

Next issue:
Sat., Apr. 3

The Main Street **WIRE**™

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Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



Following the piper These kids rode their decorated bikes in Sunday's annual Roosevelt Island St. Patrick's Day parade, following the bagpipe of Officer Dave Nisthaus up Main Street to Manhattan Park. Dave's wife, Linda, organized the kids and the decoration of their bikes.

Karine Wong

Youth Program to Lose \$2 Million Capital Funds on a Space Issue

by Dick Lutz

For lack of space to renovate, the Island's Youth Program is about to lose almost \$2,000,000.

It's a story that winds through four administrations at the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) and politics – community politics, City politics, and State politics – and now, surprisingly, national politics – and involves a dozen years of effort that ranges from simple survival through passing brushes of hopeful optimism.

But it's a story that culminates today, in the near-Spring of 2004,

in a likely loss of the funds that were once expected to bring Roosevelt Island an updated Youth and Community Center as a home for youth recreation, with a game room and classrooms for after-school learning, entertainment in the form of a movie theater that might also be used for community meetings and presentations, and possibly future day care.

In simple terms, City Council Speaker Gifford Miller has said he will set aside \$1.75 million in New York City funds, earmarked for renovation of new space. Combined with \$150,000 expected from Assemblymember Pete Grannis, the total is about \$1.9 million. But the City funds can be spent only on space that's guaranteed for 30 years – and the Youth Program has been unable to pin down space for that period of time.

For that matter, the Roosevelt Island Youth Program (RIYP) hasn't been able to pin down space for more than a year or so, according to its director, Charles De Fino.

For years, De Fino has had his eye on the Blackwell minischool, based on a promise made during the RIOC administration of Jean Lerman, backed by the RIOC Board of Directors of the time. But the election of Governor George Pataki brought Dr. Jerry Blue to Roosevelt Island as President of RIOC and, as De Fino tells it, "Jerry Blue told us, 'Forget about it,' we were not going to get the space, and in fact he tried to evict us from 506 Main Street. He and Robert Antonek



Charles De Fino
Roosevelt Island Youth Program

were going to put a lock on the door until they realized the space didn't belong to them." That space at the south end of Eastwood, which now houses the Youth Program, had been made available to the Youth Program by Roosevelt Island Housing Management.

"During the Blue period we were just trying to survive. We weren't looking to move into anything, because we didn't have the backing of RIOC. When Mr. Ryan came in [replacing Blue in 1999], he started working with us to put the proposal back together and bring it to the RIOC Board of Directors. But by that time Blue had already given the Blackwell minischool space to Lilies Christian School for basically no rent at all." De Fino explains

See **Youth**, page 15

Living Library Releases Plan for Cultural Park at Southpoint

by Dick Lutz

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation recently asked the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to undertake a conceptual planning process for Southpoint Park – closed for decades but opened eleven months ago. TPL says it will take five months to analyze community needs and existing conditions, consider the opportunities offered by the site, and develop a plan.

Meanwhile, a landscape artist supported by the Ford Foundation has spent nearly two years doing

much the same thing, providing groundwork and community liaison that could become the basis for TPL's planning.

Bonnie Sherk, whose Life Frames, Inc., has been turning portions of Roosevelt Island into a "Living Library," has been working with teachers and children at PS/IS 217, where a garden was planted in the courtyard last Roosevelt Island Day, and with Island organizations, spotting opportunities for planting. While Southpoint is the focus of a conceptual plan highlighted on pages 8 and 9 of this issue of *The WIRE*, the groups gathered under the Living Library umbrella have also looked at Lighthouse Park, areas around the Senior Center, and – with Roosevelt Island Housing Management – at the plantable areas along Main Street it controls.

The Southpoint plan, in addition to embracing concepts put forward by the Island organizations Sherk has worked with, brings the United Nations into the picture. Sherk is fond of speaking about "cultivating the human and ecological garden," envisioning a rich interplay between the literal garden of ecosystems and the figurative garden

of human cultural diversity. In Southpoint, she sees an opportunity to create a "think park" with resources – like a conference center in a restored Renwick Ruin – aimed at addressing global matters like hunger, international conflict, global ecology, sustainable development, and education for world citizenship.

Sherk has put together a Living Library in San Francisco, as well, and can muster supporting quotations from dozens of people who've worked with her there. In New York, she has captured the imagination of the Roosevelt Island people

See **Southpoint**, page 10



Bonnie Sherk

Briefly...

The Westview rent increase will be less than 5% over two years, per an order issued by DHCR earlier this month. The head of the Westview Task Force, Opher Pail, hailed the decision as a "significant achievement" for Westview residents, who fought an owner request for an 11% increase in 2004.

RIRA-RIOC Liaison – Members of the Residents Association Common Council and two resident members of the RIOC Board of Directors met last week in a liaison session that ranged over a series of issues, including the Red Bus route and schedule, accommodations for the Youth Center, street lighting, the Tram station elevator, and how the two Board members, David Kraut and Mark Ponton, see their role in representing residents. A transcript of the session is posted on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com/wire/2413/rirarioc.html.

Public Safety Officer Edgardo Rios is on active duty in Iraq and would love to hear from Roosevelt Island people. His address is Sgt. Edgardo Rios, 1174TTBN, Camp Spearhead, APO, AE 09305. Rios also served in Bosnia and Desert Storm.

Roosevelt Island Bridge renovation work has been put off until 2012 – a decision the City Department of Transportation announced Wednesday at an all-agency meeting. One question is whether the steel surface plates can last that long, but there's also a chance that the work will be done earlier if pressure is applied.

ABC-TV has a new show called *The Swap* in the works, and is looking for a Roosevelt Island family to trade mothers with another family for ten days. You'll find details on a website at www.theswaptvshow.com.

Islanders

Anthropology as a Good Yarn

by Anusha Shrivastava

Browsing in a bookstore, what is the chance that anyone but an anthropologist or a natural scientist would pick up a book on lemurs in Madagascar? And yet, if they did, and the book turned out to be Alison Jolly's *Lords and Lemurs: Mad Scientists, Kings with Spears and the Survival of Diversity in Madagascar*, they would be in for a surprise.

As Jolly writes, "To most Americans, Madagascar seems farther away than the bar in Star Wars. Actually, it is just as peculiar – and it's real."

Far from being an outlandish essay written by a wide-eyed foreigner, the book is a penetrating and exciting journey into the history, sociology and bio-diversity of Berenty, a reserve in the extreme south of Madagascar.

Jolly says the book, due out in April, is for people who like a good story. "I really set out to tell a tale about a place that is fascinating, and that reflects the whole world, and doesn't seem to 'matter' except that it has a great story."

That story includes Tandroy tribesmen, slavery, socialism, neo-colonialism, French lords, and exotic funeral practices with gunfire, dancing, sex, and sacrifices to the Ancestor.

For 40 years, Jolly, 67, a Rivercross resident, has studied the behavior of ring-tailed and white sifaka lemurs in Africa. Her research at Berenty has been interspersed with teaching and research stints at the University of Zambia, Cambridge and Sussex Universities in

England, and Cornell, Yale, and Princeton in the United States. She has been the president of the International Primatological Society and is an Officer of the National Order of Madagascar.

Her love of animals, she says, began with a "series of cats" while she was growing up in Ithaca, New York, as an only child of a Cornell professor. And if she hadn't begun studying lemurs, she might have studied gorillas, she says, "because their calm intelligence makes them very therapeutic companions."

Not that lemurs were her first choice – she was studying sponges at the graduate school level at Yale when boredom struck and she wanted to study something far different – and far away from Connecticut. Madagascar was about as far away as she could get, so she went.

The results of her research have been published in books she has written or edited: *Lemur Behavior* (1966), *The Evolution of Primate Behavior* (1972, 1985), *Play* (1976), *A World Like Our Own* (1980), and *Madagascar, a World out of Time* (1993), among others.

Jolly, married to Sir Richard Jolly, a former UN executive, moved to Roosevelt Island in 1982, when her husband became Deputy Director of UNICEF. "There was never any question of living elsewhere on Manhattan," she wrote in an e-mail. "We had four children at home at the time, and one look at the green spaces, playgrounds, and immediate sense of community on Roosevelt Island convinced us

See **Jolly**, page 7



Photo: Christopher G. Knight



Editorial photograph by Website NYC10044nyc10044.com

The Editorial Page

Red Bus, Red Faces

If the people at RIOC can't manage a four-vehicle, three-mile bus line, can RIOC run a community?

It's been over three months since the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation started fiddling with Red Bus. The first plan, started December 14, provided unwanted and unneeded northbound service to the small population in Southtown's underoccupied buildings by reducing northbound service at the subway to every second bus. Any bright third-grader at PS217 could have explained why it was a bad idea to leave the bulk of the Island's home-bound commuters waiting a half-hour and more at the subway for transportation. The February 9 plan provided a southbound stop at Southtown, and any below-average third-grader can observe that the stop is going unused while residents there cut across the landscape to the subway, demonstrating once again that actual users are a whole lot better than a visiting bureaucracy at figuring out what works. Even morning-rush subway riders from the northern reaches of the bus line have figured out that it makes sense to get off the bus at 475 Main Street and follow Southtowners across the landscape, rather than wait through an unwanted side trip to the Tram station.

