



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Volume 32, No. 1
Spring 2021

Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

www.JHBG.org

Jackson Heights – “A Garden in the City”

WE'RE BACK!



Art by Kirsten Magnani

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On the cover:
Art by Kirsten Magnani
 "I wanted to show the joy and positive energy in our diverse neighborhood, that we could have a good time, come out, live life even in the winter of COVID."

En Español páginas 6-7

President's Message

BY EDWIN O'KEEFE WESTLEY

As we begin 2021, when we will hopefully see the end of the COVID-19 Pandemic, I would like to reintroduce the Jackson Heights Beautification Group to our greater Jackson Heights neighbors, friends and members.

To that end, there will be some changes to this issue of *Views from the Heights*, noticeably starting with color Cover Art created by Kirsten Magnani, JHBG artist in residence, but also including formatting and style shifts. Issues will now include more pictures to tell our stories, after all, 'one picture is worth a thousand words'. This issue also includes pictures of our Board of Directors along with brief bios. Our articles will now be 250 words or less for easy reading.

The articles and pictures in this issue tell you what activities we were able to continue during the COVID-19 Pandemic, mainly our Tree LC gardening; our composting program at SCRAPS and Canine Recreation and Exercise Wonderland (JH-CREW) have been open; and Summer Sundays in the



Park has continued virtually. Additionally, decorating the Post Office for the holidays and MulchFest also took place, albeit with some changes. Finally, we will share how we were able to pivot to face the Food Insecurity of our neighbors (see Tuesday Giving articles and pictures).

Something we are currently actively planning is our next series of Podcasts to focus on the upcoming primary elections for City Council. Two local Council Members, Dromm and Constantinides,

will be leaving due to term limits; there are eight candidates in each election. Incumbent Councilmember Francisco Moya is being challenged by five candidates.

I encourage readers to submit comments on how we can improve our 2nd Quarter *Views from the Heights* by sending feedback to info@jhb.org.

Stay well everyone.

See you in the neighborhood,
 Edwin O'Keefe Westley
 JHBG President

Podcast 2021

BY EDWIN O'KEEFE WESTLEY

With the election scheduled for Tuesday, June 22nd, we're planning on providing everyone a chance to get to know the candidates seeking New York City Council offices in our podcast version of a voter guide produced this winter and spring. We're inviting the six candidates running for office in District 21, eight candidates running for District 22, and the nine candidates for District 25, to answer a series of questions about key issues facing their districts. We're posing the same questions to each (though sometimes requiring different follow-ups).

Stepping in to conduct the interviews and prepare each podcast is Jeff Simmons, a Jackson Heights resident for close to two decades and a member of the JHBG team.



Jeff Simmons

He's a former television and newspaper reporter who hosts two public affairs radio shows on WBAI 99.5 FM as well as the Queens Tourism Council's 'It's in Queens' podcast.

In the interest of full disclosure, Jeff's spouse is running for council in District 25, so Ed Westley, JHBG director, will be conducting the interview for that race. Either way, as noted above, the questions to all candidates will be the same.

Consider this your JHBG Voter Resource Guide. We hope it provides residents an opportunity to learn more about each candidate and help everyone become more informed voters. Remember to register to vote, if you haven't already, and mark your calendar for the Primary Election Date on Tuesday, June 22nd.

Follow our podcasts, found on our website at www.jhb.org, as we upload them.

JHBG Website Redesign

BY JERRY GOLDMAN

We're excited to announce an upcoming upgrade to our online presence through a revamping of the JHBG website. With the invaluable expertise of local designer, Ron Callahan, director of technology in the MFA Design Department at the School of Visual Arts, the site will feature improved navigation and cleaner graphics, with more local news and photos. Learn about upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, ways to support JHBG and much more by visiting us soon at info@jhb.org.

JHBG Supports 34th Avenue and Open Streets

BY LESLIE ELLMAN

Sundays in Jackson Heights make great days for getting out and socializing with our neighbors. Strolls to the Farmers Market, brunch at any one of our great restaurants, a picnic in Travers, a stop in the playground with little ones, gardening and taking care of our public spaces...

These are only some of the ways many of us used to enjoy our pre-pandemic neighborhood. Since March of last year, we have all been navigating new ways of socializing and interacting in open spaces. We also began to see our shared spaces in new ways, and what we saw surprised and in some cases frightened us. How do we go out for our strolls and maintain social distance? Suddenly our options seemed limited as we emerged from lockdown.

The Open Streets initiative represents the creative will of our neighbors. All of a sudden, our tree-lined median on 34th Avenue and the canopy of new spring leaves and flowers beckoned us outdoors. We warily engaged in an experiment that has been successful in many ways. It is not an exaggeration to say that in those early days of our experiment with Open Streets on 34th Avenue that people were actually giddy just to be outside with neighbors in new, safe ways. The evolution of 34th Avenue to date as a place for cyclists, runners, walkers, children playing, summer camp, birthday parties, exercise



classes, bingo games and more, has shown us the power of looking at things in innovative ways.

