

Next issue:
Sat., Jan. 10, 2004

The Main Street **WIRE**TM

Roosevelt Island’s Independent Community Newspaper

Between-issues bulletins by e-mail (Send “Add Me” to WIRE@nyc.rr.com)



The Snow, the Spirit, the Season The tree outside Blackwell House carries the traditional decorations of the season. RIOC President Herbert E. Berman scheduled a tree-lighting ceremony for yesterday (Friday, December 12) at 6:00, after *WIRE* deadlines.

Island House-Westview Owner Seeks New Partner

The controlling owner of Island House and Westview is looking for a new partner. “A lot of the owners are senior citizens like me, so we’re looking to get things moving with people who are younger and more energetic,” said Charles Lucido late last week when asked if either building had been sold. “I have been seeking not so much to sell as to find a partner,” he said.

Both buildings are now eligible to be taken out of the Mitchell-Lama system. While their tenants have expressed interest in buying, State law says the owner may not negotiate directly with them until an offering plan is on file with the State Attorney General. But the owner is free to work out terms with a non-resident buyer.

In the case of Roosevelt Island, extending the ground lease with RIOC is also an issue. The longer the term of the ground lease, the easier it is to get a private mortgage.

Lucido told *The WIRE* that he had ruled out further discussion of leasing the former Day Nursery space to the Roosevelt Island Youth Program because he didn’t want to encumber the building in a way that might reduce its attractiveness to a new investor. (Charlie de Fino says the Youth Program, which he directs, will ex-

pand and enhance its present quarters at the south end of Eastwood.)

Lucido said, “Appropriate channels will be used [to make an announcement] when it is, and if it is, concluded. It’s not something that I would discuss with the press.” He gave no indication of how close he may be to locating a new partner, but said, “At this stage in my life I don’t see myself being quite as active as a general partner should be. I think it’s important that new and younger talent be brought in.”

Group Seeks Input on PSD

A newly-reconstituted RIOC Public Safety Advisory Committee headed by RIOC Board member H. Patrick Stewart is seeking community input, according to Byron Gaspard, who represents Eastwood on the committee along with Nellie Velez.

The committee is asking for resident responses to these questions, with factual backup wherever possible:

- What’s right with the Public Safety Department (PSD)?
- What’s wrong with the Public Safety Department?
- What problems do you see with PSD?
- What opportunities does PSD have to improve in the future?
- What is Public Safety not doing now, but could or should be doing?

Gaspard is asking that residents interested in commenting email him at bmgaspard@aol.com, or send comments to 540 Main Street, mailbox #148, NYC10044.

Other members of the committee include: Sari Dickson (RIOC), Matthew Katz (RIRA President), Damon LaScot (Westview), Kitty Berman (Island House), Russ DiBello (Manhattan Park), and Ron Schuppert (Rivercross).

remained on leave in a non-Civil Service position.

But a press representative of the State Civil Service Commission said that the Commission routinely grants waivers when requested, suggesting that if Berman had wanted Siconolfi to stay and Siconolfi had wanted to stay, preserving Siconolfi’s Civil Service status would not be an obstacle.



The representative said that no renewal of Siconolfi’s waiver, which expired December 1, was requested.

In a second request to Berman for comment, *The WIRE* noted that Melia had responded to the first: “I sense, from that, that any comments you have to make about his service here will be either absent or limited to your earlier statements [made in a November open house See **Siconolfi**, page 9

Building a Bridge – to a Knowledge of Engineering

by Dick Lutz

It’s a cardboard affair, made mostly of those triangular FedEx tubes that transport rolled-up architectural drawings from this place to that. Glued together, they form a bridge – one strong enough to hold a third of a class of 6th-to-8th graders.

But the structure built by Diana Jensen’s art class at PS 217 is also a bridge between art and engineering, between fun and learning, and between architecture and physics.

It’s also a bridge between generations. Consulting Engineer Robert Liss, who is 66, brought the idea to PS 217. Principal Sherry Gregory liked it. And one day, maybe one of Jensen’s students – who are in the 6th through 8th grades – will apply the principles being taught to a real-world bridge. That’s one of the objectives.

“We’re producing 40 percent fewer engineers than when I graduated in 1962,” Liss says. “These days we are importing engineers from Taiwan or India, but we’re no longer producing engineers here in the United States.” Asked why that might be, Liss ventures a theory: “I think it’s a matter of student interest. Interest in science has waned. And there’s more money to be made in other fields, like investment banking. They’re looking at the dollars.”

The Salvadori Center (www.salvadoricenter.org), a non-profit group in which Liss is active, is trying

See **Bridge**, page 8



Engineer Robert Liss and art teacher Diana Jensen (standing, right) with her class and their cardboard bridge at the rear, supporting eight students. The project is introducing the students to some principles of engineering – but it’s also a connection between engineering and art.

Greetings of the Season from the entire staff of The Main Street **WIRE**

Letters

To The Editor:

As has become a tradition, a group of residents prepared and served dinner for the firefighters at the Special Ops Unit on the Island. I'd like to thank those who participated: Gristede's for their very generous donation of food, the children of P.S. 217 who made the decorations, and the residents who donated, prepared, and served the food, specifically: Gwen Almo-Duvar, Marguerite Camaio, Joe Cristiano, Carolyn Christianson, Sherie Helstien, and Nurit Marcus. But, an extra special thanks goes to Joan Christianson for cooking the turkeys, serving the dinner, and taking care of the arrangements on Thanksgiving Day.



In this season of holiday preparations and family gatherings, it's often difficult to find the time to let our firefighters know how much we appreciate all they do for us. Hopefully this event conveys to them our gratitude and our warm wishes for the holidays!

