

Next scheduled issue
Saturday, June 28
(Fourth of July issue)

The Main Street **WIRE**

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

News updates on **Website NYC10044** www.nyc10044.com



Paint Your Wagon... er, Tram! Roosevelt Island Day today kicks off a Roosevelt Island Historical Society Tram-decorating competition. Wednesday morning RIHS President Judy Berdy was finishing off a display in a Rivercross storefront window. Two \$100 grand prizes for adults and children are at stake, and participants' imaginations are the only limits. An ad on page 11 presents rules and deadlines.

Policy Restated to Allow Casual Photography Here

You can now take casual or journalistic photographs on Roosevelt Island without fear of arrest by a Public Safety Officer.

A policy clarification was issued Wednesday by RIOC's Acting President, Patrick Siconolfi, to Public Safety chief James Fry, stating, "It is the policy of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation that permits will not be required for recreational photography or

videography. The press will also not need permits to take either still or moving pictures on Roosevelt Island."

The clarification clears up a policy ambiguity that had led to several residents being taken into custody by Public Safety Officers, or being warned against continuing to shoot pictures. (See related letter, page 2.) Some residents had sought a clear policy statement as assurance that they would not be hassled for using a camera here.

The Siconolfi memo continues, "Permits will only be required for commercial photography or videography. This type of activity can most easily be identified by long sessions that often require the exclusive use of a particular area of the Island."

RIOC's policy on photography was set up originally to control the use of the Island by movie companies and for commercial fashion shoots (see photo below), but in some instances it had been interpreted as prohibiting casual use of a camera.

Briefly...



Annie Peña is leaving the Senior Center, where she's been a stalwart friend of the Island's senior citizens.

Westview residents kicked off a fundraising campaign Wednesday night, preparing to fight rent hikes and position residents to become owners, while protecting non-buyers if and when the building becomes a cooperative.



This fashion shoot at the pier earlier this week by photographer Chris Militscher, for a Lord & Taylor catalog, is an example of the kind of sessions which, along with commercial movies, require a special permit from the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. Under a policy guideline issued this week, amateur shutterbugs and journalists do not require a RIOC permit.

Possible Scandal Brews at RIOC

News Analysis by Dick Lutz

Could Roosevelt Island become the detonator in a potential scandal over Governor George Pataki's use of the State's authorities – and public-benefit corporations like RIOC – to reward friends and supporters with high-paying low-performance jobs?

The New York Times reported Thursday that Democrats in the State Assembly are gearing up to investigate that very matter, with hearings planned into the New York Power Authority's hiring of Lt. Col. Daniel Wiese, the former head of Pataki's security detail, as its inspector general. *The Times* editorialized on that matter last week, pointing out that by keeping his retirement pay under a waiver, Wiese will clear \$220,000 a year. (There's a related letter on page 2.)

Meanwhile, Robert H. Ryan, a one-time Pataki campaign operative and now the deposed President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), is pulling down \$552 per workday – for not working. He was suspended February 4, with pay, which continues under an administrative decision by Board Chair Mary Beth Labate of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR).

The RIOC Board was scheduled to meet Thursday, but the session was called off. The reason given to *The WIRE* was a Labate family emergency that kept her in Albany.

The RIOC Board has not said, officially, what Ryan's offense was. Ryan has admitted giving himself and others on the RIOC staff lavish bonuses for "volunteer" work after the 9/11 disaster, but defends himself by saying other State public benefit corporations did

the same. But as the Ryan matter drags on unresolved, an obvious question looms large: If that's the charge, why cannot it be resolved quickly? The obvious follow-up is: If there's something else, what is it? And what is the status of an investigation, ordered by the Board, into Ryan's official behavior – why haven't RIOC Board members seen the inch-thick report which, at that size, would seem to contain something more than a yes/no verdict on the 9/11-bonus question.

The Ryan matter, in juxtaposition with the Assembly Democrats' determination to look into Pataki's use of patronage power, suggests that, at some point, the use of RIOC jobs could come under close scrutiny, particularly if Ryan did something not just questionable, but patently illegal or against the understood rules of the road. Last year, five RIOC employees each took home over \$110,000 in pay. One, attorney Barbara Espejo, is authorized by the RIOC Board to "work from home" – a circumstance that could appear, to a skeptical mind, to be a no-show job. Another employee, Public Information Officer John Melia, made nearly \$96,820 in 2002; community leaders have complained before the RIOC Board that RIOC's public relations operations is essentially non-functioning – or at least that Melia himself is non-performing. (While *The WIRE* has observed Melia present at a few public functions on Roosevelt Island, the newspaper has received no press releases from Melia and little other evidence of actual work.)

But the current crux is Ryan – a no-show by order of a RIOC Board whose award of continuity in Ryan's

See **RIOC**, page 3

That Power Plant Next Door? State's Biggest – and Growing

by Robert Laux-Bachand

Have you noticed that your next-door neighbor is putting up a \$170 million addition?

The neighbor is the Ravenswood Generating Station, and the addition, a 47,000-square-foot powerhouse, was about 65 percent complete at the end of last week, according to Brian McCabe, vice president of KeySpan Energy Development Corporation.

This is a peak period of construction, with about 450 workers in the construction trades, mostly electricians, working on the project in two shifts, along with 160 to 170 supervisory and management personnel. McCabe told *The WIRE* that the construction effort will significantly diminish in early November, when testing will begin to bring the new generating units online.

Energy will flow to the State power grid in December, he said, and the project in its entirety, including offices and locker rooms, should be finished sometime in March.

KeySpan Corporation, which bought Ravenswood from Consolidated Edison in 1999, says that Ravenswood supplied about one-fifth of New York City's peak energy demand last summer. Ravenswood is already the biggest power plant in New York State, with a "net summer capability" of 2,185 megawatts, according to the federal Energy Information Administration, and this new plant will add 250 megawatts.

What impact will it have on Roosevelt Island?

The most obvious effect is visual. Some Islanders may have been



surprised by the sheer bulk of the new facility, which KeySpan promoted to the community as an eco-friendly power plant. It rises 215 feet above Vernon Boulevard in Queens, covers 2.4 acres of the 27.6-acre site, and is a formidable addition to the East Channel skyline, even if it is still overshadowed by Big Allis (Ravenswood No. 3), the 980-megawatt steam-driven unit directly to its south, which went on line in 1965. That was the year, in November, that 800,000 people were trapped in the subways during a 13-hour blackout, and Roosevelt Island as a residential community did not even exist.

The smokestack for this new, combined-cycle plant, as it's called, will be 400 feet tall, topping out at 200 feet below the striped stacks for Ravenswood's Nos. 1, 2 and 3. The height was a matter of some contention when the office of the

Queens Borough President and a local group, CHOKE (Coalition Helping to Organize a Kleaner Environment) went before a State administrative law judge two years ago and sought to intervene in the siting process.

If you look at the top of the building, the triple A-frame array that resembles a solar collector is actually part of an air-cooled condenser. McCabe said the company had to install this equipment, supplied by Balcke-Durr Inc. of Tampa, Fla., because it was not permitted to draw or discharge East River cooling water. Instead, steam from the turbine floor will be drawn through a 16-foot duct on the south side of the building, up toward the roof and 18 ceramic headers, where it will be cooled and then recycled into a holding tank, to be heated again.

See **Keyspan**, page 8

What One Thing?

In an editorial May 17, *The WIRE* asked readers to nominate the one thing they'd change about Roosevelt Island to make it a better place to live. Here are some answers:

To the Editor:

Here are the things I would like for the Island:

1. A bakery.
2. Better transportation (including the elevator issue).
3. Day care for infants.

Marguerite Camaio

To the Editor:

My nomination for the one single change that would hugely improve quality of life on Roosevelt Island would be a pedestrian/bike bridge connecting to the Manhattan side. It could be built under the Queensboro Bridge, from the Meditation Steps, or by connecting Lighthouse Park to Carl Schurz Park.

It would be great to bike into the City.

Luca Cartegni

To the Editor:

I am a new resident of the Island – I moved here in December – and I appreciate everything about this wonderful place. However, the question (*What Single Change...?*, editorial, May 31) is a difficult one. I have a number of changes I would like to see materialize.

First, I would like the MetroCard system extended to the Tram to afford greater accessibility to the Island.

