

Next issue:
Feb. 23-24

The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044



Demolition Starting Scaffolding rose last week at the abandoned Nurses Residence, which is due to come down soon as part of the Southtown construction program. A fence is also being erected around the site, and the west service road is being widened for two-way traffic. The east road is to be eliminated.

Island Shops Still Hurting – Too Few People, Tough Competition

by Anusha Shrivastava

The Island's small businesses continue to suffer in the competitive environment created by Gristede's, the supermarket many love to hate for high prices and lax customer service. Bigelow Pharmacy was bought out. The Card 'n Gift store changed its business strategy. The owner of The Fish Market gave up two months ago and sold his store to a newcomer, James Ahn, who is struggling to establish his store as an alternative.

Ahn moved from Philadelphia to New York recently, and saw an advertisement in the paper about the store's sale. "I came to Roosevelt Island and thought I could give running this dying store a shot," said Ahn. He saw a shortage of quality produce at low prices and decided to exploit that niche. "Everything on the Island is so expensive, I can hardly believe it," he said.

"I am trying to give the customer wholesale prices on fruit and vegetables," said Ahn. He sells cauliflower for as low as \$1.59 a head and lettuce at 99 cents. He claims his prices are at least 30% below Gristede's.

See **Shops**, page 7



James Ahn has great hopes for his new store next to the Library.

Motorgate Hike Drawing Fire

by Francine Lange

Motorgate rates are going up. Starting March 1, Island-resident customers will pay \$10 more per month for their spaces. The increase for non-residents is \$5 per month.

Joan Christianson (letter, page 2), a member of the Residents Association (RIRA) Common Council, said she is angry about the increase because customers received one less than two years ago. She said she is also concerned for certain customers. "A lot of people are on fixed incomes, and ten dollars is a big increase," she said. When she called RIOC President Robert Ryan and asked if he had RIOC Board approval for the hike, she said his reply was he didn't need the Board's OK. When contacted for comment, Ryan confirmed his statement. "I personally approved the rate increase," he said. When asked about resident reaction to the hike, he said, "I've only received one letter from anybody on the Island, so I don't think there's too many irate people out there."

At least one resident plans to do something about the increase. At Wednesday night's RIRA Common Council meeting, Christianson started circulating a petition she plans to present to the RIOC Board at its meeting scheduled for Thursday evening, February 15.

And a Motorgate employee, who did not want to give his name, said,

See **Parking**, page 6

RIRA Council Backing Eastwood's Public Safety Issue in Rent Hike Fight

The Residents Association (RIRA) Common Council voted Wednesday night to back efforts by the Eastwood Building Committee (EBC) to make an issue of Public Safety performance in opposing a rent hike.

By an 18-1 vote, the Council endorsed a letter of instruction from EBC co-chairs Harry De Vine and Ron and Fay Vass to an attorney hired to use the question of internal Eastwood vertical patrols as a point of opposition to the rent increase.

The Council also voted, 14 to 4

Other RIRA Actions

The RIRA Common Council took other actions Wednesday evening. A few are listed on page 6.

(with one member abstaining) to contribute \$100 toward the funding of the legal services.

Owners of the Island's Northtown buildings (Island House, Westview, Eastwood, and Rivercross) make a contribution to the Public Safety budget, which is the security arm of the Roosevelt

See **Eastwood**, page 6

Westview Residents Turn Out to Be Heard at DHCR Rent Hearing

by Robert Laux-Bachand

Westview residents, still smarting over a ten percent increase in 1998, vowed to take a stronger stand in the current round of rent deliberations before the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal.

If that was the aim, Thursday's rent determination hearing can be counted as a success. Laurence-Marie Lacoste-Brodsky, one of the organizers of the Westview Task Force, tallied nearly 30 Westview residents who made the trek to the DHCR office in Lower Manhattan.

Eleven of them, beginning with Opher Pail, the leader of the Westview Task Force, made statements to the panel of State housing officials and top executives of the partnership and management company that own and operate the 361-unit apartment complex. Their comments were followed by applause. City Council member Gifford Miller made an appearance at the hearing on behalf of the tenants, and representatives of the Island's legislators, Senator Olga Mendez and Assemblymember Pete Grannis, also addressed the panel. The hearing was chaired by Elliot Ashrey, Assistant Director of DHCR's management bureau, who indicated that a decision on Westview's rent would be forthcoming in about two weeks, after internal agency discussions involving the agency's commissioner, Joseph B. Lynch. Under the State's Mitchell-Lama middle-income housing program, the agency serves as an advocate for the tenants.

Another hearing, involving Is-

See **Westview**, page 7

Briefly...

Island gardeners weary of the snow and longing for green can get a wintertime "fix" at Goldwater Hospital. Volunteers (including non-gardeners) are needed for the Horticultural Therapy program. Contact Swee Lian Yi at **318-4745** Monday through Friday, 9:00 to 3:00. (Not sure? Visitors are welcome.)

Speakers are needed for PS/IS 217's seventh annual **Career Day** Wednesday morning, March 28. Islanders and others who'd like to tell sixth- through eighth-graders about their occupations are asked to call Susan Cohen, Guidance Counselor, at **980-0294**, ext. 2422, or Mireille Neuprez, Learning Leader and Coordinator, at **759-6781**.

Islanders

Joan Matula at 90 – Slowing Down to the Pace of a 60-Year-Old

by Anusha Shrivastava

Feisty. Caring. Resourceful. Gentle. Conscientious. These are just some of the adjectives that people use to describe Joan Matula, who will turn 90 on February 19. "This is a woman to be reckoned with," said Patrick Stewart, who has known and worked with Joan for over a decade. "In every meeting with her, she makes some cogent remark that people pay attention to. If she has an opinion about something, she lets it be known. Truth be told, they don't make them like that anymore."

Born and raised in Greenwich Village, Joan was the youngest of fourteen children. Some of the older siblings had been born in Italy and had died. "I grew up with six others and was very spoiled," she said. "My mother ran a restaurant in Staten Island and my father just went along. My mother was the boss, the cook, everything. I had a happy childhood and went to school on Varick Street. I think my school was PS 38." In high school, Joan studied "a little bit of everything." Skipping college, she began work-

ing for the City of New York.

In 1947, Joan married Dominick Matula, whom she described as "a very handsome man but a poor provider." Dominick ran a barber shop in Manhattan. "We had a son two years after the marriage and, from then on, my son John became the focus of my existence," said Joan. "I raised him pretty much on my own and worked two jobs to send him to college. He became a private investigator," she said proudly.