Margie Smith

To the Editor:

I was most offended by the tone of the letter from Nurit Marcus in the November 22 *WIRE*. The disparaging and insulting message in her letter would ensure that RIOC staff would never choose to work with her. There is a lot of give and take to do things on the Island. Quietly and out of the public press, things are accomplished. Painting the entire staff as incompetent and ineffective is an insult. Her comments about Goldwater Hospital are interesting. I have walked by their dumpsters many times and never detected an unpleasant odor. Mrs. Marcus has not come forth with plans to do any programs. It is easy to criticize, but where are your solutions, Nurit? The dozen members of the Maple Tree Group, who seem to dominate all editorials and letters to the editor, are quick to criticize, but they see no solutions, except "self governance." That is a broad stroke that will not solve our problems. These folks are our neighborhood philosophers, nay-sayers, and critics. We need action-oriented residents who will actually volunteer to raise funds, do projects, and get out of Trellis onto Main Street.

I have had my disputes and disagreements with the RIOC officers and staff for as long as RIOC has been in existence. Under some administrations things have been better than under others. I will continue to work with them. The Roosevelt Island Historical Society has been supported by them in our activities, not monetarily, but with staff time, resources, and permits to use Island sites. These are as important as other forms of support. We are steadily working with them on projects that will benefit and bring visitors and revenue to the Island. Perhaps our Maple Tree friends should look to the positive side of living on this Island.

Judith Berdy



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To the Editor:

I was on the Garden Club waiting list for over four years, but about eight years ago I finally got assigned a plot.

Last May I planted brussels sprouts for the purpose of enjoying them with my family at our Thanksgiving dinner.

Last Sunday I found out that all my brussels sprouts had been removed with a garden tool, which was left behind by the thief, underneath my mutilated plants. The vile person who perpetrated this theft could have easily purchased the same amount of brussels sprouts for \$3.25 at the supermarket or the Farmer's Market. Instead, this person chose to obliterate six months of caring and nurturing, leaving me disappointed about the behavior of some Island resident who stooped so low for something that I would have been happy to share or to donate if I had simply been asked.

I have been living on Roosevelt Island for 13 years and I love our community and the people. My children grew up here. I now wonder what is happening. This is our home and we should respect one another. (Does this really have to be said?)

Some may consider my complaint superfluous and irrelevant, but gardeners take great pride in the care they provide for whatever they grow. Have we reached the point where we need security around the community gardens? Do we need motion detectors or hidden cameras, or even a neighborhood watch, to protect our vegetables? (Give me a break.)

A personal message to the thief: I can only hope when you sat down to enjoy *my* brussels sprouts that the garden worms got to them before you and that you bit right into one. *Shame on you.*

Name Withheld

To the Editor:

Every year I see the football league players destroy the soccer field in Octagon Park by using cleats. It happens every year – the field holds up well for the entire soccer season and then is chopped into muck by football cleats starting in November. Although there is a no-cleat rule posted in Octagon Park, no one seems to be enforcing it. The field had been re-sodded yet again this year, probably at considerable cost. I now see that the new soccer field at Southtown has also been damaged by football cleats. Re-working these fields yearly must cost Roosevelt Island in the tens of thousands of dollars when we need those funds for other purposes. If Roosevelt Island is going to let these groups destroy our sports fields year after year, they should recover repair costs from the football league.

Name Withheld

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the editor, to the community, and to/from officials. Publication on a *Name Withheld* basis will be considered, but the writer's name, address, and phone number **must** be provided for verification and for our records; anonymous letters are not considered for publication. **Preferred methods of submission:** E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (E-mail format preferred, or use any word-processing software) to put a file on a PC-standard 3.5" floppy disk left at 531 Main Street addressed to *The WIRE*. **Alternatives:** Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to 1-212-755-2540 (call ahead to 1-212-826-9055). Clearly-handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we cannot take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to acceptance, and to editing for length and clarity.** Recommend maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

To the Editor:

My husband took a roll of film to Gristede's to have it developed, after having carried it in his hand through our check-in at the Denver airport to keep it from being destroyed by the x-raying process.

When he took it to Gristede's, he was told by the assistant manager to come back another day! When he did so, he was informed that new parts had been installed in the machine and that it was working correctly. When he came to pick up the prints, he was informed that the developing was too light to produce prints and that, in fact, four out of five rolls of film had been ruined.

When I checked with Adrian, the manager at Gristede's, I was made to feel that we had done something to this film to ruin it. I resent that we were blamed for their problems with their machinery. Furthermore, I resent their accepting my film knowing there were problems with their processing.

I can't imagine why four rolls of film were run through a defective machine. One destroyed roll should have been sufficient to shut down the processing system. I don't intend to entrust my precious film memories, in this case of my mother's 93rd birthday party, to people who are this casual and this irresponsible. I'm taking my film elsewhere in the future.

Sherie Helstien

11:52 a.m., Monday, November 24, 2003

Five days after my 65th birthday, which happens to be five years and five days after the death of Al Weinstein (more about Al later), I am in an elevator descending to the subway platform at 63rd and Lex, Island-bound. In doing so, I am about to complete my first one-dollar senior-citizen round trip to Manhattan. In the elevator with me are three other Islanders, each paying four times as much for their round trips.

How to save 75% on a Manhattan trip is no secret; Island seniors have known how to do it since the half-fare MetroCard came into their lives: You ride the Tram free, Manhattan-bound, then you ride half-fare MetroCard for the subway trip home. Factor in a ten percent discount for loading up the card with \$10 or more in rides, and you're getting the round trip for just 90 cents.

If you just happen to catch, or are willing to wait for, the Queens Transit bus that stops at the subway station, you also get a free ride home using the MetroCard transfer. (It would be nicer, though, if the subway station and the bus stop were in the same zip code.)

Just how long this cheap transportation will stay so cheap depends on when the Tramway becomes part of the MetroCard free-transfer system. It's in the works, as *The WIRE* reported in its November 22 lead story. Right now, half-fare for seniors on the Tramway is implemented by means of a free ride heading into Manhattan, with a full-price token charged on the return trip. But coming back on the subway for the 90-cent round trip feels like a perfectly legal "cheat," and it's too good a deal to pass up.