I have also noticed the Island in some areas is somewhat worn and neglected. For example, the area around Gristede's needs better lighting and maintenance. Gristede's, by the way, needs better management or it needs to be removed. It has some of the worst merchandise and highest prices of any nearby store.

Also, the walking/bike path on the northeast/Queens side section of the Island needs better maintenance and/or new asphalt.

Finally, I would halt development and create more park and open space for the residents. The last thing this Island needs is to be a clone of Manhattan.

S. Walden

To the Editor:

My nomination for the one single change I'd like to see on Roosevelt Island is a 24-hour day-care center. Though the Island is touted as a haven for families, working mothers are forced to leave their children with baby-sitters in the absence of such a facility. Schools run through 3:00 p.m. and, in the absence of an after-school program for the young ones, children have to be picked up by caregivers. Given that there are medical professionals and others who work the night shift, an overnight center would be a good addition. I have lived away from the Island for a brief period and know what a wonderful place it is. If only it had better facilities for my son, I would never leave!

Anusha Shrivastava



Letters

To Patrick Siconolfi
Acting President, RIOC

Dear Mr. Siconolfi:

Can something be done about taking down the winter motif (snowflakes) banners on the street lamps at the north end of the Island, near the garage and Manhattan Park? It is now summer.

Also, the situation of leaving the soccer field partially illuminated at night, which has been an ongoing problem and about which we have communicated our concerns to your office, is having a serious impact on our quality of life. The light illuminates our apartment, even with our blinds fully closed, resulting in our inability to sleep properly. In addition, it is doing nothing to keep people off the field. Indeed, the lights serve to allow people to congregate near the field at night. Last week, a group of teen-agers was near the field, hidden from view by the bushes, around 11:00 at night. In addition, having the lights on is wasting a lot of money, in the form of electricity, which the State, and the Island, sorely need.

Also, what is being done about repairing the holes and ruts in Main Street and preventing the pigeons from roosting and defecating all over the sidewalks – where we all walk – in front of Motorgate? This has been a problem for at least two years. Indeed, the carcass of a pigeon sat, for four days, in this exact location, directly at the bus stop, surrounded by the ever-present droppings. This area needs to be maintained daily, since RIOC does not seem to be able to do anything to keep the pigeons from roosting there. It is a health hazard. All over this City, and all over America, communities seem to know what to do – without resorting to poison – to keep pigeon droppings away from people. It is no coincidence that the Tram Plaza in Manhattan is also covered in droppings. This is nothing but a lack of responsibility and resolve. It is easily remedied. Please contact me if you need guidance. I am sick of walking through and near pigeon feces!

James Brock

To the Editor:

Regarding my earlier letter (*The WIRE*, May 17) regarding restrictions on amateur photography on Roosevelt Island, I received a response on May 20 from the Public Advocate's Office, from Ms. Maureen French. I had asked the Public Advocate's Office to help me determine if NYPD had placed restrictions due to security concerns on photography in New York City. Ms. French informed me that, according to Deputy Police Commissioner Michael O'Rooney, there has been no change in public policy regarding photography in the New York

See **Letters – Photos**, page 9

To the Editor, The New York Times:

Regarding your June 2 editorial, *Good Places to Stash a Crony*, we on Roosevelt Island know all too well the corrosive power of cronyism. The president of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), Robert Ryan, has been on administrative leave pending investigation by the State Inspector General since February 4. This Pataki appointee, the Governor's campaign manager in 1994, is still pulling down his \$10,000+ per month salary with no obligation to earn it. This salary, and the other inflated salaries in RIOC, are paid primarily by my neighbors, the residents of Roosevelt Island.

We have been told by RIOC that they may not discuss the succession of the presidency with the community, and the reason is that Ryan is still on paid administrative leave. Once again, we are "out of the loop" on an issue that directly impacts the residents as the end users of RIOC's role as a public-benefit corporation. Once again, this community is denied any control of its local government, which is appointed by the Governor and

See **Letters – Times**, page 9

Letters

Editor's note: Raye Schwartz, a Rivercross resident, has been monitoring a longtime standing-water condition at the south end of Eastwood, on the roof of the minischool and on the playground behind it. Here, condensed for publication, is part of her correspondence on the potential West Nile virus threat.

Re: Standing Water at 504 Main St.

Report Number: **b19811**

Dear Raye Schwartz:

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your letter.

The New York City Department of Health has received your report of standing water and has initiated action to address this potentially dangerous condition. DOH will inspect the property and, if a standing water violation exists, the condition will be remediated and, as appropriate, we will fine and bill the property owner for these services. We will [then] send you an additional letter detailing the status of your complaint.

Please contact us again on our Web site at nyc.gov/health or by calling us at 311 if you observe additional water accumulations.

For updated information on West Nile virus, please refer to the Department's website at <http://nyc.gov/health>.

James H. Gibson, M.P.H., Assistant Commissioner
New York City Department of Health

To Patrick Siconolfi (Acting President of RIOC):

Thanks for responding to my call and e-mail... As we discussed I am enclosing a copy of my response from the Department of Health, as well as its websites which address prevention of West Nile Virus. I've also enclosed websites which discuss larvacides which are "approved," as well as their potential risks.

While the use of larvacides is sometimes useful in areas of standing water that are not easily accessible, such as storm drains or marshland, its longterm use should not be a substitute for removing standing water in open areas, such as the roof or playground at 504 Main Street. I'm sure that you will agree that there is a need for vigilance in protecting at-risk residents and workers from [this] threat.

Although you told me that you were assured that [RIOC] staff had removed water after the rain, I enclose a digital photo I took yesterday around 4:00 p.m., 48 hours after the last rain, and on a day that was sunny, with temperatures close to 80 degrees. As you can see, not only was the roof not drained; water was also not drained from the adjoining playground.

I don't want to be adversarial, nor do I want to see a battle between City and State agencies, with threats of fines and sanctions. All I want to accomplish is assurance that RIOC will remove the standing water from that roof and any other area where it may accumulate. It should be routine, and shouldn't require that we need to initiate calls and letters to make it happen.

Please direct RIOC's maintenance staff to drain the water at least once a week, and certainly more often after heavy rains, during the warm months.

Thanks,

Raye Schwartz



The WIRETM

Published by **The Main Street WIRE**
©2003 Unisource2000TM Inc.
531 Main St. #413, NYC10044

News 1-212-826-9055
Urgent news 1-917-617-0449
Advertising 1-212-751-8214
Circulation 1-212-935-7534
Fax 1-212-755-2540

e-mail MainStreetWIRE@rcn.com
in association with
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Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the editor, to the community, and to/from officials. Publication on a *Name Withheld* basis will be considered, but the writer's name, address, and phone number **must** be provided for verification and for our records; anonymous letters are not considered for publication.

Preferred methods of submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (ASCII text preferred, or use any wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files with macros), or PC-standard 3.5" floppy disk left at 531 Main Street addressed to *The WIRE*.

Alternatives: Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to 1-212-755-2540 (call ahead to 1-212-826-9055). Clearly handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we cannot take telephone dictation of letters.

All letters are subject to acceptance, and to editing for length and clarity. Recommend maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

Judi Arond, Bubu Arya, David Bauer, Steve Bessenof, Virginia Boykin, Melanie Castine, Lynn Chambers, Mark Chipman, Malcolm Cohen, Susan Cohen, Pearl Cooper, Shirley Cruz, Joan Davis, Jenny Olivera DelMastro, Morty Dinerstein, Rebecca Dougherty, Juanita Elliott, Mary Fitzgerald, Teresa Hasing, Roberta Hershey, Elaine Kane, Ken Kaplan, Peter Kaplan, Mickey Karpeles-Bauer, Matthew Katz, Seth Kaufman, Mike Kolba, Bridget Lowy, Hazel Lynch, Armando Manalo, Robert Manalo, Beatrice Marcus, Clarissa McCraley, Dorene McQueen, Terry Moses, Claudia Narine, Clinton Narine, Sandra Narine, Nancy Olivera, Joan Pape, Gabrielle Parnes, Harry Patel, Sheila Patel, Gladys Rasheed, Irene Rivera, Ron Schuppert, Bernie Schwartz, Beryl Seaforth, Marilyn Sherman, Haley Shinozaki, Michael Shinozaki, George Spelvin, Joseph Strong, Lynn Strong-Shinozaki, Pearl Thomas, Maggie Warner, Nina Winteringham



Tex Allen Concert

Islander Tex Allen will lead his sextet in a *Welcome to Summer* jazz concert Sunday, June 22, in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd (see *ComingUp*, this page). Allen, who composes, has recorded with a panoply of jazz artists, including Slide Hampton, Freddie Hubbard, Nat Adderly, Gil Evans, and Sarah Vaughan. He composed for the Dreamworks film, *Amistad*, and the Walt Disney film, *Polly*.

