



A view of the Cornell Tech construction site from the Tram.

The Main Street WIRE

36:09
Saturday, January 23, 2016

Library Starts New Chapter

by Sara Maher

You won't need to be an avid reader to make good use of Roosevelt Island's new library.

Last week, representatives from the New York Public Library (NYPL) presented the plans for our new branch, revealing a space that more than doubles the Island's current library in both square footage and resources.

Room to Grow

The NYPL used Islanders' responses to their presentation in fall 2014, and the online survey that followed, to help create the final floor plan designed by Smith-Miller & Hawkinson Architects. The new branch will make use of 5,465 square feet on the ground floor of 504 Main Street. Compare that to the current library's 2,200 square feet. "Currently, there are a lot of books but not a lot of room for people,"

said Risa Honig, Vice President of Capital Planning and Construction. "[Now] we can host events or meetings."

Space to use for programs and community events was very important to Islanders, ranked only behind access to standard library resources, in the results of the online survey. Christopher Platt, Vice President for Library Services, said they received 456 responses to the survey, with all but nine of the responders using the library on a regular basis and 30% of responses coming from Island parents. The NYPL estimates 44% of Islanders have a library card. According to a statement issued by the NYPL, 91% of survey respondents listed access to books, information, and expert librarian help as their top priority, followed by "programs for children and teens (46%), exhibitions and

See **Library**, page 8



Planned New Library Interior

RIVAA Rebounds with Creative Optimism

by David Stone

Midway through the opening reception for Vernissage XIV, Roosevelt Island Visual Art Association's (RIVAA) season opener in March, 2015, RIVAA President, Tad Sudol, called a packed gathering of art lovers and artists together in a group.

"It's no secret that we've been closed for the last six weeks," he opened soberly.

The group was struggling to pay the rent, utilities, and expenses necessary to maintain the quality of shows established, and Sudol felt

compelled to describe the (mostly dark) scenarios on the horizon.

But that was last year, and the occasion for Sudol's remarks evolved to become the nadir from which RIVAA rebounded with vigor.

Among many positive contributions that made a difference in the intervening months, the Public Purpose funds approved by the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) and distributed by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) bridged a gap with much needed cash.

A growing, fertile partnership

with Cornell NYC Tech also helped keep the doors open as exciting new exhibits opened on schedule for the rest of 2015.

Peter D. Gerakaris's gallery-filling *Tropicália*, a landmark show that drew wide press recognition, marked Cornell Tech's official groundbreaking in June. More quietly, a grateful recognition of RIVAA founder Arline Jacoby's 90th birthday seasoned the year with a spice of optimism anchored in tradition.

Today, dynamic exhibits, Winter

See **RIVAA**, page 9



Peter D. Gerekaris' *Tropicália*

RIOC's Renovations Displace Meetings

by Briana Warsing

A dust-up between RIOC (Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation) and several of the Island's religious groups has occurred over work at the Good Shepherd Chapel that the groups claim has damaged their property and, without adequate notice, forced them to move services.

Two weekends ago, many Catholic, Episcopalian and Hope Church parishioners went to Good Shepherd Center for services only to find that they were locked out. According to them, the locks had been changed. Two of the parishes, Catholic and Episcopalian, did not have access to objects customarily used in worship services.

One Catholic parishioner said, "We had no way to find out whether mass was going to be at Good Shepherd or at the Chapel and we didn't receive any email or notice, nor was there anything posted at Good Shepherd or the chapel [to let us know]." A Hope Church parishioner said Hope Pastor Dan Sadlier posted a last-minute notification on Facebook, since taken down, to change the venue for Hope's Sunday Service to the Cultural Center across the street.

RIOC, in the person of President Charlene Indelicato, claimed that the church groups had been notified of the work to be done, and that no damage had taken place.

Community Concerns

An usher for the Catholic parish received an email late Friday alerting her that mass would take place in the downstairs of Good Shepherd

Center on Sunday. This limited access to Good Shepherd did not extend to a cabinet where religious artifacts are stored. Because it is normally locked, parishioners were concerned that movers, unaware of contents, may have moved them in such a way that holy water or wine had spilled on other items in the cabinet, or that fragile items might have been broken. (This later turned out to be the case.) With collection baskets unavailable, food trays had to be used for collections at displaced services.

Parishioners also expressed concern that the wooden chairs (property of the Catholic parish) may have been damaged in careless stacking by workers.

Floor Renovations

As it turned out, Good Shepherd's floors were being renovated. According to an anonymous congregant of the the Catholic Church, "We were never told that the floors were going to be replaced. They certainly would need work at some time, but I never imagined that this kind of work with RIOC would be so poorly coordinated with the existing tenants, the three churches. Donna [Masly, RIOC Program Assistant] said she shared the information as she got it, but did she not know that they were planning floor work, or what the schedule was? I don't understand why this was never communicated to us, especially considering we had a meeting with Donna Masly just two weeks prior."

See **Meetings**, page 10

Kallos Honors Islanders

Roosevelt Island was front and center at City Council Member Ben Kallos' 2016 State of the District event on January 10th. Kallos commended PS/IS 217 and Girl Scout troop leaders Janine Schaefer, and Aiesha Eleusizov, for winning his Council district's 2015 Participatory Budget Vote. The prize was \$500,000 dollars towards the school's STEM Green Roof Project. There were loud cheers when Principal Beckman and PTA president Olga Shchuchinov were mentioned with PS/IS 217 students and the Brownies and Girl Scouts from troops 3001, 3244 and 3245 for their winning efforts. Photos of Roosevelt Islanders and PS/IS 217 were also displayed on the big screen. The hour long event was attended by the Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright, Senator Liz Krueger, and Comptroller Scott Stringer. The Manhattan Borough President also awarded the STEM Green Roof project an additional \$250,000 in 2015.



Left to right: Joyce Short, Christina Delfico, PS IS 217 Principal Mandana Beckman, Girl Scout (GS) Brianna Hastings GS Michelle Nwaokolo, GS Charlotte Messer in front of City Council Member Ben Kallos, GS Olivia Schaefer, Brownie Emily Eleusizov in far front, PTA president Olga Shchuchinov next to Kallos, GS Troop 3244 & 3245 leader Janine Schaefer, GS Troop 3001 leader Aiesha Eleusizov and Maggie Messer.

Briefly...

- A blizzard watch is in effect starting Saturday. Up to 12 inches of snow is expected.
- Gale-force winds of up to 60 mph are forecast for Saturday night.
- Temperatures of 28-36°F are predicted.

- High winds can curtail or halt Roosevelt Island Tram service.
- No storm-related subway stoppage is currently planned. The current status of the F Train and other subway lines can be found at www.mta.info.

The Editorial Page

Community Spaces:
Our Turn to Decide

“Do something. If it works, do more of it. If it doesn’t, do something else.” – Franklin D. Roosevelt

Whether or not you believe RIOC’s account of when notice was given that Good Shepherd would not open for Sunday services last week, it is clear there was a communication lapse somewhere and the consequences went far beyond general inconvenience.

We need more say in how our community spaces and public spaces are managed and maintained.

The Public Purpose Fund provides a good example. It represents something we need more of: democracy.

Applications for Public Purpose Funds (PPFs) are presented to, and reviewed by, a committee of democratically elected representatives. The Committee’s recommendations are presented to the full RIRA Common Council where they are debated and voted on in full public view. And while RIRA only makes recommendations to RIOC on how PPFs are allocated (and RIOC is free to disregard our decisions on how we wish to direct this limited pool of money), Islanders have been successfully engaging in this process for decades.

It is the only shred of true democracy Islanders are allowed. Without a doubt, it is a messy process that spreads minimal resources over far too many deserving organizations. Our Albany Overlords provide mere crumbs for us to fight over. Crumbs which represent a tiny fraction of RIOC’s overall operating budget. These crumbs represent Islanders’ only form of self-determination; this is our only form of quasi-democratic rule.