Because the MetroCard system gives the first-ride provider the income, and the second-ride provider none, there's a serious question of just what arrangement is being made with the MTA on fare-sharing. But the Tramway stands to gain at least those \$1 Manhattan-bound senior fares. And *The WIRE* has heard from readers – not all seniors – who have a definite preference for the Tram, but use the subway to save.

For a reporter or a financial analyst, the MetroCard's impact on the Tram is one of those "remains to be seen" stories. It *remains to be seen* just how good a deal RIOC has made with the MTA.

Meanwhile, of course, RIOC continues to tag the Tramway with a \$2 million loss in its budgeting. In part, this is by assigning a share of administrative overhead to the Tram – an overhead figure which many believe includes inflated salaries and sweetheart salaries for non-performing political appointees. But if you take the overhead out of the picture, the Tram still loses money, and the question comes up from time to time: *Should the Tram be scrapped?*

In a word, no.

Should it be required to pay its own way?

No. All forms of mass transit are subsidized – and the Tram gets a lower percentage of subsidy than any other.

That's not all. In addition to being the safest way for our most vulnerable residents to travel, the Tram is very much a part of Roosevelt Island's identity – by now, a New York institution. Live here, and you *know that*. See the Big Picture, even if you don't live here, and you *know that*. Al Weinstein *knew that* and preached that message.

Al died November 19, 1998. He was Roosevelt Island's Grand Gentleman of the Tramway. Al worried, near the death he knew was coming, about the fate of his beloved Tram. At the time, it was threatened by bureaucratic shortsightedness and bean-counting that was both heartless and brainless. Al's spirit remains with us every time we regard the Tram with affection, and every time someone in this community rises to the Tram's defense. Time after time, Al brought out crowds ready to raise 17 kinds of hell at any threat to the Tramway.

On each trip, the Tram passes over a tree planted by residents in remembrance of Al. There is a plaque near the tree. It speaks of Al's contribution, and it's good today to be able to observe that Al's mission of saving the Tram helped it survive many years of half-blind State oversight.

Since we are inclined to believe Herb Berman's words, we appear finally to have a RIOC President who also knows the importance and value of the Tramway, whatever its financial contribution to income or deficit.

We can thus hope that the Tram will be with us always. Becoming part of the MetroCard free-transfer system should help.

DL

Letters deadline for Jan. 10 issue: Jan. 6

After deadline, letters will be considered on a space-available basis.

Since this is the last President's column before the New Year, I want to wish everyone Happy and Healthful Holidays and a wonderful start to 2004. Here at RIOC we look forward to accomplishing even more in the coming year. The gains of this year, including the start of work on the Good Shepherd Chapel, the welcoming of new Island residents to Southtown, the opening of Southpoint to the public and the movies in that beautiful open space are just the beginning. We plan to work with the community to meet many new goals in the next year to make Roosevelt Island an even better place to live and work.



Herbert E. Berman, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corp.
e-mail: hberman@rioc.com

Mother Nature made snow removal a big part of our operations in 2003. The blizzard in February had the grounds crew working for days straight, as did the snow of this past week. I want to compliment the dedicated RIOC crew who stayed throughout the weekend. I never realized how much went into clearing the streets and sidewalks, and I have a new respect for that work. I also want to compliment all of the Island residents who took the snow in stride, and even seemed to enjoy the early blast of winter. With any luck this will be the end of the snow, but even if it isn't, we are prepared for almost anything that will be thrown our way!

One other happy note for 2003 has been our successful marketing of the Island for movie, video, and photography projects, all of which provide revenue to RIOC. There were 29 such projects in 2003, including five feature films, two episodes of *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*, four episodes of *Third Watch*. Among the feature films made here, scenes for *Spider Man II*, and the re-make of *Alfie*, the classic Michael Caine movie that will star actor Jude Law. In fact, if you follow the gossip columns of our daily newspapers, Mr. Law was practically ubiquitous.

Also, the Discovery Channel was here, as was Lord & Taylor for a catalogue shoot, and McDonald's, that used the Island for a commercial.

Once again, have a happy New Year.

The RIOC Column

RIOC's Public Safety Blotter for the last half of November is now available on Website NYC10044 at <http://nyc10044.com/wire/2407/blot2407.html>

Last weekend's blizzard was a humdinger, especially as it arrived two whole weeks before the winter solstice. Running around the City on Friday and Saturday was an adventure I could have done without. Thanks are due to Housing Management and the Operating Corporation for their swift and efficacious snow removal. For the many Island residents not entirely sure-footed, and I include myself, this service was a welcome boon.

This quality didn't apply to the area surrounding the subway station, however. Negotiating the paths to and from the subway entrance to the red bus stops was hazardous for even the sure of foot given the amount of un-shoveled snow. Nothing highlights the necessity of restoring the old northbound subway bus stop more than the hundred-yard dash over slippery snow that the current bus stop requires. When I met with RIOC President Herb Berman last week, I told him that the RIRA Common Council had passed a resolution urging that the stop be placed in front of the subway station, as it once was. Herb feels that the roadway must be widened to make such a move safe for two-way traffic, and is in negotiation with the MTA to accomplish that.

We've had our first snowfall and winter is nine days away. Given the low volume of traffic in front of the subway station, I think that we would all be safer if the bus stop were moved immediately rather than waiting for MTA approvals and the laying of additional blacktop. What do you think? If you would like to express your opinion, RIOC intends to schedule evening Open Houses in the near future. Or, you can speak directly to Mr. Berman by calling him at **1-212-832-4540**.

Did you know that Pat Siconolfi no longer works on Roosevelt Island? Pat was acting president of RIOC from February, when Robert Ryan was put on administrative leave, until July when Ryan was fired and Herb Berman replaced him. Pat brought a new openness to the RIOC/resident relationship, with both an accountant's eye for the bottom line and an architect's eye for aesthetics. I was surprised to learn that Pat, a Division of Housing and Community Renewal employee, was denied a new waiver to retain his permanent position at RIOC as Chief Financial Officer, and even more surprised that the community was only informed after his departure. We are told that RIOC will attempt to schedule a more appropriate farewell for Siconolfi, and I hope that comes to pass. That Pat has been unavailable for comment to *The WIRE* only reinforces how abrupt his departure was and how unfortunate his transfer back to DHCR is. When I meet with Pat, I

will convey this community's best wishes and how much we miss him.