When JHBG was asked to endorse the Open Streets initiative citywide by signing Transportation Alternative Open Letter to Mayor Bill de Blasio, we did so knowing that true change starts at the community level, and here in Jackson Heights our community is strong, creative and vibrant. We look forward to the continued evolution of 34th Avenue and our role in it.

MulchFest: An Afterlife for Christmas Trees

BY MELISSA ZAVALA



Every year, the Department of Sanitation of the City of New York collects natural Christmas trees on the first and second weekends in January following the Holidays. The trees collected at specified sites across the city are chipped, and the fresh mulch is available for free to the public as well as for use throughout the city's parks. Trees not brought to MulchFest are picked up by the Department of Sanitation from the curb and are expected to be pulled from the regular waste stream. The best way of ensuring that trees are diverted away from landfills, however, is to take your tree to MulchFest which in Jackson Heights takes place at Travers Park. This year, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation collected trees on two Saturdays, on January 2nd and again on the 9th between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Volunteers working with the Jackson Heights Beautification Group collected trees from the curb on the chilly Saturday morning of the 9th to bring to the park, thereby increasing the number of trees chipped on site. Ensuring that the tree count grows from year to year helps bolster the importance of MulchFest and proves to city agencies that funding this effort is worth the investment. Bring your trees to MulchFest each year with us and take back a little bit of your trees with you if you have a garden in need of some mulch for acidic-loving plant varieties!

Delivering Food to Those in Need

BY MELISSA ZAVALA

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic downturn has also hit Jackson Heights especially hard. Families with workers who soon found themselves unemployed following the shutdown have been having a hard time feeding themselves. Long lines around churches with food pantries and other food distribution sites have been a persistent sight around the neighborhood since this summer. Thanks to a partnership between the Jackson Heights Beautification Group, the Queensborough President's Office and St. Mark's Episcopal Church on 82nd Street and 34th Avenue, together we were able to bring the Fresh Direct free food program to the neighborhood to help those in need between the months of June and September. This program was a temporary assistance, however,

and it is uncertain whether the company will renew it long-term. Neighborhood residents continue to struggle along with the rest of the city. New York City's food insecure population has risen to almost 13% and city residents make up half of the state's overall 11.1% total. The persisting lines at local food distribution sites well into the new year remind us of the many vulnerabilities exposed by this pandemic. JHBG has helped raise money to assist the organizations feeding the hungry in our neighborhood, donating to St. Mark's Lion's Share Food Pantry, as well as Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, Love wins Food Pantry at Friends Tavern, Centi Centro Internacional de Teoterapia (on 78th Street, off 37th Avenue) and the Salvation Army. We will continue to try to find ways to help our neighbors in need.



From left: Father Spencer Reece, Silvia Garces (Head of Lion's Share) and Ed.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church: Lion's Share Food Pantry

DISTRIBUTIONS take place every second Saturday of the month, 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. along 82nd Street.

DONATIONS of supplies are accepted daily between 10 a.m. and noon at St. Mark's Parish Hall on 82nd Street; for large in-kind donations, call in advance to schedule drop-off. For monetary donations, contribute via Paypal (please note on the memo that the contribution is for the Lion's Share Food Pantry): saintmarks.net or visit our GoFundMe page:

tinyurl.com/lionsharepantry

Prefer to send a check? Make it out to St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Please note on the memo line that the contribution is for the Lion's Share Food Pantry.



Fresh Direct food distribution at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, July 2020.

Photo by Claudia Schellenber.

Continuing Summer Sundays in the Park Post-Pandemic

BY JOE KNIPES

Summer Sundays in the Park is an annual performance series coordinated by a committee of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group. This series has become a highly anticipated staple of summer life in the community since its inception in 2004. The series of eight free concerts features musical groups reflecting the incredible range of ethnicity and musical styles prevalent in Jackson Heights—the true crossroads of the world here in Western Queens.

Each of the shows that Summer Sundays will produce will feature music or a dance group from different ethnic and global cultural styles, providing an opportunity for people to enjoy and appreciate our cultural diversity beneath the shade of the

magnificent trees in Travers Park.

In 2020, COVID-19 restrictions dictated that we move to an all-remote staging platform.

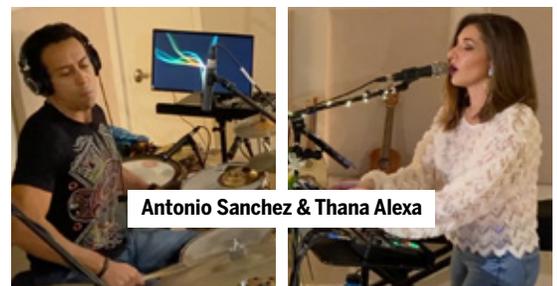
Beginning in September, we began broadcasting live performances via Facebook and YouTube. Our first act was Talujon, an ensemble of six well-seasoned master percussionists.