As flawed as the PPF process is, it is democratic. And it works. We should do more of it.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the stewardship of our public spaces. Islanders have no democratic say in how money is spent on our parks, playgrounds, piers, promenades, or our dwindling open spaces. Myriad plans to reinvigorate existing spaces have been announced to great fanfare, predictably delayed, and ultimately, forgotten.

Islanders new and old will recall the various plans for Blackwell Park (which never materialized), or the budgeted improvements to Capobianco Field (which continue to be delayed). Parents note with dismay the dangerous condition of the turf on the soccer field. And we all lived through the closing of Lighthouse Park, simple repairs to the footbridges were inexplicably delayed again and again. Joggers lament the deterioration of the promenade pavement, and we welcome visitors with decrepit seawall railings. RIOC’s undemocratic management of our public spaces doesn’t work.

The open space on Roosevelt Island is unique among New York City neighborhoods. And yet, it is neglected, rather than emphasized; it goes without maintenance until it has to be torn down and cheaply replaced. It is reserved for use by off-Island groups for minimal rent, rent not reinvested in our precious green-spaces. This is decided without public debate on residents’ priorities.

Why are Islanders not trusted with directing how money is spent on our public spaces? If our limited opportunity to direct Public Purpose Funds has been successful, why is this responsibility not expanded to encompass funds budgeted for the maintenance and improvement of our parks and playgrounds?

It is time to do something else.

It is time to democratize our public spaces.

BW

Letters

To The Editor,

I’ve never written a letter before but was compelled to by this article.

I am an alumna of the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery (RIDN), and while I agree that the renown it receives in early childhood circles is deserved, a worthy and more relevant goal would be to recommit to the mission of including all members of the community, especially low-income families. It is erroneous that vouchers are only available to foster-care children and those with special needs. The Human Resources Administration (HRA) also provides vouchers to low-income families. Early Head Start and Head Start programs would be an access point for government funding of a truly inclusive community school. Not to mention that there are foster and special needs children in this community who deserve to have a high-quality early childhood experience.

My cohort of children born in the

80s who were raised on the Island and are now raising their own children here, have watched it being remade at the expense of the poorest and most vulnerable members. Affordable housing in the form of Mitchell-Lama and Section 8 is disappearing; Goldwater residents have been deported to far corners of the earth. There is the unspoken dance of what type of people will be allowed into the building to trick or treat, or into the Gifted & Talented Program, or even the playground. This has become a very diverse and deeply segregated Island.

RIDN has a moral imperative to acknowledge the children who have been rendered invisible by its current tuition if it continues to claim it is a community school. As a community, we must consider the cost of leaving so many people behind in a place with one street.

Julia Khadijah Abdurahman

Letters deadline

for February 13 issue:
Tuesday, February 9, 5:00 p.m.

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters of interest to the Roosevelt Island community, and to/from officials. Recommended maximum length, 350 words; longer letters will be considered if their content, in the judgment of the editors, merits the required space. All letters are subject to acceptance and editing for length and clarity. Letters submitted anonymously will not be published; requests for a Name Withheld signature will be considered, but the writer’s name, address, and phone number must be provided for verification and for our records.

Submit by email to MainStreetWire@gmail.com. Expect a confirming response and, if you receive none, resend and call 212-826-9056 to alert us. Alternatives: typed copy left for The WIRE at 531 Main Street, and clearly handwritten letters will be considered, if brief.

The WIRE publishes this column, exclusively, as a service to the community and to the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, and does not control or censor its content.

If our local weather forecasts are to be believed, you are either reading this warmly tucked at home with friends and family as Jack Frost finally comes back from vacation, blanketing our little ship on the East River with a thick cover of snow, or you are whiling the weekend away, relieved that New York has once again evaded Snowmageddon. Either way, we, on the Roosevelt Island Residents’ Association, hope that our Island neighbors, family, and friends have had a great start to the New Year. Here’s what’s been happening the last few weeks.

Polling Initiative: The Survey

The Survey is a RIRA Common Council initiative intended to gauge and understand what issues and programming matters are important to you, as well as discover which are most important to maintaining and improving the quality of life on our little Island.

The
RIRA
Column

Although one-on-one conversations and outreach with your respective building representatives are the most efficient way to have your opinions and comments heard, your Common Council understands that the daily ins-and-outs of family, professional, community, and personal commitments can sometime hinder one’s ability to fully engage in Island life.

The RIRA Common Council is very excited to formally embark on the first step of this initiative with the formal rollout and launch of The Survey. Beginning on January 23rd, all residents of Roosevelt Island are invited to go to www.riraonline.com/survey and answer a few questions regarding Island life and concerns. Compiled through the assistance of professional consultants, from Cornell University and the Chairs of the Committees of the Roosevelt Island Common Council, the three-minute survey is intended to open a direct dialogue with the Island Community and get the pulse of our residents. Don’t have online access or prefer to respond through traditional pen and paper? Head to the Roosevelt Island Public Library or the Public Safety Department. Common Council volunteers will also be available at the Roosevelt Island Public Library to assist in completing the online survey during the times and dates posted at the library. Also, keep your eyes out for when your Common Council Representative will be on hand in your building to assist in The Survey. We strongly encourage all of you to participate and let your voice be heard!

On Friday, February 12th, The Survey will officially close and the tallied responses will be communicated to the Common Council, RIOC and the Electeds. Based on those results, both this term and next term’s Common Council will shape its programming and advocacy platforms accordingly. Further Community-wide meetings with the Island Community will be held to discuss issues identified which affect the Island as a whole. Lobby meet and greets with Building Representatives will be held for issues that affect your building. Together, we can hopefully address the issues that matter to you the most. Have questions regarding The Survey or assistance on participating? Have other polling questions that were not raised but you believe should be asked of the Community? Email the Polling

Initiative’s Chair, Adib Mansour at RIRAdib@earthlink.net and let your voice be heard!

Cornell Tech Community Task Force

On Monday, January 25th at 6:00 P.M. on the 12th floor conference room at 546 Main Street, the Cornell Tech Community and Construction Task Force will be holding its first meeting of 2016 to not only give the community a construction update, but also to receive a presentation from the Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW) group who will be discussing preparing women for nontraditional careers in the construction, utilities and transportation industries. Have questions or concerns regarding the current construction of the Project? Want to know more about the NEW group and nontraditional careers for women?



Jeffrey Escobar, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Association
jeffrey.escobar@gmail.com

Attend the January 25th meeting!

RIRA Advisory Committee

On Wednesday, January 27th at 5:00 pm, the RIRA Main Street Retail Advisory Committee will be holding its first meeting of the year to discuss the current status of retail development on our Main Street Corridor, discuss future plans regarding retail development and answer any questions or concerns the Island Community may have concerning retail development. All those interested in finding out more about the current status of retail development on Main Street and where it is going are strongly encouraged to attend. Reach out to Anne Kanninen, Chair of the Main Street Retail Advisory Committee at kanninen2@aol.com with any questions or concerns you might have and for the location of the meeting.

Composting Initiative Partnership

Since the launch of the Composting Initiative late last November, Islanders have contributed nearly one ton of organic kitchen scraps and materials to be composted. The Roosevelt Island Composting Initiative in cooperation with the NYC Compost Project and BIG-Reuse will continue to accept organic kitchen scraps at the Roosevelt Island Saturday Markets under the helix to be composted and used to rebuild Island and City gardens. Through your efforts, the City is well on its way to its goal of reducing landfill waste by 20% to 30%. But we are not done yet! Continue to contribute your kitchen scraps to the movement and join your fellow neighbors, RIRA, the Roosevelt Island Garden Club, the PS/IS 217 PTA, iDig2Learn the Girl Scouts and 45 other Island residents every Saturday as we look to reduce, reuse and recycle. And keep your eye out as the initiative grows! Want to find out more about how you can join the movement? Send the Common Council an email at contact@riraonline.com.