Joan reeled off his phone number without blinking an eye, but could not tell where he lived. "It is a funny-sounding place," she said as she looked up her address-book. "Hmm, Nassau. Isn't that funny-sounding?"

Joan said her son encouraged her to try out new things. In order to get a job at Goldwater Hospital, she needed to show her proficiency in typing. John rented a typewriter for her and, at the age of 50, Joan learned how to type. "John was away in the army for a short while and I used to send him typewritten letters," recalled Joan. "His friends asked him if I was a businesswoman

and he replied 'No, she is learning to type.'

Anyway, I got the job at the hospital and that is how I got to know about Roosevelt Island. I worked at the hospital for over a decade and then retired at 65. That's when I moved to the Island. I was the first person to move into my building – 546."

Joan found a new vocation after her retirement from Goldwater Hospital. She busied herself in founding the Roosevelt Island Senior Association, RISA, using her culinary skills to full advantage in raising money for the program. "I held the first meeting for RISA in the Chapel in 1976. I organized and cooked for fund-raising brunches. I ran flea markets. I organized bingo games. I cooked over 300 frankfurters for sale. I ran a bakery. I ran a knitting class and sold the things people made. Oh, I did a lot," said Joan. That year she managed to raise \$2,604, a sum that became the first budget in 1977 when RISA was officially certified by the City's Department of Aging. "Joan was tremendous," said Helen Roht, a friend who

See **Matula**, page 2



Food, Fun & Crafts: Black History Month Celebration, Senior Center, Sat., Feb. 17

Letters

Brian E. Baker
Director of Leasing
Roosevelt Island Associates
Dear Mr. Baker:

My purpose in writing this letter is to inform management of Manhattan Park about the state of affairs at 10 River Road. My wife and I chose to make this place our home more than five years ago, and I am sure you can easily verify we have been ideal tenants. We are quiet, considerate of our neighbors’ right to a peaceful environment, and always prompt with our rent payment. In addition, the friendly way the building’s concierge tries to make our life here more pleasant is always rewarded with a nice tip around the holiday seasons. Unfortunately, we are not as happy with a choice made by you, the managers, that ignores our quality of life here.

Specifically, the decision to turn this building into a college dormitory is not only bad business, it also demonstrates that we are foolish to trust you to preserve the future living environment here. I am certain the influx of Marymount Manhattan students has already chased away other tenants like us who would have otherwise been long-term customers of Manhattan Park.

Last night, the students across the hall, in apartment 3P, decided it was time to throw a party. We watched our neighbor knock on their door and ask them to keep the noise down, only to have the door slammed in his face. Our complaints to the concierge led to several attempts to solve the problem. But the situation only deteriorated. Before the night was over, the party produced a measure of shouting, singing, and what even sounded like fighting in the hallways, that could rival Times Square on New Year’s Eve. Eventually, the concierge found someone to abruptly end the festivities.

After the party ended, we could not help but notice the sound of glass bottles being carried down the hallway. As we expected, the garbage closet on our floor was filled with empty beer bottles the next morning. We wonder who is liable for the blatantly illegal consumption of alcohol by minors, not to mention the possibility of other illegal drug use.

Our lease is set to expire, and the only reason we plan on extending it is because we understand management has recognized its mis-

To the Editor:

I think the people who deliver *The WIRE* to our doors all year deserve our sincerest thanks. Ron Schuppert, for one, has been absolutely perfect. I don’t know the others, so I must thank them anonymously.

Frances Salten

take, and does not plan on renewing the agreement with Marymount Manhattan College. However, we still must put up with this environment until May.

This brings me to my final complaint. Even during normal evenings, when our walls are not shaking to the beat of party music, we are reminded of the inconsiderate juveniles across the hall by the slamming of doors as they constantly come and go. In fact, doors throughout this building seem to be always slamming. It is easy to understand why. The doors have a flaw in their assembly.

The hinges are all spring loaded and, when they were installed, the springs were wound to maximum tension. As the doors are so heavy, simply opening them and letting go shakes the walls when they slam closed. We have easily remedied the problem with our door by installing a \$40 door closer purchased at Home Depot. The door closer provides tension, much like the spring-loaded hinges, until just before the door fully closes. Then the closer acts as a cushion to gently close the door.

To make the situation even worse for us, our neighbor’s door in 3P is warped, so if it is rapidly opened or closed it creates a horrendous grinding noise as it hangs on the door jamb. With this new group of students, the incessant grinding and slamming every evening has become unbearable. This, too, could be easily fixed by simply sanding down the multiple coatings of paint on the edge of the door and applying one coat, or completely replacing the door.

The brochure we received when we moved in calls this a luxury building. What a joke. I hope you recognize this opportunity to begin to restore our trust in you by attending to the door across the hall immediately, and finding a way to ensure the partying does not continue until May.

Marvin Bolt
cc: *The WIRE*

To the Editor:

The WIRE’s Southpoint idea (January 27 issue) of a United Nations National Park and Museum (the latter perhaps sitting in the footprint of the Renwick ruin) is monumentally (sorry about that) grand.

But hold on. Haven’t we summarily relegated poor Eleanor and Franklin to memory’s junk pile on this, their namesake Island? Surely Franklin is an all-time New York favorite son; surely Eleanor and the U.N. have a huge historical tie-in. So why not have a dual park at Southpoint – the Roosevelt-U.N. National Park – with separate and opposite engraved granite memorials commemorating each, as well as a large, beautiful, Roman-like fountain between, having center water going straight up with side-waters spraying outward and inward simultaneously?

How about a floating concert band shell on a barge in the East channel with nearby permanent snack bar and toilet facilities, plus all-weather permanent swivel seats bolted in place on Southpoint, so that they can serve as well for the annual fireworks event? What a great way to spend a summer evening! Tourists, anyone?

Barbara Potts

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to/from officials, and will consider publication on a *Name Withheld* basis, but the writer’s name, address, and telephone number must be provided. All letters subject to acceptance for publication. **Preferred methods of submission: PC-standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*, or by e-mail to nyc10044@rcn.com** (ASCII text preferred or use any wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files with macros). Alternatives: Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to (212) 755-2540. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered. We cannot take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.**

To the Editor:

On Sunday (February 4) in Eastwood Building 560 Main Street (at the rear of 580), the children of the tenant who lives in 560#478, were playing in the hallway. They were causing quite a nuisance to the point that I had to call Public Safety. I called Public Safety three times and let the phone ring for two minutes each time. The call was not answered.