Recent performers for our summer Sundays/virtual Sundays series have included Grammy-winning composer/drummer Antonio Sanchez, Grammy-nominated vocalist Thana Alexa, indie rock icon Steve Wynn, and Konnakol /jazz artist Arun Luthra. Proposed performers for the

2021 season include Bhangra superstars Red Barat, and the star of Broadway's Passing Strange, Stew.

We are hoping to transition back to live performances this summer in Travers Park, once conditions have improved.

Watch videos on the [Jackson Heights Beautification Group's channel on YouTube.](#)



Antonio Sanchez & Thana Alexa

Delivering Food to Those in Need continued

Love Wins Food Pantry

DISTRIBUTIONS

take place on Fridays between 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. at Friends Tavern, off 78th Street on Roosevelt Avenue.

DONATIONS are accepted using this link: opencollective.com/lovewins, or by check, made out to Open Collective Foundation, including "Love Wins Food Pantry" in the check's memo line.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

visit their webpage: lovewinsnyc.org



Rev. Gabriel Toro Rivas (Pastor), Marlene Paucar (Secretary/Bookkeeper), Mayra Murillo (Social Pastoral Ministry) and Ed.

St. Vincent De Paul Pantry at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church

DISTRIBUTIONS

are by appointment only which must be arranged in advance by calling (718) 639-3888. For vegetables, pick-up on Saturdays. For other supplies, arrange for pick-up on Sundays. Blessed Sacrament is located at 3443 93rd Street.

DONATIONS

are accepted in the form of checks that can be made out to Blessed Sacrament Church, including "St. Vincent DePaul Pantry" in the check's memo line.

Centi Centro Latinoamericano De Teoterapia Integral

DISTRIBUTIONS take place at Centi Centro, located at 35-63 78th Street, off 37th Avenue, on Tuesdays beginning at 10 a.m. while supplies last. Distributions also include clothing.

DONATIONS of in-kind supplies including gently used clothing are collected on Mondays starting at 4 p.m. Monetary contributions can be made in the form of a check made out to Centi Centro Latinoamericano de Teoterapia, specifying "Food Pantry" in the memo line.



Pastor Alba Yepes with Ed.

The Salvation Army

DISTRIBUTIONS take place Monday through Friday for SOUP between 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.; MEALS are served Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.. The Salvation Army is located at 86-07 35th Avenue. **DONATIONS** of food and clothing are accepted Monday-Friday. For more information, visit their website templodequeens@gmail.com.



Major Guillermo DiCaterina (Salvation Army Commanding Officer), Dorila Ruiz (Bookkeeper) and Ed.



From left: Mark Buhrmester (Volunteer), Daniel Puerto and Alejandra Ruiz (Founders) with Ed.

Helping the Homeless Stay Healthy During the Pandemic

BY MELISSA ZAVALA

The percentage of homeless New Yorkers has been growing since the start of Mayor Bill de Blasio tenure—predating the effects of the pandemic which remain to be explored. But with the number of cases spiking again this winter, after New York City found itself at the epicenter of the pandemic this past Spring, it is of special importance that our unhoused neighbors stay healthy. Bringing people indoors to shelters during a global plague is not necessarily the best option given that grouping people together further exposes individuals already at special risk. Normally unable to self-quarantine or afford healthcare, oftentimes plagued by preexisting conditions, and otherwise living precariously in every

other regard, the homeless struggle with multiple factors that make them especially vulnerable to contagion. This winter, we reached out to neighbors to collect health supplies for the homeless and Jackson Heights residents responded! We received hundreds of toothbrushes and toothpaste, bottles of soap, hand sanitizers, masks, wipes, hats, scarves, blankets, towels, shaving supplies and much more. We are currently working on distributing supplies to those in need on a regular basis, especially throughout the winter months. In this way, we aim to help the many without homes ward off germs at this time of year as we are all more susceptible to the flu and other illnesses as well as the pandemic.



El JHBG apoya la Avenida 34 y la apertura de calles

POR LESLIE ELLMAN

Desde marzo del año pasado hemos estado buscando nuevas formas de socializar e interactuar en espacios abiertos. La apertura de la Avenida 34 hasta la fecha como un espacio para ciclistas, corredores, caminantes, niños jugando, campamentos de veranos, fiestas de cumpleaños, clases de ejercicio, juegos de bingo y más, nos ha mostrado el poder de ver las cosas desde formas innovadoras. Cuando se le pidió al JHBG apoyar la iniciativa de Apertura de Calles con la firma de la Carta Abierta de Transportación Alternativa al alcalde Bill de Blasio, lo hicimos sabiendo que los cambios reales comienzan en la comunidad, y en Jackson Heights nuestra comunidad es fuerte, creativa y vibrante. Esperamos que la Avenida 34 siga abierta.

Para proteger y servir...