RIOC President Herb Berman has pointed out that the second route was concocted with the help and assent of a committee that included some residents. But none of those residents commute at rush hour, and they chose the route only when Berman accepted a veto, by Southtown developer David Kramer (who says he was speaking for Cornell-Weill and Memorial Sloan-Kettering), that nixed the obvious solution – a safe shortcut path to the subway. (Meanwhile, the top housing managers for both institutions failed to respond to a *WIRE* e-mail query this week – not even a “no comment.”)

Furthermore, no resident on that committee passed on the idea of bus service disconnected from Tram arrivals and a reliable standardized departure time from Motorgate. After day one, hour one of the new schedule, it was clear that unscheduled buses lead to a bad case of bus bunching, leaving huge gaps in service.

(Now, the only people working on this matter are RIOC staffers, none of whom live here. The people who've already proven they can't visualize the transportation needs of residents have been given sole charge of finding a solution. In short, baseball fans, we're probably well on our way to a third strike.)

The only sensible response to the first-day failure of each of these attempts would have been a second-day return to the standard routing and scheduling that has worked well for two decades. But RIOC instead kept each failure in place, giving it an undeserved chance at the expense of thousands of Islanders. A conservative calculation suggests that, over the 98 days of this fiasco, at least 13,000 hours of Islanders' time has been flushed down the drain, and that figures only those forced to wait at the Tram station for an unscheduled bus. The only remaining “experiment” is the one that asks the question: *How long will this community of experimental test subjects put up with this?*

And then, there is the other question:

If the people at RIOC can't manage a four-vehicle, three-mile bus line, can RIOC run a community?

DL

Letters Policy

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

Letters

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I know I'm just one of the many Island residents who contacted you in recent weeks, asking for a re-thinking of the RIOC Red Bus route. But I'm doing it anyway:

It's absurd – and hilarious – to watch a rush-hour bus, packed with people, stopping by Southtown, where *no one ever* gets on or off; stopping again by the Tram, where a few, indeed, get off; and, finally, stopping at the subway station, where most of the people on the bus really needed to go in the first place.

The buses – apart from the fact that they don't keep a schedule anymore, so one doesn't know when to expect them – got into the habit of traveling “in packs.” On a busy morning, at 8:50 a.m., there were three buses by the subway station. On a busy evening, the three were waiting to make the turn by the Tram, lining up to enter the “circle.”

Some may find these scenes funny. Some may find them sad. Most will find them irritating.

Please give us back the reliable bus route we've always had. Let's be bold and finally admit that most of us take the subway to and from work, and that the Southtown residents can get faster to the Tram or train station on foot.

It's a short walk, even in winter. You may want to try it some day.

Thank you for your consideration to this matter.

Mirella Menglide

To the Editor:

Much has been said about the cockamamie bus route and “schedule” (i.e., absence thereof), and there's so much more to say you wouldn't know where to start. Let me just add this.

The people at Southtown obviously needed a decent, safe pathway to the subway, and what they got was a useless bus stop.

Well, if the current “experiment” is going to last on and on, I'd like those people to get their pathway, *too*.

And I could use it, because it turns out the quickest way to the subway is getting off the bus at Southtown and walking the rest of the way. Doing that, I always reach the subway station way ahead of the bus – and I'm not even talking about times when the Tram may be “docking.”

Absurd, isn't it?

Claude Lestelle

Several additional letters on the Red Bus schedule and route appear on page 12. Again this issue, there is inadequate space to print all the letters received.

To the Editor:

Unfortunately, another Red Bus policy has been implemented that does not meet the needs of many Roosevelt Island residents. Yesterday, as I boarded the bus with my toddler twins in their stroller, I was told that I had to fold up the stroller. It is impossible to fold and carry a double stroller and simultaneously carry or hold the hands of two children who are not yet walking or able to navigate the bus steps by themselves.

When I called RIOC, I was informed that the reason for this policy is one of safety – that children are safer sitting in seats rather than strapped in their strollers and that an unfolded stroller could become a projectile that could injure other passengers. Perhaps these safety studies were done with single older children in lightweight strollers. Just imagine an adult trying to board the bus carrying two infants and a stroller, then sitting with them on his or her lap or worse, standing while holding a double stroller! That is far more dangerous than having them strapped in their double stroller.

My suggestion is to allow families with more than one child under age three to bring their children on the Red Bus securely strapped in their stroller, and station the stroller in one of the spaces designated for wheel chairs or at the rear exit door.

If the stroller fold-up policy is enforced, there will be greater liability from a possibly fatal injury to an unsecured child, or families with infants or young toddlers will be required to walk to the Tram or subway and be denied use of the Red Bus.

Barbara Pittman

To the Editor:

I am so happy that we can at last use the Metrocard on the Tram! I had always maintained that this would increase ridership tremendously and, judging by the crowds in the morning Tram rides this week compared to the previous weeks, it seems that I, along with so many Island residents, was right that this is what makes the Tram our first choice again to go to the City. Most people I know who use public transportation daily have been buying monthly unlimited Metrocards, so the Tram was no longer a reasonable alternative (why pay an additional \$2 per ride when you hold a monthly pass good on all City buses and subway trains?). So for me, it will be back to the daily Tram ride over the water again!

Jean Neuprez

Additional letters on page 12



Published by **The Main Street WIRE**
©2004 Unisource2000™ Inc.
531 Main St. #413, NYC10044

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

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in association with

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- Typist – Nadya Borisova
- Advertising Sales – Ellen Levy
- Circulation Managers – Sherie Helstien, Teri Sheridan, Joyce Speziale
- Circulation Assistant – Dexter Benjamin
- Legal Counsel – Lewis Perkiss
- Website NYC10044 facilities – Frank Farence
- WIRE Webmaster – Cathy Lemp
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Today marks the vernal equinox and the start of spring. Thank God. Did you think this winter would ever end? Yes I know, "The first day of spring is one thing, and the first spring day is another," but hope springs eternal (pun intended) and I'm grateful for small blessings.

The RIRA Column

won second and first places respectively in the costume contest (Rose McCarthy came in first among the female contestants). Sherie still sports her blood-curdling tattoos, but I've consigned my switchblade to the miscellaneous drawer until further notice. The hula-hoop competition was hotly contested and George Reither and I are still debating which of us makes the better egg cream. DJ Mike spun all the hot wax from those halcyon days and the dancing alone heated the Manhattan Park Theater. It was a terrific evening (thanks as always to Dolores Green, Vicki Feinmel and Margie Smith and their hard-working crew) and RIRA raised sufficient funds to produce many important events in the months ahead.

Last week's Evening of Irish Music and Dance, again presented by Robin Russell and River Music, was a great pleasure that made Irishmen of us all, at least for an evening. Robin, whose Main Street music school Island Arts Music Center advertises in this newspaper, has offered these wonderful performances in concert with St. Patrick's Day for seven years now, and I can't understand why more Roosevelt Islanders don't attend. A prize-winning quartet of musicians played jigs, reels and hornpipes while the beautifully costumed girls of the Tir na Gael School of Irish Dancing negotiated the slippery floors of the Chapel in both hard shoe and soft shoe numbers. Sheer joy and you should put this on next year's calendar right away!

I've started to meet our newest Southtown neighbors at 465 and 475 Main Street and I'll bet that you have also. Many Island activists have made overtures to the hospital housing authorities that offer the Southtown apartments to their employees to inform them of the variety of Island services, organizations and artistic outlets available here, but with little response. I think we old-timers will need to educate these new Roosevelt Islanders and to inculcate in them

As I review this column before submitting it, we are again getting reports that snow is on the way. This has been an incredible winter with the amount of snow that has fallen, and I would again like to give credit and thanks to the RIOC

The RIOC Column

grounds department, Housing Management and the residents of Roosevelt Island for all of their cooperation and support. It has been a winter that will be long remembered!

I am happy to report that the MetroCard has brought additional ridership to the Tram. Since my first day on the Island people said that they would ride the Tram if they were able to use their MetroCards, both because of the convenience and the benefits of the transfer. This has certainly been the case, and I look forward to seeing an even greater increase as more visitors come to the Island in the warmer weather.

Everyone should be aware that on occasion, like almost every piece of machinery, the MetroCard vending machines do malfunction. If this does happen, please report the problem to the cabin attendant or other Tram personnel in the station. If it involves any loss of money, please request an envelope to send the card to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The machines are maintained by that Agency, and it is that entity that will be able to make any restitution that is necessary.

I wish that I could report that everything at the Tram is all good news. I am extremely hopeful that by the time that you read this it will all be good news. I want everyone to know that I am angry and distressed by the fact that the elevator company has failed to complete the work on the elevator. We call them on a regular basis and demand that the work be completed. We have also taken other enforcement steps, apparently to no avail. I have once again been assured that the repairs will be completed within the next two days, and hope to be able to report next time that all is well.