Admission for the concert will be \$10 at the door. A reception at Gallery RIVAA will follow the performance.

In some countries the inhabitants display a certain repugnance to avail themselves of the political privileges with which the law invests them; it would seem that they set too high a value upon their time to spend it on the interests of the community...But if an American were condemned to confine his activity to his own affairs, he would be robbed of one half of his existence; he would feel an immense void in the life which he is accustomed to lead, and his wretchedness would be unbearable.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

After decades of "meaning to get around" to reading this seminal book, I finally had the Roosevelt Island branch of the New York Public Library track down a copy for me. What an extraordinary work! For ten months, this Frenchman toured the United States of 1831, mixing with people of every rank and station in life. The insight that he drew into the American character and the relationship of the governed to their government still applies today. De Tocqueville came from a France that had run the gamut from Bourbon monarchy to republican tyranny to Napoleonic empire and back again to monarchy. He came to our shores skeptical of the efficacy of democracy as compared to government by an aristocracy, but truly admiring of how the ideal of liberty had permeated every stratum of American life.

Not every insight was on the money, of course. He discussed our elections in terms of "universal suffrage" when, clearly, women and African-Americans were disenfranchised. However, he was prescient when he wrote that the only outcome of governmental betrayal of the Indians would be their disappearance as cohesive societies. Also, he felt that slavery was not economically viable and destroyed the souls of white master and black slave alike. He predicted that slavery would die, either of its own inefficiency or through national cataclysm, and that, while American blacks might achieve legal parity with European-Americans, that social parity would take much longer, with a terrible cost in the suffering of freed slaves.

I mention all this only to explain why I chose to start this column with a quote from de Tocqueville's chapter on "Advantages of Democracy." He saw something in the national character whereby the people see government not as an "other," but as an extension of themselves, with a concomitant obligation to participate in government at some level. We see this example in the volunteers on school district boards, in community boards and, of course, on the RIRA Common Council. See, it's taken me 400 words to get around to Roosevelt Island, but I finally made it!

The RIRA Common Council completed the first quarter of its term with the June 4 meeting. Constitutionally, we are provided with a three-month hiatus over the summer. However, RIRA's impact will be felt all summer long, starting with Roosevelt Island Day today. Your Council representatives will be serving a

Editor's note: The President of RIOC has a standing invitation to provide a companion *RIOC Column* for publication here.

RIOC from page 1

\$132,596.88 salary (the 2002 figure) goes on, by DHCR administrative decision, for no apparent reason other than the Pataki connection. Some residents are asking, "What are they paying him *not* to do?"

Meanwhile, the hiring of Herbert E. Berman, the former City Councilmember from Brooklyn, is

The RIRA Column



Matthew Katz
Residents Association President
e-mail: matthewkatz@rcn.com

bagel and coffee breakfast to all the volunteers and many of us will pitch in later in the day with trowels and rakes helping to make the Island beautiful. Also, Councilmembers and others have staffed the Icla da Silva Foundation tent for weeks now to solicit your blood donations and to ask you to provide samples for the bone-marrow surveys that are the core of the Foundation's work. And our Fundraising Committee is hard at work planning other outdoor delights for July and August.

We used this June milestone to take stock of our accomplishments and future goals by asking each Councilmember for an individual assessment. As you might expect, your representatives recounted very different levels of participation in the Council's activities thus far, ranging from full-time commitment to none whatsoever. We are all volunteers, of course, with varying amounts of time available for community work. Some have labored to make an impact on the rent-regulation laws impacting our Mitchell-Lama housing by lobbying in Albany on one or more occasions. Others have tried, so far unsuccessfully, to save firehouses threatened by municipal budget-cutters, attending rallies and marching with other affected communities. And some have worked to give RIRA the financial independence it needs to accomplish its goals by producing an auction and planning other fund-raisers.

While we bring to the table different agendas and differing schedules in "real life," the obligation to serve this community in some capacity was clear the day we decided to run for office. For the majority of us who were elected either Island-wide or by building district, we were required to answer questions on a nominations form, including, "I am aware of the responsibilities of the office for which I am nominated," and, "I will serve my term of office if elected." While these documents aren't legally binding, once each of us signed his or her name, the moral obligation was clear.

For myself, I intend to continue attacking the whole range of issues I've written about for many months. Attaining the MetroCard for our Tram is still an uncertain goal, even though it has been endorsed by all the players and by every level of government. I will meet with the Council's committee chairs and vice-presidents some time in August to plan goals, projects and strategies for the fall. With a committed Common Council we can accomplish a great deal. And with those programs and accomplishments we can earn your respect and your participation. If we fail to win your interest in joining the Council or at least, in voting in the RIRA elections, we risk falling into the obscurity and irrelevance that has befallen other organizations that once were significant to Island life.

I don't intend for that to happen on my watch. And you must demand that your representatives fulfill at least the minimum requirements of Council membership as well. This Common Council has the potential to accomplish marvelous things while serving this community, but the level of expectations from the community must be high. If you demand excellence from us, you just might get it.

See you at Roosevelt Island Day.

in limbo, with Pataki's staff possibly reluctant to pass his name to the RIOC Board while Ryan remains on the payroll.

If Ryan and the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation does become a flashpoint in a hard look at Pataki patronage, the question may end up being, "Who owns this scandal? Labate, DHCR, or the members of the RIOC Board of Directors?"

But on Thursday, Assemblymember Richard L. Brodsky, who heads the Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions that will hold the hearing into the Wiese matter, told *The WIRE* that Roosevelt Island matters "have not been raised to the committee... The committee has not been approached about any matter dealing with Roosevelt Island."

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Roosevelt Island Day, today, **Sat., June 14**, starting 9:00 a.m. in Good Shepherd Plaza.

Blood Drive at the Senior Center, **Sat., June 14**, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Donors can schedule a time in Good Shepherd Plaza throughout the morning, call **1-212-593-1807**, or e-mail Airam@icla.org.

Charlie Thomas and The Drifters in concert, **Sat., June 14**, 6:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Plaza, with their Rock and Roll Hall of Fame hits, *There Goes My Baby*, *Up on the Roof*, *This Magic Moment*, *Under the Boardwalk*, presented by the Roosevelt Island Youth Program. (In the event of rain, PS/IS 217 auditorium.)

Father's Day, **Sunday, June 15**.

Pastoral Installation of Fr. Peter Miqueli, mass and dinner, **Sun., June 15**, 3:00 p.m. Reservations required; call **1-212-832-6778**.



Fr. Peter Miqueli

— The Coming Week —

Author Talk: Chang-rae Lee on *Native Speaker*, **Thur., June 19**, 6:30 p.m., Library. Free.

Pre-K/K Parents Tour at PS/IS 217, **Fri., June 20**, 9:15 a.m.; meeting in the school library. RSVP to Lauraine Rademaker at **1-212-980-0294**.

— Future Events —

The Tex Allen Sextet in Concert, A Celebration of Summer, **Sun., June 22**, 4:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd, with Tex Allen, trumpet; Melissa Slocum, double bass; Jason Brown, drums; Joe Ford, alto sax; Richard Perry, tenor sax; Carlton Holmes, piano; and surprise guest artists. \$10 at the door. Post-concert reception at Gallery RIVAA.

Island Kids Summer Registration Night, **Mon., June 23**, 5:00-7:00 p.m., 536 Main Street Community Room (behind the pizza parlor). For information, call **1-212-318-0216**.

The Main Street WIRE — Fourth of July issue (to be distributed at Southpoint for fireworks visitors, and earlier on the Island, **Sat., June 28**).