POR LOUISE MULVIHILL

El pasado 3 de febrero, mientras me preparaba para una reunión en ZOOM con la Mesa Directiva de JHBG, escuché gritos en la calle. Mire por la ventana y ahí estaba un hombre, golpeando las ventanillas de mi carro, gritando insultos a una persona imaginaria para que saliera del vehículo, que estaba vacío. Desde mi ventana le dije que se fuera, pero él siguió gritando y jalando el espejo retrovisor, así que decidí llamar al 911. Minutos después, llegó la policía y me pidieron bajar para hablar con los oficiales. Mientras tanto, el hombre había comenzado a caminar alejándose de mi apartamento. Uno de los oficiales revisó mi

carro mientras otros dos o tres fueron tras el hombre. Me dijeron que este hombre era ya conocido y que hice bien en llamar, ya que la situación pudo haber escalado a un daño grande o un altercado con alguna persona. Los oficiales se mostraron tranquilos, amables y preocupados por llevarse al hombre a un lugar seguro. ¡Gracias NYP!

El país de las maravillas y la recreación para los perros en Jackson Heights: JH CREW Dog Run

POR JERRY GOLDMAN

Temporalmente cerrado durante el pico de la pandemia, el parque ha reabierto y continúa prosperando como un lugar de reunión para los perros de Jackson Heights y sus amos. Agradecemos especialmente a nuestros miembros voluntarios: Spiro, Jade, Alina y Susan, por su buen trabajo en el mantenimiento del parque. Ven a visitarnos en la esquina noroeste de la Calle 69 y la Avenida 35. Puedes encontrar información sobre la membresía en el sitio web del JHBG: jhb.org/programs/jh-crew

Trabajo de nuestro equipo de limpieza de grafiti a lo largo del 2020

POR JIM RICCIO

El equipo de limpieza de grafiti del JHBG tuvo un 2020 muy ocupado. El grafiti se extendió en la Ciudad de Nueva York durante la pandemia, y Jackson Heights no quedó exento. Con la subvención otorgada por el Concejal Danny Dromm y Con Edison, así como con las donaciones de la comunidad, pudimos comprar pintura, químicos y otros utensilios de limpieza

necesarios. Y con la ayuda de los voluntarios del JHBG Basil Safos, Dan Karatzas y John McCaffrey, borramos bastante grafiti. Ahora, durante el invierno, estamos tomando un descanso, pero cuando volvamos a tener un clima más cálido, retomaremos el trabajo.

Una segunda vida para los árboles de navidad: MulchFest 2021

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

Cada año, el Departamento de Salubridad de la Ciudad de Nueva York recolecta los árboles de navidad naturales los primeros dos fines de semana de enero. Sin embargo, la mejor manera de asegurar que esos árboles no sean desechados en los basureros es llevarlos al festival MulchFest, que en Jackson Heights se lleva a cabo en Travers Park. Este año el Departamento de Parques y Recreación de la Ciudad de Nueva York recibió árboles los sábados 2 y 9 de enero entre 10:00 a. m. y 2:00 p. m. Los voluntarios que colaboran con el JHBG acarrearon los árboles de la calle al parque. Deposita tu árbol en el MulchFest cada año y llévate contigo un poquito de tu árbol si tienes un jardín o plantas que necesitan abono.

Mensaje del Presidente

POR EDWIN O'KEEFE WESTLEY

Para iniciar el 2021 quiero reintroducir al Grupo de Embellecimiento de Jackson Heights (Jackson Heights Beautification Group o JHBG, por sus siglas en inglés) a los residentes, amigos y miembros de Jackson Heights. Habrá algunos cambios en este número de *Views from the Heights*, empezando por la portada a color con una pieza

de arte de Kirsten Magnani, artista en residencia del JHBG, y algunos cambios en formato y estilo. Los números siguientes incluirán más fotos y artículos de 250 palabras o menos para facilitar su lectura. Los artículos y fotos de este número hablan de las actividades que pudieron realizarse durante la pandemia. Invito a nuestros lectores a enviar sus comentarios y opiniones a info@jhb.org para ayudarnos a mejorar los siguientes números de *Views from the Heights*. Espero que todos estén bien. ¡Nos vemos por aquí, en Jackson Heights!

¡Tree LC lo hace, llueva o truene!

POR LEN MANIACE

Cuando se trata de hacer jardinería, muchos esperan hasta la primavera, cuando la temperatura aumenta. No es el caso del equipo Tree LC del JHBG. Estos activistas verdes se preparan para podar los árboles que sufren durante el invierno. Equipados con tijeras de podar y sierras, nuestros voluntarios cortan ramas bajas, malformadas o rotas, y cuidan las jardineras de las calles de Jackson Heights, el Jardín de Mariposas de la Oficina de Correos y docenas de árboles, principalmente en la Avenida 37. Si te interesa ayudar al JHBG a mantener nuestros bosques urbanos ahora o cuando el tiempo mejore, por favor envíanos un email a info@jhb.org con "trees" ("árboles") en la línea de asunto. ¡Gracias!

Entrega de comida a los más necesitados

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

Además de la pandemia del COVID-19, la recesión



Distribución de alimentos donados por Fresh Direct en la Iglesia Episcopal de San Marcos, Julio, 2020.