One last piece of Tram news. I am sure that many of you have noticed the emergency drills that have taken place over the last several weeks. Tram and RIOC personnel as well the Fire Department have spent two weeks going over different scenarios to ensure the safety of all Tram riders. There will be two more weekends of tests within the next several weeks. Please know that I am urging everyone to make sure that the quality of life is constantly improved for all Island residents from Southpoint to the lighthouse and everywhere in between. I am aware that at the current time there has been vandalism in Motorgate. Public Safety is working on this issue and we hope that they will soon correct the problem.

an appreciation of our unique life style on a one-to-one basis. The current difficulty with the bus route is a case in point:

The current Red Bus route and schedule is a thorn in the side of every commuter. We've seen that the bus stop at 465/475 Main Street is ignored by Southtowners and that they have voted with their feet to use a westerly overland route to the subway. The bus route that went into effect on February 9 was designed as a response to the need for this bus stop, but as we've seen all winter, it is virtually unused. Many of us old hands have expressed our dissatisfaction to RIOC with the present route and schedule, but Southtowners must respond as well. I believe that the elimination of this bus stop with the addition of stops on the West Service Road would allow RIOC to restore both the old route up and down the west channel as well as a timetable in synch with the Tram schedule. And this would be accomplished without any inconvenience to Southtowners!

It is now over four months since the Manhattan-side Tram elevator was in service. I just searched *The Main Street WIRE* archives (nyc10044.com) to refresh my memory and discovered that this elevator broke down in October 2002 and wasn't repaired until well into the winter of 2003. There is no reason for repairs to take this long. If it is feasible to keep an inventory of parts in stock, do so. If not, find a company that can fabricate parts and effect repairs in a reasonable period of time. Four months is not a reasonable period of time. We no longer believe the RIOC advisories of imminent restoration of service. One day, the elevator will be repaired and will again serve the needs of Islanders who can't negotiate the steep staircase on Second Avenue. But what about the next time? Mechanical systems break down and contingency plans must be in place ahead of time to deal with those breakdowns. It's just a one-story elevator, but it's an essential adjunct to the Tram for our unique population.



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

With the advent of MetroCard service on the Tram we have an opportunity to increase ridership and decrease the

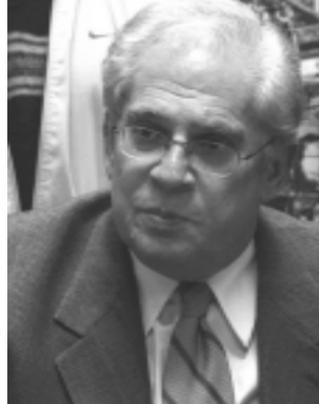
See **Katz**, page 7

Please be assured that this is a matter of concern for us and we are working to ensure that it is resolved promptly.

We also had some further discussions with the State Office of Emergency Management. As reported in the last edition, they are looking forward to scheduling some meetings for Island residents in the next several months. I receive many inquiries about this and assure you that we will report more as it becomes available.

On a more positive topic, I am please to announce that the Mobile Mammogram Machine that visited Roosevelt Island for one day last fall will be back again this September. Details are being finalized now, and as soon as they are available we will post them. Please remember that in order to take part in this program you must register beforehand.

I am also pleased to announce that the Trust for Public Land has had more meetings with Island residents and, since my last column, has also received more inquiries from interested parties. I continue to invite everyone to take part in this process.



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

Finally, the issue on everyone's mind is the red bus schedule. I appreciate everybody's frustrations and suggestions. We are looking at all of the suggestions and, as stated, will have a revised schedule and/or route shortly. We are working on this issue and thought that we would be able to have the changes in place this week. Circumstances beyond our control prevented this, and we had to reevaluate some of the suggestions. Please be assured that this issue remains one of our top priorities and we are working to ensure that everyone is satisfied with the results.

I look forward to the warmer weather, spring months and additional open houses. I do appreciate the suggestions that I receive and implement as many of them as possible.

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Photographic display of works by J. Wayne Olson (right), *Questions for a Fetus*, at the Main Street Library, through March 31.



Joey Dee and the Starliters, tonight (Sat., Mar. 20), 8:00 p.m., PS/IS 217 Auditorium; presented by the Roosevelt Island Youth Program Beacon Program. Free.

— The Coming Week —

Town Hall Meeting on Medicare and issues of concern to seniors, including prescription drug costs and Social Security, **Mon., Mar. 22**, 11:00 a.m., Lenox Hill Senior Center, 343 East 70th Street (between 1st and 2nd Avenues); sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Maloney.

Toastmasters Demonstration Meeting, Mon., Mar. 22, 7:30 p.m., Gallery RIVAA (see ad, page 4).

Free Tax Clinic for seniors and low-income taxpayers, **Tue., Mar. 23** and every Tuesday through Apr. 13, 10:00-1:30, offered by Eviction Intervention Services, at EIS offices, 150 East 62nd St. (between Lexington and Third) in Lexington United Methodist Church. No appointment required. Additional information: **212-308-2210**, ext. 207, or eisny@aol.com.

Opening Reception for Third Anniversary Exhibition, *Vernissage III*, **Sat., Mar. 27**, 6:00-9:00 p.m., Gallery RIVAA. Gallery open Saturdays and Sundays 11-5, Wednesdays 1-5, and Fridays 6-9.

— Future Events —

The Main Street WIRE — next issue **Sat., Apr. 3**. (To receive e-mail bulletins in the meantime, send an "Add Me" message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Mar. 26; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Tue., Mar. 30; fliers due Thur., Apr. 1. **Future issues:** Apr. 17; May 1, 15, 29; June 12; July 3 (Fourth of July issue); 31; Aug. 28; Sept. 11, 25; Oct. 16, 30 (pre-election issue); Nov. 6 (post-election issue), 20 (Thanksgiving issue); Dec. 4, 18 (two December holiday issues), then twice a month starting in January, 2005. (Schedule subject to adjustment.) **Phone/fax** for news, **212-826-9055/755-2540**; urgent matters **917-617-0449**. **Phone/fax** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214/755-2540**. **To list your organization's Island event in this column**, e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions; there is no charge.

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

Roy Eaton Plays Scott Joplin, a *Jazz Piano at the Y* event, **Sat., Apr. 10**, 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Avenue; music of Joplin and his generation. Ticket information: **212-415-5500** or at www.92y.org.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Apr. 12, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**



Senior Center

Monday	Thursday
10-11, Latchhook Class	10:00, Tai Chi
10-11:30, English as 2nd Lang.	10:30, Creative Arts
10:30, Blood Pressure Screen	12:30, Movie
12:30, "Oldies" Movies	7:00, Dance
1:00, Tai Chi	Friday
7:00, Dance Class (Beginners)	6:00, Dance & Relax
Tuesday	9:30, Yoga Stretch
9-1, Tax Help for Seniors	7:00, Games (RISA)
10:00, Computers	Saturday
10-11, Dance & Relax	7:30, Bingo (RISA)
1:00, Bingo	Special Events
6:00, Yoga Class	Wed., Mar. 17 , Atlantic City trip
7:30, Games (RISA)	Sat., Mar. 20 , 6:00, St. Patrick's Day Celebration
Wednesday	Fri., Mar. 26 , 12:30, Birthday Party
9:15, Stay Well	Wed., Apr. 21 , Atlantic City trip
10:00, Spanish Class	
10:30, Shoppers' Bus	
12:30, Sculpting	
7:00, Pokeno (RISA)	

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

The Public Safety Blotter through the first half of March is now on line at <http://nyc10044.com/wire/2413/blot2413.html>

Come Celebrate Gallery RIVAA's 3rd Anniversary

VERNISSAGE 3



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The Island Arts Music Center was founded by Director of RIVER MUSIC, Robin Russell, trained at Juilliard and Harvard (B.A. in Music). With over 20 years teaching experience with private students, he has been on the faculty of the Turtle Bay Music School, and the Diller-Quaile School of Music.



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River Music's Irish Night



The Seventh Annual Irish Night brought to Roosevelt Island last weekend by Robin Russell and River Music featured jigs and reels, with dances performed by a beautifully-costumed troop of lively and lovely lasses.



Cornell Seeking Bonds for Southtown #3

Cornell-Weill is going forward with Southtown Building #3. The New York State Dormitory Authority will hold a hearing in Albany on Monday on a dozen Cornell items, one of which will be 455 Main Street. The notice, published in *The New York Times* last week, reads, "Proceeds of the Notes and/or the Bonds are expected to be used to finance or refinance the following projects planned by Cornell University: At 455 Main Street, New York, New York, the purchase of the property and buildings located at such address for use as student housing by the Medical College (the 'Southtown #3 project')."

According to David Kramer of the Hudson Companies, which is developing Southtown with the Related Companies (Hudson-Related), work will go forward in May on the third Southtown building.

The bond amount for the building is \$30 million.

In the same hearing, the Dormitory Authority will consider another \$30 million item, the "purchase of the property and buildings located at 465 Main Street for use as student housing by the Medical College (the 'Southtown #2 Project')." That building has already been built.

Personnel at 475 and 465 Main Street (Southtown #1 and #2, respectively) are reluctant to give information about occupancy, but the most recent indications are that neither building is even near half-occupied.

PS217 Wants Career Speakers

Want to tell kids about your job? Friday, May 21, is the day.

The Island's PS/IS 217 is looking for Career-Day speakers – workers in all fields who can speak briefly to sixth- through eighth-grade students to stimulate their thinking about how they'll earn a living as adults. After a welcoming briefing, groups of two or three presenters visit two classrooms to talk about the specifics of their fields – the training and education necessary and how to get it, an overview of the field, the rewards of the job, what a typical day is like, promotion paths, the pay, and how they landed their jobs.