On Roosevelt Island We... Initiative

Many thanks go to Brownie Girl Scout Troop 3001

On Roosevelt Island We ...

by Jim Baehler

Is good citizenship a natural outgrowth of the education process for children or is it something that needs to be fostered and encouraged? Those who work with our children on Roosevelt Island refuse to risk that good citizenship will develop by itself, with no outside input. They make a strong effort to consciously develop good citizenship among our school-age children.

One of the leaders in that effort is Lynne Shinozaki, chair of the Social Cultural and Education Committee (SCE) of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA).

“The SCE is developing a campaign to highlight actions individuals can take to make our Island warmer for everyone. We are working with local groups to promote good citizenship. Most residents are loyal members of our community and praise life in our small town,” explains Shinozaki.

The campaign actually began some months ago when members of Brownie Girl Scout Troop 3001 brainstormed a list of ways

to complete the sentence, “On Roosevelt Island we....” with a verb that suggested a positive action and a drawing to illustrate the thought.

Troop Leader Aiesha Eleuszov said that the one action that really resonated with the second and third grade girls was the necessity for dog owners to clean up after their pets. One girl said, “I once stepped in it with my bare feet.” This brought forth a loud chorus of “EEEUW” from the troop. This is an issue that affects everyone who lives on the Island and who wants to enjoy the many activities our grassy expanses offer to our residents. Several of the Scouts drew pictures of children playing with their dogs and cleaning up after them. Each drawing contained the sentence, “On Roosevelt Island we pick up the poop” to help remind everyone to be a responsible dog owner. In addition to the Girl Scouts, other youth organizations will be asked to join the campaign for good citizenship.

Shinozaki says, “The ‘On Roosevelt Island we’ posters will emphasize positive actions like

greeting neighbors and helping elderly residents. They will be printed in a large format for placement on the Tram, the Red Buses, and the kiosks. Some will be scanned and displayed on the monitors in Tram cabins. RIOC has agreed to support the reproduction of the posters.”

According to Shinozaki, there are several objectives for the program. Encouraging good citizenship is the first. She also believes the program will foster the children’s creativity. Enabling Island youth to develop a sense of ownership of Roosevelt Island is another one, as well as empowering children by showing them they can have a positive effect on life here.

Once the campaign is up and running it will be interesting to see if the actions of children are more effective than lecturing by politicians, which is often the method adults choose when seeking to change behavior. One thing is certain, the children involved will be well on their way to becoming helpful and productive citizens of our Island.

and its Troop Leader Aiesha Eleuszov for helping to kick-off the RIRA Social Cultural and Education (SCE) Committee’s first installment of its year-long “On Roosevelt Island We ...” campaign. Through the eyes, minds, words and pictures of our Island’s children, the first installment of the SCE Committee’s multi-media campaign designed to promote good citizenship and raise awareness of the impact Island Residents have on each other’s lives will be posted throughout the Island. Keep your eyes out this year for more installments as the SCE Committee looks to work with all our Island’s children and children’s groups. If you or your child have an idea for an “On Roosevelt Island We ...” poster, or your or your child’s community group or organization would like to participate in this year’s campaign, do not hesitate to reach out at contact@riraonline.com for more information. And when you see a poster, don’t just read it, but heed it!



Island History: visit the *WIRE* archive, msWIRE.us/wirelist

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Allison Pearlman and students of Legacy High School;
Angelo Sacino, Kaitlyn Abdul, and students from the PS/IS 217 Beacon Program,
Juniors and Cadettes of Girl Scout Troop 3324

COMING UP

- THIS WEEKEND -

MST&DA spring registration, through Feb 13 at the Cultural Center (Tue & Thu 4-6pm, Sat 9-11am) or online at mstda.org. Scholarship applications also available. (See ad, page 7.)

Community Board membership applications accepted through Fri Jan 29 5pm. Apply at manhattanbp.nyc.gov/html/community-boards/community-boards.shtml Info: email Paola Liriano atpliriano@manhattanbp.nyc.gov

RIRA’s Island survey open through Feb 12. Complete the survey online (RIRAonline.com/survey) or use printed surveys at the Public Safety office and library. Questions: email Adib Mansour RIRAdib@earthlink.net

– REGULAR MEETINGS EVENTS –
See page 4.

- THE NEXT TWO WEEKS -

Nontraditional Employment for Women presentation, Mon Jan 25 6-6:30pm, 546 Main St., 12th floor conference room. Info: new-nyc.org or email Jane Swanson jane.swanson@cornell.edu

Cornell Tech Community Construction Task Force meeting, Mon Jan 25 6-8pm, Presentation by NEW (Nontraditional Employment for Women) new-nyc.org. 546 Main St., 12th floor conference room. Open to the public.

FFDC Annual Election Meeting, Tue Jan 26 7pm at Church of the Holy Trinity (316 E 88th St., Main Church). See list of candidates and RSVP at fourfreedomsnyc.org

Main Street Retail Advisory Committee meeting, Wed Jan 27 5pm. Contact Anne Kanninen for location and information at kanninen2@aol.com

Manhattan Borough President State of the Borough Address, Sun Jan 31 2pm at Tishman Auditorium, New School (63 5th Av., at 13th St.) RSVP: eventbrite.com/e/state-of-the-borough-tickets-20528242526

MST&DA Fall Sessions end on the following dates: Mon classes end Feb 1; Tue & Wed ends Jan 26 & 27; Thu ends Feb 11; Sat ends Feb 6.

Free mobile mammography, Tue Feb 2 starting 8am at the Community Office (1365 First Av., Manhattan.) For women 40 and over who have not had a mammogram within the past year. Free for uninsured. Appointment required: 1-800-564-6868

Crafts with Kids: Valentine’s., Sat Feb 6 or 13 10-11am, sponsored by Roosevelt Island Parents Network. RSVP to eva.bosbach@gmail.com.

Opening reception, “Afrocentric Images” Black History Month exhibition, **Sat Feb 6** 6-9pm at Gallery RIVAA. Exhibit runs Feb 6-28.

MST&DA Valentine Dance and silent auction, Sat Feb 6 8-11pm at the Cultural Center (548 Main St.) Ages 16+. \$30 individual/\$50 couple in advance, \$40/\$60 at the door. Info and tickets: mstda.org/valentine.html (See ad, page 7.)

The Main Street WIRE – Sat Feb 13. Advertising deadlines: Display, Wed Feb 3 decision date for circulars/inserts, Tue Feb 9; 6,000 copies due Thu Feb 11. Also: Mar 5, 19; Apr 9, 23; May 14, 28; Jun 11, 25; Jul issue date to be announced; Aug 27; Sep 10, 24; Oct 8, 22; Nov 5, 19; Dec 10. News phone, 917-842-7638; urgent matters, 917-617-0449. Email press releases and feature-story suggestions to MainStreetWIRE@usa.net. Advertising (display & classified) 917-587-3278 or msWIREads@gmail.com.



- FUTURE WEEKS -

RIHS lecture, *The Suitcases from Willard Hospital*, Tue Feb 9 6:30pm, Library. Free.

MST&DA Spring Session begins, week of Feb 22.

RIHS lecture, *The SS Columbia and the Return of the Hudson River Day Liner*, Tue Mar 8 6:30pm, Library. Free.

RIHS lecture, *Women in Health*, Tue Apr 12 6:30pm at the library. Free.

Cornell Tech Community Construction Task Force meeting, Mon Apr 25 6-8pm, Gallery RIVAA. Open to the public.

Cornell Tech Community Construction Task Force meeting, Mon Jul 25 6-8pm, Gallery RIVAA. Open to the public.