Photo by Claudia Schellenber.

económica ha golpeado a Jackson Heights con particular fuerza. Las familias de trabajadores que de pronto se encontraron desempleados después del confinamiento obligatorio han tenido muchas dificultades para obtener alimentos. Sin embargo, gracias a la asociación entre el JHBG, la Oficina del Presidente del Distrito de Queens y la Iglesia Episcopal de San Mark fue posible llevar, entre junio y septiembre, el programa de comida gratis de Fresh Direct a quienes lo necesitaban. El JHBG ha recabado dinero para donar a la Despensa Compartida de Comida de Lion de la iglesia de San Mark (St. Mark's Lion's Share Food Pantry), a la Iglesia Católica del Sagrado Sacramento, a la Despensa de Comida Love Wins (Love Wins Food Pantry) en Friends Tavern, al Centi Centro Latinoamericano de Teoterapia Integral (en la Calle 78 y la Avenida 37) y al Salvation Army.

Continuaremos buscando maneras de ayudar a nuestros vecinos más necesitados.

Ayudemos a los indigentes a permanecer sanos durante la pandemia

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

El porcentaje de indigentes de Nueva York ha aumentado desde el comienzo de la alcaldía de Bill de Blasio, incluso antes de los efectos de la pandemia. Este invierno hemos hecho un llamado a los habitantes de Jackson Heights para recolectar suministros sanitarios para los indigentes, y han respondido. Recibimos cientos de cepillos de dientes y pastas dentales, botellas de jabón, desinfectantes para manos, cubre bocas, toallitas de limpieza, gorros, bufandas, mantas, toallas, artículos para afeitarse y mucho más. Actualmente estamos trabajando con regularidad en la distribución de estos artículos. Las agencias de

la ciudad están teniendo dificultades para proporcionar la ayuda necesaria. Por eso, vamos a continuar haciendo lo que podamos por nuestros vecinos más necesitados. Agradecemos a todos por su ayuda.

Podcast 2021

POR EDWIN O'KEEFE WESTLEY

Con las elecciones programadas para el martes 22 de junio, estamos planeando ofrecer una oportunidad para conocer a los candidatos a diferentes cargos en la alcaldía de la Ciudad de Nueva York, mediante una guía para votantes en nuestra versión podcast. Vamos a invitar a seis candidatos para el Distrito 21, ocho para el Distrito 22 y nueve para el Distrito 25, y haremos una serie de preguntas sobre los asuntos cruciales que enfrentan sus respectivos distritos. Esperamos que esta guía para votar dé a los

residentes de Jackson Heights la oportunidad de saber más sobre cada candidato. No olvides registrarte para votar en las Elecciones Primarias el próximo 22 de junio y sigue nuestro podcast en jhb.org.

Rediseño del sitio web del JHBG

POR JERRY GOLDMAN

Nos complace anunciar la próxima actualización de nuestra presencia en línea mediante una nueva versión del sitio web del JHBG. Con la invaluable experiencia del diseñador local, Ron Callahan, director de tecnología en el MFA Departamento de Diseño en la Escuela de Artes Visuales. El sitio presentará una navegación mejorada y gráficos más limpios, con más noticias locales y más fotos. Encuentra más información sobre los próximos eventos, oportunidades de voluntariado, formas de apoyar al JHBG y mucho más en JHBG.org.

Jackson Heights Canine Recreational Wonderland: JH CREW Dog Run

BY JERRY GOLDMAN

Though temporarily closed during the height of the pandemic, the park has since reopened and continues to flourish as a friendly meeting place for Jackson Heights canines and their owners.

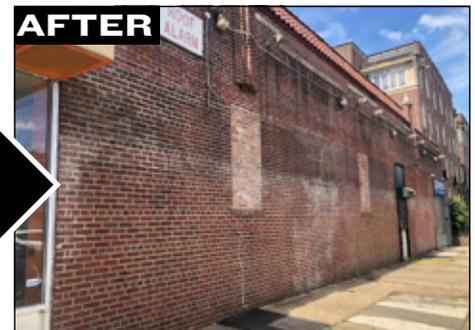
We especially thank our member volunteers—Spiro, Jade, Alina, Susan- for their good work in maintaining the park. Come see us at the northwest corner of 69th Street & 35th Avenue. Membership information can be found on the JHBG website at jhb.org/programs/jh-crew.



Our Graffiti Cleaning Team Works Through 2020

BY JIM RICCIO

The Jackson Heights Beautification Group's graffiti-cleaning team had a busy year in 2020. Graffiti proliferated throughout NYC during the pandemic, and Jackson Heights was not spared. Many neighbors will remember the "Covid fish" tags that seemed to be almost everywhere, and many other large and small tags on walls, storefront gates, mailboxes, light poles, and traffic signal boxes throughout the neighborhood. With grant money from Councilman Danny Dromm and Con Edison, as well as donations from the community, we were able to purchase the necessary paint, chemicals, and other cleaning supplies. And with a lot of elbow grease from JHBG volunteers Basil Safos, Dan Karatzas and John McCaffrey, we cleaned up quite a bit. We're taking a winter break now, but when the warmer weather returns, we'll be back at it.



Tree LC Gets it Done— Snow or Sun!