The times were 4:06 p.m., 4:17 p.m., 6:21 p.m.

I would like to know why. Why weren’t we informed? What if there was an emergency with our seniors and disabled?

Byron Gaspard

Commissioner Joseph B. Lynch
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal
38-40 State Street
Albany, New York 12207

Dear Commissioner Lynch:

I am a car owner. I am concerned with [RIOC President] Robert Ryan’s plans to increase the parking rates for residents at Motorgate Garage. I spoke to him about my concerns and I am very unhappy with both his attitude and remarks.

When I first moved to Roosevelt Island almost 24 years ago, I chose to keep my car. There is no parking on Main Street and I understood that I must park in the garage. The rates at that time were reasonable. Since that time I have become more dependent upon my car for many reasons. It is not a luxury but a necessity. Mr. Ryan raised the rates within a very short time of his appointment to RIOC. I am no fool and I realize that Motorgate Garage is a cash cow. The garage is not losing money nor has it ever.

Mr. Ryan is again raising the rates, at a time when management is also going for a large increase in our rents. When will residents of this Island stop being victimized?

Mr. Ryan’s attitude is one of not caring about the residents. He told me I could get rid of my car if I couldn’t pay the increase. He told me how he got rid of his car. I am sure there are numerous stores within walking distance of his Manhattan apartment 24 hours a day. We do not have that luxury. He can take a bus or train whenever he needs to. Our train is in the bowels of the earth and many of us do not feel safe on it. No one ever knows if the elevators or escalators will be running. The Steinway bus does not run 24 hours a day and when it does it is at 45-minute intervals. The Tram, our safest and most reliable form of transportation, does not run 24 hours a day, either. How dare Mr. Ryan suggest I get rid of my car? *I do not* have the conveniences that he has in his neighborhood. I live on an island.

Every other borough in New York City provides street parking. If Mr. Ryan wants to raise the rates again, then let him provide street parking for those who need our cars. I complained about Jerry Blue and the damage he did to this neighborhood. Robert Ryan *is no better*.

I am praying that my concerns will not fall on deaf ears. Please order Mr. Ryan to leave the parking rates as they are. We really do not get very much for our money now but we have no option but to use Motorgate Garage.

Joan T. Christianson
cc: *The WIRE*, Robert Ryan,
RIOC Board of Directors

**Letters deadline for
Feb. 24 issue: Feb. 18**

Letters received after deadline will be considered on a space-available basis

PTA’s International Dinner Celebrates Island’s Diversity

PS/IS 217 has children from more than 50 countries – a microcosm of the Island’s celebrated diversity. That’s led to an annual PTA International Dinner, with this year’s edition to be held Tuesday evening at 6:00 at the school cafeteria.

Families are being asked to bring dishes representative of their native cuisines, and to provide the recipes for a cookbook the PTA plans to publish in the future.

All PS/IS 217 families have been invited to participate in the dinner, and a request has gone out for volunteers to help organize and work the event. Information is available from Erin Feely-Nahem, PTA President, at **339-0016** (home) or First Vice President Mosud Mannan, at **583-9149**.

Matula from page 1

worked as a volunteer at RISA for the first decade of its existence. “Some people complained that she was bossy, but she got things done.”

“Today, people don’t want to work,” said Joan. “There is a different breed who expects things to be done for them. I ran the lunch program for 220 seniors and worked as a volunteer. Now, people want to be paid for the job. I washed the uniforms of the Little League group. I doubt anyone would do that now. People should try to be more active. That is the reason why I like young people. This used to be a joke at the Trellis when I was asked what I would like to have. I would go in and order two men, 35 years old each,” said Joan with a laugh.

Her own activities have been curtailed in the past few years and, clearly, she misses her freedom. “I can’t go out like I used to. I had a car that I drove until five years ago. My son forced me to stop. He said there were too many crazy people on the road. It broke my heart. Now, I read a lot. I love mysteries. I watch television. I like *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* I also watch a lot of movies. One advantage of my age is that the video store has given me free membership.”

John bought her a computer last year and she was nonplussed, never having used one before. “John said I should fool around with it and I actually managed to learn how to e-mail. I bought books and taught myself, so now I exchange e-mails with my three grandchildren and RISA friends.”

Joan’s bag of memories contains her first trip on the Tram, a big party when the cherry trees were put in the Cherry Tree Row and the fact that there was only one pupil at the public school. “They had to call a teacher just to teach that one student,” said Joan. “Things were different back then and I wish the Island had not changed so much. We didn’t have much but we enjoyed what we had. It was much safer in the old days. Kids were mischievous, but they didn’t do drugs and beat anyone up. I remember that some boys would ring my doorbell and run away. Once, I was cooking spaghetti and, when the doorbell rang, I saw a boy run away. I chased him down the hallway with my pitchfork. Years later, a handsome young man came to me and said hello. I asked him if I knew him and he said, ‘Yes, you chased me with a pitchfork.’ I asked him if he had become a good boy since then and he said he had.”

Joan has touched the lives of all the people she has interacted with in her years on the Island. Dolores Green, the President of RISA, says, “Joan’s energy at her age is what impresses me most. She treats RISA as her family and feels for them. All of us hope to reach 90 and be as good as Joan at that age.” Ruth Kolins, a friend for the past 24 years, said that Joan is very reliable. “When she starts a project, she puts her heart and soul into it. She is still willing to do the best for the community,” said Ruth. “She is a remarkable woman and a great lover of life. She is a wonderful dancer and will do a samba for you if you don’t watch out,” said Helen. “She plans well and can cook a lasagna better than anyone else in the world.”

Joan admits that she is not as active in planning events anymore. “I began to feel tired at 89,” she said. But she is planning for her 90th birthday party. “I already have a list of 100 people. I am finding it difficult to exclude anyone because all the people I know here are part of my family. When I walk on the street, I know everyone. I thought I would be strict and invite just those people I know.

“But then I know everyone,” said Joan with a chuckle.



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- Managing Editor – Dick Lutz
Chief Feature Writer – Anusha Shrivastava
Reporters – Francine Lange, Robert Laux-Bachand
Ombudsman – Armand Schwab – **838-3184**
Chief Proofreader – Kay Thompson
Proofreaders – Linda Heimer, Frances Salten
Chief Photographer – Margery Rubin
Photographers – Vicki Feinmel, Ronnie Stuart
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Weekends East

by Judith Berdy

Where can you go east of Roosevelt Island?

