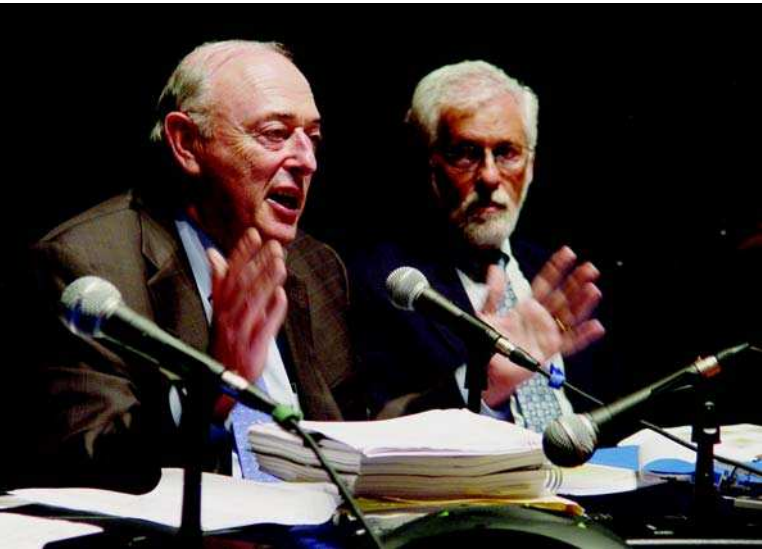


Next issue
in 2 weeks:
October 20

The Main Street WIRE™

28th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



With Prof. Rene Testa of Columbia at his side, RIOC President Steve Shane told residents about RIOC's Tramway options on Thursday night.

RIOC Has Four Tram Options, From \$6 Million to \$21 Million

by Dick Lutz
RIOC President Steve Shane outlined Tramway alternatives for an audience of Islanders Thursday night. There was good news, and there was bad news.
The good news is that RIOC has all the money it needs to take any of four possible paths for the future of the system. There's a State budget allocation; there is money already set aside for track rope replacement; and there is expected or available general income in RIOC's cash stream.

The bad news is that the most likely solutions will involve at least six months of downtime, possibly seven, unless RIOC engages in some hyperspending to gain a little time by imposing a high-intensity work schedule.
One other tidbit of good news: None of this is likely to result in Tramway outages for at least a year.
But start it must, for, at a minimum, the Tramway's track ropes must soon be replaced with new ones.
The RIOC Board of Directors will meet October 18 (see ComingUp, page 3) and, because of the State budgeting process, will be urged to choose a course of action.

Alternatives
Shane outlined four approaches for the 65 or so residents who showed up for the presentation:
• Alternative 1 would take care of the track ropes, replace some critical components, and involve only two months of downtime. It would cost only about \$5.6 million. But the engineers give it a life expectancy of only seven years; one reason is that the system would not be fully modernized, and would mostly use mechanical parts equivalent to the current 30-year-old setup.
• Alternative 2 would involve a "fundamentally new system" with a probable 30 years of useful life ahead of it. The cost would be
See Tramway, page 13

15 Years On, Icla da Silva Foundation Looks Back to RI's Love Thy Neighbor

Memoir
by Airam da Silva
In October of 1989 my family arrived on Roosevelt Island from Brazil with the hope of saving the life of my 11-year-old sister, Icla. She had been diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukemia.
Icla's only hope for a cure was a bone-marrow transplant. No match was found within our family; that meant finding a match from an unrelated donor.
On Roosevelt Island, our family found a community ready to help. Residents, led by Pat Schwartzberg, Ronald Vass, and Dr. Lawrence Itskowitch, mounted a 15-day fundraising campaign.



Traci Fox, a 12-year-old leukemia patient in need of a bone-marrow donor, with Airam da Silva.

Love Thy Neighbor worked to raise over \$45,000 for Icla's transplant while a search for a match continued.
But months of searching for a donor match failed. My sister died. I was 15.
See Icla, page 10

In her last few weeks of life, Icla wrote a note saying that all she wanted was to be cured of leukemia and to help people in need of bone-marrow transplants. In response, the Icla da Silva Foundation was founded. Today, after 15 years, it lives on, the embodiment of Icla's energy and enthusiasm.
The Icla da Silva Foundation started its activities in 1992, identifying the critical need for expanding the nation's pool of potential bone-marrow donors. A marrow transplant is often the only effective way to save the life of patients suffering with leukemia, lymphoma, and many other life-threatening diseases.
Matches for bone-marrow transplants are very particular, and often hard to find. Ethnicity can be a key to finding the right match. "Finding a needle in a haystack"

Westview Cited Inspector General Slams DHCR Work Under Pataki

New York State's Inspector General has belatedly blasted the Pataki administration for cavalier mismanagement of the State's Mitchell-Lama affordable housing program – including Westview on Roosevelt Island.
Auditors from the I.G.'s office chose Westview as one of three buildings examined closely to back up a charge of "Systemic Deficiencies in Mitchell-Lama Oversight" – one index heading in the 75-page report issued two weeks ago. Referring to the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, the report said that the audit "revealed serious inadequacies in nearly every aspect of DHCR's Mitchell-Lama oversight."
In an executive summary, the report "concluded that DHCR's monitoring of Mitchell-Lama housing companies and its enforcement of its own regulations has been grossly deficient on a broad scale. Rather than safeguarding the integrity of the program, DHCR... has allowed housing companies to flout rules regarding apartment allocation, financial reporting, and contracting. DHCR's deep and systemic failures have
See DHCR, page 12

Briefly...

- The **Roosevelt Island Bridge** was stuck again two weeks ago, impassable overnight, when a crew working on it did an unnecessary out-of-hours opening, then failed to call for help for hours. Steps have been taken (RIOC Column, page 2).
- Island pediatrician **Dr. Kathie Grimm** was injured in an off-Island accident and is recovering after an emergency hip replacement (letter, page 3).
- Work toward the community's **RIOC Board nominations** moves forward Wednesday night with a meeting at Westview (page 4).
- The **15th Anniversary** of the Island-founded Icla da Silva Foundation takes place with a gala dinner-dance Wednesday, October 17, at Tavern on the Green (story, this page).

125 DAYS

to Island-wide balloting

for Residents' RIOC Board nominees

Next event:

Community Meeting

Wednesday Night

(Notice on page 4)

Lappin Gets City's \$1.5 Million for Southpoint Park

City Councilmember Jessica Lappin came to the Island early this week to drop \$1.5 million on the table for Southpoint Park, raising the City's investment – all maneuvered into place by Lappin – to \$4.5 million.
While here, Lappin reviewed the funding she's arranged for several Island organizations.
• Day Nursery – \$8,500 for scholarships
• Historical Society – \$50,000 for the visitor center at the Tram station, and \$5,000 for staffing it
• Residents Association – \$4,000 for voting machine rental
• Senior Center – \$31,000 for staff and activities
• Youth Program – \$20,000 for program support
• Disabled Association – \$20,000 to support educational activities
• PS/IS 217 PTA – \$20,000 for educational activities
"These organizations are an important part of the close-knit nature of Roosevelt Island," Lappin said, calling it "a sense of community that I don't see in other parts of my district."



Left to right with the traditional giant check: Virginia Granato, Disabled Association; Matthew Katz, Residents Association; Steve Shane, RIOC; Zakia Wazani, visitor kiosk; Lappin; Penny Cannon, visitor kiosk; Tina Gonzalez, Youth Program; Maudi Ridler, Day Nursery.

The Editorial Page

Wednesday at 8:00

There’s nothing like seeing Roosevelt Island come alive when summer ends and the demands of autumn energize this community’s go-getters.

You can sense the *action* in Trellis when half the booths and tables seem to be occupied with planners eagerly exchanging ideas about how to move their own particular game ball forward toward some well-defined goal. You can feel it when you try to book a room for a meeting and you have to work around the needs of other groups who got there first.

Two Island-founded organizations are headed for important fundraisers soon: Orphans International will present Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Paul and Mary) on October 30 (see *ComingUp*, page 3), and the Icla da Silva Foundation will celebrate 15 years of saving lives with a dinner-dance on October 17 at Tavern on the Green (story, page 1). There was a Run for Congo Women last weekend (story, page 14). Toastmasters has geared up for its regular meetings, the Residents Association Common Council has had its second meeting of the season, and RIOC is in high gear with discussions and planning that will determine much about the short- to long-term future of the Tramway. School is deeply in session. Today is the *Fall for Arts Festival*. And, of course, *The WIRE* is back on its twice-a-month schedule.

But one activity has an overriding importance, and we eagerly direct your attention to it: RIRA is gearing up for a first-ever vote to choose the community’s nominees for the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. (You’ve read about this in these pages before, and you can be sure we’ll be coming back to the subject.) In immediate prospect is a community-wide meeting Wednesday night (October 10) at 8:00 in the lower community room at Westview (625 Main Street). There, people who have been working on self-governance for Roosevelt Island for a decade-plus will describe, briefly, this process in which our votes will choose residents whose names will be put before the Governor with the morally compelling request that he appoint them to the RIOC Board.

Why is that important?

The RIOC Board is like our City Council here in this neatly defined river town where the State calls the shots and the Board sets policies and approves plans. Running for and serving on that Board is a chance for real impact. If you’ve ever contemplated government service or elective office, this is your crack at it, in a situation where the decisions you help make will have the potential for direct influence on your life and on the lives of your fellow residents – our safety, our recreational opportunities, our transit needs, our quality of life... our very future in this terrific community.