BY LEN MANIACE

When it comes to gardening, most wait for spring when temperatures head well north of freezing – but not JHBG’s Tree LC corps. These green activists are bundling up to prune neighborhood street trees in distress through the winter.

Armed with loppers, long pole saws, and pruning shears, our volunteers are trimming away low, misshapen and broken branches (the city normally forbids tree pruning, except for trained, volunteer Citizen Tree Pruners, of which we now have five.)

Similarly, when many activities stopped for the pandemic last spring, our volunteers masked up and worked while socially distancing on JH’s curbside gardens, the Post Office Butterfly Garden and on dozens of trees, most on 37th Avenue. Normally, we would wrap up work before Thanksgiving, but frankly in the COVID-19 era, most of us didn’t have a lot to do on Saturdays – and there were lots of trees that needed pruning.

Core members of the JHBG Tree LC team working with me include Kathy Smith, Iris Lentjes, Randy Minor, Meredith and Eilean Faltin, Marco Ariza, Felicia Simion, Anne Valk, Bill Bruno, Sandra Tang, Savannah Monteiro and Erika Custer.

Working through the cold wasn’t the only first for the team this winter: JHBG funded the actual planting of five street trees on 37th Avenue. This was prompted by deep cuts in tree plantings by the NYC Parks Department, and our success in winning a grant from the City Parks Foundation.

The aim is not just to make Jackson Heights look nice. Big, thriving trees are nature’s air conditioners and play an important



role in making New York City more environmentally sustainable in the face of climate change. Studies show that neighborhoods with many large trees are cooler than those lacking them.

Cities such as Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., have already set goals to increase the area covered by their tree canopies to between 30 and 40 percent of those cities’ surfaces. New York City’s tree coverage is 21 percent, with Jackson Heights coming in at 19 percent, showing we can still use more planting.

New York City could be the next city growing its tree canopy as a result of the Urban Forest Agenda, which is expected to be released this spring - just in time for the NYC Democratic Primary. That report calls for a series of measures to make our city more tree-friendly. JHBG is a member of the Urban Forestry Task Force and participates in this project.

If you’re interested in helping JHBG maintain our urban forest now or as the weather warms, please email info@jhb.org with “trees” in the subject line. Thank you.

Post-Pandemic Composting at JH-SCRAPS

BY MELISSA ZAVALA

Last Spring following the shutdown, organic waste collection was halted throughout the city. At first, community gardens and composting sites were shuttered as a public health measure to keep people at home during the quarantine. Later, suspending the municipal collection indefinitely was a fiscal decision. The budgetary shortfalls related to the COVID-19 response have led city officials to further disinvest in critical municipal services including sanitation. Canceling the municipal brown bin program has also meant that promoting composting among a public not fully accustomed to recycling their food scraps will require neighborhood organizations to pick up the slack. The Jackson Heights Beautification Group’s composting center, JH-SCRAPS, is answering that call. Collecting over 9,500 lbs. of food waste, as well as yard waste and fall leaves, over the 2020 calendar year, we more than doubled the totals from prior years



despite closing for four months. With the Green Market collection program reopening on Sundays, contributions have dwindled, even while the number of contributors has remained above previous averages. Though we cannot perform outreach and welcome visitors to the site yet given the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidelines advocating social distancing, we have been grateful for a growing number of regular volunteers. With their support, we have been

able to complete much needed upgrades and cleaned up the site—all while absorbing a healthy portion of organic scraps as the Queens Botanical Garden prepared to reopen. Soon, we will begin to spread the fully finished product of the increase in home cooking we all did last year. Thanks to everyone supporting composting in the neighborhood! Our compost will benefit our neighborhood gardens and greenways in 2021, making this only one of the many benefits of local composting.

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Beautification Group**

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Jim Riccio
Edwin O'Keefe Westley
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MEET THE BOARD



Edwin O'Keefe Westley President, Halloween Parade / Retired Senior Planner

Edwin O'Keefe Westley has served as President of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group several times since the organization's inception and is the longest serving President. Ed has also served as Secretary, all while co-chairing several committees. He is a community leader of longstanding, also serving on the Community Board for close to 15 years. For JHBG, Ed heads the annual Halloween Parade, and with a group of other Board Members, works on Summer Sundays in the Park. Ed began volunteering with the organization in the early 1990s, initially cleaning up broken glass and dog waste each Saturday with the Friends of Travers Park. He retired from the Northrop Grumman Corporation in February 2006 after 34 years of service where his assignments included Finance and Planning, Quality Assurance, and Internal Audit. Ed has also long been involved in our nearby sports arenas in Flushing Meadows/Corona Park in different capacities. He has served as a supervisor for Summit Security during the United States Tennis Open (1999 – 2005), as well as working as an Usher at the U.S. Open (2005 – present) and a Ticket Taker for the NY Mets (2005 – present). His catchphrase is "See you in the neighborhood" because as a community resident and volunteer with a long history, he is a well-known neighbor to many.