It's easy now that the **F** train stops on the Island on weekends. But check the schedule to be sure it is running on any particular weekend before using these instructions. ***This weekend***, for example, the R train will serve Roosevelt Island. Simply take the R to Roosevelt Avenue, then change for the F on the same platform.

Not all these routes are fast, but they are cheap. You avoid a trip into Manhattan to transfer. You get to see new sights and neighborhoods. You avoid those car service trips that cost so much for such short trips.

Home Depot • Toys R Us • Pergament

Take the **F** to Roosevelt Avenue. Cross over to the Manhattan bound platform. Take The **R** local train to Northern Blvd. (second stop). Exit at front of train.

Home Depot is two blocks, Pergament and Toys R Us are four blocks from the station.

Information: www.homedepot.com or 718-278-0931.

Queens Center Mall

Take the **F** to Roosevelt Avenue (the first stop after 21st St./Queensbridge) and change for the **R** local across the platform. Take the local to Woodhaven Blvd.

Upstairs is the Mall containing an array of Department and specialty shops.

Info: www.shopqueenscenter.com or 718-592-3900.

The Library

If you'd like to know about Queens, Brooklyn, Nassau and Suffolk Counties' histories, take the **F** to the 168th Street stop. Four blocks from the station is the Jamaica branch of the Queensborough Public Library. It has an excellent local History section with lots of information about our eastern-neighbor counties.

Info: www.queenslibrary.org or 718-990-0770.

Queens Museum • Queens Zoo • Hall of Science

Take the **F** into Queens. At Roosevelt Avenue, transfer to the **7** train. Get off at 111th Street for all these sites.

Info: www.queensmuseum.org or 718-592-9700; <http://wcs.org/home/zoos/queenswildlifecenter> or 718-271-1500; www.nyhallsci.org/vi-hour-directions.html or 718-699-0005.

LaGuardia Airport

Take the **F** train to Roosevelt Avenue, then the **Q33** bus directly to the airport (about 25 minutes).

Info: www.panynj.gov/aviation/ligtsfram.htm or 718-335-1000.

Kennedy Airport

Take the **F** to Kew Gardens station. Outside take the **Q10** bus directly to the airport terminals.

Info: www.panynj.gov/aviation/jfkpubtransframe.html or 718-995-4700.

COMING UP

Compiled by Alain Pinset – phone and fax 208-2907
e-mail alpinset@cs.com

Sat., Feb. 10, 3:00 p.m., Kaffee-Klatsch Series, Judith Berdy, President, Roosevelt Island Historical Society, 755-7285 for information.

Tues., Feb. 13, 6:00 p.m., PTA International Dinner, PS/IS 217 cafeteria, celebrating the diversity of the school. Information: Erin Feely-Nahem, 339-0016 (evenings) or 718-443-3928 (days).

Thur., Feb. 15, 6:00 p.m., RIOC Board of Directors meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Open public session expected to resume at about 7:00 p.m., following a closed executive session, which starts at 6:00. Agenda includes **Octagon Apartments** and **Public Purpose Funds Advisory Committee**. A *“town hall” forum will follow adjournment of the Board meeting.*

Sat., Feb. 17, 10:00-4:00, Black History Celebration, sponsored by Housing Management and the Roosevelt Island Seniors Association, Senior Center.

Sat., Feb. 17, 3:00 p.m., Kaffee-Klatsch Series, Matthew Katz, President, Roosevelt Island Residents' Association (RIRA), 755-7285 for information.

Wed., Feb. 21, 7:00 p.m., International Mother Language Day observance: Multi-lingual poetry recitations, with translations. Information: 583-9149.

Sat., Feb. 24, next issue of The Main Street WIRE. Deadlines: Advertising in the paper, Fri., Feb. 16; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Feb. 19; materials due Thur., Feb. 22. **Future issues:** Mar. 10, 24; Apr. 7, 21; May 5, 19; June 2, 30; Aug. 4, then every two weeks starting early in September. **Phone/fax** for news, 826-9055/755-2540; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, 751-8214/755-2540; phone/fax to list your organization's Island events here (no charge), 208-2907, or e-mail alpinset@cs.com.

Sat., Feb. 24, 3:00 p.m., Kaffee-Klatsch Series, Dolores Green, President, Roosevelt Island Seniors Association, 755-7285 for information.

Mon., Feb. 26, 7:30 p.m., Historical Society meeting, Memories of Blackwell House, with Geniza Madden, resident of Blackwell House 1951-56.

Tue., Feb. 27, 7:30 p.m., Eastwood Building Committee meeting, Senior Center.

Sat., Mar. 3, 3:00 p.m., Kaffee-Klatsch Series, to be announced, 755-7285 for information.

Sat., Mar. 3, 8:00-midnight, RIRA's Swingin' Soiree Fun'Raiser, Manhattan Park Theater Club. \$10 admission (seniors, disabled, \$8).

Wed., Mar. 7, 8:00 p.m., RIRA Common Council meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Thur., Mar. 8, 9:30 a.m., RIOC Board of Directors meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. (Executive session normally starts at 9:30, followed by open meeting, starting 10:30 or 11:00.)

Sat., Mar. 10, 3:00 p.m., Kaffee-Klatsch Series, Byron Gaspard, Vice President, RIRA, 755-7285 for information.

There is no charge for listing Island events here. E-mail information to alpinset@cs.com or fax/call 208-2907.

Island's Library Gets New Chief

by Anusha Shrivastava

Clearly excited about her new assignment as the librarian of the New York Public Library's branch on Roosevelt Island, Laura Sutherland calls to mind a breath of fresh air – she is full of promise and passion.



“I want everyone to share my love of books,” said the sometimes-bespectacled 28-year-old. “I hated returning library books when I was a child myself because I wanted to keep all of them. Thankfully, I have not encountered another child like me since I became a librarian.”

A children's librarian, Laura, 28, moved to New York from London, Ontario, four years ago. After graduating from the University of Western Ontario with a specialization in library science, she worked in the children's room at the Staten Island Branch for two years. At the Webster Branch on the East side, Laura chose to work in the children's section and then transferred to the St. Agnes Branch on the West side.

Laura decided to come to Roosevelt Island because of the opportunities here. “I could see that I could work with the children in the community. I had worked on CLASP, an outreach program aimed at connecting libraries with schools, and I plan to apply that experience here,” said Laura.