Cornell Tech Community Construction Task Force meeting, Mon Oct 24 6-8pm, 546 Main St., 12th floor conference room. Open to the public.

Reaching Officials – the email addresses:

Island (RIOC) directors@rioc.ny.gov (Board of Directors) Charlene.Indelicato@rioc.ny.gov (President) Cyril.Opperman@rioc.ny.gov (Director of Transportation) John.McManus@rioc.ny.gov (Director of Public Safety) Erica.Spencer-EL@rioc.ny.gov (Community Relations)	State SeawrightR@assembly.state.ny.us (Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright) Serrano@nysenate.gov (State Senator José M. Serrano)
City BKallos@council.nyc.gov (City Council Member Ben Kallos)	When all else fails (or just to keep us informed): MainStreetWIRE@usa.net (<i>The WIRE</i>)

Submitting Event Information

When sending event information, please check against this list:

☐ Full name of organization	☐ Name and telephone number (with an answering machine) for <i>The WIRE</i> to use to call for additional information
☐ Full name of event / meeting	☐ Any rain date or bad-weather location?
☐ Date and time	☐ Do you have an organization logo or a photo that illustrates this event? If you do, don’t ask – just send it, even if you think we have it.
☐ Ending date, if a series of events/meetings	
☐ Location, with address	
☐ Admission charge / donation / free?	
☐ Range of appropriate ages	
☐ Email address / website / phone number for more information	

Adventures OFF-Island

curated by Sara Maher

Well, it seems winter decided to show up after all. In this case, we might say better never than late, but before you head back into hibernation, go out! Have some fun (and stock up on dumplings and hot cocoa.)!

Sopranos and Fiddle Strings

Get your year off to an ... ahem ... eclectic start with a performance of The Cave: A Folk Opera. Winner of the 2014 Hollywood Fringe Festival awards for “Best First Play” and “The Encore Producer’s Award,” this “musical exploration of fairy tales, myths, and spiritualism” follows a girl named Willow, who offers to work in an opium den to pay off her father’s debt. Along the way, she “fights to find light, not only in the grim and strange shadow-world around her, but also within herself.” So that’s that.

☛F downtown to Delancey St and walk north to Cake Shop (152 Ludlow.) Sun Jan 31, 8pm. Ages 21+. Free. Info and reserve tickets at thecavefolkopera.com

Ice is Nice

If you can’t beat it, enjoy it. Bryant Park’s Winter Carnival lets you celebrate the snowy season with the lowest level of discomfort. There’s an ice skating showcase, curling lessons,

giant Jenga, ice golf, an ice castle, and even more frozen festivities befitting your little Elsas and Olafs. There’s also a nice warming hut with snacks and hot beverages and a brew house for the grown-ups.

F downtown to 42nd St-Bryant Park and enter the park. Fri Feb 5-Sat Feb 6, 12pm-10pm. All ages. Most activities free. Full schedule of events at wintervillage.org/visit/wintercarnival

Off with a Bang

Did you catch yourself nodding off hours before the ball dropped? You can head down to Chinatown and ring in Chinese New Year in broad daylight. You have two opportunities to welcome the Year of the Monkey: first, watch the Firecracker Ceremony, where thousands of firecrackers are set off to scare away bad spirits, and enjoy a festival filled with food and dancing. Come back a few days later to enjoy the New Year’s parade, with costumed marchers, performers, and dragon dancers.

☛Firecracker Ceremony and festival: F downtown to Delancey St and walk west to Sara D. Roosevelt Park; firecrackers will go off in the park between Grand and Hester Sts. Mon Feb 8, firecrackers at 11am. Free. Parade: F downtown to Delancey St and walk southwest to Forsyth

St between Grand and Hester Sts or F downtown to East Broadway and walk northwest to Eldridge St between Ludlow and Hester Sts. Sun Feb 14, starting at 1pm. Free. betterchinatown.com

Hot Spot + Chocolate

We don’t have a Polar Bear Plunge, but we can freeze our keisters off in other ways. Take a 90-minute tour of Union Square, the “Crossroads of New York,” and explore the social and political history of this ever-busy neighborhood. After the tour, swing into Max Brenner’s or The City Bakery for a toasty cup of hot cocoa and a tasty treat.

☛F downtown to 14th St and walk east to Union Square. Walking tour: walk north on Union Square West and turn right into the park at the 16th St entrance; meet in front of the Abraham Lincoln statue. Every Sat through Feb 27, 2pm. Free. Reservations required for groups only. nycgovparks.org/events/2016/01/16/union-square-crossroads-of-new-york-walking-tour Max Brenner: 841 Broadway (off southeast corner of Union Square). Open daily. Hot chocolate (24 flavors) \$5.95/cup. maxbrenner.com City Bakery: 3 W 18th St (off northwest corner of Union Square). Open daily. Hot chocolate (with marshmallow) \$7/cup. thecitybakery.com

COMING UP

CONTINUING EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

A listing of **repeating** or **regularly held** meetings & events (a listing of other events scheduled for this weekend and in coming weeks appears on page 3).

ART EXHIBITS

Affordable New York: A Housing Legacy exhibit involving Roosevelt Island continues at the Museum of the City of New York, Manhattan, **daily** 10am-6pm through Feb 7. Co-sponsored by RIRA.

Winter Treasures at Gallery RIVAA, **through Jan 31**. Gallery open Tue, Thu 6-8pm and Sat-Sun 12-4pm.

Winter Treasures #2 at the Octagon Gallery, **through Mar 6**. Gallery open daily 9am-8pm.

PARKS

Southpoint Park open daily 6am-10pm.

Lighthouse Park open daily 7am-9pm.

Four Freedoms Park daily 9am-5pm. **Closed Tue**. Free guided tours **Sat** 11am, 3pm; **Sun** 11am.

CLASSES

Art, taught by members of the RI Visual Art Association, **Sat** 11am-2pm, Sportspark. Free. **We Are New York English Class**, every **Fri** 10:30-12:30 at the library.

EXERCISE & SPORTS *(alphabetical)*

Basketball (all ages), **Sat** 2-5pm, Sportspark. Free.

Basketball (adults), **Mon-Thu** 7:30-9:30pm, PS/IS 217. Free.

Pilates with Karen, **Wed** 8:30am. Info 212-750-6223.

Ping Pong (all ages), **Tue Wed Fri** 6-9pm, Sportspark. \$5.

Rhythmic Gymnastics Classes, **Mon** 4-6pm for beginners, **Thu** 4-6 intermediate, Sportspark. Information: RogueRhythmics@yahoo.com or 917-331-2044.

RI Moms on the Move walk and exercise program, **Mon 9:30am**, Visitor Kiosk in Tramway Plaza. Free. To confirm day and time: Eva.Bosbach@gmail.com.

Sportspark extended hours (ages 16-25), **Fri-Sat** 9pm-midnight. **Weight-lifting and basketball**. Free. **Note:** ID and proof of Island residency required.

Swimming* (all ages; no instructor) – **Sat-Sun** 12-3pm, **Mon-Fri** 6-10am, **Mon Wed Thu Fri** 7:30-10:30pm, Sportspark.

Swimming* (18 yrs+) – **Sat-Sun** 4-7pm, **Tue** 7:30-10:30pm, Sportspark.

Swimming* – Water Aerobics, **Sun** 12-1pm, **Wed & Fri** 9-10am, Sportspark.

Swimming* – Master class, **Mon Wed Fri** 7:30-8:30pm, Sportspark.

(*\$5; free for disabled, seniors 60+, and ages 0-3.)

Tennis for Kids, see **Older Kids** entries, below.

Yoga (open-level), **Mon & Thu** 6:15-7:15pm, **Sat** 10-11am, Sportspark. \$5. Mats available.

Yoga (Vinyassa-flow) with Keren Messer, **Mon** 7:45pm, **Fri** 10am, Good Shepherd Center. Info: KerenMsr@gmail.com.