Let me get some housekeeping out of the way: RIRA has voted to provide the funds for Christmas lights along with other Island organizations and the lights are now strung along Main Street. Thanks again to Julie Palermo and the Roosevelt Island Chamber of Commerce for leading the effort. In the

last issue I corrected an Identity Theft telephone number that I was told came from the NYPD. Given the confusion, I dialed the number myself recently and discovered that 1-888-5-OPT-OUT connects you to Trans Union, a service that will allow you to "opt out" of receiving unwanted telephone solicitations. This is not a police number and is not a resource for reporting identity theft crime. Also, for those of you who recently received the RIHMC News Bulleting (sic), the phone number listed on page 2 to report Quality of Life violations is wrong. Last year, Mayor Bloomberg simplified this number to **311**. The 800 number listed in the bulletin is defunct.

The Westview Health Club just keeps getting better and better. After waiting five months for the newly refurbished but unused saunas in the men's and women's locker rooms to receive City approval they are now open for use by the membership. Also, water aerobics are available twice weekly and an Island resident is offering scuba lessons. This last item is dear to my heart as I've been a certified diver for twenty-five years. Robert Arrizon is offering instruction through the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), a non-profit outfit that I think is a cut above other certifying organizations. Robert's phone numbers are available at the pool and you can call him for prices and information. My hours under water are the most fun I've ever had with my clothes off (well, maybe second most fun) and I heartily recommend this rewarding sport.

It just remains for me to wish you all the gifts of the season, whether you celebrate Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or Christmas. When next I speak to you in these pages, it will be 2004. I hope this presidential election year brings us a leader worthy of his people. I hope the long-sought Tram MetroCard becomes a reality, not in the sweet by-and-by, but this winter. I hope our elected officials make good on their promises to give us an elected RIOC Board, representative of and responsible to the people whose lives they manage. And I hope the new year brings us all health, happiness and prosperity. That would be nice.

The RIRA Column



Matthew Katz, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Assn.
e-mail: matthewkatz@rcn.com

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Santa Claus's Holiday Gift Drive pickup schedule, **today**, 10:00 a.m. through 12:00 noon, with stops at all the Island's residential buildings (see ad, page 11; accepting gifts through December 17).

Boy Scout Christmas Tree Sale, today, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Motorgate (see ad, page 7, for additional times through December 23).

Rebecca's Kit and Kaboodle, soft-sculptured-doll art of Rebecca Knell, **through January 8**, Gallery RIVAA display window next to 625 Main Street.

Photographic Art of Paul Katz, continuing exhibit, Library windows.

Holiday Music Celebration, Sun., Dec. 14, 2:00 p.m., with Robin Russell and the faculty of Island Arts Music Center, at the Main Street Theatre. Information: **1-212-371-4449**. \$5 for all. (See ad, page 4.)

Carol Sing and Christmas Candlelight Service, Sun., Dec. 14, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd (see ad, page 11).

— The Coming Week —

Roosevelt Island Tidal Energy (RITE) Joint Agency/Public Meeting, Mon., Dec. 15, 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., Manhattan Park Theater Club. Discussion of project to use currents in the East Channel of the East River to generate electricity, with the Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies responsible for approvals.

Santa Claus's Holiday Gift Drive deadline, **Wed., Dec. 17** (see ad, page 11, and listing for today, above).

Book Discussion — Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt, **Thur., Dec. 18**, 6:30 p.m., Library. Free. Books available at the Library.

Dancers on the Line auditions, **Sat., Dec. 20**, 12:30, Main Street Theatre (see ad, page 4).

— Future Events —

Residents Association Common Council meeting, Wed., Jan. 7, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public access near beginning of session.

The Main Street WIRE — First issue of 2004 in 4 weeks, on **Sat., Jan. 10**. (To receive e-mail bulletins in the meantime, send an "Add Me" message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Jan. 2; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Mon., Jan. 5; fliers due Thur., Jan. 8. **Future issues:** Jan. 24; Feb. 7, 21; Mar. 6, 20; Apr. 3, 17; May 1, 15, 29; June 12; July 3 (Fourth of July issue), 31; Aug. 28; Sept. 11, 25; Oct. 16, 30 (pre-election issue); Nov. 6 (post-election issue), 20 (Thanksgiving issue); Dec. 4, 18 (holiday issues), then twice a month starting in January, 2005. (Schedule subject to adjustment.) **Phone/fax** for news, **1-212-826-9055/755-2540**; urgent matters **917-617-0449**. phone/fax for display and classified advertising placement and information, **1-212-751-8214/755-2540**. **To list your organization's Island event in this column**, e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions; there is no charge.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Jan. 12, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **1-212-751-9577 / 1-212-935-1254**.

Book Discussion — Pale Fire by Vladimir Nabokov, **Thur., Jan. 15**, 6:30 p.m., Library. Free. Books available at the Library.

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com or leave copy at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. Please provide telephone numbers for possible follow-up.

Senior Center

Monday
10-11, **Latchhook Class**
10-11:30, **English as 2nd Language**
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screen**
12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
1:00, **Tai Chi**
7:00, **Dance Class** (Beginners)

Tuesday
10:00, **Computers**
10-11, **Dance & Relax**
1:00, **Bingo**
6:00, **Yoga Class**
7:30, **Games (RISA)**

Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well**
10:00, **Spanish Class**
10:30, **Shoppers' Bus**
12:30, **Sculpting**
7:00, **Pokeno (RISA)**

Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
7:00, **Dance**

Friday
Pool Tournament (time flexible)
9:30, **Yoga Stretch**
7:00, **Games (RISA)**

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

Special Events

Wed., Dec. 17, Atlantic City
Sat., Dec. 20, Holiday Party
Wed., Dec. 24, Birthday Party
Thur., Dec. 25, closed for Christmas
Wed., Dec. 31, New Year's Eve Party (ad, page 13)
Thur., Jan. 1, 2004, closed.