Wednesday night at 8:00 is a chance to learn more about putting your name on the February 5 ballot, or to find out how you can help the community take this important step. Come out of curiosity, out of concern, or out of determination to make things better... But come.

DL



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This week, Sherie and I celebrated our fourteenth wedding anniversary. We celebrated by cooking something scrumptious together and drinking a gorgeous bottle of wine. Fortunately, there were no Island meetings that evening, but I did spend the day writing this column and my president’s report to the Common Council. Not very romantic, I’m afraid. While we’ve referred to our wedding as “a day that shall live in infamy,” it was in fact one helluva party and we’ve got the pictures to prove it. We discovered Roosevelt Island together when we moved to a brand-new Manhattan Park, she from Brooklyn and I from the Upper East Side, and we’ve never looked back.

The RIRA Column

Grimm on Injured Reserve List

I’ve learned that our Island pediatrician and good neighbor, Kathie Grimm, is recovering from a serious traffic accident that required hip replacement surgery. She is recuperating in a Queens rehab facility and I know you join me in wishing her a speedy recovery.

Roosevelt Island Bridge

With the end of the United Nations General Assembly, we have had our Southpoint Park restored to us, and the openings of our Roosevelt Island lift bridge should return to occasional testing of the systems. I’ve been told by the Department of Transportation’s PR company that the bridge “incidents” on September 21 and 26, when the bridge failed with the lift portion raised, were “...a result of malfunctioning electrical components that were corrected by the contractor [Koch Skanska, Inc.].” In fact, I’ve learned that the Friday incident, during which Skanska raised the lift at 11:00 p.m., was only corrected when the City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) arrived to effect repairs at 4:00 a.m. I’ve inquired as to whether the lift should only be used with DOT operators present, and they informed me that NYCDOT bridge operator would be present during the U.N. session that ended October 5. After that, we shall have to

The RIOC Column

- End of September and beginning of October:
- 1. Bridge “Operation:”** Busy times with the UN mandating closing of Southpoint and the west channel of the East River, forcing the Department of Transportation (DOT) into operating (or too often, not operating) the Roosevelt Island Bridge. All over until next year. The mechanical difficulties certainly demonstrate why the bridge badly needs the \$86.5 million overhaul now under way. Kudos to those who managed the inconvenience and took care of the very few emergencies without unhappy incident. The Tram served very well. Maybe the parents of the newborn will have named the baby Dot.
 - 2. Public Safety:** (a) Officer Michaels was struck by a car last week while she was directing traffic in front of Blackwell House, necessitated by the construction activity closing the east side. Happily, she seems only bruised and after her trip to the hospital and a short recuperation, hopefully will be back on the job. (b) While causing some anguish to a few Island residents, Public Safety is trying to sort out the competing needs of the handicapped community and parking on Main Street. A sympathetic approach to those with special needs has to be balanced with the needs of the rest of the community.
 - 3. Councilmember Lappin:** The Island’s staunch supporter, Jessica Lappin, was on the Island October 1 to announce the cumulative funding of almost \$1.7 million for various groups and activities, including the library, nursery school scholarships, the Historical Society, the Senior Center, RIRA, the Youth Center, the Disabled Association, the PTA, and Southpoint Park (\$1.5 million to be added to the \$3 million previously secured).
 - 4. Assemblymember Kellner:** The open visiting hours at RIOC’s offices every Thursday from 3 to 7 seem to be well received. Come in to see your Assemblyman.
 - 5. Tram:** By the time this column is published, the public meeting to discuss the future of the Tram will have been held. For those not able to attend, please look at the RIOC website for a recording of the event or read the reports in *The WIRE* or look at the Island blog sites. Think about, talk about, and communicate your views to the Board of Directors so that a consensus can be reached as to what decision to make on present work to secure the future of the Tram. An essential public transportation system deserves the special attention everyone should give.
 - 6. RIRA:** The process for selection of candidates

see, I suppose.

Also, I’ve received notification of abrasive blasting paint removal on bridge infrastructure to start on or about October 1. We are told that this process will remove paint that may contain lead from the steel surfaces of the bridge, and that abrasive blasting involves the use of compressed air and will be entirely contained within impermeable walls with sealed joints. All paint wastes will be packaged and shipped from the site for disposal elsewhere. Also this: “The work may occur 24 hours per day, seven days a week, and may generate some noise. The painting is scheduled to be completed by August, 2009. Abrasive blasting removal will not necessarily occur during the entire time period specified above.” This three-year renovation project is absolutely essential for future usefulness of our bridge, and we will have to monitor how well the contractor complies with noise and lead paint removal safety requirements.



Matthew Katz, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Association
e-mail: MatthewKatz@verizon.net

Subway Benches Revisited

We now have the MTA, RIOC, and the Southtown construction company, Monodnock, searching for the benches that once provided relief to subway riders as they awaited northbound Red Bus service. They were rough and splintery, you may recall, and I would be happy to see them replaced with something a tad less likely to tear clothing or skin. We’re talking about just a few benches here, and it would be nice to see them in place before chilly weather makes them su-

See Katz, page 6

- for nomination to the Board goes forward. The more who participate, the more the result will have public weight. Get involved.
- 7. Swimming:** Despite our best efforts, we are still unable to coax the seniors into the pool for a special senior swim program. After a few more weeks, we will have to abandon the idea. Meanwhile, a group of adults is plugging for early morning and more evening swim time. We will be glad to accommodate if there are enough sign-ups. If you are interested, contact the Sportspark Director Carol Rubino at **212-832-4569**.
 - 8. Hospital wheel chair users:** In response to the expressed concerns about the safety of the many wheelchair users who take to the street, especially after dusk, we have been in touch with the Administrator of Coler/Goldwater and they are going to try a program of reflectors or lights or something to avoid an unfortunate possible incident.
 - 9. Blackwell House:** Exterior nearing completion and the construction fence will soon come down so everyone can see and appreciate the restoration. This historic house is an Island treasure, and everyone should appreciate the efforts that have gone into it, especially the City’s funding with RIOC’s and the Historical Society’s pushing of the process.
 - 10. Racquet Club:** On the agenda for the next Board meeting will be a proposed modification of the License Agreement with the Racquet Club that includes its obligation to study the prospect of an expanded facility. There is a growing demand for tennis courts and other similar sports activities in Manhattan occasioned by the pressure on available real estate. Perhaps an expansion to include Sportspark in a coordinated facility will be a major attraction. All within the existing footprint. First step.
 - 11. Streetlights:** We continue to chase outages, circuitry problems, coordination between ConEd and the several building managers, jurisdictional issues within the City as to whether the Island is in Manhattan or Queens for maintenance purposes, etc. We will solve this problem.



Steve Shane, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
e-mail: SShane@RIOC.com

See Shane, page 6

COMING UP

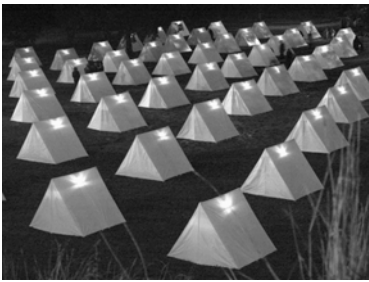
— This Weekend —



Art Association, **Sat., Oct. 6**, 11:00-2:00, Sportspark Art Studio, sponsored by RIOC. Free. Paper and art supplies will be provided. Today's subject: Painting. Future sessions Oct. 20, Nov. 3, Nov. 10, Nov. 17.

The Encampment, art installation by Thom Sokoloski, continuing through **Sun., Oct. 7**, 7:00 p.m.-1:00 a.m., Southpoint Park. ▷

Stone and Fire, exhibit of the photography of Tad Sudol, continues through tomorrow at Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. Gallery hours: **Sat.-Sun.**, 11:00-5:00; **Wed. and Fri.**, 6:00-9:00.



— The Coming Week —

Toastmasters meeting, **Mon., Oct. 8**, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Maple Tree Group Open Meeting regarding RIOC Board nominations process, **Wed., Oct. 10**, 8:00 p.m., Westview Lower Community Room, 625 Main Street. Planning for campaigns and February balloting.

State Assemblymember Micah Kellner, District Office hours, Thursdays, 3-7 p.m., RIOC Conference Room at 591 Main St.

— Future Weeks —

Art Sale, paintings and prints of G. Bertoli, **Sat.-Mon., Oct. 13-15**, 4:00-8:00 p.m., 531 Main Street, apt. 627. Refreshments.

Roosevelt Island Democratic Club meeting, **Tue., Oct. 16**, 7:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center.

Icla da Silva Foundation 15th Anniversary Dinner-Dance, **Wed., Oct. 17**, 7:00 p.m., Tavern on the Green, Central Park. Information: **212-593-0474**.

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Thur., Oct. 18**, 4:30 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center. **Key Issue: Tramway.** An open forum for residents to bring matters before the Board will follow the formal session. (Future meeting 9:30 Nov. 29.)

Stuffing Session for *The WIRE*, **Fri., Oct. 19**, 10:00 a.m. to completion (usually by 1:45 p.m.); lunch provided; willing hands welcome. Call for details: **212-826-9055**.