Past speakers have included Assemblymember Pete Grannis and City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, librarians, journalists, medical professionals, lawyers, teachers, artists, musicians, decorators, designers, sales professionals, law-enforcement specialists, broadcasters, sports professionals, civil service workers, filmmakers, food service workers, financial planners, computer specialists, diplomats, actors, scientists, and virtually every other field of work. Many have brought examples of their work, brochures, or articles to pass out among the students.

Career Day is scheduled for Friday, May 21, at the Island school, with an 8:20 a.m. start. The commitment is a full morning, with an 11:00 a.m. lunch to follow. Willing to speak? Call Guidance Counselor Susan Cohen at 212-980-0294, ext. 2323.



Residents Association Common Councilor Vicki Feinmel presented a check to members of the Youth Program's Island Girls Project this week as thanks for help the group provided with last weekend's RIRA Sock Hop. Shaheda Adaolsha and Nicole Matthews received the check as Youth Program Director Charlie De Fino stood by.

Katz from page 3

budget deficit that comes with Tram operation. But the current snafu with the Red Buses and the elevator are giving people reason to stay with the overcrowded F train rather than availing themselves of a new and better way of commuting to Manhattan. RIOC keeps shooting themselves in the foot by failing to repair broken systems and broken machinery in a timely fashion.

And finally: You will read in this issue of *The WIRE* about two years of work that Island groups, including RIRA, PS/IS 217, the RIVAA artists' collective, Housing Management, the Senior and Disabled Associations, and others have done in conjunction with the Living Library project. Bonnie Sherk of Life Frames, Inc., has brought her experience and her record of accomplishment in San Francisco to our Island with the intention of using our open space and parkland to create an urban oasis as well as a destination that will have visitors from around the world beating a path to our door. This is a work in progress that I hope can be incorporated into the master plan that the RIOC Board of Directors has commissioned the Trust for Public Land to develop. If RIOC and TPL statements are to be believed regarding their intent to include the community in this process, then this work can't be ignored and will result in something wonderful on our doorstep.

Jolly from page 1

that if we could find an apartment here, we would move in. We originally planned to come for two years, but stayed for twenty."

The couple moved to England when Richard retired, and Alison continued her research at Sussex University.

She says there is "not much similarity between Roosevelt Island and Madagascar. Madagascar has rainforest and baobab forest and spiny desert, and a capital city of a couple of million people that looks like a rosy-red-brick Italian hill town. And almost 90% of its wild species are endemic to Madagascar."

Economically it is one of the world's poorest countries, "while New York is probably the richest city in the world."

"As islands go," Alison wrote, "maybe you could say Roosevelt Island and Madagascar are opposites."

Firefighters Offer Carillon For Good Shepherd Tower

Island-based firefighters at the Special Operations Command are offering to buy an electronic carillon for the Bell Tower of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

The offer comes in appreciation for the many favors and courtesies extended to the firefighting community by Roosevelt Island residents in the period after 9/11/01.

A retiree from the Special Operations unit, John Connolly, who lives in Rivercross, suggested the bells would be heard only during waking hours, with a volume control to keep them from being intrusive. The system is computer controlled and mostly solid-state, using sampled bells of recognized quality. Connolly, whose e-mail address is cjbudcon@aol.com, is looking for resident comments on the idea, gathering information in preparation for the donation.

Connolly said that RIOC President Herb Berman was receptive to the idea, but in a later contact with RIOC, concern was expressed that some residents might object to the sound. "Use of the carillon could be limited to special occasions," Connolly said, citing Roosevelt Island Day, commemorations of September 11, Thanksgiving, weddings, and special holidays. He told *The WIRE* that one of the companies offering carillons will provide a one-month trial period.

"I think having the sound of bells in the center of the community will add to our feeling of community," Connolly said. While anticipating that the carillon might be used on occasion by religious organizations using the Chapel, Connolly said that he sees the carillon as a non-religious community matter that will serve to give the Chapel a traditional voice. The system uses outdoor speakers for outdoor sound projection, but can be switched to indoor speakers when their sound is desired for use during a church service. A standard keyboard can be used to play the system "live," though an extensive repertoire of recorded music is available.

Connolly said that the system can be used to ring the hours at selected times; for accuracy, the unit's timekeeping is controlled by the U.S. Atomic Clock in Fort Collins, Colorado. The system can be set to sound either cast Flemish bells or English bells; the Flemish are more subdued with less "clang."

The donation would have to be accepted by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC).

Gallery Marking 3rd Year

Gallery RIVAA will soon mark its third anniversary with Vernissage 3, a fresh collection of works with an opening reception set for Saturday, March 27 (see ad, page 4).

But the gallery at 527 Main Street has quietly become an Island gathering place, available for meetings and public events. Monday evening, for example, the Island's Toastmasters unit will hold a second demonstration meeting there, recruiting new members.

RIVAA stands for Roosevelt Island Visual Artists Association. New members must go through a review and jury process to be admitted into the organization, but its tastes and media are eclectic, ranging from traditional art to high tech and embracing sculpture, photography, ceramics, and architecture.

Arrangements for other organizations to use the gallery are handled by Arline Jacoby, at 212-421-5939.

Ira Holland

Ira Holland died Tuesday morning. He had lived on Roosevelt Island since 1976, first as a patient in Goldwater Hospital, then as a resident of Eastwood. He was a member of the initial planning committee set up to make the Island and the Tram handicapped-accessible.

He suffered from post-polio syndrome, having been struck at age 16. He was wheelchair bound, a quadriplegic, and respiratory dependent. His death was sudden and unexpected.

Ira Holland was born October 1, 1939, in Brooklyn. He was the subject of a *WIRE* feature in July, 2000, the founder of a non-profit corporation called Concepts of Independence, providing personal assistants to the disabled. He said the company was the largest of its kind in the country, providing employment for over 2,300 aides who gave 1000 clients some 3.4 million hours of service annually. He told a *WIRE* reporter who interviewed him for the feature, "I have been disabled for 46 years and I think I have accomplished a great deal and am continuing to do so. My motto is self-direction. I see it as both a right and a responsibility. If you wish to live in a particular manner, you have a responsibility to yourself. You can choose to control your life in every way possible." He commuted to his office in Manhattan two days a week, but also worked from home using a voice-activated computer, a fax machine, and a special telephone.

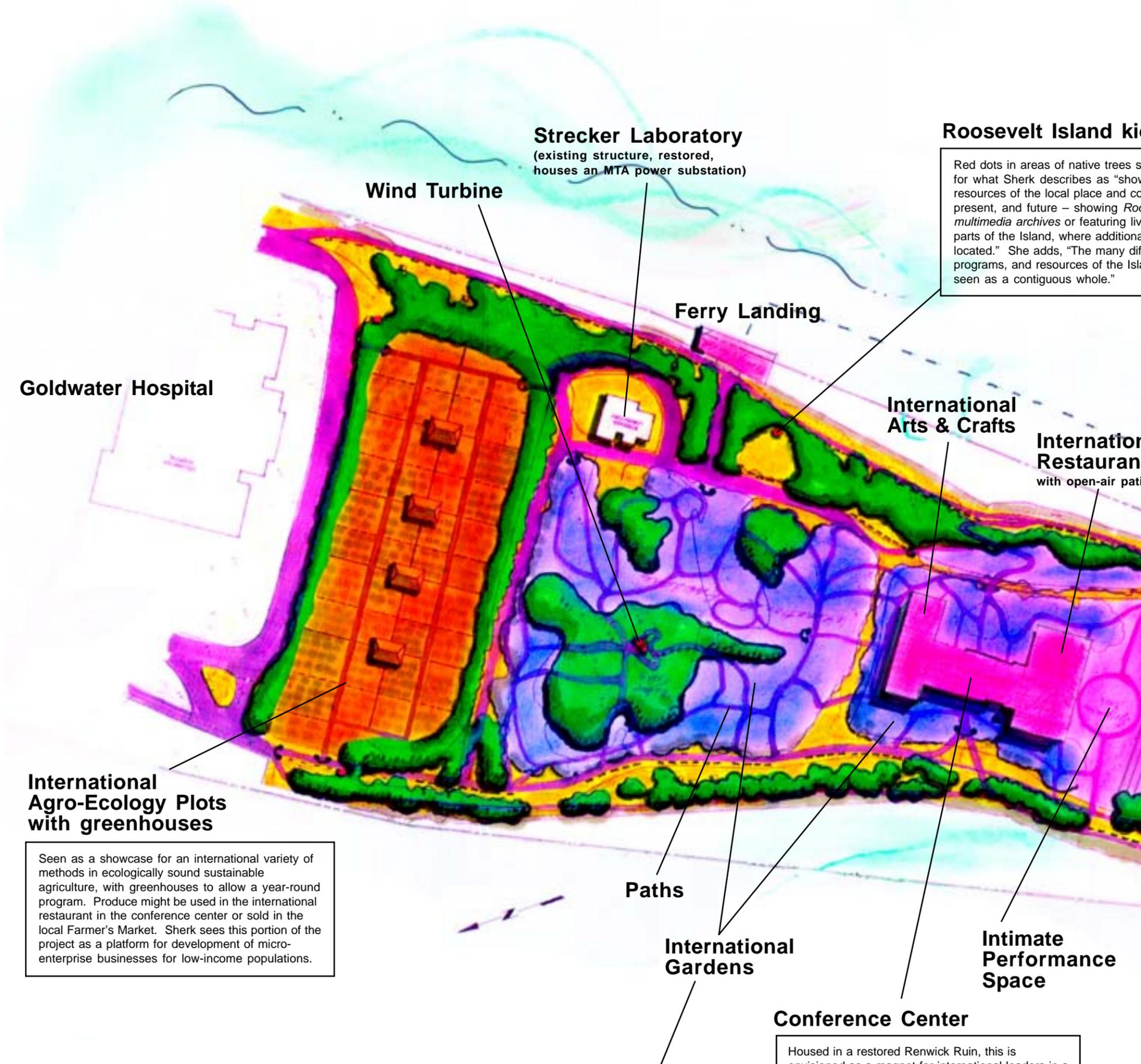
He is survived by Maria Manrique of Brooklyn, whom he described as "a significant person in my life for more than 30 years;" by a brother, Peter M. Holland, a physician who lives in Houston, and by Peter's sons, John and Matthew; and by Island resident Edward Litcher, whom he described as "more than a brother."