Home-delivered meals available: **1-212-744-5022**, ext. 1203



A Holiday Celebration

Sunday, December 14
at 2pm \$5 all seats
The Main Street Theatre

Holiday Music
Guest Vocalist – Leandra Ramm
Pianist – Robin Russell
& the Faculty of the
Island Arts Music Center

Dramatic Reading
Truman Capote’s
A Christmas Memory
with Joan Pape & Dane Knell

Seasonal Sing-a-long
and refreshments on sale

AUDITIONS

FOR

DANCERS ON THE LINE

5th Annual Dance Project

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20TH

12:30 PM at the MST&DA

SEEKING **DANCERS**

MALE & FEMALE 8 years-adult

Must be trained in at least one style of dance,
especially jazz, ballet or tap.

DANCER CONTRIBUTION: \$35

SHOW DATES: April 2, 3 & 4

REHEARSALS: Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays (revolving schedule)

LOCATION: MST&DA is located on R.I. behind the video store.

CALL FOR INFORMATION: 212-371-4449

This event, in cooperation with the MST&DA, is made possible in part with public funds from the Fund for Creative Communities/New York State Council on the Arts Decentralization Program, administered by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.





Roosevelt Island Cleaners

Best Wishes
for a Joyous
Holiday Season

1-212-758-1778
571 Main Street



Arharn Thai

Take a Short Trip to Thailand and
Take the Chill off Winter!
Enjoy Authentic Thai Cuisine
in Queens,
just over the Roosevelt Island Bridge!
(Only 10 minutes by car)

Treat your Taste Buds to Fragrant, Exotic
Combinations of lemongrass, coconut, cilantro, and
curry, adjusted to your taste

Delicious Food Prepared and Served
With Special Care and Attention
Very Reasonable Prices

Bring this Ad
when you come to Arharn
and receive a
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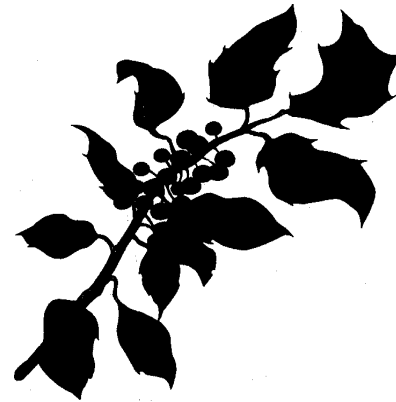
The Island Arts Music Center was founded by the Director of RIVER MUSIC, Robin Russell. Trained at Juilliard and Harvard (B.A. in Music). With over 20 years teaching experience with private students, he has been on the faculty of the Turtle Bay Music School and the Diller-Quaile School of Music.



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ROOSEVELT ISLAND TIDAL ENERGY PROJECT NO. 12178**

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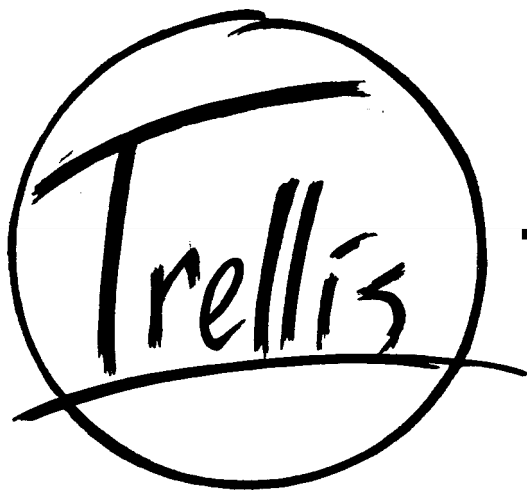
Verdant Power, LLC proposes to develop the Roosevelt Island Tidal Energy Project within the East Channel of the East River between Queens and Roosevelt Island within New York County, New York. Verdant Power is applying for an initial license to develop and operate the project with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission).

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE THAT VERDANT POWER LLC, in accordance with Commission regulations, will hold public meetings at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., on Monday, December 15, 2003 at the Manhattan Park Theater Club, 8 River Road, Roosevelt Island, New York 10044. In addition, a site visit will be conducted following the 2:00 p.m. meeting. The agenda for the public meetings will be: (a) a brief description of the project and the project's operations; (b) explanation of the Commission's licensing process; (c) a discussion of the anticipated study program; and (d) obtaining the views of the public regarding resource issues to be addressed in the license application.

Pursuant to the Commission's regulations, an information package will be available to the public for inspection and reproduction at a cost of \$0.10/ page, plus postage, both prepaid, from the date of this notice to the date of the public meeting. This information can be reviewed or obtained by contacting the following responsible individual:

William H. ("Trey") Taylor
Verdant Power, LLC
4640 13th Street, North
Arlington, VA 22207-2102
Telephone: (703) 528-6445

For information or assistance concerning the public meeting, interested persons may contact the aforementioned individual.



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Theme at Mitchell-Lama Meeting: Organize, Organize, Organize

Get organized, act, and inform your fellow tenants – but mostly, *organize*.

Speaker after speaker repeated that theme last week at a first-ever “Mitchell-Lama Convention” staged by Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields. Many New York City buildings in the Mitchell-Lama program are now eligible to leave the State and City Mitchell-Lama systems (under which rent increases are controlled by government), seek private mortgages, and increase rents. A panel of nine experts shared their experiences and advice with a standing-room-only crowd at Hunter College.

On Roosevelt Island, three buildings are considered candidates for privatization– Island House and Westview, which are rental buildings (see story, page 1), and Rivercross, the cooperative. On the Island, the process has a twist in that the State controls the land, so there is an added step – negotiating a ground-lease extension with RIOOC. Apart from that additional step and some considerations of how property taxes might change, residents in the Island’s Mitchell-Lama buildings are targets of the expert advice that was given at the Mitchell-Lama meeting.