Special programs for toddlers and preschoolers are in the works. “We'll have interactive book readings and rhyme sessions for the young ones. The idea is to foster a love of learning and get them to love being in the library,” she said. She is restarting the book discussion group at the library, with the first one scheduled for February 28. Electronic resources are to be upgraded so that more people can access them free from home. “The aim is to ensure that everybody can use the material we have and the use goes up,” said Laura. “It never hurts to read and there is so much out there. No one should apologize for their taste. They should just read.”

How does she plan to solve the discipline problem at the library that some patrons complain about? “Being a youth librarian, I think I am more tolerant than other librarians, but I will make it clear to the young adults that certain behavior is acceptable at the library while rowdy behavior is not. I love having kids in the library, but behavior that disturbs others will have to be dealt with swiftly.”

Public Safety Blotter

appears this issue on

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I hate February. I'm writing my column on the Monday before you're reading it, and today is typical of this winter; snow, rain and sleet. My thoughts are on spring training and the day Mets tickets go on sale. I'm also thinking about opening day of Roosevelt Island Little League and the vista of white blossoms when Cherry Tree Walk is in bloom. We all do what we need to get through winter, and this works for me.

By the time you read this I will have met with Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields. Some of you know that her primary aide to constituent groups, Barbara Allen, worked for our City Councilmember, Gifford Miller, for several years. Barbara is up to speed on Island issues, and I expect that President Fields is as well. I intend to discuss with her some of our complaints regarding City services. Perhaps the BP's office can help us with getting our street lights fixed and with getting more NYPD patrols on the Island. And then, there's our perennial problem, no MetroCard on the tram. As we often say, this is not rocket science, and there must be a solution if people of good will put their heads together.

Two weeks ago, a small group of Islanders, representing RIRA, the Maple Tree Group and RIRSD, the primary litigants in the Southtown suit, met at our State Senator's office with several representatives of Governor George Pataki. Sen. Mendez had arranged the meeting to include the “2nd Floor,” that is, the executive branch, in our efforts to achieve consensus on the legislation that will replace the appointed RIOC Board with an elected one and an appointed RIOC president with a professional, experienced community manager. Each of the players, Assemblymember, Senator and Governor, has stated a belief that the time for elected, representative government for Roosevelt Island has come. However, each has demands of the other two as prerequisites to action. We are working to break the destructive gridlock that could sabotage our efforts for another legislative session and provide each of them with the assurances needed to start moving forward on our behalf. We hope that politics, ego and personal animosities will take a back seat to serving this constituency and doing what is right.

When you read this, the February Common Council meeting will be history, and something extraordinary will have occurred. I've proposed and convened a “constitutional convention,” if you will, to examine the RIRA Constitution and propose changes. Now, I think our Constitution is an excellent document, but it was last brought up to date in December 1991. Even the U.S. Constitution needs sprucing up now and again. The nation's Founders neglected to include guarantees of the rights of free speech and religion, freedom from self-incrimination and the enfranchisement of all Americans the first time around in 1789. They experimented with prohibiting alcoholic beverages in 1919, and then thought better of it in 1933. And with the twenty-second Amendment in 1951 they limited the presidency to two terms. I think this is an exercise that we might consider conducting on a regular basis, perhaps every five years or seven years or ten years. The provisions for amending our Constitution are complicated and time-consuming, as they should be, and therefore can't be undertaken lightly or frivolously.

And keep in mind, the Roosevelt Island community is an intrinsic part of the process. After the Common Council has approved various amendments with a two-thirds majority vote, we must convene a Town Meeting within thirty days. A quorum of residents, defined as 100 individuals living in residential housing, must give a simple majority to each of the changes proposed by the Common Council. If we fail to convene a quorum, then the responsibility reverts to the Common Council. But wouldn't it be a shame not to take advantage of this opportunity to continue the work of the Founding Fathers and Mothers of our community? We have so few chances to make a difference here, and this Constitution provides the basic rules that your Residents Association must abide by.

We will be working to identify the items in need of change and to construct the language that will make the RIRA Constitution less ambiguous, more responsive to present needs and a more efficient tool with which to conduct our business. I hope you will participate and will encourage your children to participate. Come make a difference.

The RIRA Column



Matthew Katz
Residents Association President

Senior Center

Monday

10:00, **Blood Pressure Screening**

12:45, **Arts & Crafts** (RIDA)

Tuesday

10:00, **Jazzercise**

1:00, **Games** (RISA)

Wednesday

9:15, **Stay Well** (stretch)

10:00, **English as 2nd Lang.**

7:00, **Glee Club** Choral Group (except Feb. 14)

Thursday

10:00, **Tai Chi**

10:30, **Creative Arts**

12:30, **Movie**

7:00, **Dance Class**

Friday

9:00, **Citizenship**

10:00, **English as 2nd Lang.**

7:30, **Bingo** (RISA)

Special Events

Mon., Feb. 12, 11-1,

MetroCard Bus

Mon., Feb. 12, 11:30,

Sally Jessy Raphael Show

Wed., Feb. 14, 7:00,

Valentine's Party

Sat., Feb. 17, 10:00 a.m. on,

Black History Celebration

Wed., Feb. 21,

Atlantic City (RISA)

Thur., Feb. 22, VNS

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February 28

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7:00 p.m.	Mass and Distribution of Ashes

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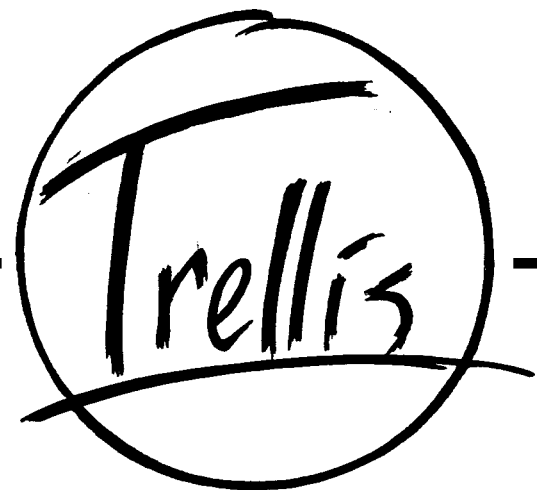
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Parking from page 1

“People are always upset when there’s a raise because they don’t know what’s being done with the money.”

Another monthly customer, pediatrician Katherine Grimm, said, “I’m not happy” about the increase, but

Rate change March 1	Current	New
Island residents	170	180
Non-residents	150	155
Reserved parking	225	235
Rooftop parking	104	114
Motorcycles	117	127

added, “If expenses went up, then it’s fair.” She listed some possible expenses she felt might justify a rate increase: capital improvements, utility rate increases or an increase in liability insurance for Motorgate.