The Main Street WIRE — Next issue, **Sat., Oct. 20**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadlines:** Ads in the paper, **Thur., Oct. 11**; decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, **Mon., Oct. 15**; they are due **Thur., Oct. 18**. **Additional issues in 2007:** Nov. 3, 17; Dec. 1, 15. **Issues in 2008:** Jan. 12, 26; Feb. 9, 23; Mar. 15, 29; Apr. 19; May 3, 17, 31; June 14, 28; Aug. 2, 30; Sept. 13, 27; Oct. 11, 25; Nov. 8, 22; Dec. 6, 20. **News phone**, **212-826-9055**; urgent matters, **917-617-0449**. **Phone** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214**.

Life Drawing — Art Instruction by the Roosevelt Island Visual Art Association, **Sat., Oct. 20**, 11:00-2:00, Sportspark Art Studio, sponsored by RIOC. Free. Paper and art supplies will be provided. Future sessions Nov. 3, Nov. 10, Nov. 17.

Open House Reception and Toastmasters public speaking group meeting, **Mon., Oct. 22**, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **917-757-3215**.

Community Board 8 Housing Committee meeting to consider Roosevelt Island housing issues, **Wed., Oct. 24**, 6:30-9:00 p.m., Hunter College School of Social Work, 129 E. 79th St. (between Park and Lexington), room 1010. Information: **212-758-4340**.

An Evening with Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary, the Orphans International Sixth Annual Benefit, **Tue., Oct. 30**, 6-9 p.m., in Mr. Yarrow's Manhattan home. Attendance limited; call **212-755-7285** for information.

Election Day, Tue., Nov. 6. **Residents Association Common Council** meeting, **Wed., Nov. 7**, 8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level). Meetings, open to all, begin with public access period for residents to present matters to the Council. (Future meeting Dec. 5.)

Pastel Workshop — Art Instruction by the Roosevelt Island Visual Art Association, **Sat., Nov. 10**, 11:00-2:00, Sportspark Art Studio, sponsored by RIOC. Free. Paper and art supplies will be provided. Future session Nov. 17.

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Thur., Nov. 29**, 9:30 a.m., Good Shepherd Community Center.

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed., Dec. 5**, 8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level). Meetings, open to all, begin with public access period for residents to present matters to the Council.

— 2008 —

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed., Jan. 9**, 8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level); all meetings begin with an opportunity for residents to address the Council.

Candidate Event for RIOC Board Nominations Balloting, **Wed., Jan. 16**, time and place to be announced.

Nominations close for the February 5 RIRA Balloting to select residents' nominations to the RIOC Board, **Fri., Jan. 18**.

Candidate Event for RIOC Board Nominations Balloting, **Sat., Feb. 2**, time to be announced.

To The Editor:

Steve Marcus's commentary in the last issue of *The WIRE* has prompted me to write about another parking issue. My concern is with the area between Westview and PS/IS 217.

For the last several years, just after the area along the driveway north of 625 was re-landscaped, Westview management allowed a parking area for its employees to develop there on top of the roots of three 30-year-old maple trees. The yew bushes that were planted are already destroyed. Now cars, vans, trucks, and SUVs are endangering those trees, not to mention destroying the curbstones.

North of the entrance to 625, just at the top of the driveway, is another off-street parking area, and here vehicles are damaging both the curbstones and the paving stones.

Ultimately, it will be the residents of Westview who will have to pay for replacing trees and repairing sidewalks and driveways. It is also Westview residents who'll be turning up the air-conditioners (and electric bills) in summer if those trees are destroyed.

And while we're on the subject of who is paying, why must residents of Westview pay to park in Motorgate or on the street while employees of RY Management get free parking? Is this declared additional income for the employees or employee benefit expense for RY Management?

So, I hope that when RIOC turns its attention to parking on Roosevelt Island it will clear up all parking issues in one fell swoop.

Eileen Gardiner

To the Editor:

Who says New York City residents are unfriendly? As a parent and Island resident, I am proud to be a part of a community that celebrates families, diversity, and the human spirit.

I have the great fortune of being under the direction of Coach Tommy, who is out each Saturday morning with a smile, energy, and enthusiasm for our kinderkickers. He is extremely animated, and motivates the children to be their best when they're out on the field. He demonstrates the values that we all strive to instill in our children, those of good sportsmanship, a sense of humor, endurance, and team work. Coach Tommy is what's right in the world. He is the type of person who is approachable and does whatever it takes to create an inclusive, team-oriented approach to soccer, while running clinics for novice parents serving as surrogate coaches. Coach Tommy has the ability and insight to bring out the best not only in the most aggressive, well-coordinated children. He motivates even the shyest, uncoordinated on the field. He is amazing!

Each Saturday he draws the kids together in a huddle and explains to them that they should wake his wife up on the top floor in Westview by shouting "Team-work." Well, I'd like to take this opportunity to shout what each family should echo after walking away from kinderkick on Saturday mornings: "Thank you, Coach Tommy!" You're inspiring children to develop the tools to become productive citizens who will change the world one day.

Keisha Lawrence

New on the Island? Catch up with WIRE back issues at nyc10044.com

Letters

To the Editor:

I would like to address the small number of "haters" amongst us who find fault with every single issue on this Island. I personally appreciate my involved neighbors who give freely of their time and talents to effect positive changes and strive in a *reasonable* manner to make our neighborhood a safer, more enjoyable place. I thank you. However, there are a few who are constantly irritating and pompous and, I believe, adversely affect the degree of positive influence that those sincere and straightforward activists have with our governing agencies. The constant nitpicking and blatantly insulting nature of these few doesn't seem to be a tactic that will make friends and influence people.

For example, I *don't* agree with sending Red Buses off-Island to "rescue" people during emergencies, unless maybe to transport the handicapped only. From Queens Plaza, we can access the Q102 bus directly to the Island, or the Q101, transferring either to the Q66 down 35th Ave. to 21st St. (a short walk to the Island) or the Q104 down Broadway to Vernon Blvd. and 34th Ave. (another short walk). That seems reasonable, knowing emergency situations *are* inconvenient; no other community I know of demands or receives transportation to their doorstep! The Red Buses are funded for Island transportation and I think that's where they belong.

I am also tired of this big protest about "privileged parking." It is *not* that widespread, nor happening with 24/7 frequency. I don't know of many professions, or people of status, that do not receive perks of some type, and I have no problem with that. Transit workers ride free, retail employees get discounts, medical people get professional courtesies, gamblers get comped, community leaders get amenities. Let he who has never received special consideration cast the first stone. Perhaps if the "haters" taking photos of cars (intrusive, unless identifying features are blocked out) and publicly insulting our Public Safety Officers acted more respectfully, they might find themselves on the receiving end of more consideration. Nice people are treated nicely, jerks are not. It's been tiresome all these years. Choose your battles, and get a life.

Gail Montague

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters of local interest to the community, and to/from officials. Requests for *Name Withheld* publication will be considered, but the writer's name, address, and phone number must be provided for verification and for our records; *letters submitted anonymously will not be published*. Recommended method of submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (plaintext e-mail preferred, or attach a file), or on a CD left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. If you e-mail, *expect a confirming response* and, if you don't receive one, *resend* and call 212-826-9055 to alert us that it's been sent. Alternatives: Typed copy left at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street; allow extra time for typesetting. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered, if brief. We are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. All letters are subject to acceptance and editing for length and clarity. Recommended maximum length, 350 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

To City Councilmember Jessica Lappin:

Last Thursday, our dear friend Dr. Kathie Grimm was hit by a bike travelling against traffic.

The fall caused her to break her hip, requiring hip replacement surgery and what will be a long and painful recuperation period.

In speaking with neighbors about this accident, it is apparent that almost everyone has numerous and recent stories about collisions and near-collisions with bikers traveling either the wrong way on a one-way street or on the wrong side of two-way streets. Pedestrians seldom look in the opposite direction from oncoming traffic, nor should it be necessary.

I was hit by a bike traveling south on the east side of Park Avenue a few weeks ago, and was almost hit another two times in the last several weeks. I am concluding that this is becoming an epidemic.

I imagine that there are already laws on the books that fine bikers who travel against the traffic.

Perhaps you can try to have these laws more thoroughly enforced, and strengthened if necessary.

Thanks kindly.

Steve Marcus

Letters deadline for October 6 issue: Tuesday, October 2
After deadline, letters are considered on a space-available basis.


The Main Street WIRE
advertising fliers are stuffed, counted, and boxed for Island-wide delivery. Join in! Call 212-826-9055 for information.

needs volunteers for WIRE-Friday "stuffing" sessions in which the newspaper and
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Senior Center

Monday

9:30, **Hawaiian Hula**
10:30, **English as 2nd Language**
12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
5:45, **Yoga**

Tuesday

9:30, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Blood Pressure**
10:30, **Shoppers' Bus**
2:00, **Bingo**
2:00, **Paint & Sculpt**
7:30, **Games (RISA)**

Wednesday

9:30, **Yoga**
10:30, **Computers**
10:30, **Shoppers' Bus**
7:00, **Pokeno (RISA)**

Thursday

9:30, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
11:00, **Tai Chi**
12:30, **Movie**

Friday

9:30, **Yoga**
9:45, 10:45, 12:30, **Senior Swim**
bus pickups at Good Shepherd stop — transport to Sportspark.
10:30, **Computers**
1:00, **Bridge**
7:00, **Games (RISA)**

Saturday

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

Special Events

Atlantic City, Wed., Oct. 17
Halloween Party, Wed., Oct. 31, 7:00 p.m.