He is also survived by his family of aides: Tamara Williams, Susana Guivara, Ann Rampersuol, and Ibeth Chabur.

After cremation, his remains will be consigned to Pine Lawn Cemetery in Suffolk County. A memorial service, to be announced, will be scheduled on the Island in a few weeks.



Nearly Barren Now, Southpoint Would Become a Kind of Cultural World's Fair – and Much More – in Bonnie Sherk's Synthesis Gathered Over Two Years of Community Consultations



Roosevelt Island ki
 Red dots in areas of native trees s
 for what Sherk describes as "show
 resources of the local place and co
 present, and future – showing Roo
multimedia archives or featuring liv
 parts of the Island, where addition
 located." She adds, "The many dif
 programs, and resources of the Isl
 seen as a contiguous whole."

International Agro-Ecology Plots with greenhouses

Seen as a showcase for an international variety of methods in ecologically sound sustainable agriculture, with greenhouses to allow a year-round program. Produce might be used in the international restaurant in the conference center or sold in the local Farmer's Market. Sherk sees this portion of the project as a platform for development of micro-enterprise businesses for low-income populations.

Conference Center

Housed in a restored Renwick Ruin, this is envisioned as a magnet for international leaders in a variety of fields, bringing them together to consider planet-size issues like global warming, economic development, hunger and nutrition, social and environmental justice, housing, cultural diversity, education, and literacy. Sherk sees it as a UN-connected "headquarters for global civil society."



Sherk provides this sketch of the entry to an Assyrian Garden as an example of a number of themed gardens showcasing cultures of the world. Elements in this example relate to Mesopotamian culture: There is a statue of King Ashurbanipal, who founded the first library of clay-tablet writings, which were incised, while wet, with reeds, which grow on either side of the entry gate. Herringbone pavers are typical of Assyrian design. Two ponds signify the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The entry portal is one of several "multimedia digital gateways," each of which would display a live feed from the part of the world represented in the garden. Each of the gardens would be designed, says Sherk, in conjunction with the cultural community represented.

Analysis of Diverse Ideas

Kiosks

Suggest locations showcasing the rich community – past, present, future – of Roosevelt Island. The kiosks will be placed in different places, and can then be

Final
t
to dining



View looking north

Same view today



East Channel of East River
(Queens side)

Flags of UN member nations
(lining sides of a Dymaxion map of the world)

UN Pavilion

Wind Turbine

World Stage Amphitheater

Paths

Monarch Butterfly Meadow

Native Trees
(shown in green)

West Channel of East River
(Manhattan side)

Digital Gateways

Sherk describes these as showcasing special events at the site, or showing multimedia archives of the cultures represented in the international gardens, or "live, interactive broadcasts between sites." They would be solar-powered or get their power from wind turbines envisioned as part of the park.



Southpoint as seen today from the 39th floor of the United Nations Secretariat Building

Scenes from the Island's Family Album: *The RIRA Sock Hop*

Saturday, March 6
 Photo coverage by Linda Heimer
 and Website NYC10044.com



Prints of the pictures published here and of some 200 more taken at the RIRA Sock Hop may be ordered from Shutterfly.com. To receive a password enabling you to view the available photos, send an e-mail to Editor@MainStreetWIRE.com with the subject Sock Hop Photos.

About color in *The WIRE*—
 The added cost to print portions of *The WIRE* in color is \$640 per issue, creating a total publication cost that exceeds the revenue generated by selling advertising. *The WIRE* therefore seeks donor support to allow printing some issues in color, particularly when coverage of certain subjects is enhanced. A portion of incremental cost of color in this issue was covered by a donor who prefers to remain anonymous. For additional information, call the editor at 212-826-9055.

Southpoint from page 1
 she's working with. Ronald Becker, the director of therapeutic recreation at Coler-Goldwater Hospital, sees Sherk's work as "a catalyst for bridging cultures and peoples from around the world." Indeed, Sherk envisions high-tech connections she calls "digital gateways" between foreign lands and corollary international gardens in Southpoint Park – live two-way video "bridges" that might also show cultural archives for the areas represented.

Miguel Garcia, the program officer at the Ford Foundation whose portfolio embraces Sherk's work, sees Southpoint as "a diamond in the rough." (Ford also supports TPL.) Garcia says the foundation seeks to "animate open and recreational space to benefit mixed-income and mixed-race communities," and says that "Bonnie's identification of the UN as an important driver

of her master plan demonstrates a commitment to that approach." He adds, "As TPL goes forward with planning, they're well-suited to take stock of Bonnie's community organizing work and some of the ideas in her conceptual master plan. Her work represents a very grand vision for the property that embodies the spirit of the United Nations and the adjacent communities on Roosevelt Island." Besides international video connections, Sherk sees point-to-point connections on the Island as part of the park, along with kiosks representing the diversity of communities within the overall Roosevelt Island community.

Garcia concedes that the cost of realizing Sherk's plan for Southpoint would be "substantial," but adds, "At this point it's intended to stimulate the imagination and creativity of a community and to engage citizens in a democratic process, to think broadly about the space." Costing it out and identi-

fying funding sources would come later, he says.

Sherk recalls that her first meeting on Roosevelt Island, with PS/IS 217 Principal Sherry Gregory, took place on September 12, 2001 – the day after 9/11. Gregory is excited about the Living Library concept: "PS/IS 217 has embarked upon an exciting journey," she wrote recently. "We are focusing our sights on cultivating our human garden and transforming our school and Island. Collaborating as part of a Living Library think tank team... maximizes our potential. [This] will augment our children's progress and bond all Island constituencies, drawing upon a common language and belief system. We have begun our journey of growth and discovery! Watch us bloom!"

Such enthusiasm around Sherk's approach isn't unusual. An expert on monarch butterflies and their migratory patterns, noting the pres-

ence of a monarch butterfly meadow in Sherk's Southpoint plan, sees a relationship between their international travels and the United Nations. A teacher at Jamaica High School sees Southpoint as a perfect location for a "planetary dance" in which participants "make an offering to the planet and voice their commitment to peace." A geologist in Maine who runs a "rock detective" educational program sees Roosevelt Island as a geological showcase: "Using the rubble at Southpoint from the building of the New York subway system exposes the geology of Manhattan," she writes.

On the Island, Sherk has captured the support of several representatives to the Residents Association Common Council. RIRA President Matthew Katz comments in his column this issue (page 3). Margie Smith (Rivercross) writes, "Bonnie's enthusiasm and hard work have breathed life into this

project for me. Her plan ties together areas of the Island physically using landscape techniques, and electronically, integrating us with the world community – and emotionally, uniting us by incorporating into the plan the Island's personality, people, and its hopes for the future." Common Council Secretary Sherie Helstien adds, "Bonnie Sherk has shown the community how it can not only enhance and develop its own open spaces, but also become connected with communities throughout the United States and the world who share these same interests... These are important lessons for our children."

Sherk has been invited by the Trust for Public Land to participate as it works toward its own conceptual master plan for the future of Southpoint. Meanwhile, she presses on with her own planning and the Island-wide projects of her Living Library.

MAIN STREET THEATRE
DANCE ALLIANCE

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Letters

from page 2

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I would like to add my voice to the many you have already heard (or *did* you hear them) about the Red Bus. We need the bus to be on a schedule. Even city buses have schedules posted. The change in the bus route and non-schedule has caused more havoc and unnecessary anxiety on this Island than any other issue I remember. I am a longtime resident and sincerely hope that this can be solved to the satisfaction of the residents, not special interest groups.

Barbara Leonardo, MSC

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

Some observations about the current Red Bus schedule:

Not *once* have I seen anybody from Southtown board, either going in the direction of the Tram or coming from anywhere else on Roosevelt Island. So why does it stop in front of the new Southtown buildings, especially when those residents are walking to the Tram and subway? The Red Bus shouldn't even be traveling down the new Main Street extension – it should be re-routed back to pass the subway going both ways; then subway passengers and Tram passengers can hop on more frequently.