Yoga (Hatha) with Keren Messer, **Tue** 6:30pm, Good Shepherd Center.

Yoga with Jax Schott, **Wed** 7:30-8:40pm, Island Kids, 536 Main St. \$15.

Yoga (open-level) with Lauren Blankstein, **Thu** 7:30-8:30pm, PS/IS 217 Beacon. Free.

Zumba, **Mon** 6:30-7:30pm, **Thu** 6:30-7:30pm, **Sat** 10-11am, Sportspark. \$5.

BIRTH THROUGH TODDLER *(listed Sat-Fri)*

Parent and Me Swim Class, **Sun** 11am & **Wed** 10:30am, Sportspark. \$5 for pre-registered Island families.

Baby Story Time (0-18 mo), **Mon** 10:30am, Library. No registration required.

Baby Playtime (0-18 mo), **Mon** 11am, Library. No registration required.

Music with James, every **Tue** 4pm at the Cultural Center (548 Main St.) Ages 4mo-4yr. \$15/child. musicwithjames.com

Toddler Story Time (18-36 mo), **Wed** 10:15 & 11:15am, Library. No registration required.

Toddler Play Time (18-36 mo), **Wed** 10:45 & 11:45am, Library. No registration required.

Island Kids Baby Group (0-14 mo.), **Thu** 10:30-11:30am, 536 Main St. Info: IslandKidsRI@gmail.com.

OLDER KIDS *(listed Sat-Fri)*

Tennis – Junior Tennis, **Sat & Mon-Fri** after school, Racquet Club. Info 212-935-0250.

Tennis – New York Junior Tennis & Learning program, **Mon-Fri** 3-6pm (ages 8-18); **Tue** 5-6pm & **Thu** 3-4pm for ages 5-7 (with parent/guardian), Octagon Park Courts. No pre-registration; sneakers required. Info tc@nyjtl.org or 718-786-7110.

Teen Time (ages 13-18), **Mon-Fri** 3pm, Library.

Beacon After-School Program, grades 1-8, **Mon-Fri** 3-6pm, PS/IS 217. Free. Info: 212-527-2505.

Open Gym for high school students, **Mon & Wed** 6-8pm, PS/IS 217.

Board Games (5-12 yrs), **Tue** 4pm, Library. Free.

Teen Game Night, **Wed** 6pm, Main Street Sweets, 559 Main St.

Anime Club (teens), **Thu** 4-5pm, Library. No registration required.

Kids & Family Yoga (ages 4-7 & caregivers), see Exercise & Sports.

Reading Aloud (children), **Fri** 3:30pm, Library. No registration required.

Girl Scouts (6-13 yrs), **Fri** 6-8pm, PS/IS 217. Info: 212-527-2505.

SENIORS

Lunch, **Mon-Fri** noon, Senior Center, 546 Main St. \$1.50. Menus outside social worker’s office. Also see additional listings, this page.

Computer Basics for Seniors, every **Fri** 10:30am at the Library..

REGULAR MEETINGS *(listed Sat-Fri)*

Toastmasters (public speaking), **2nd & 4th Mon** 7:30pm. Info: 212-751-9577.

Sci-Fi Discussion Group, **1st Tue** 6:30pm, Library.

Coloring for Adults, every **Tue** 12pm, Library. Materials provided.

114th Precinct Community Meeting, **4th Tue** 7pm, Riccardo’, 2101 24th Av., Astoria.

RIRA Common Council meeting **1st Wed** (except Jul-Aug) 8pm, Good Shepherd Center.

Women’s Health Organization, **last Wed** except Nov and Dec, when meeting is on third Wed, 6:30pm, 546 Main St, 12th floor conference room.

Knitting and Crochet Group, every **Thu** 11:30am. Library.

Book Discussion, **3rd Thu** 6:30-8pm, Library.

OFFICE HOURS

RIOC’s Community Office Hours, **Mon** 3-5pm, 591 Main St. Info: 212-832-4540.

Conversations with Cornell Tech Staff at Gallery RIVAA, **Wed & Fri** 10am-12noon & 1-4pm, 527 Main St.

Constituent Service Hours:

Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright, **1st Wed** 3-6pm, Senior Center or Library Info: 212 288-4607.

City Council Member Ben Kallos, **4th Wed** 2-5pm, Senior Center, 546 Main St.

State Senator Jose Serrano, **Wed** 3-6pm, Senior Center or Library. Info: 212-828-5829.

OTHER

Organics Recycling every **Sat** at the Farmer’s Market under the Helix from 9:30am-3:30pm.

Residents can drop off kitchen scraps to be made into compost for local parks and gardens.

Clinic on Housing Law, **1st & 3rd Mon** 3-6pm, district office of City Councilmember Ben Kallos, 244 E. 93rd St. Reservations and questions: 212-860-1950 or RSVP@BenKallos.com.

Free Legal Clinic, **1st Mon**, sponsored by Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright. For ap- pointment call 212-288-4607.

Policy Night, **2nd Tue** 6:30pm, Kallos office (see above), 244 E. 93rd St.; help formulate policy.

Knitting & Crocheting Circle (adults), **Thu** 11:30am, Library. Info: nypl.org.

First Fridays with Kallos, 8-10am, district office (see above); questions and issues.

Senior Center

Monday 10:00 Zumba 11:00 Adv. Computers 5:00 Brain & Body Stretch	Wednesday 9:30 Yoga 10:20 Shoppers’ Bus 10:30 Tone and Tighten 10:45 Spanish 11:00 Social Media 12:00 Bridge 1:30 Scrabble	Friday 9:00 Building Strength 10:30 Computers 10:30 Tai Chi 12:00 Korean Exercise 1:00 Art with John 2:00 Pokeno
Tuesday 10:20 Shoppers’ Bus 10:30 Building Strength 11:00 Blood Pressure 1:00 Paint & Sculpt	Thursday 9:25 Chair Pilates 10:30 Zumba 10:45 Ping Pong 12:30 Movie 1:00-2:30 Theatre tickets at discount prices; see Rema or Annie	Special Events Senior Constituent Hours with State Sen. Serrano Wed Feb 3 11:00-2:00

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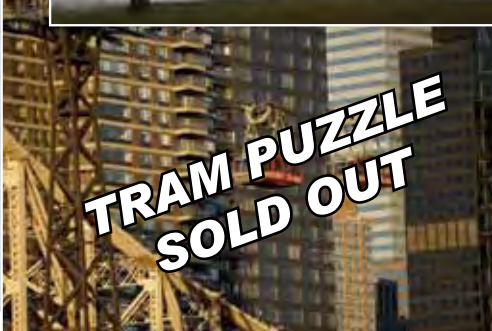
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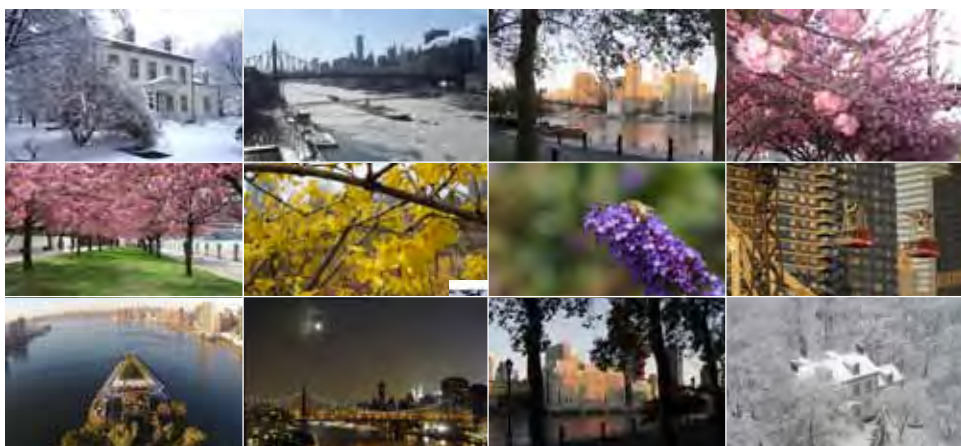
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To *The WIRE*: I enclose \$20 each for _____ (number) calendar(s). On-Island delivery free to buildings with a doorkeeper, but no orders can be filled until January 21. (If no doorkeeper, we'll notify you with an email or phone message when your order is ready for pickup.) Add \$2.25 for each calendar to be mailed off-Island in continental USA. Send order to *The WIRE*, 531 Main Street #413, NYC10044 or leave your order at the Rivercross front desk, 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. **Questions?** Call **212-826-9056**. Leave your phone number at beginning **and** end of your message.