Island House has an Island House Ownership Committee [IHOC] which has been considering issues of resident ownership for years. In Westview, its Task Force is active on the privatization issue. Rivercross residents are represented in the process by the building’s Board and a special committee, but the panel’s advice was for cooperative residents, as well: *Organize*.

Reproduced here are portions of the remarks of two speakers at the session.

Stuart M. Saft

Stuart M. Saft is a partner in the law firm of Wolf Haldenstein Adler Freeman & Herz LLP, and chairs its Real Estate Department. He’s a contributing editor of *The Real Estate Finance Journal* and author of more than 20 books on real estate. He represents tenants or owners in Mitchell-Lama cases.

I think I spend a third of my time giving legal advice, a third giving practical business advice, and the rest doing psychological counseling.

This is a very difficult time. Virginia [Fields] was absolutely right in her opening remarks [about the success of Mitchell-Lama]. In one regard, she didn’t go far enough. The Mitchell-Lama program is not only the most successful housing program in New York State. It is probably the most successful housing program in the entire United States. And there are members of the Administration who have admitted that. Unfortunately, nobody is interested in con-

tinuing the program, for a number of reasons.

We’ve been involved in a number of Mitchell-Lama buy-outs. In one, we were able to stop it. In Ruppert-Yorkville, we were able to negotiate a deal where tenants were offered the ability to buy their apartments at a steep discount, and those who didn’t buy got lifetime rent protection.

Every one of the Mitchell-Lamas that we’ve been involved in has played out differently because of the nature of the landlords, tenant groups, and the property.

The most important thing is for the tenants to be organized. Probably the second most important thing is to communicate with the tenants in order to prevent rumors from circulating. The worst rumor that we have to deal with in any of these buy-out situations is that, “We don’t have to do anything because next week, next month, a week from Tuesday, or whenever the date is going to be, the Legislature is going to pass a bill that I have been absolutely promised is going to be enacted.” We all pray that’s going to happen, but none of us believe it. Unless the Legislature changes and the Governor changes, it’s not going to happen, so you can’t bury your head in the sand and say, “Something’s going to happen in Albany and the problem is going to go away.”

We have often been told that the first thing we should do is sue New York City or New York State to stop the buy-out, because somebody heard from somebody that that’s the thing to do. That really is not the thing to do. And it’s not the thing to do because neither the City nor the State has a great deal of discretion in this matter, based upon the way the law is written.

We look at these things as if it’s a war, and when you plan out the battle, you have to get hold of the land disposition agreement by which your landlord [acquired] the land and made certain promises as to what was going to happen at this Mitchell-Lama site. We have found that to be very helpful because every landlord assumes that what he signed 30 years ago no longer counts. But, in fact, it does.

We also want tenants to look for little pieces of evidence that could show the landlord’s intent when the property first opened. That means going back and finding the newsletters the landlord put out when he was trying to fill up

the building. And you’ll find some very interesting admissions. Fortunately, in all of the Mitchell-Lamas we’ve been involved in, there have been squirrels who like to keep these 30-year-old newsletters, and some of the statements the landlords made 30 years ago are absolutely amazing about keeping the property in Mitchell-Lama for the next 30 years, not buying out before 2012 – all the things that today they deny ever having done.

The other thing you want to do is collect copies of everybody’s leases, because one of the things I’ve found amazing in the buildings we’ve dealt with is, notwithstanding the landlords’ all saying today that they always intended to buy out, none of them ever wrote a lease in which they advised you that this was a possibility. And that’s an important consideration.

We advise tenants’ organizations to have an engineer go through the building, because we believe very strongly that there is a good-faith obligation on all of the landlords to maintain the buildings in the way that the Legislature had intended them to be maintained. That does not mean forcing you to live like second-

class citizens just because the rent is being subsidized. These buildings have to be properly maintained. And unfortunately we’ve seen a lot of situations where the buildings weren’t being properly maintained.

These are all important things to do. You don’t need a lawyer to start looking around the building or to get the old leases or to get the publicity material.

Louise Roberts Sanchez

Louise Roberts Sanchez is a longtime Mitchell-Lama tenant who chairs the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition (www.mitchell-lama.org).

I think we have to understand not only the crisis, but we have to understand that there is a way out. And that is what everybody says: Organize your building, get to know your building, get people involved in your building, and – I’m going to say that dirty word – lobby. If we don’t understand that nobody is going to preserve our buildings unless we get them to do it kicking and screaming all the way, our buildings are not going to be saved. And lobbying

See **Sanchez**, page 9

Bridge at PS217 Brings Engineering to 6th-8th Graders

from page 1



to turn that around – trying, through programs like the PS 217 bridge, to spark an interest in engineering. As the Center’s pamphlet puts it, “‘Salvadori kids’ begin by building paper towers and bridges and testing them to failure. Soon they are caught up in the world of architecture and engineering, intrigued by the scientific method, and ready to explore a variety of academic subjects.” The PS 217 group has thus joined over 120,000 New York City students in discovering the connections among physics, art, architecture, and real-world construction.

Yesterday, the kids were on schedule to test their bridge “to failure,” which Liss defines as a deflection of a half-inch. The plan was for a few students, who volunteered on Monday, to put weights on the structure while other students measure deflection and still others graph the results. Mem-

bers of the Board of the Salvadori Center were to look on, carrying on the tradition established by the late Mario Salvadori, a Columbia professor who taught engineering and architecture. A quarter-century ago, he turned his attention to high school students.

“I want these kids to become aware that they have choices – to

make them aware of this field as one choice available to them,” Liss says. “Engineering is a rewarding field. When engineers work with other engineers and architects and contractors, it’s a very serious, results-oriented group.”