When asked the reason for the increase, Jerry Morecraft, Director of Management Accounting at Central Parking, said, “I prefer not to comment on that,” and referred the question to RIOC.

At RIOC, Ryan said, “It was a business decision on the part of Central after consulting with us.” He explained that the company told him that the Motorgate rates did not compare with those at their other facilities in the city so it was time to raise Motorgate fees. Ryan agreed and approved the new rates. “They’re

RIRA Common Council also...

In other activity Wednesday night, the RIRA Common Council...

- Approved a \$500 working budget for the organization’s March 3 “Fun’Raiser,” an evening dance and party to be held at the Manhattan Park Theater Club. (Tickets are \$10, \$8 for seniors and disabled; for information, call Vicki Feinmel at 223-1108.)

- Voted to support a PTA bid asking RIOC Island Public Purpose Funds to fund musical instruments and uniforms for a PS/IS 217 music program, which will include a band.

- Added Councilor Frank Farance to its Legal Action Committee. RIRA is appealing the July 5 rejection of its attempt to join, as an intervenor, the case brought against the current Southtown plan by Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD) and Robert Chira’s Alternative Southtown Design Committee (ASDC). Appeals in the Southtown cases are expected to be filed before month’s end, with arguments likely to be heard in May.

- Heard a Southtown trees statistic from Margie Smith of the RIRSD steering committee. Quoting an expert source, she said that of 471 trees on the Southtown site, three-quarters (369) are to be cut down; many of those are large-girth mature trees. The developers, Hudson/Related, have said they intend to plant some 450 trees on the site.

- Received the resignations, from the Council, of Sigrid Martin of Manhattan Park, who is moving off-Island in response to rent increases there; Tom Brown of Eastwood; and Ken Diebner of Westview. The Brown and Diebner spots will be taken by alternates Ruth Kolins and Patricia Ricketts. The Martin seat and other seats are open at Manhattan Park, which didn’t field a full roster of candidates in November’s election. (Residents interested in the posts can get more information by calling RIRA President Matthew Katz at 935-7534, or by e-mail at MatthewKatz@rcn.com.)

running a business,” he said.

Morecraft emphasized that Central Parking had complied with the requirement to advise the Department of Consumer Affairs 60 days

prior to the increase. He added that the company has posted signs at Motorgate, distributed fliers, and has included the information in tenants’ February bill.

Eastwood from page 1

Island Operating Corporation. EBC has waged a campaign to get more frequent vertical patrols in Eastwood, where, residents say, there are frequent disturbances in the halls, drug dealing, and other anti-social behavior.

Rent determination hearings for Eastwood have not yet been scheduled.

Meanwhile, a controversy has arisen within Eastwood as to whether Public Safety performance is a relevant issue in rent determination. Someone recently circulation a flier anonymously, reading in its entirety:

“Dear Neighbors
“Do not be confused by the leaflet that tries to tie in Public Safety with rent.

“Mr. Ron Vass has a *personal* grievance that should not interfere with so serious a case as our rents.”

The flier is signed “Concerned Residents of Eastwood,” without further identification.

Asked about the matter, Vass told *The WIRE*, “I have no personal grievance with Public Safety. My grievance is on behalf of our building and community, because we are paying for a service we are not getting.” Vass points out that “Public Safety is definitely included in our rents, which pay 50% of the cost of the service.” Eastwood is the heaviest contributor, Vass added, citing a figure of \$1,047 per day.

Vass invited the unknown “Concerned Residents of Eastwood” to speak out at the next EBC meeting 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, February 27, at the Senior Center.

RIRA President Matthew Katz commented, after the Common Council vote, “I thought Ron Vass made a strong appeal for Common Council support. Few of us on Roosevelt Island feel that Public Safety has complied with their contract with the housing companies, especially in terms of their mandate for internal, vertical patrols.”

He continued, “It’s appropriate that this initiative come from the Eastwood Building Committee, given that Eastwood provides almost 50% of the revenues that support Public Safety. I was proud of the Common Council’s vote to support that initiative verbally and with a cash contribution.”

Nights



Trains will detour through 63rd St. Tunnel.

February 5 to 16
10PM to 5:30AM every night

- F trains will detour between Roosevelt Ave. and 47th-50th Sts. stopping at the 21st St.-Queensbridge, Roosevelt Island, Lexington Ave.-63rd St., and 57th St.-6th Ave. stations.
- E trains will run as usual.
- For Manhattan-bound service **to** the Queens Plaza, 23rd St.-Ely Ave., Lexington Ave.-53rd St., and Fifth Ave. stations, take the E train.
- To continue downtown **from** these stations, take the E to 7th Ave. and transfer to a downtown D. Then take the D to 47th-50th Sts. station, where downtown F service is available.
- For Queens-bound service **to** the Fifth Ave., Lexington Ave.-53rd St., 23rd St.-Ely Ave., and Queens Plaza stations, take the F to West 4th St. and transfer to the Queens-bound E. Or, take the F to 47th-50th Sts. and transfer to an uptown D to 7th Ave. where you can transfer to the E.
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SPORTSWIRE

BASKETBALL The standings in the RI Youth Program’s Winter Basketball League after four weeks are:

Junior Division (12-14)		Senior Division (15-17)	
NY Heat	4 - 0	Mavericks	3 - 1
Terminators	3 - 1	Holla	2 - 2
Giants	1 - 3	Da Kingz	2 - 2
Knicks	0 - 4	Blazers	0 - 2

In the **Junior Division**, the NY Heat remained undefeated and in sole possession of first place, having defeated the Terminators in week 3 action by a 45-29 score. In that game, Sika Franco led the scoring with 18 points, while Paul Brown added 10 and Tyrell Anderson 8 points for the victorious NY Heat. Deshawn Pearson was high scorer for the Terminators with 12 points. In other action from week 3, the Giants defeated the Knicks 50-23. Anthony Simmons led the scoring with 22 points, while Jose Marte and John McNeil added 10 points each for the Giants. Steve Morgan and Mohamed Camara led the Knicks with 8 points each. In week 4, the NY Heat defeated the Knicks 64-26 and the Terminators defeated the Giants 47-44. Sika Franco again led the NY Heat with 14 points, but had lots of help from Fode Bah (12 points) and Fabian Williams (10 points). Anthony Santiago was high scorer for the Knicks with 12 points. In the closest game of week 4, the Terminators prevailed by three points, led by Deshawn Pearson with 18 points, Lamar Burrows with 17 points and Pedro Valerio with 12 points. Jose Marte was high scorer for the Giants with 14 points, while Kristy Chavez and Ahmadu Fall added 10 points each.

