe
Age 10

March Willam
Thomas
Mac Dermothoe.
age 10

Editor’s note: The following letter concerns August 30 incidents reported briefly in *The WIRE*’s last issue, described as a melee behind Eastwood touched off after a complaint of excessive noise, and the subsequent torching of a Public Safety Cushman scooter outside RIOC’s offices. RIOC responded with a 170-word answer, the relevant portion of which is printed below the letter.

September 23, 1998

Mr. Jim Fry
Acting Director, Public Safety

Dear Jim:

Since August 30, the community grapevine has been alive with rumors about the incidents of that date. *The Main Street WIRE* carried the account of the incident supplied by RIOC, and recorded your statement at the last RIOC meeting that “there were no injuries to Public Safety personnel or others,” but it appears that both your statement and the RIOC report published in *The WIRE* are widely considered to be a cover-up.

To deal with the rumors, I will print this letter in this week’s *WIRE*. If you and/or RIOC supplies a response, I will print that response, as well. This should be a good opportunity to make the public record complete, and to deal forthrightly with what’s on the community grapevine.

Here are the rumors, some traced back to sources I consider reliable:

- Two Public Safety officers (or employees) were “stomped” – to the ground.

True, partly true, or false?

- A female Public Safety employee maced (or used another spray substance on) another Public Safety employee, incapacitating him. The employee was not authorized to carry the weapon involved. The sprayed employee was (or is now) out of work with an eye infection that resulted.

True, partly true, or false?

- No supervisor was on duty at the time of the early portion of the incident.

True, partly true, or false?

- Only three Public Safety personnel were (choose one) on duty at the time of the incident, or (second choice) on patrol at the time of the incident.

True, partly true, or false?

- None of the Public Safety personnel on duty were qualified Peace Officers.

True, partly true, or false?

- Two people, or three people, one or more of whom were Public Safety Officers, were hospitalized, at least briefly, after the incident.

True, partly true, or false?

- A window of a 114 Precinct vehicle was broken, or the vehicle was otherwise damaged, during or after the incident.

True, partly true, or false?

- A female Public Safety employee is out on disability as a result of injuries or other causes arising from the incident.

True, partly true, or false?

I’d like to urge a real effort to reestablish your credibility, and RIOC’s, by a full disclosure of all details of the incident. To be printed along with this letter, your response (or RIOC’s) will need to be in my hands (fax 755-2540) by 2:00 p.m. Thursday.

Dick Lutz
Managing Editor, *The WIRE*
copy: RIOC

Fax received from RIOC:

Dr. Blue’s response: “At the September 8, 1998 RIOC board meeting we shared information concerning this occurrence as we did earlier in the month; in addition, I have attached another copy of the incident report which is under investigation. I will continue to share ways in which we have improved Island services, safety, and self-sufficiency, and look forward to continuing to work with residents for even greater improvements. The resident advisory committees on transportation and planning are excellent models and are under consideration to expand their topics to include incidents like this one...”

New Yorkers have a way of not noticing the more unpleasant things around them... perhaps a defense mechanism developed to shield us from urban blight, human suffering, metropolitan rage, anti-social behavior and on, and on, and on. We grow inured in order to survive, and perhaps it's just as well.

Every so often, though, some event will occur that allows us to really focus on what's happening around us, and pay more attention than we have in a long while.

This happened for me with last Sunday's displacement of both the Protestant and Catholic congregations from their chapel into the basement of the church. The move was necessitated by extensive water damage caused simply and solely by RIOC's patent, and criminal, neglect. It is hardly reassuring to know that the water damage would have been even greater were the fire sprinkler system not so totally clogged.

This is not the first appearance of their neglect. Since June of 1996 there has been little or no maintenance of the Island. The grounds and open spaces and playgrounds have been allowed to go to seed due to their extensive cutbacks in maintenance staff and the lack of appropriate funding.

There has been little or no maintenance of the seawall... the seawall that throughout all previous administrations has needed and received continuous maintenance.

There has been a State-funded engineering study in existence on the landmark Good Shepherd Chapel for at least four years. The study outlines the serious nature of many dangerous conditions in the building. That study has been deliberately ignored, and nothing has been done. Perhaps it will take the roof collapsing on a congregation to get them to attend to their responsibilities.

The continuous water seepage on the street in front of Good Shepherd is an indication of grievous problems with the pipes below. The same condition exists in front of 40 River Road. The entire length of Main Street and River Road has been buckling and heaving for over two years. And two years of mild winters at that.

Most of the safety features on the play equipment in the two playgrounds are broken or missing. This is a particularly reprehensible situation that has been

brought to their attention before. Drainage for the children's sprinklers has been regularly blocked all season. The Blackwell Plaza fountain goes unrepaired.