Jerry Goldman Vice President, Head of JH CREW Dog Run & Membership / Retired Chef

A native of the Midwest, Jerry Goldman has been a resident of Jackson Heights since 1999. He is an outspoken partisan who considers our neighborhood to be the very best place to live in New York City. Since his retirement from the restaurant industry he has devoted much of his time to community participation. In addition to serving on the Jackson Heights Beautification Group's board, he is involved in the daily running of JH CREW, our organization's local dog park. More recently, Jerry has been updating JHBG's software and membership records while enhancing the organization's online presence. Jerry has also been serving as an officer for his co-op, Hawthorne Court, for some time.



James McIntyre Vice President & Fundraising / Director at NY State Housing Agency

James McIntyre currently works for New York State Homes and Community Renewal as the Director of Capital Markets where he manages multi-family and single-family affordable housing units as well as student loan debt programs. He develops and oversees the implementation of financing and asset management solutions in support of furthering the agency's mission over the long term. James has extensive experience in public finances and a commitment to political organizing and transportation alternatives. Recently joining the Jackson Heights Beautification Group's Board of Directors, he has been involved in the group's fundraising efforts and now serves as one of two Vice Presidents, a responsibility he shares with Jerry Goldman.



Joe Brunken Treasurer, By-Laws and Nominations / Property Manager

Joseph Brunken runs Garden Heights Property Management, Inc. on 37th Avenue. Not only does he manage several local properties, but he also keeps the books for the Jackson Heights Beautification Group. After 30 years in the financial services industry – holding senior positions at such firms as Chase, Institutional Investor, Nikko Capital Management, Mutual of America and Amalgamated Bank – Joe turned to his life-long interest in real estate and launched Garden Heights Property Management (GHPM) to serve the needs of unique small co-op's like those in Jackson Heights.



Daniel Karatzas Secretary, Head of Historic Weekend & Preservation / Financial Planner

Dan Karatzas is an enduring member and former President of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group. He currently serves as Secretary and contributes to managing membership and records. Famous for his book, *Jackson Heights – A Garden in the City* (1990), which chronicles the history of Jackson Heights and its exceptional contribution to urban planning history, Dan is the resident expert on the community. As the acknowledged historian of the neighborhood, he is responsible for organizing the JHBG's popular "Historic Jackson Heights Weekend," held each June, when residents are treated to a lecture on the neighborhood's history along with tours (guided and self-lead) of the area's private gardens otherwise closed to the public throughout the year.



Leslie Ellman Friends of Travers Park & Co-Chair for "Good Neighbor Awards" / NYC Public School Administrator

Leslie Ellman is a Queens native and proud resident of Jackson Heights for over 10 years. She is delighted to be a volunteer and director of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group because she believes in the power of neighbors working together to maintain and improve a shared quality of life. Leslie co-chairs the bi-annual "Good Neighbor Awards" event, which she is passionate about as it allows JHBG to celebrate the people and businesses that make Jackson Heights such a great place to live and work. Leslie heads Friends of Travers, which has been working to beautify the grounds well before the park's transformation from playground to park. In partnership with the city's Parks Department, Friends of Travers Park helps maintain the grounds and contribute to the neighborhood's community life. Professionally, she is an Administrator for the city's public-school system. She is dedicated to creating learning environments that foster success among all students.

Continued on next page ►

MEET THE BOARD continued



Patricia Glunt Founder and Conductor for the Jackson Heights Orchestra / Retired Educator

A retired music educator and violinist, Pat Glunt has hit the right note founding a community orchestra in Queens. Having lived in Jackson Heights for years, Pat launched the Jackson Heights Orchestra in 2012. It now features over two-dozen local musicians and has the support of the local elected officials as well

as the Queens Council on the Arts. The orchestra easily became a beloved institution in the neighborhood for its rich programming, offered for free, to all music lovers.



Barbara Kunkel Head of the JH Art Contest & Merchandise Sales / Retired Software Engineer

After teaching school children for several years, Barbara Kunkel completed a certificate in software engineering at NYU and worked as a systems analyst and project manager until her recent retirement. She currently dedicates her time to Jackson Heights by supporting various programs in different capacities,

including serving as head of sales of Jackson Heights Beautification Group's merchandise. More importantly, Barbara has continued JHBG's traditional art contest, a staple in the neighborhood for over 25 years. The art contest showcases students' talents and creativity, which are honored at the end of each school year in an annual celebration of the winners selected from entries submitted by students from the local public schools.



Len Maniace Environmental Sustainability Programs, Holiday Lighting & Facebook Moderator / Journalist & Marketing Manager

Len Maniace and his wife Barbara Monteiro moved to Jackson Heights in 1988 and have two sons, Daniel and Nicholas. Len started volunteering with the Friends of Travers Park committee when the park was in terrible shape. He brought the Greenmarket

to Jackson Heights in 2000 and, with local musician Jonathan Kane, started the Summer Sundays in the Park performance series in 2004. A past Jackson Heights Beautification Group President, Len now focuses on environmental sustainability, heading the group's TreeLC program which plants and maintains our neighborhood street trees. He initiated JHBG's Green Agenda for Jackson Heights, a community environmental planning effort, with sessions in English, Spanish and Bengali, that brought attention to the need for more park space in Jackson Heights. This effort yielded key insights now guiding Len's community efforts in support of pedestrian plazas, green transportation alternatives and organic composting. His goal for JHBG is to make Jackson Heights the city's greenest and friendliest neighborhood for all members of our diverse community.