In the **Senior Divison**, the Holla defeated the Mavericks 61-58 in week 3 action to tie them for first place, but the Mavericks regained first place in week 4 with a 101-54 victory over the Blazers while the Holla were upended by Da Kingz by a 71-47 score. The Holla victory over the Mavericks in week 3 was a tough, tightly-fought contest that was not decided until the last minute, when Blas Loor and Marcus Moore each hit a pair of clutch free-throws to hold off the surging Mavericks. Marcus Moore was high scorer for the Holla with 30 points, while Blas Loor added 9 and Chris Coleman 8 points. For the Mavericks, Charles McCoy poured in a season high 37 points and Kendrick Gibson added 10 points. In other action from week 3, Da Kingz defeated the Blazers by a 71-60 score. Wayne Neal led the scoring for Da Kingz with 27 points and received strong support from Alex Sheppard (18 points), Bobby Blanco (16 points), and Mark Comrie (8 points). For the Blazers, Steven Paredes, Vernon Jonas, Omar Moore, Jason Burnette, and Anthony Delgado all scored in double figures, led by Steven Paredes’ 15 points. In Da Kingz victory over the Holla in week 4, Alex Sheppard led all scorers with 27 points, while Marcus Moore with 19 points and Devin Epps with 15 points led the Holla scoring. In the Mavericks week 4 victory over the Blazers, the Mavericks became the first team to break the 100-point barrier in a league game. Charles McCoy led the scoring for the Mavericks with 25 points, while Marcus Harrison added 23 points, and Robert Taveres and Jonathan Taveres added 14 points each. For the Blazers, Steven Paredes was the high scorer with 24 points and Anthony Delgado added 18 points.

BASEBALL The Youth Program is accepting registrations for its Little League baseball program (ages 6-13) through February 24. Registration forms are available at the Youth Center at 506 Main Street. The baseball season will run from April 7 through June 16.

Shops from page 1

“I bring stuff every morning. I buy fish on demand and have even brought shark for customers who have asked for it,” said the newcomer. Though it seems as if he is selling more produce than fish, Ahn claims he has the same volume of fish as the previous owner.

The volume of customers has been growing steadily and, if all goes well, James says he plans to move next year into the vacant space once occupied by Bigelow Pharmacy.

Card ’n Gift

It took Mohammed Ali Khan, 46, more than five years to make a success of running the Card ’n Gift store on Roosevelt Island. It took him less than six months to realize that his changed business strategy is not as successful as he had hoped it would be. Khan has been selling extension cords, shoe polish, steel mixing bowls, ceramic soup bowls, photo frames, trays, stationery items and candles for less than a dollar since Christmas last year. “There isn’t enough margin in the business. I get barely ten cents on every item sold,” said Khan.

“After having worked 15 hours a day, seven days a week, for 13 years, I am now ready to give the business one more year to prove that this has been worth it. I am in

debt, I am behind in paying rent and I am losing hope,” said Khan. He hopes that the new Southtown development will bring a new clientele. If not, he will have to consider closing shop. “I would hate to leave but I have no option. My lease is up for renewal and, unless I cough up past dues, I will not be able to sign it.”

In better days, Khan had a 50% margin on every card he sold. He sold 700 newspapers a day, making a 20% profit on the sales. Cigarette and candy sales were high and his gift items sold at a profit. Today, he has been reduced to selling his cards at half-price because Gristede’s offers a wider selection. Newspaper sales are down to 300 a day. He has been peddling 99-cent goods, hoping more people will stop by, but the volume of business is not high enough to sustain rent payment – a hefty \$3,500 a month.

The downward spiral began way back in 1989 when he was forced to remove video game machines from his store. Some children got into a big fight and he decided to avoid discipline problems by taking the machines out. Soon after, the Youth Center brought in free machines.

In 1990, the bus stop location was changed. “Moving the stop away from here caused massive disruption in my business,” said Khan. When the bus stop was in front

of his store, he claims he did brisk business, selling newspapers, cigarettes and candy to batches of 30 to 40 people waiting for the bus. Now, hardly anyone stops by in the mornings. They go directly to the subway stop, where someone else is selling newspapers. Khan said he complained to the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation that the new vendor did not possess a license to sell newspapers at the subway stop, but he was told it was MTA property. When he talked to MTA officials, they said it was RIOCI’s property. Having wasted time and effort, Khan gave up.

The final straw was the conversion of Sloan’s into the Gristede’s megastore. “They are big fish and, though I didn’t get swallowed up like Bigelow’s, I got badly hit,” said Khan. Unlike Sloan’s, Gristede’s sells cigarettes by the pack. It sells cards, newspapers, magazines and candy – plus everything else. “No one wants to walk down to my store anymore. They just go to Gristede’s and buy everything there,” said Khan.

Those who do make the effort to go to Khan’s store are pleasantly surprised. Tracy Thomas, who stops by every once in a while, said she loves the new merchandise. “Everything is very cheap. If I require anything for my household, I always check to see if it is available at the 99-cent store. I got a fan-



Ali Khan is holding fast, hoping for better days ahead.

tastic set of knives and lots of stuff for my child – blocks, paints, play-dough and paper,” said Tracy.

Faithful customers go into Khan’s shop partly because they like him. “Nice people work here and I have good conversations with them,” said Al “Grandpa Munster” Lewis. “Ali says hello to me and makes me feel nice,” said Iris Adams, who still buys cards at his store. “Ali is a gentleman and I like to come here,” said Louise Nardin, who has been a customer ever since the store opened.

The feeling is reciprocated. Khan says he thinks of everyone around him as his family, adding, “I have been here for so long that it would break my heart to leave.”

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Westview Rent Hearing from page 1

land House, which has 400 apartments, was scheduled for later in the day, after *WIRE* deadlines.

At this point, the three sides in the Westview rent equation – it is not, as the owner pointed out, an adversarial proceeding – are poles apart.