The roof of Blackwell House is obviously near collapse, as is the porch. Its disrepair is more indicative of an abandoned private house rather than a landmark under the specific care of the state.

The Lighthouse was cleaned and repaired with private funding raised by the previous administration, although RIOC would like to claim credit for it.

And speaking of funding, we have *still* not seen an audit of Public Purpose Funds. Nor have they produced the audit of missing RICO funds. The audits have each been promised by RIOC for more than two years.

Nor have they released the Army Corps of Engineers Study of the seawall, undertaken in July of 1997. Nor have they released the outcome of the \$100,000 Deloit Touche LLP management consultants study of their management practices and financial policies. This consultation was an outcome of the State Comptroller's audit.

RIOC has stated proudly time and again that they need no capital or operating budget from Albany, due to their superior fiscal management. When our public representatives recommended the use of available monies or grants, they were refused. Now we find Roosevelt Island in a state of serious disrepair attended by real and potential hazards to the citizenry and to the state.

This disrepair will eventually cost the taxpayers of New York an amount exponentially higher than it would have cost to prudently maintain it – as the State of New York is legally required to do under the terms of its lease with the city. But then, RIOC's zero budget is one of the things the State is bragging about this election year.

Once, Roosevelt Island was something to brag about.



Patrick Stewart



More of Margery Rubin's emotive photographs of FDR Day participants appear on pages 1,4, 5, and 6.



RIRA Nominating Form 1998 Election of Officers

OFFICE:

____ President
____ Vice President
____ Common Council, for
Building: _____

The following information should be completed about the individual whose name is being presented for nomination:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone, Day _____

Phone, Evening _____

Qualifications:

I will serve if elected:

Signature of Nominee

Nominees must be 18 or older and reside on Roosevelt Island.

Your name _____

Your signature _____

Address _____

Phone, Day _____

Phone, Evening _____

COMING UP

Mon., Sept. 28, 7:30 p.m., Special Meeting of The Maple Tree Group, open to the public and new members, to discuss modifications of **Self-Government Legislation** for Roosevelt Island, and to organize for the **Drive For Democracy** to secure its passage. Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Sun., Oct. 4, regular meeting of the **Roosevelt Island Art Association**, 546 Main Street, 12th floor. Live model. Call **517-0564**.

Wed., Oct. 7, meeting of the **Common Council** of the **Roosevelt Island Residents Association**, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Members of the community who wish to address the Council are invited to arrive in time for the public comment portion of the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Thur., Oct. 8, 10:00 a.m., Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board of Directors Meeting, Good Shepherd Chapel. Advance registration required for those who wish to address the Board. Call **832-4540** or see receptionist at 591 Main Street during business hours.

Fri.-Sat., Oct. 9-10, next scheduled issue of **The Main Street WIRE**. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Oct. 3; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Oct. 5. **Future issues:** October 24; November 7, 21; December 5, 19; January 9, thereafter generally every two weeks. **Un-scheduled extra editions** may be published as news and advertising support warrant; advertisers who would like to be included in one or more **extra** editions, *without advance notice at the time*, are invited to call **826-9055** to make their interest known. **Plan now to include your business card in the November 21 Thanksgiving issue.** **Phone/fax** for news, (212) **826-9055/755-2540**; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, (212) **755-8214/755-2540**; phone & fax to list your Island organization's event without charge, **317-8523** (provide call-back number for possible follow-up).

Sat., Oct. 10, 10 a.m., the Roosevelt Island Tree Board's annual **Fall Tree Walk**, starting at Blackwell House. Free.

Fri., Oct. 16, deadline for nominations for offices in the **Roosevelt Island Residents Association** and for its Common Council, for those who wish to participate in Candidates Night the week of October 18. (Final deadline: **October 27**. Information: **308-0479**.)

Thur., Oct. 22, PS/IS 217, training sessions for tutors in the New York City **School Volunteer Program** for adults who wish to work one-on-one with a child to improve reading, writing, math, or English skills. Additional sessions (all are required) October 29 and November 5. Information: **980-0294, ext. 2422**.

Tue., Nov., 3, Election Day. All Roosevelt Island residents over 18, **including** those not citizens of the United States or New York, are eligible to vote in the election for members of the Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA), and on the ballot question regarding self-government for Roosevelt Island. All day, PS/IS 217.

Sun., Dec. 13, Special Guest Performance, **The Morgan Scott Ballet Company**, Coler Hospital. Times & tickets: **848-6043**.