Deadlines: Advertising in the paper, **Fri., June 20**; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, **Mon., June 23**; fliers due **Thur., June 26**. **Future issues:** July 26;

August 23; September 6, 20; October 11, 25; November 8, 22 (Thanksgiving issue); December 13 (holiday issue). **Phone/fax** for news, **1-212-826-9055/755-2540**; **phone/fax** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **1-212-751-8214/755-2540**.

To list your organization's Island events here, e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up.

Fourth of July Fireworks Viewing at Southpoint Park, **Fri., July 4**,

gate open at 6:00; fireworks at 9:15; Southpoint. Tickets, \$18, available from RIOC office, 591 Main Street, during business hours, at Manhattan-side Tram station, or on-line at www.rioc.com through July 2. **Note:** No large coolers, backpacks, or over-size bags permitted on site; all bags subject to search.

RIRA Common Council meeting, Wed., Sept. 3, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Open to the public; public comments invited near start of meeting.

RIOC Board Meeting, Thur., Sept. 11, 5:30 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

RIRA Common Council meeting, Wed., Oct. 1, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Open to the public; public comments invited near start of meeting.

RIOC Board Meeting, Thur., Oct. 9, 9:30 a.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

RIRA Common Council meeting, Wed., Nov. 5, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd.



Senior Center

Monday

10:30, **Blood Pressure Screen**
12:30, "Oldies" Movies
1:00, **Tai Chi**
7:00, **Dance Class** (Beginners)

Tuesday

10-11, **Dance & Relax**
10-11, **Latchhook Class**
6:30, **Yoga Class**
7:30, **Games** (RISA)

Wednesday

9:15, **Stay Well**
10:30, **Beading Class**
7:00, **Pokeno** (RISA)

Thursday

10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
3:00, **Computer Class** (advance registration required)
7:00, **Dance Class** (Advanced)

Friday

9:30, **Yoga Stretch**
1:00, **Bridge Class**
7:00, **Games** (RISA)

Saturday

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

Special Events

Tue., June 17, 11:00, *The Seniors Go to Harlem*

Wed., June 18, Atlantic City Trip

Thur., June 19, Goodbye Party for Annie Peña

Thur., June 26, 7:00 p.m., **Initiation of Officers**

Fri., June 27, 12:30, **Birthdays Party**

Mon., June 30, last day of classes at the Senior Center

Fri., July 25, Birthday party

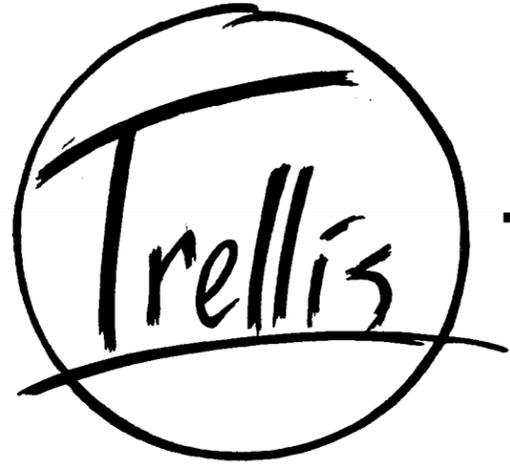
Home-delivered meals available: 1-212-744-5022, ext. 1203

10044.com

Roosevelt Island Computers

- Any computer problems
- 24 hours service, tech support
- Consultations
- Upgrades
- Pick-up and delivery
- Web sites for individuals (businesses)

Call 1-917-916-5306



Roosevelt Island Day...

It represents everything that's great about this wonderful community: People working together in the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect that is conveyed to the physical surroundings, as well. Let's have the spirit of this day extend throughout the year...

See you at Trellis...

1-212-752-1517

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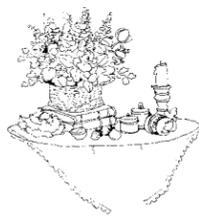
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The Child School Holds a Celebratory Groundbreaking...



Maari de Souza, center, breaks "ground" for The Child School's new facility, with the assistance of Spencer Jurman of Hunter+Partners, as RIOG Acting President Patrick Siconolfi (left) and Child School Board Chair Michael Patterson (second from right) applaud. Far right is Aurelie Ferrara, described by de Souza as her right arm in the institution's affairs.

by Dick Lutz

The Child School broke ground – well, a pile of symbolic sand, anyway – late last week. The event became a celebration of the school's past and future as a private institution for children, grade school through high school, with special educational needs.

The Child School and its Legacy High School are taking over, and rehabilitating, the Island's near-delinquent minischools in Eastwood, Rivercross, Island House, and Westview. Soon, a gymnasium will be constructed in an Eastwood courtyard. Presuming construction is completed on schedule, the school will open for classes here in September, completing a long-planned transition from its Manhattan location.

A student, Bret Lehne, who spoke as part of last week's ceremonies, summarized the difference between old and new: "Our gym in the old school currently consists of one quarter of the basement, next to the kitchen and the bathroom and, as if *that* wasn't cramped enough, there's a big pillar smack in the middle of it all... You can

imagine how exciting it will be to have a real gym of our own... I may miss the pillar a bit..."

As though released after a long period of anticipation, parents and others in the groundbreaking audience of about 100 broke into applause after the first sentence spoken by the founder of the school,



Maari de Souza: "It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the groundbreaking of The Child School / Legacy High School campus on Roosevelt Island."

De Souza continued with some history of her school and her own experiences in starting it and getting to know the special nature of its students: "Thirty years ago when the school was founded in a

four-bedroom apartment on Roosevelt Island with five children, little did I envision that one day I would be standing here before you talking about moving into a four-building apartment with the potential of helping 280 youngsters."

She continued, "As a psychologist, when I met them a long time ago, I first saw them on paper. These were children that left you daunted. They looked so dysfunctional, so unable to do anything, behavior so serious. You didn't think that there was a potential of any sort. And then I met the youngsters themselves, and I was pierced by their awareness that they were rejected – how different they felt – how they dog-paddled to keep their heads above water. On one side was this amazing awareness, this tremendous amount of pain, and on the other side, as I got to know them, I was taken aback by the sparkles of brilliance, the ability to look at details, some of them able to see the gestalt, the forest, in a sprinkling of a second. And amazing memory, perseverance, courage, a willingness to go at it over and over again. And I started to realize, it wasn't they that were less; it wasn't they that had to fit in; it wasn't they that were not making it; it was us – the educators – we were the ones that needed to look at them a little differently. We were the ones that needed to look at them from their perspective, and to see what they were seeing. If we did that, we would be intrigued..."

"I discovered that there was no limit to the potential. The idea was that we could reach any – any – level of performance. We were the ones that needed to build the bridge. And so we created this nurturing environment...this environment that nurtures the youngsters, that was therapeutic and, most of all, was *academic* way beyond anything and everything that anybody else could do, that we wanted to present and surround the children. That's what's coming to Roosevelt Island.

"Coming also to this Island are children that are courageous, hard-working, knowledgeable about themselves, and compassionate to others."

De Souza spoke of starting the school's junior high school pro-

gram in 1991 and, later, a high school program to address "the education system's" failure to provide Regents-level studies for students with special requirements. Sentence by sentence, she was applauded as she recounted the results: "This June... there will be 21 seniors graduating. Eighteen of them are heading into college. Three of them will be going into the work world."

"Every one of these children will be taking three things to offer the world and the community. They will have knowledge that learning will go on forever. There will be a reasonableness within them. They will be compassionate because they have received compassion from the school, and they will have a respect for individual differences, just as they have learned to do so within the walls of the school."

Describing the facilities of the new school, de Souza listed the gym, a state-of-the-art science room, a complete library, three computer rooms, computers in every classroom, an art room, an organic garden, and "a music room like none I have ever seen."

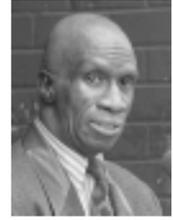
De Souza told her audience that most of the \$10 million-plus cost of the project has been financed by an Industrial Development Authority bond issue.