Charles A. Lucido, President of Westview Houses Inc., and Managing General Partner of North Town Phase III Associates, signed an application on Aug. 31 for a 31% rent increase for Westview. After examining the proposed budget, DHCR countered with a proposal for an increase of about 6.9%. And at the hearing Thursday, Jeffrey Resnick, an accountant who has had great success in beating down previous rent-increase proposals for Island House and Eastwood, presented a case for an actual rent decrease, asserting that Westview could generate a surplus over the next two years.

So what will it be: a rent increase of \$93 a room, or \$20, or nothing? Under the Mitchell-Lama system, rental income is supposed to be based on housing company expenses. At no point during the proceedings Thursday, or in informal questioning afterward, did anyone acknowledge that the publicly-available figures have already been modified, either in negotiations or by the facts of a rapidly-changing energy market.

As Lucido noted, Westview’s electricity costs have tripled from January 2000 to January 2001, and these costs are not reflected in DHCR’s proposal of a \$20.70 per-room rent increase. Can the State order him, in effect, to lose money?

No, Lucido replied, the only alternative is to cut expenses.

In that respect, the owner and tenants are in agreement. Resnick said efficiencies could start with Westview’s pool. He said the tenants felt that it was unfair that they had to subsidize community use of Westview’s pool and that either increased fees for the pool or shutting it down would produce a swing of about \$200,000 over the budget period. Five percent of the building’s utility costs, he said in a report submitted to the DHCR, should be allocated to pool expense.

Another major expense cited by Resnick, Pail and other Westview spokespersons and their supporters was the cost of roofing, \$700,000, which they characterized as a “front-loaded” charge in the budget that translates into a permanent rent increase, rather than an expense that ought to be spread out over the duration of the roof’s lifetime, 20 years.

The session produced some disconnections. Aaron Silberman of Jerome Belson & Associates, the parent of Roosevelt Island Housing Management Corporation, said that previous rent decisions had undercut the company’s efforts to maintain the building, and thus a higher level of spending is needed now. “Sooner or later it catches up,” he said. He noted that he had been “lucky” to negotiate cheaper prices for natural gas on contracts in the past, but that no such savings were available now.

One of the tenant speakers, on the other hand, Rebecca Ocampo, argued that “we still are owed a reduction on our 10 percent” because the company had failed to deliver capital improvements in line with the previous rent increase.

Pail and other tenant representatives asserted that the company had failed to perform an energy audit to reduce spending on electricity. Silberman responded that the company had been working since last October with NYSERDA (the New York State Energy Resource Development Authority) to cut energy costs.

Lucido said, “When we did our budget two years ago, we did not anticipate our utilities going up to the extent they have gone up.” He brought up the problem of electricity being included in the rent and said, “It would be fairer to all of you to have separate meters.”

He also asserted that the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, headquartered in Westview, was not paying its fair share of the building’s expenses in commercial rent. And he expressed gratitude to everyone who showed up and said he appreciated their comments.

Several tenants expressed the desire to hold down rents at all costs, given the economic pressure on residents who are living on fixed incomes. Others, however, were more concerned with problems of maintenance, such as poor ventilation and heating, shoddy repairs and painting, water leakage, and lack of insulation.

The DHCR staff members, led by Ashrey, took down everyone’s name and apartment number.

Alex Marshall, a 17-year resident, delivered what could be considered a coda to the proceedings, as an addendum to a complaint about his heating and air conditioning system. “The Rivercross building, the co-op building, was also hit with the same sort of energy costs, but that building is properly maintained,” Marshall said. “But Westview has been run, all the years I’ve been there, on the cheap, and if you run the building on the cheap, then eventually the building is going to fall apart. You’re in business, Mr. Lucido, presumably you made an investment in order to get back something out of it, but surely, you can’t manage this building, it seems, in a sensible way. Perhaps the answer is to give it to us. You can pay the underlying mortgage, but you know, the fact is, the Rivercross building was built with the same underlying standards and it’s not falling apart, and ours is, because it hasn’t been properly run over the years.”

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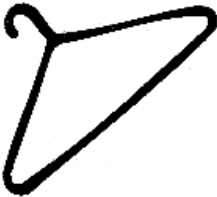
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Monday & Thursday • 9 a.m. -12 noon
Tuesday • 12:30 - 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday & Friday • 1:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Coverage provided at all times, when office is closed,
by Dr. Grimm or by her group, Uptown Pediatrics.
We provide comprehensive health care to children and adolescents.
Dr. Grimm is also qualified to evaluate and treat allergy and asthma in adults.



A Friendly Place for Children to open their first account and start learning how to manage their finances

FEATURES:
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NO Monthly Service Charges
NO Maintenance Fees

BENEFITS:
Dividends paid on balances of \$25 or more
Deposit funds in person, by mail, direct deposit or payroll deduction
Access funds by mail, telephone (MON-TALK), or in person
Convenient access to funds and account information 24 hours a day

We recommend that a parent or guardian become joint owners with children under 18.
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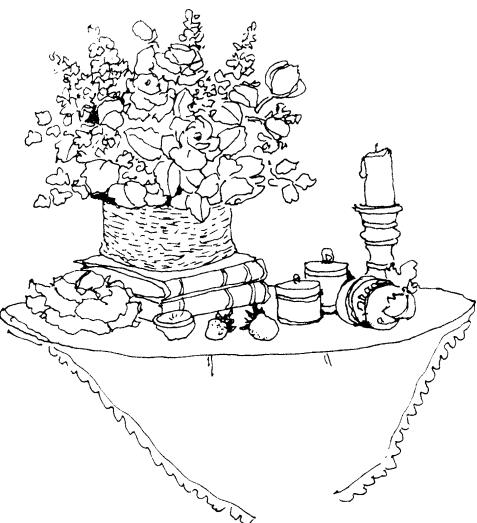
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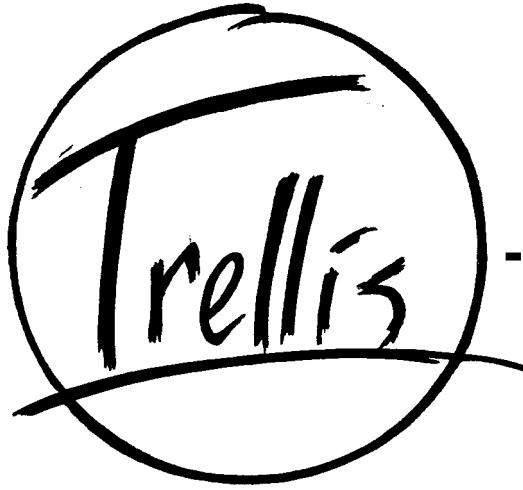
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