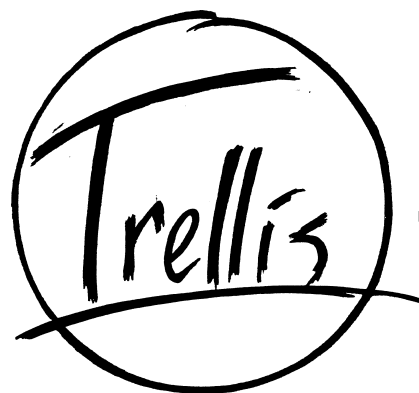
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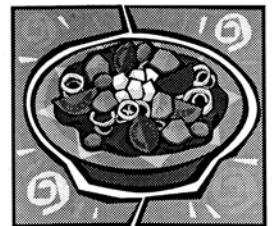
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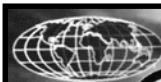
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Katz from page 2

perfluous. I will continue to pursue this with those in charge.

Important Meetings

Two meetings have taken place over the last two weeks that I hope you attended. The first was a “Ready New York” program, sponsored by Assemblymember Micah Kellner and produced by the American Red Cross with input from the Roosevelt Island Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). There is emergency contingency planning going on here to address the unique problems an island community faces during a hurricane, a blackout, or worse. You need to know as much as you can; we’ve learned to our sorrow that government services won’t necessarily bail us out.

Also, RIOC offered the community an opportunity to be heard regarding the options for Tram repairs and renovation. A decision must be made this month and so, if you couldn’t attend this meeting, your chance to be heard is gone. One way or another, the Tram will be out of service for some number of months, and we were asked for our input as we face this considerable inconvenience. RIOC has not often asked us for advice and suggestions on questions that intimately affect our quality of life. I think it is incumbent upon us to take advantage of this new attitude and to participate in our own futures. The Tram question and others will be addressed at the RIOC Board of Directors meeting on October 18 at 4:30 p.m. in the Good Shepherd Community Center and, if you can be there, do so.



The Survivor Tree

In my last column, I mentioned that survivors of the Murrah Federal Building blast in Oklahoma City who joined us for our 9/11 observances brought us a cutting from an American elm tree that barely survived that attack. It was in rocky shape as a result of its journey here, and has been residing on Margie Smith’s balcony while we researched the best place to plant it. Vicki Feinmel now reports that, with the advice of our Garden Club and Tree Board, the tree has found its permanent home behind the R-Y Management offices facing the west channel of the river. Just walk down the sloping path north of Rivercross and you will find it. It seems that elms need considerable room to spread their branches, so a home near the 9/11 Memorial’s cherry tree was out of the question. RIRA will now turn its attention to proper signage at our Survivor Tree to explain its meaning and to thank those thoughtful Oklahomans whose gift now graces Tree City, a/k/a Roosevelt Island.

Fall for Arts Festival

This weekend is replete with artistic and cultural activities. The 100 tents of *The Encampment* will cover Southpoint Park, and each will hold a Roosevelt Island storyteller. Fall for Arts activities start today at 11:00 a.m., and a comprehensive program can be found in these pages. The Good Shepherd Plaza will present many Island artists’ work for your delectation and possible purchase. Our own Julie Palermo will keep us well-fed with Julie’s Unique Cuisine. I will offer folk and blues numbers with my guitar as one of the outdoor performers on Rivercross lawn, while others perform in the Gallery RIVAA. My spouse Sherie is one of the artists providing entertainment in the Good Shepherd Community Center after 7:30 p.m. It never ceases to amaze me how considerable and how varied this tiny community’s artistic outpourings are. Give yourself a treat; come out and support your neighbors!

RIOC Board Balloting Reprised

The website I promised you in the last issue is up and running and may be accessed at www.nyc10044.com/riocelec/index.htm. It includes the Nomination and Nomination Petition forms you will need to complete should you be interested in offering your services to the community in this important role. We hope to include the State-required form in the near future. I’m getting excited, and I hope you are intrigued by what this effort may augur for this heretofore disenfranchised community.

There will be a meeting at 8:00 P.M., Wednesday evening, October 10, in the Westview lower community room to answer your questions and solicit your participation. Now is the time to find out what we are doing and how you can help. Don’t just stay tuned; get involved!

Housing Trends and the Island’s Future as a Diverse Community

Commentary by Robert Chira

Recent statements by State officials, published in *The WIRE*, indicate that the State intends to do what it can to preserve the economic diversity of the Island’s population with its mix of subsidized and market-rate housing. The State has the power to realize that objective by requiring both tenants and owners to adhere to the Island’s General Development Plan (GDP) and by withholding ground-lease extensions for Island House, Westview, and Rivercross unless certain conditions are met.

In negotiations with each of those buildings, the State is apparently insisting that all or nearly all of the currently subsidized housing units remain “affordable” and, apparently, not just to today’s tenants, but to future tenants as well.

The GDP, part of the Lease between the City and State, originally permitted only 25% of Southtown and Northtown units to be built for rental/sale at market rates; the other 75% had to be allocated for low-, moderate-, and middle-income subsidized housing. Thus, the State argues the Island was never supposed to become an exclusively high-income community like Manhattan’s Upper East Side. But, in a major concession to developers who insisted that Southtown could not be built without more market-rate housing, the State and City amended the GDP in 1990 to allow approximately 60% of Southtown’s units to be market-rate. No change was made for Northtown, which remained limited to 25% market-rate housing.

Due to the general massive appreciation in housing prices over the past few years, the per-square-foot price of the new market-rate housing units in Southtown and The Octagon (which is 80% market-rate rental housing) is more than double compared to the rates at the Island’s subsidized housing in Northtown. The State’s insistence on strict adherence to the housing allocations in the GDP means the Island will ultimately contain a two-tiered, economically diverse community – Southtown with its symbolically upscale Starbucks, and Northtown with its mid-scale Trellis restaurant.

After several years of fruitless talks, three of the original four Northtown buildings are trying to finalize negotiations with the State over their future status. Many tenants wish to own their units with the right to sell them in the open market, but need a renewal of their ground leases from the State to achieve market values. Tenants, including those at Rivercross, a Mitchell-Lama cooperative, simply hold leases that expire in 20 years. They do not own the land, which remains City property. Because of this “leasehold” structure, the value of the units is diminished in general and, with only a 20-year term left, it is rapidly dwindling. Try selling an apartment at full market rate when all you can deliver is a lease term of another 20 years of occupancy and no right to a renewal term!

Despite tenants’ wishes to become owners with market-rate units to sell, the State apparently will not help them realize those dreams – will not grant the buildings new ground leases without stringent conditions attached. In part, this position is a reaction by the Governor and Mayor to intense media and political pressures resulting from the massive loss of subsidized and regulated middle-income housing in other parts of the City, which I have described in previous *WIRE* commentaries.

Eastwood is an exception. More and more of its apartments are being rented out at market rates due to a special deal that its owner struck with the State before the media and political pressures surfaced. That deal allows the owner to rent out federally subsidized units (which constitute the bulk of Eastwood’s 1003 units) at market rates with the tenant’s rent payments

remaining below market but supplemented by the Federal government through its voucher system. It is a cruel irony that because the GDP limits Northtown to 25% market rate housing, the Eastwood deal means the 25% allowance for market-rate units in Northtown is already oversubscribed!

What can be done by the tenants at the three remaining subsidized Northtown buildings? Rental tenants at Island House and Westview face many difficult obstacles. First, they and the owners of those buildings must agree upon a price at which tenants can afford to buy under a cooperative or condominium plan. The buildings will then need massive capital infusions to renovate and repair them. Raising rents/maintenance on the tenants as new owners or having the building borrow funds is not an attractive option, as it imposes the costs on the tenants rather than tapping the substantial market value that would exist if sales at market rates were permitted. Nor will a prospective “deep-pockets” buyer, who can wait until present tenants vacate, be attracted to buy the buildings from the present owners if units cannot be sold at market rate. Indeed, how else can a new owner recover a purchase-and-renovation investment other



Longtime resident Robert Chira practices law in Manhattan.

than by realizing the market value of units? Allowing sales at market value by older residents to young families has the added benefit of revitalizing the community and its schools, as well as facilitating the move by seniors to re-locate to warmer locales.

It is rumored that one condition discussed by the State with Island House and Westview tenants’ negotiating committees is for a substantial part of the profit from any permitted market-rate sales to be retained by the building for capital needs and to keep rents at affordable levels for future generations, and not simply pocketed by the selling tenant.

It is also rumored that negotiations with Rivercross are taking a back seat as the State focuses, instead, on Island House and Westview.

Rivercross’s tenant/shareholders also have only 20 years left on their leases, but may be able to obtain a longer renewal term from the State by committing to sales to affordable buyers. Selling to buyers in the same income stratum should satisfy the State’s priority on maintaining “affordability.” Rivercross might also be required to present a plan that keeps most of the profit from market sales in the building for needed capital repairs and to protect tenants from higher maintenance fees.