In the course of thanking the many supporters who made the school's presence on Roosevelt Island possible, de Souza men-

tioned Jerome Belson and Roosevelt Island Housing Management with a thank-you for the Eastwood courtyard land made available for a gymnasium and thanked the Eastwood Building Committee for its role in making that possible.

with Maari over 25 years ago," Patterson said, describing the school's move to Roosevelt Island as "a kind of homecoming." Speaking of the Island, he said, "This is going to be an absolutely wonderful partnership between a unique educational institution and an absolutely spectacular spot for a school like this, and I'm sure that the two will mutually reinforce each other. The community is going to be great for the school, and the school is going to be great for the community."

Patterson then introduced "our great friend, Byron Gaspard, who has done so much to help us reach this day and who is going to be so key in our future, as well."

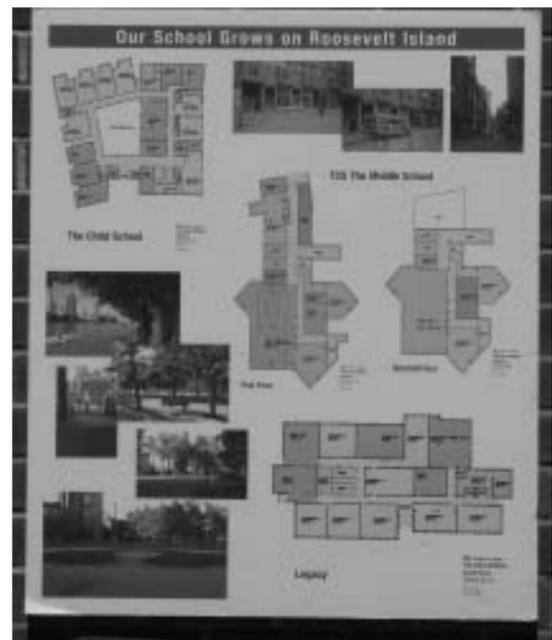


Gaspard told the audience that the parents among them know of the trouble they've had finding a quality educational environment for their children. "The Child School / Legacy High School has provided us with that environment, and I am so glad to see that this environment is coming to Roosevelt Island. What that is going to provide to this wonderful, diverse community is an enhancement and completion of this wonderful planned community by providing an additional service for our kids with special needs. We need

more institutions like The Child School and Legacy High School to provide much-needed service for this population. I am so glad that it's happened." Speaking of Roosevelt Island's many activists, Gaspard thanked "the many people who stood up and made noise... for our kids with special needs."

Maari de Souza then introduced Bret Lehne (see text of his talk, this page), who said, "I love this school – this wonderful school."

The groundbreaking event was capped with a musical performance at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. A percussion group and small choir received standing ovations from an enthusiastic crowd.



With considerable thanks and tribute, de Souza introduced Michael Patterson of J.P. Morgan, Chair of the school's Board of Trustees. "Our daughter was one of the first children who started here

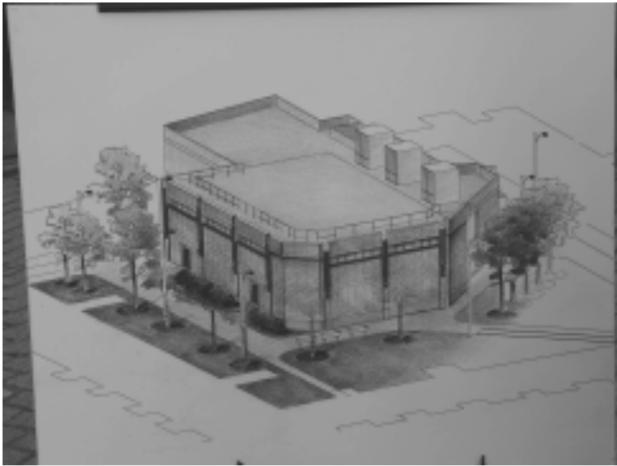
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The Child School maintains a website at www.thechildschool.org



...and Gets Ready to Open New Doors on Roosevelt Island



A Student, Praising His School, Anticipates Its Enhanced Future...

Hello... My name is Bret Lehne, and I've been a student in this wonderful school for eight years and counting...

I love this school. It took me in when nothing else was working, and did what everyone thought was impossible – they made me sit still. Well, at least a little. I'm still working on that, to tell you the truth – but at least now I'm bouncing in my chair instead of off the walls. I didn't believe in miracles until this school showed me one... myself.

size just by staring at you. And it only took me four years to figure out that she was on my side, even though she was constantly attacking it.

And she doesn't give up, either. When she set out to whip me into shape, she took out the biggest whip she could find and never stopped cracking. She's built this school up from an apartment-sized classroom to the four-building campus on Roosevelt Island.

Each of these new buildings will

come into contact with will be more than possible. With a school atrium, we'll be able to, well, *grow stuff*, which will probably be a lot cooler than it sounds.

Our gym in the old school currently consists of one quarter of the basement, next to the kitchen and the bathroom and, as if *that* wasn't cramped enough, there's a big pillar smack in the middle of it all. Did I mention it's also where we store mostly everything? We practically

have to step outside just to have enough room to play a game of chess. And don't even get me started on playing *football* in there. You can imagine how exciting it will be for us to have a real gym of our own. Though I may miss the pillar a bit, it'll be a great thing, and with the new gym equipment we'll be getting, it'll be even greater!

The new school, as a whole, will be fantastic. With new facilities, tools, faculty, students, and a *great* neighborhood to stay in, we're going to create a promising future for all children who need to see that *they* can do it *themselves*. And it's all thanks to the *unbelievable* help and support we've gotten. We could never have done anything this big without the help of people who care *immensely*, not the least of which, our Board of Trustees, our politicians, our parents, our teachers, our friends and friends of the school, our alumni, our Board of Education members. And I know we have some of our students out there too,



The \$10 million renovation of the minischools will proceed throughout the summer.

let me hear you guys!

All of these people have helped this along the way with generous donations, contributions, and services. None of this would have ever been possible without all of your help. Thanks also to the Roosevelt Island Community, who gave us a chance to show them

job, guys... Aren't they doing a great job, folks?

And finally, again and again, to Maari de Souza, the woman behind the *dream*.

All of these people – all of *you* have done this wonderful thing for my friends, my school, and myself, and for that, I thank you.



People look upon Special Education children as if they are inferior, unable to function – as if we are burdens, helpless in the world. They think we don't have the ability to do things ourselves, and need to be aided through every task.

We *don't* need help all along the way. The Child School and Legacy High School has shown me that... they've shown me that the "Special" in Special Education really *does* mean special... Because we are the ones who have the power to overcome our obstacles.

Now, I think *that's* pretty special. This school has taught me better than any other school I've ever been to... I've learned more here in single days than I have in entire years in other schools...

I remember when I first came into the school. Let me tell you, I fit in like a whale in a *desert*. I spent more time in the principal's office than I did sleeping. But I eventually realized that school was there to *help* me, not to oppress me, which is something that many mainstream school children *never* realize. I remember every teacher that has ever taught in this school. I've enjoyed meeting new ones, and even cried when some of them left. A teacher is someone who helps you change, and *nobody* has done that better than Maari...

She is the epitome of "intimidation"... She's the only person I've ever met who can *grow* to twice her

be packed to the brim with more education than you can shake a textbook at... and we're getting new stuff, too. Our student body will be almost doubling, and our equipment will be brand new and cutting-edge – new computers, new gym equipment, new desks, and new chairs... Books that don't refer to the *lunar landing* as "a promising future..."

With a new lab and equipment, science projects we never could have thought possible will be a reality. With a media room, ventures in technology we have rarely even



how responsible we can be. And a big round of thanks to our wonderful Construction Team! Awesome

The Child School's gymnasium will be built in this Eastwood courtyard. The school's classes start September 15.

...and Other Students Perform for Guests in Good Shepherd Chapel



Keyspan from page 1

Here is your word of the day: *enthalpy*. It's a measure of steam energy, and CCI, an international company that is one of the suppliers for the prime contractor, Stone and Webster, was called on to put together the control valves, resistor, disk stack, and "desuperheater" to tame the steam – to reduce the enthalpy of the steam so that it can be discharged into the Balcke-Durr condenser.

As Judge Helene G. Goldberger noted in declining to adjudicate the stack height,



Keyspan concluded that 400 feet was "sufficient to allow the plume to escape the downwind, turbulent 'cavity' zone caused by the air-cooled condenser." The cavity height was determined to be 322.5 feet, she said, "and therefore, the proposed stack height is sufficient to keep the plume out of the cavity."