People are extremely irritated that the Red Bus doesn't meet them at the Tram anymore. There always was a bus there to meet arriving Tram riders for as long as we've lived here. Now, when you get off the Tram, you're staring at a Keyspan power plant and a deserted construction site and a huge overhead bridge standing on one of the most desolate and cold places on the Island, with the longest walk home – instead of jumping onto a warm bus. Nobody feels safe standing out there waiting at any hour, but especially for women and when it's dark, the shelter is inadequate. You can't see approaching buses. Nobody knows when a bus will arrive, so this is especially brutal for older people, handicapped people, parents with little kids, people with bags or luggage, and visitors without a clue where they are. Add some snow like today (Tuesday, March 16) and it's even worse.

It's incredibly frustrating when you're waiting for a bus, get tired of waiting, then start walking home and see two or three buses bunched up as you're walking into your building. If they're not equipped with GPS positioning equipment so they can space themselves out properly, then how about a common sense idea as a solution: If they're bunched up like today (where they were probably 300 feet apart and nobody was using the second bus so it was running around the Island for nothing) and the two bus drivers can obviously see each other, why doesn't the second bus just pull over for a few minutes at the next safe stop where they aren't blocking traffic (in front of Gristede's would be perfect; that's where shoppers and folks from Manhattan Park were used to catching a bus), and just let that first bus get forward far enough so they pass each other going in opposite directions, or time it out so they get roughly half way around the Island.

Just because an addition was built onto Main Street that runs past the new buildings at Southtown doesn't mean sending buses that route makes any sense for commuters.

If you don't ride it, then please stop playing around with it.

Denise Larocque

Editor's note: *The WIRE* is interested in hearing from other parents with the problem described in the following letter, or from any who have found a solution.

To the Public Schools Chancellor:

I live on Roosevelt Island with my nine-year-old son, who attends PS 77 (the Lower Lab School) on East 95th Street. Every morning and every afternoon my son takes the Roosevelt Island Tramway and a yellow public-school bus to get to and from school.

Prior to March 1, my son had a Tram pass, which meant he was not charged a fare for riding the Tram. However, as of March 1, the Tram became part of the MetroCard system. This means my son must get a MetroCard in order to ride the Tram.

My son's school referred me to the Department of Student Transportation. When I contacted Mr. Heslin, manager of this department, he informed me that, due to the fact that my son takes a school bus, he is not qualified to receive a student MetroCard. He suggested I pay the regular fare or send my nine-year-old son on the subway or MTA bus alone. I asked if a school bus could be routed to Roosevelt Island and I was told it could not.

Even though my son attends a public school in the same borough that he lives in and attends a school in the same District, he is now required to pay \$4 to attend school each day. That is \$720 per school year. This is outrageous!

So, I come to you to help solve this dilemma. Can you please take this extenuating circumstance and issue student MetroCards to children who ride both the Tram and school buses?

I look forward to your reply.

Leslie Rapchik

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I recently resumed my former walking regimen with a friend. Our route takes us from the back of Westview, up to and around the Lighthouse, then South on the East Channel promenade, all the way around to the Tram and back to Westview. When I used to do this walk, I noticed and reported then that lights were out from Manhattan Park nearly all the way to the Lighthouse and then on the East Channel walk all the way around to the Special Operations Fire House.

Whatever else Public Safety officers are doing in their cars at night, their duties should, at the very least, include keeping you and Vinnie Kopicki apprised of these outages. And yet, not only does RIOC generally seem surprised to hear about them, but the lights have been out for at least the past two years and probably longer. Nothing seems to be done to correct this situation.

One of these days, because of the lack of lighting, someone is going to trip into the two- to three-foot-deep hole behind Manhattan Park (I'm told this is indicative of a serious seawall erosion problem), or trip elsewhere, as has already happened when someone took a header (while riding a bike) because he couldn't see the chain across the posts just before entering the Lighthouse path area.

Please get these lights lit for all our protection and well being, and ensure that Public Safety reports back to you in a timely fashion. Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

To the Editor:

Kudos to City Council Speaker Gifford Miller for helping to bring the MetroCard to the Roosevelt Island Tram. Now if they can paint those "subwaysque" prison bar gratings yellow, they will have captured the mood of the Tram. I love the MetroCard combined with the Tram, and have been enjoying new ways to transfer from the Tram, going south one day in Manhattan, and then west the next. I have noticed a lot more people taking the Tram now that it is on an equal footing with the subway.

Now more than ever, we need a Roosevelt Island bus working in tandem with the Tram, so we need to get back to a predictable Red Bus route. We are getting more people stuck at the Tram, which is a longer walk than if you're stuck at the subway. Even at the subway I am not seeing the bus coming any sooner than it did before. (Some have hinted that maybe some bus drivers are taking a break, out by the Community Gardens, just to catch their breath, instead of driving continually.) Has anyone asked them how they feel about the new schedule?

If the anointed and appointed Colonial High Commissioners under his Lordship the Governor would be so kind to give the people what they want, we would be happy to help them save face. Surely they must have noticed a drop in the number of quarters they have been collecting from us. We could start by meet-

By two weeks ago, *The WIRE* had received so many calls complaining about the Red Bus schedule that we published a business card and posted it at the Tramway bus stop, hoping to divert some of the calls to RIOC. (Note that *The WIRE* is an independent community newspaper, not associated with RIOC and not in a position to act on resident complaints, other than through editorials and by publishing resident letters. We're happy to hear from readers, but prefer publishable letters or e-mails.) **Here's the information on the card:**

How to Contact RIOC

Register your views

Phone: 212 832-4540
E-mail: Hberman@RIOC.com
Fax: 212 832-4582
Mail: Herb Berman, President, RIOC, 591 Main St., NYC10044

Copy to *The WIRE*
E-mail: Editor@MainStreetWIRE.com
Fax: 212 755-2540
Mail: *The WIRE*, 531 Main St. #413, NYC10044

To the Editor:

I have now lived here for 15 months and I really appreciate this rock in the middle of the East River where I live. However, I have observed a number of problems that are in need of solutions.

First, the street lighting on this Island is terrible. There are large patches of sidewalk where there is no light at all, especially near the Tram, the area near the Post Office, and the small park around Manhattan Park.

Second, the brick roadway near Manhattan Park and Gristede's is full of divots and crevasses that fill up with water when it rains. There appears to be little concern about this.

Third, the sign placement on this Island is poor. When one arrives on the Island off the bridge, where are the signs directing people to the two hospitals, schools, Tram, subway, parks, etc.? *Where are the signs?* There is no sign for River Road! There should be numerous signs all over the Island directing visitors and residents to the various points of interest. Now, there is a yellow sign under the turnaround when one arrives on the Island, but it is terribly positioned. There should be a bright sign placed on the street and numerous signs all over.

It's apparent that the Island went through a long period of benign neglect that it is just barely recovering from. The link of the MetroCard to the Tram was an excellent move and long overdue, but there is plenty more to be done.

One more thing... I realize that Chase once had a branch here and was replaced by New York National, but is there any way to entice HSBC to take over that branch? Since we are a very diverse and international community, it might be worthwhile to upgrade the level of banking services as well.

S. Walden

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I am writing to let you know how upset I am with the Red Bus schedule. I leave for work earlier and still am late 3-4 times a week. There is no schedule. You either hit it or you don't. Monday, March 8, I waited 20 minutes during rush hour. A full bus went by, and another did not follow until ten minutes later.

Three street lights are out at the Tram bus stop. When I come home late at night, it is deserted and dark as you wait up to 15 minutes for the bus. This is dangerous.

I feel that you are trying to accommodate a few hundred people from Southtown and forgetting a few thousand people on the rest of the Island. Give us back our bus schedule that meets the Tram to make our lives easier – and replace the lights.

Sherie Helstien

Elizabeth Berg

ing half way and go to a half-hour predictable schedule for a while before we eventually go back 100% back to the old way of commuting. With input from the people, I think we can come up with some good ideas for the route.

The kids on the Island have the right idea. I have seen some of them getting off at that new stop and walking across the lawn to get to the subway before the bus can make the trip back. What if we turn the bus route around, go counter clockwise (no more spinning at the Tram!), build a walking path from the subway to that new Main Street (make it the pick-up, not the drop-off point), and of course put the bus back on a schedule? The key is a short walk path across the narrow width of our Island near the subway.

I have been on Roosevelt Island long before we had the subway, and I remember when the subway first came to the Island. It was like being in a scene from H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*. The people on the Island divided into two camps, the Eloi, who stayed above ground, and took the Tram with its wonderful views, and the Morlocks, who descended underground with its dark and dismal passageways. Who knows how things will evolve over time, but I don't think anyone will be resorting to cannibalism anytime soon. The only thing that could cause such a revolting evolution would be if we keep to the new bus schedule.

Neal Weissman

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

The Tram is accepting the MetroCard! Well done!

Now if you will just return the buses to a schedule to allow us to plan the time of the Tram for which we will use it, life will be lovely.

Mary Cavanaugh

To the Editor:

I would like to give housing management some credit for a brave stand on a difficult issue. Some weeks ago, in the middle of the last brutal cold snap, residents received a letter forbidding the use of space heaters and recommending that if we were cold we should wear more clothes: excellent advice in view of global climate change, and the need to conserve energy and cut costs.