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Classes for students of all ages, 18 months to adult.

Theatre	Dance	Fitness			
MONDAY 7:30 - 9:00 Ballroom All Levels (Marceau) 7:45 - 8:45 Vinyasa-Flow Yoga (Schott)	TUESDAY 4:30 - 5:15 Tap 5 - 6 years (Harrod) 4:30 - 5:30 Ballet 1st Grade+ (Ishmon) 5:00 - 7:00 Children's Theatre (Lucid-Cusick) 5:30 - 6:30 Ballet 3rd Grade+ (Ishmon) 6:30 - 7:30 Advanced Ballet (Ishmon) 7:00 - 9:00 Teen Theatre Grade (10), 11, 12 (Lucid-Cusick)	WEDNESDAY 6:00 - 6:00 Jazz 1st Grade+ (McCatty) 6:00 - 7:00 Children's Theatre (Lucid-Cusick) 6:00 - 7:00 Jazz Teen (McCatty) 5:05 - 6:00 Creative Drama K - 2nd Grade (Orenstein) 5:15 - 6:00 Hip-Hop 5 - 6 years (Brown) 6:00 - 7:00 Intro to Tap (Parker) 7:00 - 8:00 Adult Jazz Open Level (McCatty) 7:30 - 9:00 Acting for Adults (Mihut) 8:00 - 9:00 Adult Tap (McCatty)	THURSDAY 10:45 - 11:30 Little Dancers 18 mo - 3 years (Orenstein) 2:30 - 3:30 Yoga (Orenstein) 3:30 - 4:15 Creative Pre-Ballet 3 - 4 years (Orenstein) 4:15 - 5:00 Pre-Ballet 5 - 6 years (Orenstein) 5:05 - 6:00 Creative Drama K - 2nd Grade (Orenstein) 5:15 - 6:00 Hip-Hop 5 - 6 years (Brown) 6:00 - 7:00 Intro to Tap (Parker) 7:00 - 8:00 Adult Jazz Open Level (McCatty) 7:30 - 9:00 Acting for Adults (Mihut) 8:00 - 9:00 Adult Tap (McCatty)	FRIDAY  	SATURDAY 9:00 am - 9:45 Creative Pre-Ballet 3 - 4 years (Clark) 9:30 - 10:30 Aeropump (Parker) 9:45 - 10:30 Creative Pre-Ballet 3 - 4 years (Clark) 10:00 am - 2:00 pm Adult Musical Theatre Studio (Lucid-Cusick) 10:30 - 11:15 Pre-Ballet 5 - 6 years (Clark) 10:30 - 11:30 Hip-Hop 10 - 13 years (Parker) 11:15 - 12:00 Intro to Tap 4 - 5 years (Clark)

Register online or in-person at the Cultural Center, 548 Main Street
Tue./Thur. 1/28, 2/4, and 2/11 4-6pm;
Sat. 1/23, 1/30, 2/6, and 2/13 9-11am.
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Library, from page 1 lectures (40%), access to public computers and technology (39%), and spaces to research, write, study, and learn new skills (over 30%).” According to the survey, the changes that would have the most value to the community were increased access to technology and a larger children’s area, each receiving a rating of 4.1 out of 5 for importance.

The plans for the new library include a designated “teen space;” a separate, closed-off, 640-square-foot children’s room; and a 670-square-foot community room that will be used for classes during the day and adult programs in the evening. The community room can also be used as an additional reading room, and will be equipped with an assistive listening system for meetings and events.

Other highly rated features incorporated into the final design include a “Grab and Go Area” to quickly return checked-out items and browse new releases; a larger magazine and periodical section; and an area for displaying Island artifacts, history, and information. The library will be fully disabled and stroller accessible, and will have a stroller parking area by the entrance.

Multiple Islanders at the meeting made suggestions for the outdoor space surrounding the library, including a “tot lot” playground for ages 0-5 and an outdoor reading area with tables and chairs. The presenters made clear this was not a part of the construction plan. They explained that the land is owned by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), but they had given advice and recommendations for its uses that would complement the library.

City Councilmember Ben Kallos, who attended the presentation, said a playground could be a viable participatory budgeting initiative, and also suggested additional

library furniture and other enrichment items not included in the library’s construction budget.

Programming for All

Honig said they “worked very closely with Nicole [Nelson, Roosevelt Island Library Manager] to make sure she got everything she needs.” Because of the added space, “we can have programs going on in two rooms at the same time,” said Nelson. “I am extremely excited about that.” Nelson said children’s programming will focus on early literacy, while programs aimed at teens will focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education. All patrons will have more access to technology, as the new branch will have 16 PCs and 24 laptops for patron use—a significant increase from the three PCs and 11 laptops at the current location.

The Island library also plans to direct more attention to English as a Second Language (ESL) programming. Nelson hopes

to offer more ESL classes and is currently working with to get ESL classes for children.

Platt said the NYPL plans to reach out to Islanders again as construction nears completion so they can get a better idea of what programs should be offered at the new branch. Platt also said they were “very interested in doing some community partnerships” with Cornell and trying to figure out programs Cornell could host in the space.

Next Steps

The design phase of the project will be complete this summer, with construction starting in the fall. The library is scheduled to open in late 2017 or early 2018.

Norah Yahya, Senior Manager of Government and Community Affairs for NYPL, noted the importance of Islanders staying involved even as they wait for their new branch. “We want to make sure that we can continue to increase programming,