At the Senior Center

Every week
Mondays
9:30 **Stay Well** (exercise)
Tuesdays
10-11 a.m. **Blood Pressure Screening**
1:30 **Bingo**
Wednesdays
9:30 **Stay Well** (Stretch)
10:00 **English as 2nd Language** (Beg)
11:00 **English as 2nd** (Intermediate)
1:30 **Lotto** (Games)
Thursdays
10:00 **Tai Chi**
12:30 **Movie**
Fridays
10:00 **Billiards/Pool Table Open**
10:00 **English as Second Language**
12:30 **Blood Pressure Screening**
Saturdays
7:30 **Bingo & Games**
Special Events
Fri., Oct. 2 – **Healthy Living**

The Faces and Feelings of FDR Day 1998

photographs by Margery Rubin



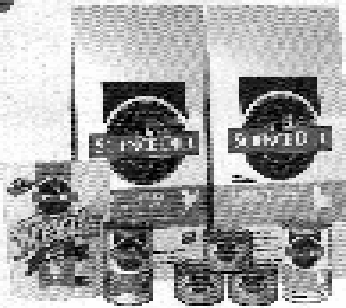
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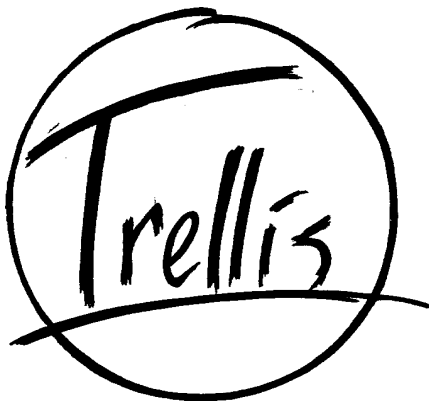
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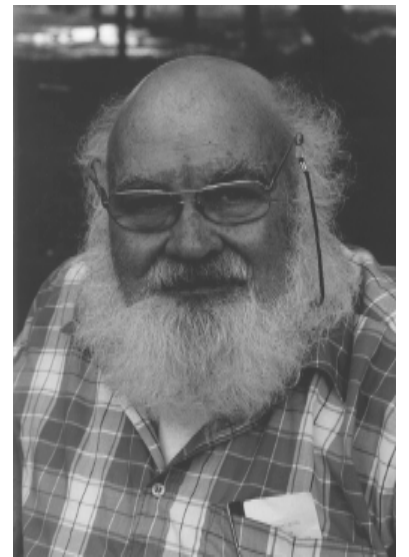
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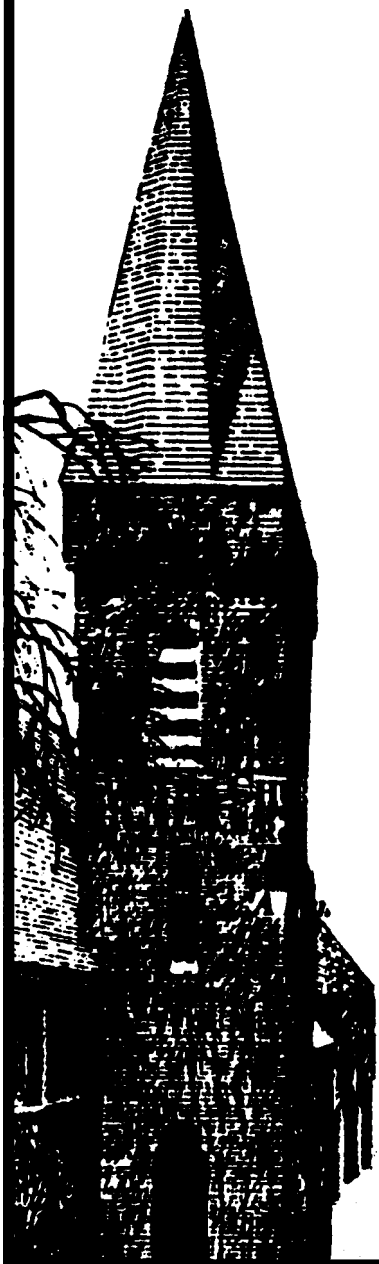
Good Shepherd Sunday School is Back

Each Sunday 8:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m., let your children be our Shepherd's children. Come register in front of Good Shepherd Chapel, Saturday, September 26, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Meet the devoted teachers and some members (children) of our Sunday School.

*My child, give me your heart and let your eyes observe my ways.
Proverbs 23 v. 26.*

Free gift for all who stop to inquire
on Sept. 26, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Rev. Oliver T. Chapin (212) 486-0529



FDR Day from page 1

There were short speeches by Assemblymember Pete Grannis and Representative Carolyn Maloney. Pete Grannis said, "What a wonderful day for the physically challenged who live here on Roosevelt Island. More people should hear and see them and their accomplishments. It is