John McCaffrey, Jr. Clean Streets, Co-Chair of Halloween Parade / HR Director at UNITE HERE

An experienced Human Resources professional with an ability to collaborate with multiple parties, John McCaffrey has been working for UNITE HERE! for over 15 years. He joined the Jackson Heights Beautification Group to help carry out the organization's diverse set of programs. Having served

as President and Vice President for years, he now focuses on organizing the annual Halloween Parade while also supporting other board member's projects and assisting in shorter-termed efforts such as Census 2020 outreach. John and his family are life-long residents of the neighborhood and have lived here for multiple generations.



Louise Mulvihill Gardener & Event Coordinator for JH Orchestra / Consular Assistant

Louise Mulvihill has worked for the Canadian Consulate for over 30 years. She has been volunteering for the Jackson Heights Beautification Group for many years in various ways prior to joining the board. As a music lover, she is the organizing force behind the receptions for the JH Orchestra's

after-parties. She can also be found out and about every Saturday gardening around the neighborhood. Louise moved to Jackson Heights in 1997 and has felt at home here considering her love for the great diversity evidenced in the various cultures, foods and experiences, as well as the area's beautiful architecture. She believes that one should always participate and contribute to one's community and has been instilling that in her son so that he will also contribute to Jackson Heights now and in the future. She has worked with Friends of Travers Park, and currently collaborates in the publication and distribution of the organization's newsletter, *Views from the Heights*.



Jim Riccio Graffiti Busters, By-Laws & Nominations Committee / Social Researcher

A longtime board member, James Riccio heads Jackson Heights Beautification Group's graffiti removal program. He also serves on the nominations committee which helps select and elect new board members and officers for the organization. At the Manhattan based nonprofit organization MDRC, he

investigates the effectiveness of welfare to work programs, strategies for reducing poverty and increasing employment for residents of public housing. His research takes place in the U.S. and the U.K.



Doris Derwik Wurgler Head of Elections Committee / Retired Educator

A skilled administrator with over 30 years of experience in education, Doris Derwik Wurgler has been a member of Jackson Heights Beautification Group's Board of Directors for decades. She worked at the Lexington School for the Deaf and has training in music as well as in early childhood special education.

Doris currently heads the Elections Committee for JHBG, coordinating the process of member selection and nominations. She also oversees elections. Doris grew up in the neighborhood and provides a valued source of institutional knowledge and neighborhood history. Having also served as Editor for the organization's quarterly Newsletter, *Views from the Heights*, she has long provided vital support for JHBG in various ways.



Melissa Zavala Composting, Newsletter Committee & Friends of Travers Parks / Anthropologist

Along with her husband, Melissa Zavala is one of the co-founding and current volunteer members of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group's composting center, JH-SCRAPS (Scraps Composting to Revitalize the Area's Poor Soils). She is a Master Composter, gardener and Citizen Pruner who has been

volunteering around the neighborhood for almost two decades, becoming involved with the Jackson Heights Beautification Group's sustainability programs. Melissa grew up in Jackson Heights and while not having had the opportunity to garden in the city, she was drawn to gardening by her love for plants and animals. Always preoccupied with waste, prior to joining JHBG's Board of Directors and helping found SCRAPS, she began the composting program now run by Farm Spot, the well-established food share program operating at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. She is professor of Anthropology at the City University of New York and a lover of urban parks.

FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS

Please join us or renew your membership (there are 2 ways):

Go to www.JHBG.org/donate and pay by credit card.

It's quick and easy! Mail a check with this form
for the membership level you select to:

JHBG–Membership
P.O. Box 720253
Jackson Heights, NY 11372

Membership includes a subscription to *Views from the Heights* and helps fund our numerous community activities. JHBG is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, so your contribution is tax deductible.

Please check membership level:

- Individual \$50 Patron \$250 Sponsor \$1,000
 Family \$100 Benefactor \$500 Other _____

Please print the following:

Name: _____

Address (Include apt. #): _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-mail address: _____

If you're interested in being contacted about any JHBG activities, please email info@JHBG.org.

ONGOING EVENTS

Saturdays, 11am-1 pm JH-SCRAPS (composting)

69th St. & 35th Ave.

For info on what is
compostable, contact
info@JHBG.org

Most Saturdays, 10 am Tree LC

*Meets at the NE corner of
80th St. & 37th Ave.*

Schedule may vary and include
some Sundays. Check the
[JHBG Facebook page](#)
for complete information.

Saturdays 10 am Clean and Green

For complete details,
go to www.jhbg.org

Daily JH-CREW dog run

69th St. between
34th & 35th Aves.

To join, go to
www.jhbg.org
for application.
Suggested donation,
\$25/year.