From observation of housing trends and the public comments made by State officials, several matters seem clear:

- First, the Island’s overall character is changing as more and more units are sold/rented at market rates in Southtown and The Octagon.
- Second, the State apparently will not grant new leases for additional 40-year terms beyond the current term that ends in 2027 without conditions being met that will keep the units essentially “affordable” for present as well as future generations.
- Third, unless the GDP is amended, it does not appear realistic to hope for market sales of all units in Northtown.
- Fourth, most observers believe that any practical and realistic plan must allow for at least some market sales so as to generate the substantial funds needed to renovate the buildings and keep them affordable.
- Fifth, tenants of Island House, Westview, or Rivercross should not expect to retain a substantial portion of the profits from any market rate sales that are permitted.

The end result of these forces and conditions is that the Island is likely to remain an economically diverse community with at least half of its overall population being low-, moderate-, and middle-income residents.

Shane from page 2

12. **Southtown Construction:** Building 5 & 6 foundations are almost complete, and superstructure work is ready to start. A giant crane was delivered by barge, and the erection work should be quite the project.

13. **Fall Festival for the Arts:** This weekend, all sorts of festivities and presentations. Be a participant and/or support the artists. *The Encampment* at Southpoint

should be a very interesting presentation.

14. **5K Run:** Last Saturday morning, a 5K run was sponsored by “Women for Women International” to help support women from the Congo. Any interruption in Island service was very brief for this worthwhile cause.

Finally, on a personal note, I’m off to Scotland for a week of golf with my sons and a weekend in London with my wife in antcipa-

tory celebration of my 70th birthday. RIOC’s open door policy will continue in my absence, so if there are any issues, please contact Fernando Martinez, Vice President for Operations, Carla Van De Walle, Vice President and CFO, or Ken Leitner, Vice President and General Counsel. All will be in touch with me. See you at the October 18 Board meeting [see *ComingUp*, page 3].

Island’s Leandra Ramm Finds Her Voice – and Her Dream

by Rachel Durfee

Leandra Ramm knew she was hooked on opera before she graduated from high school. “I was about 15 or 16 years old and I went to see *Madame Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Opera,” she says. “I went by myself on a \$25 student ticket and sat in the orchestra. I went to see what it was like and I was so moved...I was crying so much at the end...tears dripping down my face because it was so moving, so riveting...[it was] such an emotional experience.”

Less than a decade later, Ramm is a professional mezzo soprano with a long list of accomplishments. Without a note of bragging, she calmly ticks off performances in *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Barber of Seville* in places like Prague, Vienna, England, and Carnegie Hall. Nonchalantly, she mentions that she also plays flute and piano; she can sing and dance; and she speaks Italian, French, German, and Spanish, as well as bits of Russian and Czech. “To me, opera is the highest art form because it is a weave of music, acting, the human voice, instrumental music, great literature, and sometimes even ballet and other forms of dance. It combines all these arts to tell a story through the voice.”

Ramm, who has striking green eyes, high cheekbones, and wavy auburn hair, was born and raised on Roosevelt Island. It was here that she first thought of becoming a singer. “When I was about 14, my mother’s dance teacher, who was like a grandmother to me, took me for a walk and asked me what I wanted to do. I said I didn’t know and she asked me, ‘What makes you really happy?’ and I said, right away, ‘singing.’ And she said, ‘Then you should be a singer.’”

Ramm’s melodic voice overflows with enthusiasm when talking about her career path. From third through eighth grades she performed with the Main Street Children’s Theatre, to which she credits her early love of performing. There, Ramm sparred with an amorous Curly when she played Laurie in *Oklahoma!* and crooned about summer nights as Sandy in *Grease!*

At 14, Ramm won an international competition for solo voice as a member of the Young People’s Chorus of New York, which inspired her to pursue classical music seriously. She won a full scholarship to the Manhattan School of Music and received a degree in classical voice.

After graduation, Ramm began auditioning with different opera companies for an apprenticeship. Growing up in New York City gave her unparalleled audition opportunities: “Other cities simply don’t have the same exposure to classes and teachers.” She landed an apprenticeship with the Sarasota Opera in Florida, and “I’ve been singing ever since.”

Like others in her field, Ramm travels the world on a grueling schedule in order to remain a full-time singer. Most recently, in only a couple of months, she has lived and performed in England, Arizona, and New York City. She cites the frequent traveling as one of the challenges of being in the business. “Though it’s wonderful to visit all these places, it’s hard being away from your family,” but “Opera is a very small world, and I’ll see a lot of the same people over and over again.”

On or off the road, singers are training intensely. “You have to be a triple threat,” Ramm explains, “meaning great voice, great acting, and great dance skills.” How does she stay at the top of her game? There are weekly voice lessons with a private teacher, weekly sessions with diction coaches, language classes, dance classes, fitness classes, and music theory classes, not to mention the hours spent studying a single role.

Ramm laughs when she hears the stereotype of large, red-lipsticked sopranos shattering opera house glass. “It’s not big, fat singers that just stand there and sing anymore,” she says. “Now you have to have everything.”

Even when a singer has it all, not every role is the right one, Ramm explains. When she is first offered a part, she has to make sure that it is healthy for her vocally, as well as a good career move. Once she accepts, she must read the libretto from front to back and research the background of the composer and librettist, learn the origins of the story, and decide where her character fits. “I translate every script word-for-word,” says Ramm. “You have to know every single word you’re singing – otherwise, it’s just sound.” Depending on the language, this task can be demanding. Italian is her favorite because “it’s easy to sing, and has a wonderful bel canto repertoire.” Bel canto literally means “beautiful singing” and, according to Ramm, it is a term

used in opera to describe the 17th century Italian vocal technique made famous by composers like Rossini and Bellini. For any role, most singers will have one main coach to train with, but will additionally employ specialist coaches depending on the source of the opera (French, German, etc.), and every opera company also has coaches on staff. But again, there’s no place like New York: “At home, I can pick up the phone and find a specialist in an hour.”

Only after all this prep work does Ramm let herself go to the piano, where she opens to the first page of the opera and starts singing. As for forgetting on stage? “The memorization sort of comes naturally,” she says breezily. Ideally, says Ramm, a singer will want at least a month to prepare before rehearsals, but sometimes the process is more rushed.

In fact, performers sometimes have only one to two weeks to prepare, which “can affect the smoothness of the rehearsals and the ultimate performance.”

Extensive prep work pays off, but Ramm says that the most important element of a successful performance is fully embodying the character. Ramm says her favorite roles are those that explore human relationships, adding that with every costume she puts on, she must first understand her character’s motivations in order to truly become her—or him, as the case may be. Of her first professional onstage opportunity in San Francisco in 2001, where Ramm sang in *The Marriage of Figaro*, she says: “Surprisingly, I wasn’t that nervous because I felt like I was the character. I felt like I was telling a story and [instead of having stage fright] it was a great experience.”

Costumes and make-up help on the exterior. The process usually takes one to two hours, but “if you are completely transforming, it could take much longer.”

She says with heavy make-up, wigs, and elaborate costumes, there is usually a dresser and a make-up artist backstage. “It is amazing looking in the mirror after the make-up and hair is done, and seeing yourself look completely different,” she says. “Sometimes I don’t recognize myself, especially if I am playing a male role.” When she performed as Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*, a “pants role,” as male roles are called in opera, Ramm says, “this was the role most different from the real-life me. I actually thought a lot of my teenage brother, to give me inspiration on how to walk and act.”

Currently, Ramm is in Tucson, participating in a program called Education Outreach. She is part of a small cast of four singers performing a children’s version of *The Magic Flute* by Mozart, Ramm’s favorite composer. Along with a soprano, tenor, baritone, pianist, and stage manager, Ramm is touring the entire state from August through this month, performing at different elementary schools.

The young singer describes her days as long and exhausting. She wakes up at 5:30 each morning, jumps into a van with the group at 6:20, and travels to the first school. The cast sets up the stage, gets into costume, and warms up. In addition to loosening up her vocal chords, Ramm stretches her entire body, giving one a sense of how kinetic each of her performances is. Ramm plays four characters and has “about a zillion costume changes.” After they perform, the group takes down the set, hops back in the van, and travels up to two more hours to the next school. A short break for lunch, and it’s time for the second performance. Ramm’s day ends around 5:00 and she is in bed by 8:00, “because I have to get up and do the same thing the next day.”

This is Ramm’s third time performing with an Outreach Tour, a unique experience because “it can really touch children... It’s great to instill the arts into the lives of young people.” She remembers performing arts groups visiting PS 217 on Roosevelt Island and believes that “they have a lasting effect. Maybe not [all these kids will] go into opera, but hopefully they will have some sort of music or performing arts in their lives.”

Ramm considers herself lucky to have been working consistently since she turned professional. Her real motivation is her desire to reach every audience: “Even though [performing] makes me happy and I love to do it, it’s really about influencing other people and seeing people moved. Ensemble pieces that make everyone in the audience have tears in their eyes, that moment is priceless. It’s worth everything to me.”

For those who hear “opera” and think “boring,” Ramm’s advice is, “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” She adds passionately, “Opera is so much more than people just standing there singing. It’s wonderful singing, wonderful sto-

ries. You can go to an opera and walk out of that opera a changed person.” Plus, she insists, “Traditional operas will always be there, but there are modern takes.” Operas and musicals are also increasingly melding. Shows like 1996’s *Rent*, for example, enjoy huge success. Opera companies are also adjusting to the times by filming operas and then screening them at movie theatres, and, live or filmed, Ramm promises there are always English translations on an overhead screen. Plus, she adds, with “millions” being spent on sets, costumes, and special effects, it’s entertaining. “You can like movies and TV and still love opera,” she says adamantly. “I think young people would be surprised. There’s so much more to it [than the stereotypes].”