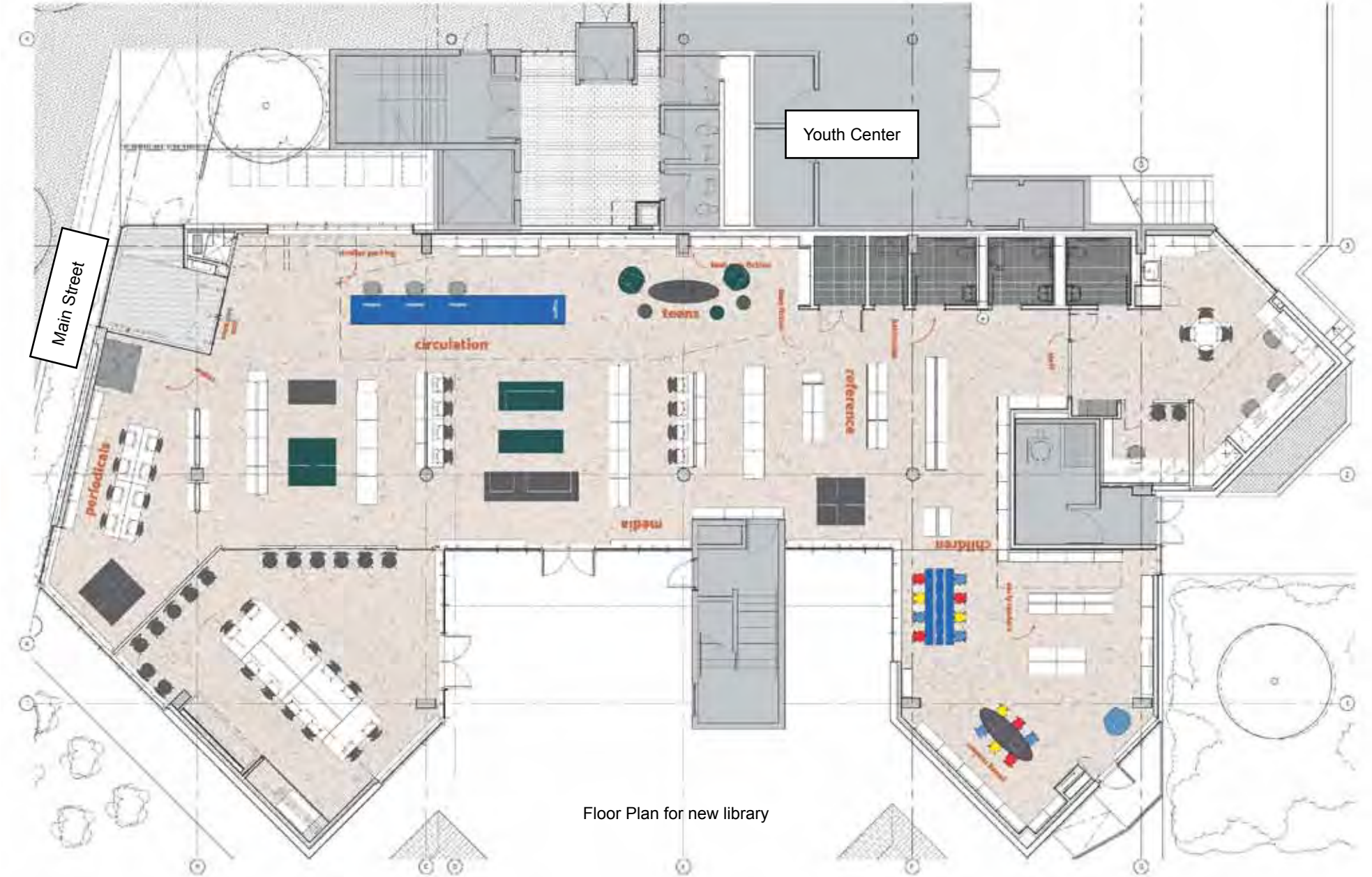
hours, [and] staff, and the way we do that is through expense funding,” she said. “It’s important that we collaborate with our other branches [to keep the NYPL funded through the City], so please stay involved.”

Yahya said voting for library projects for participatory budgeting and participating in fundraising efforts and letter writing campaigns (the Island library’s letter-writing campaign resulted in four times the expected letters) were good ways to support the library system. Kallos and Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, also in attendance, echoed this. Kallos thanked Islanders for “engaging in a public process,” while Brewer reiterated the need to push for increased funding for libraries in general. She ended by saying the Island “had many good aspects... and I think the library is one of the stars.”

To see the presentation from this meeting and learn more about the new branch, go to NYPL.org/capitalprojects.



Plan for 504 Main Street exterior



Floor Plan for new library

RIVAA, from page 1

Treasures and Winter Treasures 2 fill the main gallery at 527 Main Street and Octagon Gallery at 888 Main Street respectively. In what RIVAA calls “Gallery 3,” large artworks, largely created during Fall for Arts festivals, uplift Motorgate from a dreary concrete shell into a space where murals brighten public spaces.

A return to presenting exhibits keyed to Black History Month is planned for February, and Vernissage, this year, will be a milestone: RIVAA’s 15th “varnishing,” the literal French interpretation, in which its members introduce all new work and set a tone for the coming year, one certain to be brighter than the last.

A Mission

RIVAA has always floated on a wave of creative optimism.

A loose fellowship of artists got acquainted while coalescing around Arline Jacoby’s vi-

sion to brand our small town as the “Island of Art.”

By the time she led the pioneering Art Frenzy experience in 2001, Jacoby established a career as not just an artist but also a teacher and art administrator. She brought her skills to staging an exhibit of local works on the walls of PS/IS 217, part of broader initiative that saw Red Buses, the Tram and subway shuttling art enthusiasts between coordinated exhibits in Manhattan and Queens. Roosevelt Island sat at the heart of it, long and lean in the middle of the river that links both boroughs.

Invigorated by this success, Jacoby joined forces with fellow artists and founding members, Tad Sudol, Harry Small, and Esther Piaskowski, along with local attorney, Phillip Groner, to press RIOCC to support a permanent art resource as part of its role in developing the community.

They were lucky to find an instant supporter in RIOCC’s then president, Robert Ryan. With Ryan’s backing, the embryonic association took over the space that Bigelow Pharmacy had just left, still RIVAA’s current location, and put their minds and bodies to work, building the gallery space out from a vision.

Floors were ripped and replaced, and

windows, designed by architect Sudol, became not just windows to the world on Main Street but Roosevelt Island’s welcome to visitors and residents entering the center of town.

What they created is the still impressive space at street level in front of Rivercross. Before each show, a team led by veteran artists, Valeriu Boborelu and Ioan Popoiu, clean, spackle and paint the space afresh to give new art fresh atmosphere.

2016

“We are in good shape, right now,” Sudol reported, sitting in RIVAA’s tiny office space with fellow board members, Popoiu and Esther Piaskowski.

A new three-year lease has recently been signed with Hudson-Related, the company responsible for our commercial spaces.

“Hudson is very important to us,” Sudol adds. “David Kramer tries hard to recognize our value to the look of Main Street and the

community. Our windows are crucial.”

Kramer is president of Hudson Companies, a high profile city developer, and his taking time to work directly with RIVAA is no small thing.

As support for RIVAA’s mission goes, neither is the \$9,000 dollars in public purpose funds funneled from RIOCC after approval by RIRA. Roosevelt Island’s public purpose money started with a deposit by Manhattan Park, in lieu of sales taxes on construction materials, and has grown as new buildings rise. Because rulings handed down from a distant, apparently disinterested Cuomo administration in Albany made the distribution shaky in recent years, 2016’s speedy, kink-free process was especially welcome.

Cornell Loves RIVAA

Asked about Cornell Tech’s partnership with the gallery, Piaskowski told *The WIRE*, “We couldn’t be luckier with such a person as Jane Swanson,” Cornell’s Assistant Director of Government and Community Relations.

Swanson is often present at gallery openings and has been a consistently supportive liaison.

“We couldn’t believe it,” Sudol added. “Esther and I were listening to the groundbreaking speeches and, right there, on stage

with Bloomberg and De Blasio, Dan Huttenlocher mentioned RIVAA, not once, but three times, as an example of community outreach.”

Huttenlocher is Cornell Tech’s first Dean. He along with Cathy Dove, since appointed as second in command, and Swanson have followed through on the university’s initial promises to the community. Currently, Cornell uses RIVAA Gallery space to keep the community informed about campus construction.

This partnership’s most visible reward to date has been Gerakaris’s show coinciding with the Cornell Tech groundbreaking, funded by Cornell. As Tropicália helped turn the corner for RIVAA’s future, it preserved a legacy of contributions by the artists’ group that extends beyond what they bring to Main Street.

RIVAA In The Community

RIVAA’s hands at work on the Island include the routine events of conducting tours of the gallery, introducing art up close to kids from PS/IS 217, and weekly workshops conducted by internationally recognized RIVAA member, Valeriu Boborelu.

(Workshops are open to all comers and take place on Saturdays from 11:00 to 2:00. For more information, call the gallery at

212-308-6630 and leave a message or email: galleryinfo@rivaa.com)

In 2005, at the Gallery, RIVAA hosted *Coming to Light*, an exhibit that introduced The Louis I. Kahn Monument to Franklin D. Roosevelt, the design which gave rebirth to the Island’s southern tip as Four Freedoms Park.