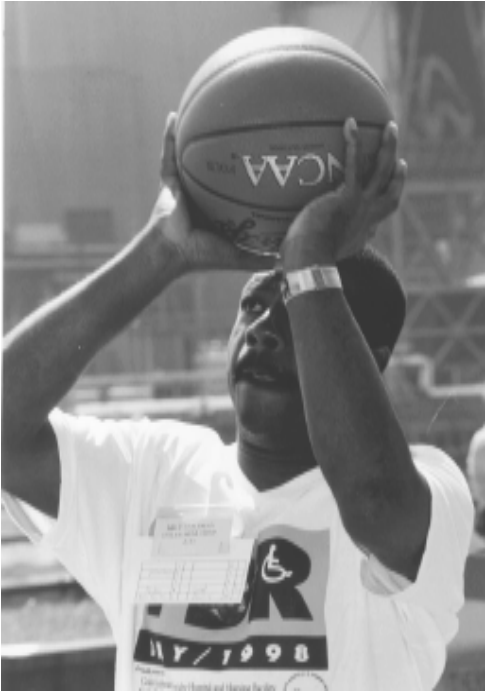


a sad comment that the Director of the Island, Dr. Jerome Blue, failed to be here, and shows so little concern for the Island residents. If Governor Pataki had run the small town of Peekskill in the same manner, he would never have been elected Governor of

New York. This is why Roosevelt Island needs self-government, though I know it is an uphill battle."

There were so many people to thank. Some are Ron Ballister for the posters and flyers; Sunderam Srinivasan for constant availability in assisting with his computer talents and for the production of booth banners; Virginia Granato, a great resource for support and enthusiasm; Fay Vass, one of the founders of FDR day; Marilyn Engstler, Housing Management's Director of Community Relations; and the two volunteers who returned to the island to help out, Carol Berger and Gail Herring; also Claude Rittman, Senior Associate Executive Director of Coler-Goldwater and Linda Dianto, Director of Therapeutic Recreation, Coler-Goldwater, who coordinated both campuses.

The day ended with delicious food in an outdoor and an indoor buffet and lots of music and dancing. Everyone who attended was part of a wonderful gathering. FDR would have truly been proud of us on this day.



Tutors Sought In Island School's Volunteer Effort

Island School PS/IS 217 is seeking volunteer tutors to work one-on-one with its students to improve their skills in reading, math, writing, or English. School volunteers work individually with the students, and help in the library, office and cafeteria, as well.

The program involves a training program on three Thursday mornings, starting October 22. Volunteers must attend all three sessions.

Islanders may register by calling Susan Cohen, the school guidance counselor, at 980-0294, ext. 2422.

Tree Walk Scheduled October 10

The Roosevelt Island Tree Board has scheduled its annual Fall Tree Walk for Saturday, October 10, at 10:00 a.m. It will start at the landmark Blackwell House and will be guided by State Forester Michael Curley, who will identify the trees in the area and elaborate on their features and structure. The path will be similar to the route depicted in the self-guided Island Tree Walk brochure prepared last year by Michael Keller as his Eagle Scout project.

Along the way, Maurice Bleifeld, chair of the Tree Board, will provide folders from the National Arbor Day Foundation, and will describe efforts to preserve the trees on Roosevelt Island. Bleifeld calls this "a good opportunity for the average city-dweller to learn more about the trees around us." The Tree Walk is free.



第一

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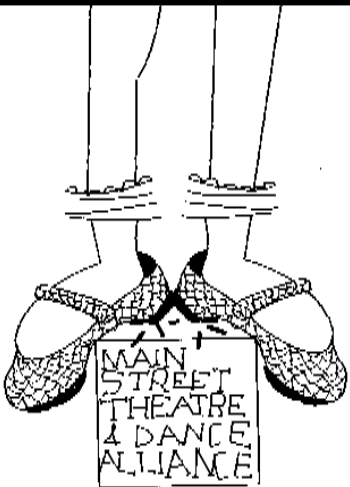
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JAZZ DANCE
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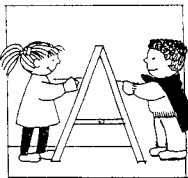
Make check payable to "Friends of Al Lewis."
PO Box 277, NYC, NY 10044

(Contributions to political campaigns are not tax deductible.)

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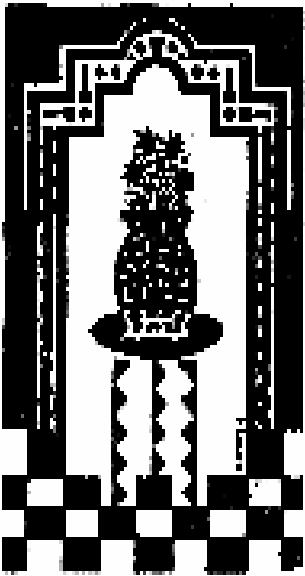
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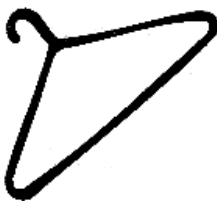
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