Speaking of young, many pros say an opera singer’s peak is between the ages of 45 and 55, but Ramm doesn’t see her age – 23 – as a handicap. Rather, she’s excited that she’s begun so early. “Hopefully I can keep singing until I’m in my 60s.” Though she admits she was lucky—“I got a lot of ‘yes’s”—Ramm attributes her success to perseverance more than anything else. “Don’t let setbacks stop you,” she says energetically. “If you get rejected, keep at it. There’s always another audition tomorrow.” She adds that to keep the auditions coming, “staying healthy is the most important thing,” and getting a cold is one of her biggest fears. She takes vitamins daily, drinks plenty of water (“I’m chugging water now because of the [low] humidity in Arizona”), and tries to get enough sleep. With that in mind, she has to head to bed. There is another day of singing ahead of her tomorrow.

For more information, visit www.LeandraRamm.com. On November 2, Ramm will be back in New York performing in an American Art Song recital sponsored by the Greenwich Music House in the West Village (www.gharts.com).

Fall for Arts

Today (Saturday, October 6)

Schedule of exhibits and performances

Good Shepherd Plaza

- 11:00-5:00** – Artists displaying their works
11:00-5:00 – *The Authors Project* – Authors with their books
11:30 – James R. Baehler, *The Temple of Ill Omens*
12:00 – Jami Bernard, *The Incredible Shrinking Critic – My Excellent Adventure in Weight Loss*
12:30 – Roy Eaton, *Keyboard Classics for Children*
1:00 – Jim Luce, *Riding the Tiger – The Creation of Orphans International*
1:30 – Ethel Grodzins Romm – *The Open Conspiracy: What America’s Angry Generation Is Saying*
2:00 – Richard J. Lutz – *Jadwiga’s Crossing – A Story of the Great Migration*
2:30 – G. T. Gyatso – *Things Big Adventure*
3:00 – Judith Berdy – *Images of America: Roosevelt Island*
11:00-5:00 – Food, desserts, entertainment for children

Rivercross Lawn

- 11:00-3:00** – Main stage performances
11:05 – PS 217 students, ballroom dancing
12:00 – David Kraut, guitar/folk
12:30 – MST&DA, *Tap Jam*
1:05 – Matthew Katz, guitar/folk and blues
1:35 – Sharon Bermon, tai chi demonstration
2:00 – Child School/Legacy High School, choral music
2:25 – Zen Holmes, West African dance
3:00 – Music, to be announced
3:30 – *Hector Ramos El Galan de la Salsa* band
4:30 – Rock band *Early Edison*

Sportspark

- 11:00** – Free art workshop – painting

Gallery RIVAA

- 11:00-5:00** – *Stone and Fire*, photography of Tad Sudol
1:00 – Antoinette Davis, guitar concert (all ages)
2:00 – Naomi Imbrogno, spoken word – poetry
2:15 – Kenny Sales, spoken word – poetry
2:35 – Poets from Coler/Goldwater – spoken word
4:00 – Isadora Duncan classical modern dance

Southpoint Park

- 7:00-1:00 a.m.** – *The Encampment*, installation by Thom Sokolowski

Good Shepherd Community Center

- 7:30** – Mitch Elinson, clarinet, and Richard Buchbinder, klezmer
7:50 – Marianne Labriola, spirituals
8:15 – Natalia Gruzdeva, classical flute
8:30 – Sherie Helstien, soprano, and Elizabeth O’Neil, piano, art songs
8:45 – Chris Fuller, guitar
8:55 – Roy Eaton, classical piano
9:25 – Blair Strain Madison, modern songs
9:35 – Juanita Fleming, gospel

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12:30pm-Final pick up of all participants of the Senior Swim program

For More Information, Call Carol Rubino at 212-832-4569

Icla from page 1

doesn't even begin to describe the difficulty.

But over the course of the past 15 years, the Foundation has recruited more than 75,000 potential donors, and has become the largest bone-marrow recruitment center in the United States. As a constituent donor-recruitment organization of the National Marrow Donor Program, the Foundation was given a recruitment goal of 6,700 donors in 2006; actual new donors registered by the Foundation numbered 10,345. In 2007, the number of new donors will reach over 14,000.

The Foundation works with a population that is difficult to reach, educating and registering donors, but also providing a range of services to pediatric patients and their families at the most stressful period in their lives. The Foundation has achieved certified matches of 75 unrelated donors for leukemia patients, and effected an additional 250 transplants from relatives who would not otherwise have known that they might be a match, or might not know how to access the medical care delivery system.

In 2006, the Foundation provided services to over 100 families, including education about the disease and the range of treatment options, expedited access to premier medical facilities regardless of the ability to pay, and psycho-social support from the point of diagnosis through periods of hospitalization and post-release care.

For me, Icla's suffering and my family's experience made clear the importance of the mission the Foundation took on – to minimize the pain and suffering of patients and their families, but most importantly, finding and providing a compatible donor. That is the gift of life.

Today, the Icla da Silva Foundation continues to receive the support of many Roosevelt Islanders. As a resident, I am

proud to say that the support of Island residents helped make the Foundation visible world wide, internationally recognized for life-saving work.

Since the Foundation's patient base is drawn from all sectors of the United States and Central and South America, its staff assists in arranging transportation to the medical care site, securing housing, and providing patient advocacy within the complex medical care system. About 90 percent of the Foundation's patient base consists of the economically disadvantaged, from both the United States and other nations. For that reason, the Foundation provides grants, judiciously administered, to the neediest families. This can involve a need for warm clothing for families from a warm climate, for example. All such services are provided by the small Foundation staff with the help of culturally sensitive bilingual volunteers.

The organization is celebrating 15 years of saving lives on Wednesday, October 17, 2007, at New York's most prestigious and spectacular landmark restaurant, Tavern on the Green, located at Central Park West at 67th Street in Manhattan. Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are still available. Please contact me, Airam da Silva, at 212-593-0474 or by e-mail at Airam@icla.org for more information on the event, as well as how to get involved as a volunteer or supporter. Our website is at www.icla.org and we'll answer questions directed to info@icla.org.

The October 17 evening will begin with a cocktail reception with live music and a silent auction, followed by dinner and dancing. We anticipate that the highlight of the evening will be a first-time meeting between a former leukemia patient, who received assistance from the Foundation, and his bone-marrow donor, who was identified and recruited by the Foundation.



The Icla da Silva Foundation is helping the family of Zoamy Ortiz, from Puerto Rico, during a transplant procedure.

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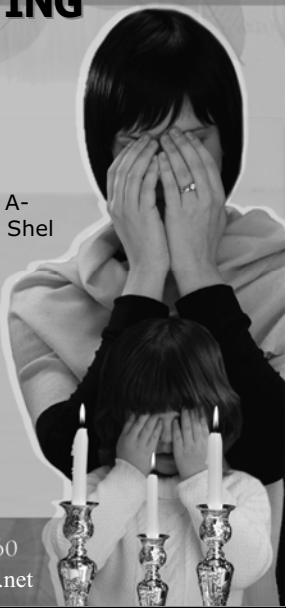
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Translation: Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the light of the holy Shabbat.



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ROOSEVELT ISLAND DAY NURSERY

DHCR from page 1

resulted in deterioration of facilities, waste of taxpayer money, increase in charges to tenants, and the allocation of apartments to unqualified applicants at the expense of those legitimately entitled to those same apartments.”

At Westview as well as at the other two New York City buildings chosen for close audit, “We found numerous instances of apartments being provided to individuals who were ineligible or had unfairly jumped ahead of others on the waiting list.”

The I.G.’s audit was undertaken, and the buildings chosen for audit, largely in response to complaints – complaints the report said DHCR had failed to handle properly. The I.G. found that DHCR had no system for logging complaints, maintaining records of them, or recording the results of investigations, and that all too often, the subjects of complaints were asked to follow up on the complaints, effectively investigating and acquitting themselves on charges of violations of DHCR’s rules, then losing the records of the complaint and investigation.

“Astonishingly, in 109, or 70 percent of the 156 tenancies” reviewed, the report says of all three buildings examined, “the housing companies had granted apartments despite the fact that the applications had not been submitted to DHCR for approval or had been submitted but returned as incomplete or denied... DHCR failed to detect or correct these irregularities because it neglected to enforce its own rules and properly train its staff,” and “Further, DHCR failed to detect unauthorized residents... because it conducted so few audits of apartment rent rolls” even when

a simple comparison of a rent roll against income affidavit submissions would show irregularities.

The current head of DHCR, Deborah VanAmerongen, signed off on an eight-page response to the report, listing “immediate, short-term, and long-term goals and strategies” developed to deal with the issues in the I.G.’s report “to restore public confidence in DHCR’s supervision of the Mitchell-Lama program.”