CHOKE's point was to keep the plume out of Queens, period, and the higher the better. Even the gas-fired engineering marvel proposed by KeySpan – one whose emission rates are "more than 10 times lower than standards proposed for 2003 in New York State," according to the company – was bound to produce some pollutants. CHOKE presented objections based on the cumulative effects of this pollution when combined with other power plants, and tried, unsuccessfully, to raise the matter of health problems associated with particulates (calculated at the time as 203 tons per year) and with so-called "non-criteria pollutants," both of which fell outside the existing regulatory limits.

As it turned out, KeySpan pre-empted many of these concerns by introducing a \$10 million Air Quality Improvement Program at its existing Ravenswood units to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 22 percent, or the equivalent of closing an older, 350-megawatt unit, according to the Edison Electric Institute, an industry trade group. Nitrogen oxide, or NOx, is one of the federal government's heavily regulated "criteria air pollutants." McCabe described the work as the installation of new combustion hardware. It was done during a maintenance outage at Big Allis last winter; it came back on line in late February.

The company is also installing pollution-control devices in the new plant to cut down on carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds (VOC), which can cause major health problems. It is offsetting its possible emissions of 142 tons of NOx and 99 tons of VOC with State Emission Reduction Credits supplied by a KeySpan plant in Glenwood Landing, New York, and by 3M Corporation in Bristol, Pennsylvania.

A clean-burning design, however, could be the biggest factor in reducing pollution. The plant will run primarily on natural gas, with an allowable backup of 720 hours a year of kerosene (the fuel in the big tank on the north yard). Of the 250 megawatts, 160 will come from a combustion turbine generator, according to Slattery Skanska, the main construction contractor for Stone and Webster, which is part of the Shaw Group. Then, as McCabe explains it, the waste heat from the exhaust path of this turbine, at more than 1,000 degrees, will be used to generate more electricity as it is routed to a heat recovery

steam generator driving another turbine. This is why the plant is designated as "combined cycle," as opposed to the 16 "simple cycle" combustion turbines that are lined up in three rows on the north end of the Ravenswood site, close to the Red Bridge on 36th Avenue. Altogether, they have a generating capacity of 417 megawatts, and all were in place when Con-Ed owned the plant.

Hot greasy film rises in a roar at times from the rectangular housings of these variously sized units, which operate on demand as required by the New York Independent System Operator, a not-for-profit utility-owned

corporation based in Schenectady that runs New York's high-voltage electric transmission system. Four of these 16 units, McCabe said, are "aero-derivative," essentially land-based jet engines made by Pratt & Whitney that "can go from no load to full load in well under 10 minutes." Those units are closer to Vernon Boulevard; the other 12 were manufactured by General Electric.

The new powerhouse is designated as a cogeneration plant because it is capable of diverting steam to heat buildings, McCabe said. A tunnel holding electric and steam lines runs to Manhattan from the double-stack structure on the shore near a moored ship, the Lemon Creek (it is used to store No. 6 oil, the backup fuel for the older steam units at Ravenswood). But there is no customer yet for the steam, McCabe said.

Aside from aesthetics and pollution, the other side effect of most interest to Roosevelt could be noise, and it appears that KeySpan tried to keep this issue off the table, too. According to CCI, which is headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, it is not unusual for conventional steam bypass units to have "far field noise levels of 70 dBA at 4,000 feet from plant." Roosevelt Island is much closer than that, and New York City defines a decibel level of more than 70 dBA as "marginally unacceptable," and above 80 as "clearly unacceptable."

On Complex Matter, Sound-Bite News Can Miss Mark

News Analysis by Robert Laux-Bachand

Sometimes a casual entry in a dense, complicated report becomes the lead of a news story, whether it's news or not, or even factually correct. A politician standing before the cameras and tape recorders, talking about a complicated subject like air pollution in the presence of impassioned advocates, has to come up with something.

But the soundbite is not always the real story, and can even be somewhat misleading. That was the case on May 29, when Borough President Helen Marshall and other elected officials presented "Air Quality in Queens County," a comprehensive analysis of Queens air-quality problems and related health risks that concluded with 27 specific policy proposals, including a recommendation (No. 25) to "implement tolls at the Queensboro Bridge and the other 'free' East River crossings."

No. 25 could easily have been the soundbite or headline, and Marshall did, after all, call on "all local officials" to work with her in implementing the proposals. But the policy prescriptions, some of them controversial, did not make the cut. Instead, ac-

Keyspan Gets High Marks for PR Effort on Ravenswood Plant

The Edison Award is the electric power industry's equivalent of the Oscar or Tony, and four days before the Tonys were presented in New York, KeySpan Corporation officials were in Honolulu last week as Edison finalists "for accomplishing something many said was impossible" – winning approval for a siting so-called new merchant generation right in the heart of New York City.

Brooklyn-based KeySpan didn't bring home the Edison. It went to FPL Group Inc. (which includes Florida Power & Light), "the world leader in wind power," according to the Edison Electric Institute. But the publicity surrounding KeySpan's effort at Ravenswood underscores the crucial role that community relations plays in disputes over power production and pollution.

Keyspan's biggest coup, as the industry association notes, was in turning adversaries into allies. It did this by winning the battle for public opinion (through a "major outreach program" that encompassed Roosevelt Island) and by stepping up an air quality improvement program at its Ravenswood power complex.

These efforts, the trade group said, "helped win support for the project from the Natural Resources Defense Council, the first time NRDC had ever endorsed a fossil-fueled power plant within New York State."

The payoff came on May 29, when NRDC and a local anti-pollution group, CHOKE, were able to present a major study that includes numerous public policy recommendations for improving the air quality of New York City. The study, "Air Quality in Queens County: Opportunities for Cleaning Up the Air in Queens County and Neighboring Regions," was conducted by Synapse Energy Economics, Inc., of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The study was sponsored by the two organizations, which participated in the Ravenswood permit process, and was paid for by KeySpan.

Thus, everybody got at least something that they wanted: CHOKE, indignant over the fact that Northwest Queens was the home of 46 electric generating units, gained access to an influential research and consulting firm to reinforce its concerns about local air quality; NRDC won a public forum for a set of stringent policy recommendations (higher gasoline taxes; "cents per mile" car insurance; "vehicle mile traveled fees"; California-style carbon dioxide vehicle emission standards, etc.); and KeySpan was able to expand its capacity in a so-called "load pocket" (New York City) that is shielded from competition from outside utilities.

A load pocket is an area where the demand for power exceeds the capacity of the transmission lines coming into it. After the disastrous blackout of July 1977, the State Power Authorities determined that 80 percent of the City's power must be generated in-house. The "in-city" rule, as KeySpan recently reported to its investors, "has resulted in a reliable capacity stream for the company." As the City's demand for power goes up, the existing players are able to exploit a captive market.

This week, the wholesale buyer, the New York Independent System Operator, estimated that the peak load forecast for the City would be 11,020 megawatts this summer. That is an increase of 485 megawatts, or 4.6 percent, from the forecast of 2001, despite the economic downturn and the loss of a huge segment of demand from Lower Manhattan after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11.

The valve company, in a press release, said it had designed the system "to be able to meet the Ravenswood 55 dBA noise level requirement within 1,000 feet from the plant to allow nighttime operation of the bypass system." This is well below the ambient noise levels recorded on the Island and on Vernon Boulevard in connection with an environmental assessment conducted for the proposed Octagon Apartments in 2001.

McCabe said that the new plant would be 30 percent more efficient than existing generating units. This is supposed to have two major consequences: First, it will mitigate the current price premium for natural gas; second, it will displace production by less efficient – and more polluting – units, both at Ravenswood and at other power plants in the area.

A final point of interest to many Islanders could be that the construction of this facility is a multinational effort. Slattery Skanska,

rooted in Sweden, is the nuts and bolts contractor. It has its hands everywhere in New York these days, from the Times Square reconstruction to the rail project at JFK Airport. Alstom, a French company, manufactured the heat-recovery steam generator. GE, another multinational, barged in the gas turbine from Greenville, South Carolina, and a generator from Schenectady.