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Come April, Roosevelt Islanders will see a monumental addition to Sudol’s intention of making our home something of a sculpture park. Working with RIOCC General Counsel, Susan Rosenthal, and resident board member Mike Shinozaki, RIVAA has arranged for a major new installation, Gustav Kraitz’s *Blue Dragon*, a sculpture measuring 9X3 feet, to be placed near the entrance to Southpoint Park.

A Hungarian born artist, Kraitz survived a Soviet forced labor camp in 1945 and eventually settled in Sweden. He is best known in New York for *Hope*, his sculpture completed in honor of Swedish World War II hero, Raul Wallenberg. It occupies space at 47th Street and First Avenue, facing the United Nations. Kraitz was invited for a tour of Roosevelt Island by resident and RIVAA associate,



By the time she led the pioneering Art Frenzy experience in 2001, Jacoby established a career as not just an artist but also a teacher and art administrator. She brought her skills to staging an exhibit of local works on the walls of PS/IS 217, part of broader initiative that saw Red Buses, the Tram and subway shuttling art enthusiasts between coordinated exhibits in Manhattan and Queens. Roosevelt Island sat at the heart of it, long and lean in the middle of the river that links both boroughs.

Invigorated by this success, Jacoby joined forces with fellow artists and founding members, Tad Sudol, Harry Small, and Esther Piaskowski, along with local attorney, Phillip Groner, to press RIOCC to support a permanent art resource as part of its role in developing the community.

They were lucky to find an instant supporter in RIOCC’s then president, Robert Ryan. With Ryan’s backing, the embryonic association took over the space that Bigelow Pharmacy had just left, still RIVAA’s current location, and put their minds and bodies to work, building the gallery space out from a vision.

Floors were ripped and replaced, and

windows, designed by architect Sudol, became not just windows to the world on Main Street but Roosevelt Island’s welcome to visitors and residents entering the center of town.

What they created is the still impressive space at street level in front of Rivercross. Before each show, a team led by veteran artists, Valeriu Boborelu and Ioan Popoiu, clean, spackle and paint the space afresh to give new art fresh atmosphere.

2016

“We are in good shape, right now,” Sudol reported, sitting in RIVAA’s tiny office space with fellow board members, Popoiu and Esther Piaskowski.

A new three-year lease has recently been signed with Hudson-Related, the company responsible for our commercial spaces.

“Hudson is very important to us,” Sudol adds. “David Kramer tries hard to recognize our value to the look of Main Street and the

community. Our windows are crucial.”

Kramer is president of Hudson Companies, a high profile city developer, and his taking time to work directly with RIVAA is no small thing.

As support for RIVAA’s mission goes, neither is the \$9,000 dollars in public purpose funds funneled from RIOCC after approval by RIRA. Roosevelt Island’s public purpose money started with a deposit by Manhattan Park, in lieu of sales taxes on construction materials, and has grown as new buildings rise. Because rulings handed down from a distant, apparently disinterested Cuomo administration in Albany made the distribution shaky in recent years, 2016’s speedy, kink-free process was especially welcome.

Cornell Loves RIVAA

Asked about Cornell Tech’s partnership with the gallery, Piaskowski told *The WIRE*, “We couldn’t be luckier with such a person as Jane Swanson,” Cornell’s Assistant Director of Government and Community Relations.

Swanson is often present at gallery openings and has been a consistently supportive liaison.

“We couldn’t believe it,” Sudol added. “Esther and I were listening to the groundbreaking speeches and, right there, on stage

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Valeriu Boborelu leading a school class on a tour of the gallery.

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The congregant said that, had the parish known, “We would have had an organ company come out and protect the organ. They would have disconnected the wires and sealed the pipes so no sawdust entered into the pipes. In addition, we keep chalices, a ciborium, holy water, wine, holy oils and unconsecrated hosts in the cabinet, as well as the Holy Missal and Lector books, clothing for altar servers, and so on. [These items are] essential elements for our Mass, that can easily be ruined by moving them.”

Good Shepherd Center

Good Shepherd, which also serves as a community center, houses many of the Island’s secular meetings, classes, and events as well. A Community Conversation, hosted by Ben Kallos and the New York Public Library (NYPL), was scheduled for January 14 in the Good Shepherd Center. Islanders got word that the meeting venue was changed to the Cultural Center about two hours before the meeting was scheduled to start.

The Damage

A member of the Catholic congregation told The WIRE that, once their choir director gained access to Good Shepherd for practice on January 6, (RIOC had changed the locks), he discovered that the pipe organ’s wires had been cut and it had been moved, that their cabinets were moved, that their altar had been moved, and that construction garbage had been piled on the altar. “We had to discover the extent of the disruption. Donna Masly did not tell us in advance about the floor work, or tell us about the damage and disruption to the parish’s stuff.”

Reports indicate that neither the piano nor the organ were covered during renovation work. While the piano survived, the organ is likely to need professional repair.

RIOC’s Response

RIOC President Charlene Indelicato tells a different story. First, Indelicato says, “RIOC booked five working days in Good Shepherd. The only permit during that time was for choir practice one evening for two hours. The permit holder was notified and arrangements were made to use the large room downstairs. On Thursday when it became clear

that contractors would not finish in time for Sunday services, those who had permits were notified by email and alternate arrangements were made.”

Specifically, Indelicato says notice was given to the Catholic Parish via email on January 5 regarding moving the following day’s choir practice. She says they were notified that Sunday services had to take place elsewhere at a 10:00 a.m. meeting on Thursday, January 7. She says the Episcopalian parish was notified via email at 10:45 am on January 7 and that Hope Church received its notice at a 1:00 p.m. meeting on that same day.

Indelicato says that the New York Public Library (NYPL) was emailed on January 13 regarding the following day’s meeting. She said, “Although the downstairs was available in Good Shepherd, we felt that there may have been an issue with fumes and therefore changed the Library meeting to the Cultural Center. Unfortunately, we did not estimate the time to cure.”

(Although Indelicato notified NYPL, Islanders did not receive word of the change until about two hours prior.)

Regarding damage and care taken in handling sacred objects, Indelicato contradicts representatives of the congregations: “There was no damage. Representatives of the various congregations were present at different times when RIOC staff set up the facility. The organ was checked for problems by a church representative.”

Lingering Outrage

The result of this incident for a lot of Islanders has been outrage. Even assuming RIOC is correct about the dates and times they gave notice, many Islanders remain annoyed. In an email to RIOC, Frank Farance wrote, “It is impossible to comprehend the severe lack of coordination with your floor renovations at Good Shepherd Church.” In Farance’s view, RIOC should have communicated with church users and the community at large, allowed religious organizations to move their own sacred objects prior to work commencing, and made alternate arrangements for services and meetings well

in advance.

In an email to the RIOC Board of Directors, Residents Association Councilor Lynne Shinozaki characterized the situation as a

“public space crisis.” She added, “The needs of our community are not being addressed and the sentiment in the community is that our voice is not heard.”



Above, cabinets housing religious objects moved, uncovered organ in background. Below, Catholic Parish’s wooden chairs stacked by movers. Photos courtesy of Frank Farance.



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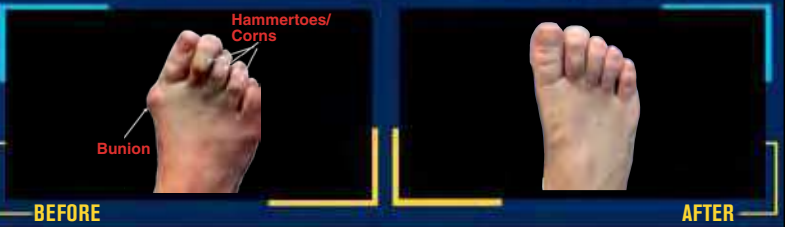
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