The DHCR response also says, *It didn’t happen on our watch:* “While the report finds that certain

ganization became a potential buyer in 2003-2004, management passed from Roosevelt Island Housing Management to a company chosen by Sheldrake; when the Sheldrake deal fell through, management moved to another entity – presently RY Management (RY stands for Ruppert-Yorkville), whose Island operations are headed by Jennifer Jones, the daughter of a former DHCR Assistant Commissioner. Responding to a *WIRE* query, Jones said, “The report of the New York State Inspector General was a review of the

New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal’s oversight of the Mitchell-Lama program. With respect to the findings in Westview, R.Y. Management Co., Inc. is investigating each item and will address each one on a case by case basis. Nevertheless, R.Y. Management Co., Inc., has and will continue to

manage Westview and Island House as per the Rules and Regulations of DCHR.”

“At Westview,” the I.G.’s report continues, we tested a sample of 37 tenancies whose postal change of address records did not coincide with tenant records at the complex. These 37 accounted for approximately 10 percent of the apartments... We found that 13 did not have DHCR approval for occupancy and 15 were not eligible according to regulations. The majority of the non-approved tenancies at Westview involved applications of relatives to take over the apartment lease...

“Of the tenancies that were examined at Westview, 10 involved [family member] succession rights. In none of these succession tenancies was an application submitted

employees broke the law and that others may have abused their position or neglected their responsibilities, please be assured that these isolated cases do not reflect the professionalism or work ethic of DHCR’s 900+ workforce. Since the period covered by the report, new leadership has assumed responsibility for DHCR and senior staff is actively working to dispel any impression that the actions of those former employees reflect the conduct of any current staff members.”

Westview

Westview’s recent history and chain of responsibility for failures to observe DHCR’s rules has been clouded by changes of management brought on by efforts of its owners to divest themselves of the project. When the Sheldrake Or-

From the I.G. Report
DHCR Failures Under Pataki

- Failed to prevent warehousing.
- Failed to enforce reporting requirements.
- Failed to examine reports, even when submitted.
- Allowed flagrant abuse of apartment allocation standards.
- Did only three rent-roll audits between 2002 and 2006.
- Failed to make more than half the required field visits.
- Failed to perform many required inspections.
- Failed to track accounting irregularities.
- Failed to track conflicts of interest.
- Failed to log and track complaints.
- Failed to monitor waiting lists adequately.
- Disproportionate number of DHCR employees living in Mitchell-Lama housing, or housing that recently left Mitchell-Lama. (This suggests that DHCR employees may have been snapping up apartments that they could shortly sell at a profit.)

VanAmerongen Responds

Following is the text of DHCR Commissioner Deborah VanAmerongen’s comments at a press conference announcing the Inspector General’s report.

Thank you, Inspector General Hamann, for the opportunity to be here today to talk about all the steps we’ve already taken to make the Division of Housing and Community Renewal more effective, more transparent, and more accountable.

The Division of Housing and Community Renewal performs a great many functions, the vast majority of them very well. The staff of DHCR is committed to the mission of providing affordable housing and revitalizing communities, and they should be proud of all they accomplish.

However, it has been clear for some time that the Division sometimes suffered from a lack of sufficient support and attention.

Governor Spitzer has made it clear that affordable housing is a top priority for his administration. As such, he wants to ensure that DHCR is as effective, transparent, and accountable as possible.

I’m happy to report that we’ve accomplished a great deal in a very short time.

Upon my appointment in February, I immediately implemented a plan of action to reorganize and revitalize the Division. One of my first acts – in order to re-establish the integrity of DHCR – was to suspend without pay the three employees who had been indicted for abuse of their offices as noted in the Inspector General’s report.

I assembled a new leadership team of housing professionals to help me fulfill the Governor’s mandate to make DHCR a national leader among affordable housing agencies.

Volunteer Ombudsmen Sought for Roosevelt Island Hospital Patients

The New York Foundation for Senior Citizens is looking for volunteers willing to serve four or more hours a week as advocates for seniors in nursing homes and adult homes. There are 56,000 residents of such facilities in the City, and New York State requires at least one ombudsman in each of the facilities.

The ombudsmen visit residents weekly and work with them and facility staff to maintain high standards of care. The Foundation says the volunteers find the work rewarding. Taking on the task involves providing three references, completion of a free training program, and a commitment to serve four hours a week. There’s an age minimum of 21.

The Foundation boosted its pool of volunteers from 70 in 2005 to 170 today, but has a need for replacements as volunteers come and go.

A spokeswoman for the Foundation told *The WIRE* that volunteers are needed to fill the ombudsman role at both care facilities on Roosevelt Island – the Coler facility near the north end, and Goldwater, near the south end.

For more information, or to volunteer, call 212-962-2720, or e-mail dwarburton@nyfscitcop.org. The New York Foundation for Senior Citizens maintains a website at www.nyfsc.org.

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to DHCR for approval... We found that only two of the 10 had sufficient documentation to support a request for succession rights. Five... lacked sufficient proof that the succession applicant was a family member, and three lacked proof that the apartment had been the primary residence of both the tenant of record and the succession applicant for at least two years, as regulations require.

“For the period 1998 to 2006, we found that Westview submitted no succession applications to DHCR for approval. When we asked the current housing company manager about this situation, she said she believed that many housing companies... believe the right to succession is implied...”

“We found 43 individuals in 33 apartments who appeared to have lived there... without appearing on the housing company’s list of tenants... We found that 25 of these 43 individuals... had not been reported... on the income affidavit.” The report observes that such activity creates a presumption of aggregate apartment income over the limits, which would result in surcharges and that, because the surcharges were not levied, allowing “violators to benefit from lower rents” at the expense of other tenants.

A broader investigation suggested that “for... 27 apartments whose residents we were not able to contact,” there is the possibility that the apartments are illegally possessed and illegally sublet to non-approved residents who may not qualify as tenants under the income rules. “DHCR lacked procedures to check if the tenant residing in an apartment is the correct tenant. When we raised this issue with DHCR management staff, they said they viewed it as a housing company matter, not a DHCR problem, claiming that the... management agent is in the best position to verify continued occupancy eligibility...”

“At Westview, residents of two apartments submitted income affidavits indicating that the occupants

earned over \$500,000 per year. These tenants exceed the maximum allowable income by at least \$200,000.” Rents paid in these cases are \$1,500 (two bedrooms) and \$2,000 (three bedrooms).

“We found that warehousing of Mitchell-Lama units appeared to be occurring at Westview,” where there is “a waiting list of more than 1,000 applicants. As of August 2006, the complex had 31 vacant apartments, each of which had been vacant for an average of 327 days.” This warehousing was part of a Westview plan that would have led to an exit from Mitchell-Lama and profits for the owner. The I.G.’s report said that under the management selected by Sheldrake, vacancies rose from “three to five” to 27, “a rate of 7.5 percent.”

The report says that, “In February, 2006, a Westview resident complained to DHCR about ‘major warehousing of apartments,’” and says that while a DHCR field representative had noted the problem a year earlier, the representative had never referred the matter to DHCR management until the 2006

complaint came up. The report says DHCR took “no additional action until June of 2006, when a second complaint was received and after the Inspector General had begun this review.” Four months later, the vacancy rate had grown to 8 percent.

In an e-mail, current DHCR chief Deborah VanAmerongen told *The WIRE*, “I am sure you know that since I assumed my position we have addressed the issue of renting vacancies at Island House and Westview.”

Outmoded Systems

VanAmerongen went on, “I am encouraged by the support I have received from staff here at DHCR, who work extraordinarily hard, but are dealing with outmoded systems and procedures, right up to the Governor’s office, which knows that an effective DHCR is essential to further the affordable housing mission he has articulated.”

DATA

The Mitchell-Lama program bears the names of the legislative sponsors, State Senator MacNeil Mitchell and Assemblyman Alfred Lama. It was passed in 1955. 289 developments, with more than 105,000 units, were built under the program. Today, 189 remain in the State program, comprising 80,000 apartments, the majority in New York City. The City has 107 additional projects.

Tramway from page 1

\$14.25 million – just about the amount the State has set aside. Six months of downtime would be involved.

• Alternative 3 would result in a system very similar to that in Alternative 2, but it would add an alternative drive motor, increasing reliability. The hit in downtime would be seven months, and the cost would be \$17.25 million.

• Alternative 4 would involve a departure from the present “jigback” or “clothesline” system in which cabins move simultaneously in opposite directions. In this scheme, the two sides of the system would be separated, and they would be able to operate independently. Cost: \$20.4 million and seven months of downtime.

Shane clearly prefers the fourth alternative, as did most of the residents who engaged in a Q&A after his presentation. Shane cited greater reliability, operating flexibility (half the system could be idled in non-rush periods, or for maintenance), and a stranded-cabin rescue scheme in which a bridge would allow passengers to cross from the cabin on the disabled side to a cabin brought even with it on the other side.

Coping With Downtime

Residents were concerned about another set of alternatives – what to do for transportation without a Tramway to relieve subway overcrowding, especially at rush hour, or to cope when the F line is out of commission for one reason or another. Extra subway trains are simply not operationally feasible, according to the MTA, so reliance could be placed on buses taking rush-hour commuters to Queens Plaza to board subway trains there. But Shane and others observed that buses going all the way to Manhattan were slow at times, inconvenient almost all the time, unreliable, and underutilized in previous Tramway outages.

It seemed apparent that the subway, which now handles two-thirds of the morning rush traffic (see graph, page 12) would get some additional action during a planned Tramway outage. For some who commute at the peak, this would probably mean watching multiple trains load and leave before they could board.