Stretched between milk crates acting as abutments, the PS 217 bridge should be able to support a load of 400 or 500 pounds before its center deflects half an inch, says Liss, charged with enthusiasm for both the project and for reaching the minds of the kids in the class. Because it weighs only about 175 pounds, the project demonstrates that light material assembled in the right geometry can support itself plus more than twice its own weight. There’s a lesson there that draws on physics, higher math, and quality control in construction. “These are difficult, abstract concepts,” Liss says.

The project has taken the class out of the classroom, too. “The highlight of our experience was a walk across the Queensboro Bridge with Vic Wagh, a former chief engineer with the Department of Trans-



portation. They went across the bridge and they began to understand how a cantilever bridge works.”

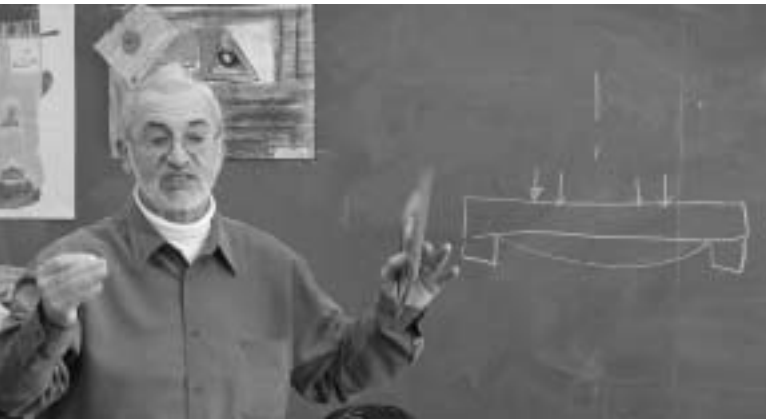
The PS 217 bridge is a “plate bridge.” It’s 16 feet long, four feet wide, and three feet thick. Four layers of the FedEx tubes are bound together by layers of flat cardboard and a generous helping of Elmer’s all-purpose glue. “We’re using the FedEx tubes as a honeycomb between the cardboard plates. It acts as a web, and in combination it becomes a very strong structure.”

Liss, a Rivercross resident, has already accepted an invitation to take his bridge project on the road. Next week, he’ll scale it down to fifth-graders and eight feet in length at another school.

Building the bridge has been a learning experience for Liss, as well. “What I think is most significant about the bridge is that you really have the youngsters

working as a team, and they seem to be fascinated by what is going on.” But, he says, “the hardest part was getting them to focus.” Indeed, as he had the students set up a photograph for *The WIRE* on Monday, a major challenge was keeping young minds on the matter at hand.

What’s being built at PS 217 has also provided a bridge between engineering and teaching. “I came away with much more respect for what a teacher goes through every day,” Liss says. “A teacher told me this would be a humbling experience, and I have found it was humbling to see how much preparation a teacher must go through to coordinate 25 students simultaneously, to have everyone engaged in doing something. It’s very easy to lose control. A teacher must be really skilled, and part of that is the time and work they put into their lesson plans.”



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Siconolfi from page 1

session] about terrible morale problems [among RIOC staff] when you arrived...” Once again, Berman made no comment, but had Melia call. Pressed for some indication of Berman’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction with Siconolfi, Melia said, “I will tell you one thing Herb said to me, which is, ‘Pat Siconolfi had an impact on RIOC when he was here, and his absence will have an impact.’” The statement could be interpreted as being, at its most generous, a neutral comment on Siconolfi’s contribution.

Siconolfi was popular with resident leaders, and was the recipient of frequent praise from members of the RIOC Board both as CFO and as Acting President.

Residents praised Siconolfi for a new openness and orientation to action. He also signaled an orientation to residents shortly after taking over as Acting President by quickly restoring the turnaround just north of Southtown; its closure had been a sore point with residents during Southtown construction as they were forced to drive to the Tram station to reverse course. Siconolfi also appeared to have a hand in speeding along the opening of Southpoint Park, a matter on which Ryan had appeared to drag his feet or give in to staffers reluctant to move the project forward.

Siconolfi gained points with resident leaders with timely responses to simple requests. Told that residents and visitors felt hassled by

Public Safety Officers enforcing a “no photography” rule, he issued a directive to Public Safety Chief James Fry reinterpreting RIOC’s policy to allow casual and press photography. He established a pattern of regular meetings with Residents Association officers. He abolished nuisance charges to resident groups wanting to use Island facilities for events like dances on the promenade. Perhaps most significantly, he opened RIOC’s books to resident leaders and was said to be generous with explanations of the numbers.

Vicki Feinmel, who is active in the Residents Association, told *The WIRE* this week, “I think his biggest accomplishment was his openness with the community. People were able to talk to him and you sensed that he did want to make things better for the people who live here. He met with those who wanted to discuss different issues. He walked around at night to see about the lights; he came to Roosevelt Island Day. He reached out to the community. He was honest when something couldn’t be done.” Matthew Katz also comments on Siconolfi in his column (page 3).

RIOC Board members praised Siconolfi’s grasp of the numbers and his ability to give cogent explanations of the spreadsheets he projected on a screen during Board budgeting sessions. Board member Leo Kayser told *The WIRE* this week that he was surprised to learn that Siconolfi had left RIOC. “He was valuable,” Kayser said. “I am sorry to see him go.” Another Board mem-

ber, John Mannix, said, “He did a great job and he will be missed.”

Siconolfi seemed to be trying to be responsive to repeated requests for long-term projections under Ryan, then far more open once Ryan was gone. Whether accurate or not, the impression was clear: Ryan had held RIOC budgeting close to his vest; Siconolfi was willing to open it up for Board and public scrutiny.

While few RIOC staffers in a position to know the details are talking about Siconolfi’s departure, there are clear indications that the more politically-connected administrative staffers felt lingering resentment – a feeling that Siconolfi had betrayed Ryan when the Board suspended him – part of a complex of facts suggesting that Siconolfi the Civil Servant was simply not “political” enough to head RIOC.