I found the letter very useful. At the time, I was pushing wads of newspaper into a wide gap between the living-room air-conditioner and its ill-fitting sleeve, and it came in very handy. I might have been even more impressed if management had been sending teams round to see if there were any problems – little things like the arctic blast coming through the air-conditioner. I would have been totally in awe if at some time in the last quarter-century anyone had noticed that our windows' steel frames were apparently designed to conduct heat out of the apartment (except of course in summer, when they help with the heating); or that once in every generation even well-fitting windows need replacing.

Sealing the windows shut and "winterising" with little bits of foam and lots of duct tape is a great help, of course, except that I have to open the window because my ventilator hasn't worked for years. Still, it's good to see HMC doing something courageous, especially with a letter telling the people to shut off the heat during the coldest winter in memory. It reminds me of that queen of France who advised her breadless subjects to eat cake. It was well-meant advice but unrealistic, and not at all well received – but keep trying, RIHMC, the peasants aren't in the streets yet. They're probably still huddled round the space heater.

Alex Marshall

Letters deadline for Apr. 3 issue: Mar. 30

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

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I'm once again compelled to bring the issue of the disgusting and ever-growing pigeon population to your office. Actually, I'm rather surprised that, since you've been on our Island and your office is opposite the Deli, you haven't noticed. Maybe you have, and simply like to see them.

It appears that the Deli garbage is not the only attraction for the pigeons. They are being fed by residents and store owners alike.

Have you taken the Tram lately? It's a disgusting pigeon mess! That's a great way to greet visitors.

Take a stroll down Main Street and you'll have to duck/weave in and around the pigeons. There are more pigeons than there are residents on Main Street.

Gristede's is covered with pigeon poop.

There is an anti-pigeon gel that can be used as a deterrent. You should also consider fines for people feeding pigeons (and fines for spitting and littering while you're at it).

You should also consider hanging up *Do Not Feed the Pigeons* signs all over the Island and talk to the store owners about the gar-

See **Letters**, next page

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Letters

from page 2

bage. There is a dreadful stench, especially in the heat of the summer. On three-day weekends, when the trash is not picked up, the Island reeks of garbage (another welcome-to-our-Island sign for visitors).

This issue has been a pet peeve of mine for years and literally nothing has been done by any of your predecessors. The pigeon population gets worse every year. Not only do we have pigeons, we have gulls, squirrels, rats, and vermin hanging out on the Island (look outside your door).

Warm weather is right around the corner. I implore you to take a very active and aggressive approach in an effort to discourage the pigeons from calling our Island home and to clean up the pigeon mess. At the very least, let the residents see that RIOC is making an effort to do so. Talk to all the management companies about the anti-pigeon gel, clean up Gristede's, and the Tram station. Action is way overdue.

Our management company's maintenance workers spend countless hours scraping up pigeon poop from our breezeways and sidewalks. This is a waste of their valuable time, which instead should be spent in our buildings. Finally, how healthy could this possibly be for any of us?!

J. Brooks

To the Editor:

Do the people of Roosevelt Island feel hopeless, unable to be masters of their own lives? Do they feel impotent - unable to stand up for themselves? Will they just lay down and allow some nincompoops to push them around? Will they not stand up and be counted?

What, you ask, is she referring to? The new non-scheduled bus schedule that has been visited upon us. What else? An easy issue to wrap one's arms around. Not complicated. It is a question of most of the population of this Island being inconvenienced, not-serviced, and worse, for the non-existent amount of populace that RIOC is trying to service. It is blatantly a bad idea. We have been told by the RIOC brass they are just trying it on for size. Don't be fooled. They think we will all be lulled into passivity.

There is something we can do about it. When the people of this Island speak in one voice, they make a difference. There is not one person I have spoken to who hasn't hated the new non-system system. So, the first thing we do is let RIOC know that "We are mad as hell... etc." Call RIOC at 212-832-4540, from 9-5, and register your complaints. FYI, they do not have voice mail. What a surprise. (I'm sure there is a private number for the people who count.) Fax to 212-832-4582, or e-mail them at Hberman@rioc.com, with copies to the Chair of the RIOC Board, MLabate@dhcr.state.ny.us and The WIRE (editor@MainStreetWIRE.com).

Don't allow these boobs to push us around. Let's mobilize. If the responses are minimal and no one calls/e-mails/writes to RIOC, then I speak for a small constituency and will back off. But if there is a groundswell and they still don't respond, then we will figure out the next step.

Name Withheld

To the Editor:

A banged-up knee, a scraped and bleeding chin, a badly stained, maybe cracked wrist.

A fall caused by a non-ice-cleaned and streetlight-broken dead-dark RIOC sidewalk.

Saturday evening, February 8, after night had fallen, I was jogging around the Island as I usually do once a week. As I came south on the west side of Lighthouse Park, where the Park ends and the grounds surrounding the hospital begin, I could somewhat make out numerous patches of ice all over the promenade. It was difficult because the street lights behind were out and several in front. The only one that was working was the one right after the end of the park, the first one on the grounds around the hospital. As I approached, I looked down to carefully note the ice patches, especially since the main walkway was chained off and I had to detour around where RIOC maintenance had piled up the snow, now turned to ice. As I slowed down and looked down to try and note the ice, the only working streetlight went out.

Slow, almost stop. Then bam, knee, wrist, I was down. Up again, a step, carefully now, slip, down again, chin against ice.

I was up in a flash and off to finish my run. It didn't seem like anything until I got home. When I looked in the mirror, I saw my chin was bleeding. When I took off the sweats, I saw a banged knee. At first my wrist didn't seem too bad, but later it pained greatly, especially if I tried to bend it to any degree.

If RIOC had cleaned the sidewalk, I wouldn't have fallen. Even if I had been able to see where the ice was, I wouldn't have fallen - I do this every week and am used to dodging and making my way. But the streetlights before and after were out - one actually broken at the base and the whole pole lying on the ground for well over a year - and the only one on went out as I approached, making it pitch black and impossible to see. However, this comes as no surprise to me, nor, I believe is it to any other resident of the Island. I have been running for years, and for years huge numbers of streetlights have always been out. It would seem on the face of it that there must be some very deep and severe problem that makes it so hard for RIOC to solve chronic and severe streetlight outage. But as one looks into the matter, it becomes astounding to learn that at a meeting well over six months ago, it was determined that the only reason the streetlights were not kept in working order was because RIOC's engineer, Vinnie Kopicki, doesn't order and keep on hand a supply of spare parts. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Kopicki is paid in excess of \$85,000 a year, and he is one of the senior RIOC staff Herb Berman, our patronage-appointed \$125,000-a-year chief operating officer, praises so much.

Well, it is now over a month since my fall. My knee is better. My chin has healed almost completely. My wrist, however, still pains me and I hope it will be fine soon. If it is not, it will soon be the judicious thing to do to consult a doctor. Then, of course, RIOC will have medical bills to pay too.

Lee Edelman

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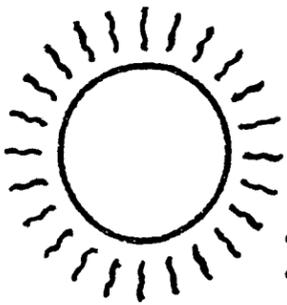
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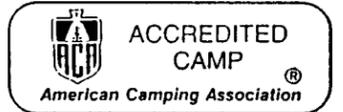
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SPORTSWIRE

Basketball **Seniors** Orange ended the regular season with an unblemished record of 6 and 0 and went into the playoffs with a great deal of optimism. In the first round Orange met a stubborn Red team coached by Harold Burrows, forced to play without its marquee player, Lamar Burrows, who broke a bone in his foot a week earlier. Red, rallying around balanced scoring of Melvin Gager (19), Jose Marte (15), Jonathan Singh (14), Karam Hider (13), Shirome Dixon (12), and Dan Mararu (8), almost pulled off an upset victory. In a very exciting game, Red never gave up, but finally succumbed to Orange, 88-81. Orange coach Jim Armenakis stated the key to the game was to prevent Shirome Dixon from penetrating the point for easy lay-ups and contain him by employing a trapping 3-2 zone that limited him to 12 points, which was 50% below his average. Orange was led by the spectacular play of Sika Franco (29), Chris Chatman (25), and contributions from Quincy Leon (14), Gabriel McCabe (13), Remy Armenakis (5), and Sasha Agosta (2).

The second game, between Green, coached by Tony Simmons and Steve Long, and Blue, coached by Steve Marcus, Arnold Swaby and Kevin Brown, ended early after Anthony Santiago accumulated 2 technical fouls which led to automatic ejection from the gym. When he refused to leave, the referees stopped the game and Green was declared the winner. The score at the time was Green 63 to Blue 31. Blue, which had easily beaten Green in the past, was unable to deal with Green's stifling defense and balanced scoring, led by Anthony Simmons (18), Isiah Lee (11), Andrew Rousseau (8), John "Budha" McNeil (8), Anthony Pompey (6), Darren Roy (6), Fode Bah (2), and Steve Morgan (1).