Keyspan's media relations office did not respond to an inquiry about how much all this work will cost, but a Shaw Group corporate disclosure put the backlog value of its cost-plus contract at \$170 million as of last November. Slattery Skanska quoted a figure of \$160 million in its press materials. This doesn't include, of course, the expense of KeySpan's intensive community relations effort. The new plant is expected to add about 20 jobs to the Ravenswood payroll.

According to several news reports, Marshall, and City Council Member Peter Vallone, Jr., and the other speakers who assembled at Long Island City High School, appeared to dwell on one sentence in the report's executive summary. This is it:

"Environmental Defense has ranked Queens among the worst 10% of U.S. counties in terms of its exposure to criteria air pollutants."

The next day, *The Daily News* headline was: "What Stinks? Oh, It's the Air; Boro Among Worst in U.S. – Study."

Here is the *The Daily News* lead: "A new study of air quality in Queens puts the county among the worst 10% of the nation's counties."

Similarly, here is the lead in the June 4 article in the *Western Queens Gazette*: "Residents of the borough of Queens live in a county that is among the 10 percent worst in the United States in terms of exposure to air pollution, a report by Synapse Energy Economics Inc., a Cambridge, Massachusetts research firm, revealed last Thursday."

These news reports, which were based on the politicians' speeches, were clearly wrong

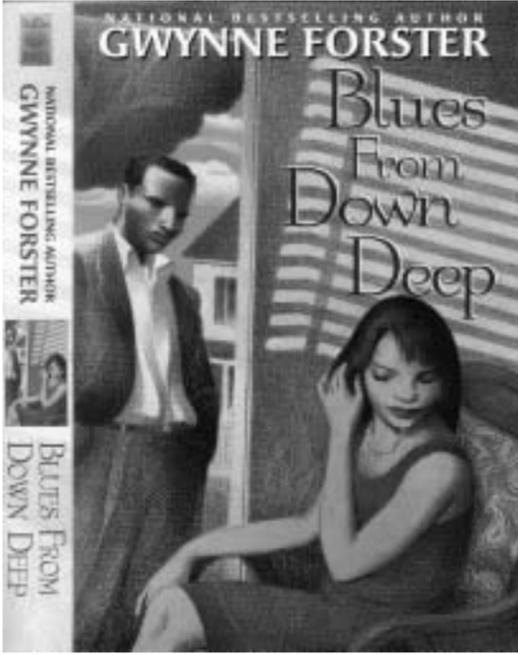
in attribution and characterization, and possibly incorrect in substance – although the factual assertion would be almost impossible to verify, given the lack of underlying data.

First, it is not true that Synapse, which says its main focus is on policy analysis, discovered or revealed or did a "new study" to determine Queens' ranking in terms of air pollution. It simply quoted an environmental organization, formerly known as the Environmental Defense Fund, which maintains a sophisticated Scorecard on the Internet that can quickly tap into government databases to segregate information on pollutants and health hazards according to geographic areas. A user can go to the Web site, type in a ZIP code, for example, and, in a flash, gain access to voluminous databases on air and water pollution.

Second, the data are not "new." The emissions figures date to 1999, and the latest exposure figures are from 2000.

Third, the exposure ranking itself is something of a conjecture, and Environmental Defense provides numerous "caveats" to users who visit its website and wish to inter-

See PR, next page

**New Novel**

Islander Gwen Acsadi, writing as Gwynne Forster, has a new book out – a mainstream work of fiction described on the jacket as “a joyous reminder that love comes when we least expect it, from every side of life, and the family that makes us crazy can also lead us home.”

PR from previous page

pret the numbers. It uses a Pollutant Standards Index (PSI) to rank counties according to measurements from monitoring stations. “The PSI converts the measured pollutant concentrations of criteria air pollutants in a community’s air to a numerical scale of 0 to 500,” according to Environmental Defense.

Criteria air pollutants include carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen oxide, ozone, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide. Federal air-quality standards are based on the concentrations of these substances. Environmental Defense ranks counties according to Maximum PSI, and “levels above a PSI of 100 are considered unhealthy.”

Although both Queens and Manhattan hit 90th-percentile rankings for six discrete emissions components listed on the Environmental Defense Web site (those substances do not match up exactly with the criteria air pollutants), neither borough ranks in the “Top 10 Percent” when it comes to the Pollutant Standards Index. Manhattan is in the range of the 50-60th percentile; Queens in the 60-70th percentile range, not 90-100th, as stated by Synapse in its report.

The readings are compiled from 4,000 monitoring stations “in almost 1,000 counties,” the organization says. This is a major caveat because the United States has more than 3,100 counties. How would Queens rank when the other 2,100 are added in? This is not an idle question if one spends any time dialing up counties in the database while keeping in mind certain basic facts of geography.

Let’s take an example from the edge of the Great Plains, Oliver County, N.D., where the population now has dropped below 2,000 – little more, say, than the Eastwood housing complex on Roosevelt Island. Three years ago, Oliver County had a maximum PSI of 52, even though its nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide emissions put it among the 10 percent “dirtiest counties” in the United States in those categories. Oliver has a power plant, a strip mine (lignite coal), strong breezes from the west, and at least one monitoring station.

Drive north on U.S. 83 about 85 miles, though, to Minot, the seat of Ward County (population 58,795), and you find a PSI of, well ... nothing. There was no monitoring station in 2000, and thus it did not count, even though Minot Air Force Base is the home of B-52 bombers, and there are the usual concerns of urban traffic, and diesel fumes from trucks and farm machinery. And, come to think of it, a potentially catastrophic release of anhydrous ammonia in the dead of night in January 2002, after a train derailment on the outskirts of town.

If there had been a monitoring station then, Ward County would probably have registered a digit on the Environmental Defense PSI table for “percentage of days with unhealthy air quality.” Unhealthy, as in one dead, hundreds evacuated, and dozens treated for inhaling ammonia.

(Check some counties around Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri and you will find no air-quality monitoring stations, either.)

The maximum PSI in Queens in 2000 was computed at 111. Manhattan’s number was 98. Neither county had any days of “unhealthy air quality,” according to the Scorecard. Queens actually ranked better than Manhattan in days with “good air quality” (88 percent for Queens, 74 percent for New York County).

This is not to minimize the serious air-pollution problems in New York City. Synapse’s report (which can be downloaded from the Internet at the company’s website, <http://www.synapse-energy.com>) presents the issues in compelling detail and tries to quantify – in numbers of lives saved – the benefits of changes in utility, insurance, and transportation regulations. The real problem is that attempts to simplify the issue and stir up residents’ resentments seem, instead, to call attention to the anomalies of the pollution-reporting system itself. Or, more precisely, to the complex nature of this type of pollution.

One would think, for example, that Queens, with its so-called “Top 10 Percent” national billing and PSI grade of 111 (and its more than 2.2 million people, and LaGuardia, and JFK, and its constant traffic) would certainly be the “worst” county in the State. But you would be way off the mark. Queens is indeed right up there, at No. 2. But it is far healthier, by this measure, than the No. 1, Suffolk County, which comes in at a staggering PSI of 131.

It seems counterintuitive to imagine that someone from Montauk or Southampton would drive into Astoria or Woodside for a breath of fresh air, but Suffolk’s numbers, across the board, are worse than those in Queens. Suffolk even hits the tripwire for “percentage of days with unhealthy air quality”: 1 percent.

Air pollution does not yield to easy explanations. It floats high above the continent, on steady winds, and settles into mountain sinks and urban traps, and even along the ocean shore. No. 3 in New York State, behind Queens? Richmond County (Staten Island). No. 1, nationally, with a PSI of 472 and 9 percent of its days judged as unhealthy? Inyo County.

And where might that be?

Death Valley, California.

Arias Attains Eagle Rank in Scouting

by Anusha Shrivastava

The eighth Boy Scout on the Island to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout – Romel Arias – is a lanky bespectacled young man who worked with single-minded purpose toward his goal and made it just before he turned 18, the cut-off age. Having gotten several merit badges in areas ranging from leathercraft to insect study, his final project was fire-safety training at PS/IS 217, which he attended as a child.

Like most boys, Arias says he has always loved fire trucks. Now, he is going to be a firefighter. He has already taken tests to enroll in the New York Fire Department but is not old enough to join, so he is going to attend John Jay College for the next three years, studying Fire and Emergency Services.