There are reliable reports, for example, that Siconolfi attempted to fire Melia, but was thwarted in that effort by the political structure above DHCR – the Governor’s of-

fice. After Berman’s arrival, in fact, Melia told *The WIRE* in an on-the-record conversation that he had been sidelined under Siconolfi. “They put me in an office with no phone or computer,” he said as he resumed duties as RIOC’s public information officer after several months of silence.

Reports also have it that Siconolfi and staff lawyer Kenneth Leitner were not speaking. (Siconolfi and Leitner had joined Ryan’s executive staff at the same time, late in 1999.)

In the absence of more comprehensive and solid information from RIOC or Siconolfi himself, observers are left to speculate that Berman, just months into his RIOC Presidency, may have faced a difficult choice between politically-connected staffers, whatever their competence, and a demonstrably competent civil-servant CFO who, while popular with resident leaders, lacked the high-level political connections of fellow staffers he had offended during his six months in charge.

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Sanchez from page 8

doesn’t mean that everybody has to go to Albany... All the legislators have district offices right here in the City. We’re going to have to begin to visit them on their own turf.

Additionally, I think we have to begin to go out into our communities and draw in other people. For years, it has been said that Mitchell-Lama residents built communities – came in when there was nothing there. We brought the stores in, we brought other amenities into the community, which is why the landlords want to buy out – they’re just wonderful communities. We have to make other people in our community understand that it is in their interest that they help us save our homes.

And the other issue I want to hit briefly is that when we build tenants’ associations, we have to build them independent of management [and] make sure that we are truly representative and democratic – that our tenants’ association doesn’t only represent seniors, only represent African-Americans, doesn’t only represent the first to the tenth floor. We have to make sure that our tenants’ associations are truly democratic.

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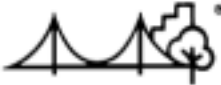
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Santa Claus' Schedule

Saturday, December 13, 2003

EASTWOOD RESIDENTS (546) 10:00AM

RIVERCROSS (531) 10:30AM

ISLAND HOUSE (555) 11:00AM

WESTVIEW (625) 11:30AM

MANHATTAN PARK (30RR) 12:00AM



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TO CONFESSION BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24 CHRISTMAS EVE
5:00 PM**

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25 CHRISTMAS
12:00 AM MIDNIGHT MASS & 11:15 AM**

CHAPEL OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

PLEASE NOTE THERE WILL BE NO 8:15 AM MASS
CHRISTMAS MORNING.

Annual

Christmas Candlelight Service



**Church of the
Good Shepherd**

Come one...Come all!

**SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 14
8 O'CLOCK PM**



**LET US SING CHRISTMAS
TOGETHER**

CAROLS

REFRESHMENT FOLLOWS



Find us at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, 543 Main Street.
We are an Episcopal congregation with roots in many Christian traditions.
The Rev. Christopher Calderhead, pastor. Telephone 917 572 6674.



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Joyous Holiday
Season and a

Very Happy and Prosperous New Year

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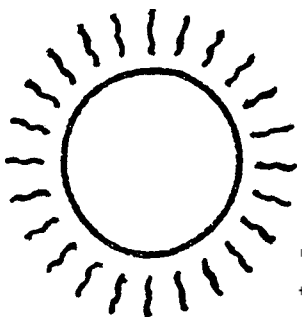
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from the

Roosevelt Island Seniors Association

Come enjoy bringing in the New Year with us

Wednesday, December 31, 2003

8:00 p.m.

Members \$10, Non-members \$15

Full-Course Dinner

Party Favors

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SPORTSWIRE

Soccer The playoffs in the Youth Program's Fall Soccer League concluded on Saturday, November 22, with Green defeating Black & White to capture the Junior championship, after Burgundy upset Black & White on Friday evening, November 21, to win the Senior championship.

Seniors: The Senior championship game, played under the lights on a surprisingly mild Friday evening, was a well-played, exciting game, as the second-place Burgundy team upset the first-place Black & White team by a 3-2 score. Black & White took an early 1-0 lead on a goal by Elliot Levine and built the lead to 2-0 at the half on a goal by Samuel Johns. However, the second half belonged to Burgundy, as Aidar Sydykov scored early in the half to cut the deficit to 2-1 and Thomas Herlihy put a beautiful shot in the upper corner midway through the half to tie the score at 2-2. Then, with 5 minutes left in the game, Thomas Herlihy used his outstanding speed to get around the defense and score the game-winner. Genny Holmes, the center defender for Burgundy, was outstanding, breaking up numerous Black & White scoring opportunities. Congratulations to all of the members of the championship Burgundy team – Annie Battles, Kevin Breslin, Thibault Codderrans, Lequan Francis, Nalani Glenn, Adrian Gordan, Coleen Herlihy, Nicole Herlihy, Thomas Herlihy, Genny Holmes, Ante Kendes, Ian Kleinfeld, Robert Manukyan, Mikko McDonald, David Mischiu, Alex Pinks, and Aidar Sydykov; and their coaches, Glenn Pinks and Bob Schrum.

Juniors: In a playoff season filled with upsets, the Green team continued the trend by upsetting the first-place Black & White team by a 6-1 score. Kenneth Avocetien and Mahdi Ladjouzi scored all of the goals for Green, while Javon Perry scored for Black & White. Congratulations to all of the members of the championship Green team – Kenneth Avocetien, Journey Barrera, Justus Burgos, Evan Espinoza, Anthony Fallone, Jared Francis, Johanna Frederick, Darrell Henry, Kiah Lawrence, Mahdi Ladjouzi, Krit McClean, George Mushy, David Passey, Franco Revello, Sean Ticona, and Natalija Trojanovic; and their coaches, Patti Fallone and Luis Ticona.

The Green team



Best wishes for the Holidays
and a Happy New Year
from all of us at



MANHATTAN PARK

ON ROOSEVELT ISLAND

and

Roosevelt Island Associates Inc.

Katherine Teets Grimm, M.D.

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***Have a Happy and Healthy
Holiday Season***

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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.
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