Shane was prepared for the concern. “It is my pledge,” he said, “that I am going to try to see whether RIOC has the resources to devote itself to organizing a timetable that will minimize the [Tramway] downtime. That will cost more, so that rather than costing \$20 million, it may cost as much as \$25 million, so RIOC would have to come up with \$10 million... Whether we would allocate the additional money is up to the [RIOC] Board [of Directors].”

Breakeven

Shane had some good news about the Tram’s current financials. “Tram usage is up and now we’re at breakeven,” he said, acknowledging that the calculation ignores the original capital investment. He said that income now runs to almost \$300,000 a month, even while costs are going up for parts,

people, and energy. He said the New York Power Authority has warned RIOC to expect a 15% increase in electricity cost next year.

Cost figures for the four alternatives, projected over the life of each, produced some numbers showing that annual revenue exceeded annual cost of operation. The simplest alternative, number 1, would produce a net income of six cents per passenger trip for its projected usefulness of seven years. But it would produce a loss of ten cents per ride if figured at five years of useful life – or 19 cents if the system life could be stretched to ten years.

For the others, with a projected 30 years of life, the numbers are more solid:

- Alternative 2, 17 cents per ride.
- Alternative 3, 11 cents.
- Alternative 4, 6 cents — lower because of the higher initial cost of a separated system.

Whatever course is chosen, Shane said, “This is not a waste of money. The investment of this money is appropriate if you make the cost-benefit assumptions. We have demonstrated to the State watchdogs that we’re spending the State money wisely, no matter which of the alternatives we choose.”

Annual Downtime

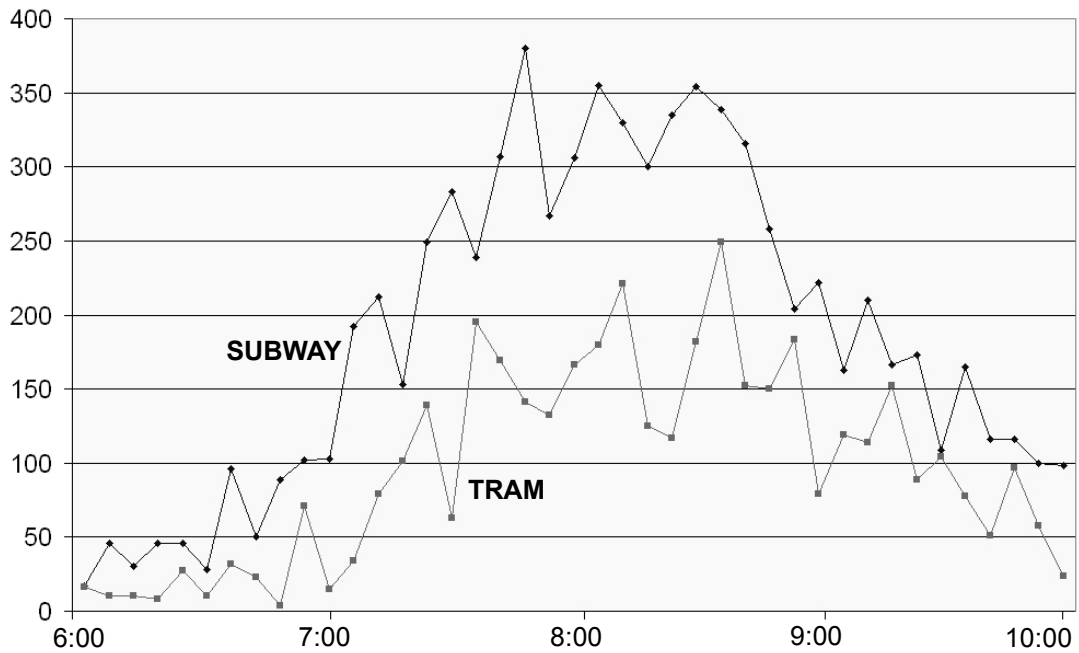
According to the records, today’s Tram system is down some 850 hours a year for standard maintenance

work, and that would probably continue to be the number if the fastest, lowest-cost alternative (#1) were selected, according to Shane. Annual downtime drops to 580 hours under Alternative 2, 440 under Alternative 3, and all the way down to just 25 hours a year – essentially nil – with the independent systems of Alternative 4. As Shane discussed the choices, he emphasized the reliability for passengers in a separated system, and suggested that independent operation of cabins might also produce a rush-hour passenger-load increase of 10% by allowing two more trips per hour. “You want the system to be working when you get there to use it,” he said, emphasizing the greater dependability the Tramway consultants said would be available from independently operable cabins.

“You can always count on the system,” Shane went on. “I think that is a huge benefit. It comes with a larger cost and a cost in [longer] downtime [during construction], but it has a major benefit, obviously reducing the future downtime. It gives you flexibility. We can take one [side] out of operation, maintain it, then put it back in service. During off-peak hours, we can operate one car rather than two, with one operator rather than two.”

DATA

Shape of the Morning Rush



Data requested from the New York City Transit shows turnstile swipes over a four-hour period, totaled over three days (Monday-Wednesday, September 10-12), indicating that the peak of the morning rush arrives just before 8:00 and continues strong until 8:45. Because turnstile data are recorded every six minutes but Red Bus arrivals do not coincide, lines appear jagged, dipping at data points between Red Bus arrivals and, in the case of the Tramway, dipping at periods between Tram arrivals, when the tape is lowered to permit passage to the platform. The lesson of the data seems to be that avoiding 8:00-8:45 a.m. will make your commute smoother. The data do not reflect the available capacity of F trains arriving from Queens.



Prof. Rene Testa of the Columbia University Graduate School of Engineering, Shane’s right-hand consultant in analyzing the data brought in by the three consulting firms that pronounced today’s system safe and reasonably reliable, sat quietly throughout Shane’s presentation, answering only one question during the later Q&A; Shane carried the ball calmly throughout, getting annoyed with a questioner only once when told, “You can’t take the system out of service. Lives will be

lost.” Shane pointed out that there is no choice – that, at a minimum, track ropes must be replaced.

Constraints

In discussing the possibilities for revising the Tramway, Shane listed

a series of constraints RIOC faces; they tend to place hard limits on any desire to increase the system’s capacity. They include these:

- Cabins can’t increase much in weight, because the towers have limits and, as a practical matter, cannot be completely rebuilt.
- Cabins can’t be wider, because the Manhattan station can’t be modified without City permitting that would entail giving up “grandfathered” status for parameters — like height over Second Avenue — that have grown more stringent since the Tramway was built.
- A double-decker system is out for the same reason, as well as for the reason of weight.
- There are sway limits that would affect any change of design, because a new building is planned very close to the Tram’s path.

Questions & Answers

Residents who stood up to question and comment elicited some additional information from Shane: • He’s added 20% to the time and cost figures he’s been given. • Downtime associated with the project, for whatever alternative is selected, isn’t likely to start for at least a year, and it could be spring

of 2009 before work would begin.

• Responding to suggestions that the MTA be asked to tailor its subway work to avoid further inconvenience to Islanders while the Tram is down, Shane said, “RIOC is a peanut in this enterprise. I can send letters and e-mails, but the head of the MTA gets those from every community that wants better service.” He said Islanders who want to pressure the MTA should work through their elected representatives, but held out little hope that the Island would get special consideration in the context of the huge demand for transit from Queens to Manhattan that causes rush-hour trains to arrive full at the Island platforms.

• To a woman who expressed doubt that a seven-month schedule could be met, Shane pointed out that the four-and-a-half-month outage occasioned by the April, 2005, episode in which passengers were stuck above the East River was an unplanned outage. He said that with planning, preordering, and prestaging of parts, a planned outage could adhere to a schedule more readily than was possible when RIOC had to order parts on an emergency basis.

RIOC now telecasts meetings like Thursday night’s session via its website, RIOC.com.



Run for Congo Women Draws On- and Off-Island Participants

by Misha Cohen

A war has been waging in the Democratic Republic of Congo for over five years. Rebel groups and government troops have been raiding villages, kidnapping, killing, and torturing civilians, and using sexual violence against women and children as a weapon of war. Over three million have died, many directly at the hands of combatants, and others due to war-related causes. Millions more have been driven from their homes.

Women are among the most vulnerable. It has been called Africa’s first World War. It has gone unnoticed by many, but not by Lisa Shannon. When she learned of the violence targeting Congolese women three years ago, she started the grass-roots organization, Run for Congo Women, which not only raises awareness through runs, walks, and hikes, but also raises money to sponsor women of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in conjunction with the organization Women for Women International.

Last weekend, Run for Congo Women had a 5K run/walk event on Roosevelt Island. As a resident I have run around the Island many times, enjoying the quiet and the views. But Run for Congo felt different: I was inspired by seeing people come together to raise awareness for women who live across the world. As I ran, I felt that I was doing something that would impact the life of another. I ran with purpose.

Marianne Lau and Marc Diamond, longtime Islanders, felt the same. Marianne said she grieved after learning about the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. And when she heard that similar crimes were being committed in the Democratic Republic of Congo by the same Hutu extremists, she felt compelled to be a part of the run. She got her husband on board and together they ran for Congo women.

To learn more: runforcongowomen.org / www.womenforwomen.org.



Lisa Shannon, founder of the Congo Run for Women, at last weekend’s event on the Island.

Photo: Misha Cohen

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