An Island resident since the age of four, he joined the Boy Scouts when he was 11. “It was a way to make friends and get away from the City on trips,” Arias says. As he grew older, he became more serious about the “job” of being a scout.

“He has a very clear idea of what he wants to do,” says Geoff Kerr, the Scoutmaster on the Island. “He is very disciplined and, once he decides he wants something, he goes out and gets it.” Citing an example, Kerr said Arias went to a summer camp a few years ago and had his heart set on becoming a senior patrol leader. “He got himself elected even though there were many other Boy Scouts with more experience than him.”

Kerr pointed out that it is very difficult to be a good scout in New York City because there are so many activities competing for the attention of young boys. Attendance at meetings these days is down to a handful of dedicated young men – only 10 are currently enrolled. There used to be up to 60 when the chapter was started on the Island in the late 1970s, but there has been a steady decline over the years.

Recruitment in schools is no longer allowed, so the group has to rely on word-of-mouth to get more members. They have tried putting up posters and handing out fliers, but it has not seemed to work. “Romel inspired some kids when he went to the public school,” Kerr said. “He is a good example for the others.”

Arias’s discipline and focus have won him admiration from his peers as well. “He has good leadership qualities and he deserved to become an Eagle,” said Owens O’Brien, a fellow-scout in the Island troop.

For the summer, Arias is looking for acting jobs to make some money. He has already had a tiny part in *Spiderman 2*, due to be released next summer.

That’s about as far as he will go from his stated goal – to become a New York City firefighter. “Like the Boy Scouts, there seems to be a strong sense of camaraderie there,” he says.

Sounding much older than his 18 years, Arias says, “Saving lives may not give many people a kick but it seems like fun to me.”



Letters

 from page 2
To Island Residents:

I am writing this as a member of and on behalf of the Residents Association Housing Committee, which has tried to keep you informed and to activate the community with regard to Mitchell-Lama housing and other rent issues. As you have been made aware, the rent stabilization laws reach their end tomorrow – June 15 – unless they are renewed by the State Legislature.

The Mitchell-Lama Residents Association is organizing a Tenants Town Hall Meeting for all Mitchell-Lama tenants to demonstrate their support for City legislation, calling on the City Council to preserve Mitchell-Lama affordable housing. The demonstration will take place Wednesday, June 25, at 7:30 p.m., at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, Theater 1. The location is 199 Chambers Street and you can get there easily by taking the A, C, E or 1, 2, 3, 9 trains to the Chambers Street station.

Sponsors so far are Independent Plaza North Tenants Association, West Village Houses, Glenn Gardens, the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, The Working Family Party, and various unions.

There will be more information as the day – Wednesday, June 25 – comes closer. Please check the kiosks on Main Street.

I hope that all of us in Mitchell-Lama buildings will make a serious effort to support this Town Hall meeting. Whatever you may think is going to happen in your own building, it is only right to support ourselves and our fellow New Yorkers who are in imminent danger of losing their housing.

Keep your eyes on the kiosks! See you at the Town Hall meeting and demonstration.

Sherie Helstien

Letters deadline for June 28 (4th of July) issue: June 23

Times

 from page 2

bypasses our City elected officials.

We Islanders have been cronyed to death since RIOC was created by statute in 1984. When will this Island community of 9,500 earn the right to elect its *de facto* local government, the RIOC Board of Directors? They could then hire a trained, experienced, competent city manager such as the one the City of East Providence, Rhode Island, advertised for in *The Times* several Sundays ago. That job, running a significantly larger town, requires credentials and experience and pays around \$35,000 less than does the Roosevelt Island patronage position. We get retreads who must learn the job from scratch. This special Island community deserves better.

Matthew M. Katz, President
Roosevelt Island Residents
Association

Photos

 from page 2

area as a result of increased security concerns since 9/11. The Commissioner reportedly expressed surprise that anyone would be stopped in the situation outlined to him, as described in my previous letter.

I wonder, therefore, why the Roosevelt Island police have established restrictions that go beyond that of the NYPD?

Lynne A. Grifo

To the Editor:

The Tram token’s rarity and scarcity as of recently have given the many users on the Island an issue to talk about. Some muse, others bemoan. The majority just wonder why at this 2003rd year a simple remedy is not yet found. Do away with the tokens and revert to the old fashioned book of tickets. Sixty rides a month, on average, and you pay \$120 for a book of 60 clean paper (recycled, please) tickets that you give the Tram operator upon entry. Something to think about.

Ali Al-Za’tari

The WIRE needs you!

The Main Street WIRE relies on many Island volunteers to fill important roles in distribution, and there’s a role for **you** if you’d like to join in this important community effort. On Friday, when *The WIRE* comes off the press, we have a stuffing crew at work from about 10:00 to 1:45 p.m. (lunch is provided). Friday evenings (and early Saturday), volunteers deliver *The WIRE* to every apartment door on the Island. It’s an important service to the community, satisfying, and often fun. If you’d like to join this dedicated group, please call **1-212-935-7534**, or 1-212-826-9055. (If a machine answers, please include your phone number in the message *twice*. We’ll call you back.) Or e-mail nyc10044@rcn.com. Thanks!

The WIRE and Website NYC10044 also seek news and feature writers. Call 1-212-826-9055.

by Seth Kaufman

SPORTSWIRE

Baseball A very competitive but wet regular season in the Youth Program's Little League came to a close on June 1, and playoffs began the following week. The final regular season standings were:

Minors		Majors	
Green	4-2-1	Red	7-0-3
Silver	3-3	Green	5-2-3
Red	3-3	Royal	3-4-3
Royal	2-4-1	Silver	0-9-1

Minors: In first-round playoff action June 10, the first-place Green team advanced to the championship game by defeating Royal 4-1 in a close, well-played game. For Green, the offense was led by Rahul Dhodapkar, who scored 2 runs and had an RBI; Jacob Kelman, who had 2 RBIs and scored one run; Thomas Diamond, who scored one run; and Andrew Feely, who had one RBI.

The first-round playoff game between Silver and Red will be held today (Saturday, June 14) at 12:30 p.m., with the winner advancing to face Green in the Championship Game at 2:30 today at Capobianco Field.

Majors: The playoffs in the Majors use a modified double-elimination format rather than the single-elimination format used in the Minors. In the first round of the Majors playoffs, Red defeated Silver 16-5, and Royal defeated Green 6-3 in a game that was called after 4 innings because of rain and lightning. In the Royal win, Thomas Herlihy pitched 4 innings for the win, and Justin Gonzalez led the attack with 2 RBIs.

In the second round of the Majors playoffs, Red advanced to the championship game by defeating Royal 6-5 in a game that was decided on a two-out hit by Kenny Pizarro in the bottom of the final inning. Neal Stueber pitched shutout ball for Red for the last three innings to pick up the win. In the other second-round game, Green defeated Silver 6-0 behind the pitching of Eyosyus Tadesse, who struck out 15 batters while allowing no hits.

Green and Royal met again on June 11 to determine who would advance to the championship game against Red. In another very exciting game that was not decided until the final inning, Eyosyus Tadesse, leading off the bottom of the sixth, hit a walk-off home run to give Green a 10-9 victory over Royal. The hitting stars for Green, in addition to Eyosyus, were Jonathan Jackson, who had two triples; and Sean Suarez, who was 3 for 3 with 5 RBIs. For Royal, the attack was led by Shabaka White, who was 4 for 4 with 4 runs scored; Adrian Gordon, who was 4 for 4 with 3 runs scored; and Samuel Johns with 2 RBIs.

Green will play Red for the championship at 10 a.m. today, June 14, at Capobianco Field.

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Deadline for June 28 (July 4) issue: June 23

ELDER LAW – Wills & Trusts, Medicaid Planning, Nursing Home Matters, Estate Planning, and Living Wills. Steven M. Ratner, Esq., 420 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY. 1-212-754-9117.

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ISLAND KIDS



Summer Registration Night
Monday, June 23rd, 5 to 7pm
In the Island Kids Room

Music and Rhythm Friday 9am
Tumbling Wednesday 9,10,11 am
New Baby Group Friday 11am
Fun & Facts Tuesday 9,10,11 am
Creative Movement Friday 10am
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Classes will be filled on a first come, first served basis
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Fourth of July 2003

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