The championship game between Green and Orange played on March 12, 2004 was a study in contrast, in comparison to the semi-final games. Orange employed a floating Box and one-zone defense that completely took Green out of its game. The score was 19 to 4 in the first five minutes, and Green, despite rallying in the second half, never got back into the game. Orange, missing three players including two starters, Gabe McCabe and Fabian Williams, was forced to use its bench. Sasha Agosta and Quincy Leon were able to dominate the boards, and Sika Franco was able to contain Anthony Simmons in the first half, holding him to 7 points. Simmons eventually scored 26 points and was the high scorer in the game. He received some help from John McNeil who scored 19 points, 18 in the second half; Mirza Avdovic (6), Steve Morgan (4), Isiah Lee (4), and Fode Bah (1). Anthony Pompey and Darren Roy were held scoreless. Ultimately, the game was decided on the foul line. Green hit six (6) foul shots while Orange had sixteen (16). Another telling element was the unselfish passing. Orange passed the ball three or four times before they found an open man for a better shot while Green, down by 30 at one point, didn't have the luxury and was forced into a "run and shoot" game that didn't allow for high percentage shooting. Significantly, Chris Chatman (14) and Sika Franco (16) who scored 30 of Orange's 40 points in the first half only managed 14 points between them in the second half as a result of the trapping defense Green employed. But the slack was picked up by Quincy Leon (15), Remy Armenakis (9), Dax Armenakis (2), and Sasha Agosta (2). Sika Franco, who fouled out, scored 25 points and Chris Chatman had 19. Sika and Chris were joint MVPs for the season. John "Budha"



Members of the winning Senior Orange team: Dax and Remy Armenakis (front); Sasha Agosta, Chris Chatman, Quincy Leon, and Sika Franco; missing – Fabian Williams, Gabe McCabe, and Seif Dorani.

McNeil of Green was given the Sportmanship Trophy. His coach, Tony Simmons, said, "he was the only guy who showed up to play every week and gave 100%."

Juniors The championship game was played Saturday, March 13, before a packed audience. Anthony Simmons, coaching for the first time, led his Orange team to victory over Fode Bah's Green team 50-47. Orange was led by MVP Robert Lawrence who had 10 points and 10 rebounds. Also contributing were Kenny Temple (13), Jonathan Douglas (11), Lequan Francis (9) who had 8 steals, Noel Polanco (4) who also had 4 steals and 7 rebounds, and Adrian Gordon who hit a three-pointer that tied the game at the end. Jenna and Neal Steuber were standouts with their defensive play and Sanger Devine was strong under the boards. Missing from action was Saul Nadel, who had another engagement. Orange was able to hit 8 foul shots that were significant in the 3-point victory.

Green was led by Broderick Taylor (12), Aaron Bills (10), Massi Ladjouzi (8) who hit 2 back-to-back 3-pointers that brought his team back from a deficit, Austin Lee (6) who fouled out, Damian Skiba (9) who hit a 3-pointer at the end to tie the score, and Pierre Tall (2).

The game was very exciting to watch and played with a lot of passion and intensity and went right to the wire.

Congratulations to all the players and coaches for a very successful season.

Youth from page 1

that RIOC had first built Lilies a school in the Sportspark but, in early 1999, when Blue thought he had a deal for a developer to erect an eldercare residence next to the Queensboro Bridge, he moved Lilies to the Blackwell minischool at 504 Main Street.

"We then lobbied the RIOC Board. Steve Kaufman [of the Youth Program Board of Directors] and I spoke to every Board member, and we believed we were going in with an 8-0 vote to get the lease for that building." (That was April, 2002.) "But when they came out of the executive session, the vote was eight to nothing against us – to give Lilies one more year." (Lilies has since been terminated at that space, which is empty.)

The Youth Program then started working on leasing the former Day Nursery space in Island House. By November of 2002, there seemed to be an arrangement in place. "But what happened is that now, with the idea of privatization, the owners are no longer interested in leasing any space until the privatization deal is completed." Here, De Fino is referring to the likely acquisition of Island House by the Sheldrake Corporation. The current owners, represented by Charles Lucido, are unwilling to make commitments that might threaten or complicate that deal. There may also be a concern that such a deal might not be compatible with changing Fed-

eral policy on subsidized housing.

That, in fact, was the next stumbling block faced by the Youth Program: "We then went to Doryne Isley [General Manager of Roosevelt Island Housing Management], who's been a very good friend of ours over the years. She and Mr. [Aaron] Silverman have basically given us everything we wanted. But they told me that there was no possibility of getting a long-term lease. They're not looking to throw us out, but they said there was no way they would give us a lease of that length. I think it's for the same reason – with the changing law in the Bush administration on Section 8 housing – I think Eastwood also has to look at the future of privatization, just for survival.

"That eliminates us from that. So the only space still available is the Blackwell minischool, and one of the reasons that it's the only possibility is that the City requires a 30-year lease in order to spend City money. The Bloomberg administration is holding fast to that."

Three or four RIOC administrations past Jean Lerman, it appears that the today's Operating Corporation and its Board may feel that passage of time has released it from any commitment to make the Blackwell minischool available for the Youth Program. This week, when asked by e-mail, "What are your plans for 504 Main Street?" Berman re-

sponded, "We are seeking legal authority for the property." Asked in a follow-up e-mail to explain, Berman wrote, "Since it has to still be returned by the School, there are no Board approved plans. We have a mission to develop a healthy commercial strip that will compliment the commercial stores on the Island, will provide good revenue and enhance the quality of life for the people who reside here. The operative point still is that until such time as we have the legal right to dispose of same, there will be no official determinations made."

To another WIRE query, "I gather that the possibility of the space's being used to expand the Youth Center is not being considered," Berman responded only, "No decisions have been made for the use of the space."

But decisions are one thing, and plans are another, and along Main Street there has been talk that RIOC covets the Blackwell minischool – at least its upstairs – for expanded offices, and that it would like to see a bakery or restaurant in the space, at least on the ground level. If true, such plans would seem to rule out any use of the space by the Youth Program.

"We approached RIOC with suggestions about if we could raise money to buy the lease for thirty years – what would it cost – they never give us a number, they tell us to call the management company [a consultant advising RIOC on marketing Island properties], but that company tells me this is not a real estate decision, this is a political decision, and it has to be made by RIOC: 'Does RIOC want to give you space to upgrade the community, or does RIOC want the space to be commercial.'"

De Fino's ability to corral government funding is near-legend among those who have served on the Youth Center Board. Almost single-handedly, he caused the qualifying rules for the City's Beacon programs to be revised to include Roosevelt Island. The result was a jump in the number of Beacons City-wide, as other communities found they qualified. This summer, De Fino believes he'll have funding to hire every willing teen-ager on the Island for some form of summer work – something that many residents see as a way to "keep the lid on."

But now, DeFino sounds discouraged. "This has been an eleven-year process for me," he says. "I came here with the expectation that it was a done deal, that I was coming to build a Youth Center, that I would do that and then turn it over to the Police Ath-

letic League or the Boys Clubs of America. My goals were to build a community center able to attract all the people of the Island. It was never my intention to be here long-term.

"This money became available, really, only because we got lucky. For probably the only time in our existence, we have a Speaker of the City Council. I don't foresee that happening any time in the near or distant future." With term limits, De Fino points out, he had a five-year window to put together the deal for City money through Gifford Miller. Miller is expected to run for the Mayor's office next year, and De Fino recognizes that the money Miller can commit cannot be held for Roosevelt Island with no clear possibility of it actually being used. And timing is important. The City budget will be negotiated over the next four or five months. Sometime during that period, Miller must put the funding in the budget again – or not.

Last week, in a liaison meeting between members of the Residents Association Common Council and two members of the RIOC Board, David Kraut and Mark Ponton, Kraut said, "I don't want to see that money disappear for lack of a space... And apparently, it's going to." Kraut also said, "I told Charlie, 'You're just not making your wishes known to everybody. You're just not yelling loud enough. But I'm afraid, as a community, we're going to lose those funds for the kids.'" Later, he added, "We can't just leave that money on the table in this economy when we can use more space at the Youth Center."

De Fino told *The WIRE* this week, "Gifford Miller cannot be expected to keep putting this in the City budget, because he'll look foolish, especially now that RIOC has taken the only possible space off the table." De Fino says he broached the idea of a two-story steel building over one of the basketball courts in Blackwell Park. He says Berman said, "Give me a proposal," and "he said they might consider it in the months ahead," but that might be too late. In any case, De Fino says he has little hope that idea will go anywhere.

In the RIRA-RIOC Board liaison session, both Ponton and Kraut were asked why the resident members of the RIOC Board don't stand together on this and other issues, unite, and recruit one more Board vote, which would make a majority, to move things in directions the community wants. The question was discussed, but left unanswered.

(The transcript of the RIRA-RIOC liaison session is available on line, on *Website NYC10044*, at nyc10044.com/rirarioc.html.)

Jack Resnick, M.D.

Board-Certified Internist, FACP
Specialist in Adult Medicine

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Rockwell Island Youth Program, Inc.

Rockwell Island Youth Program, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides a safe and fun environment for children and teenagers on Rockwell Island. We are celebrating our 25th birthday and would like to invite you and your family to join us for a night of fun and celebration. The event will be held on Friday, March 19, at 8:00 PM and Saturday, March 20, at 10:00 AM. We will have live music by Joey Dewee and the Starlites, a DJ, and a variety of food and drinks. The event is free and open to all ages. We hope you will join us for this special occasion.

Location: Rockwell Island

For more information, please call (718) 224-1234 or visit our website at www.rockwellislandyouth.org. We are located at 1234 Rockwell Island, New York, NY 10001. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all donations are tax-deductible. We are grateful for the support of our community and look forward to celebrating with you.

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