



# VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Volume 32, No. 2  
Summer 2021

Jackson Heights  
Beautification Group

[www.JHBG.org](http://www.JHBG.org)

Jackson Heights – “A Garden in the City”

## JHBG NEEDS YOU !!!

### We Can Do It!

Summer  
Concerts



TreeLC



JHScraps  
Composting

Community  
Gardening



Historic  
Weekend

Coming this Fall



Children's  
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WINK AS ROSIE THE RIVETER by Kirsten Magnani



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Go to [JHBG.org](http://JHBG.org) or e-mail [info@jhb.org](mailto:info@jhb.org) to sign up!

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**Art by Kirsten Magnani**  
 "By helping our neighbors, we make our community a wbetter place. This is what inspires all the community service done in Jackson Heights."

**En Español**  
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# President's Message

BY LESLIE ELLMAN



Dear Neighbors,

I write this first message as president with a deep sense of appreciation for the ritual of transition and the history and work of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group (JHBG). In its 31 years of service to our neighborhood, the JHBG has become a living member of our community. Founded through love for our neighborhood, this group has endured thanks to the work and commitment of its members, volunteers, board of directors and past leadership. I assume this role with reverence for the past and an eye on the future.

As we collectively emerge from the pandemic and cautiously approach the future, the JHBG is eager to resume our work in the neighborhood. We look forward to a full return of our programming, including The Historic Weekend, The Halloween Parade, Summer Sundays in the Park, the Jackson Heights Orchestra and more!

We know that this has been an extremely difficult year and we share in the pain many of us and continue to endure. And yet, at the same time, we are hopeful and eager for a brighter tomorrow. We hope you share our sense of optimism for the future and in the words of my predecessor, Ed Westley, we will see you in the neighborhood!

Leslie Ellman  
 President



# Editor's Message

BY MELISSA ZAVALA



**Continuing Proud Traditions—and Introducing Innovations**

**H**ello, neighbors! I am excited to be taking on the role of editor for our organization's quarterly newsletter, a position previously held by Louise Mulvihill under the leadership of Nuala O'Doherty. Our group's newsletter has undergone various renderings in the recent past, consisting of longer articles and special features based on the personalities and interests of the serving editors. This has meant that length and content has varied over time. As I take on the role of editor, shorter articles for increased readability paired with lots of photographs and visual aids will be prioritized, all following a general theme organizing each issue. After a hiatus, we began publishing our newsletter this past Spring, reintroducing our work and ourselves to you. In this edition, we will begin showcasing the many talented, dedicated and enthusiastic Jackson Heights Beautification Group (JHBG) members and volunteers who make all of our work possible and who have supported us in various ways over our 32-year span.

To kick off this series, this issue features an article written by long-time Director and chronicler of Jackson Heights history, Daniel Karatzas, honoring the life of Betty Morris, a dear neighbor,

member and volunteer who recently passed away at the age of 100 and lived in the neighborhood since its earliest beginnings in the 1920s.

In the spirit of honoring our neighbors (in this issue, volunteers and members), we are also starting a regular feature entitled, "Jackson Heights Notables". In this column, we will showcase public figures and neighbors who live or have lived in the neighborhood at different times throughout its history and who are of interest for differing reasons. This issue includes a story on Grace Lee Boggs, philosopher, feminist author, and social activist mainly associated with Michigan. An important Asian-American woman, we explore her roots in Jackson Heights. We hope you enjoy our new format. We are always grateful for feedback, so if you have ideas on how we can improve and build upon what we are currently doing, please email us at [info@jhb.org](mailto:info@jhb.org) or write us by mail at **JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372**.

We hope to see and hear from you this Summer,

Melissa Zavala  
 Editor

# JHBG Gets It Done, Again: New Trees Coming to 34th Avenue

BY LEN MANIACE

**N**YC Parks credits JHBG with a big role in its plan to include 66 new trees on the 34th Avenue medians. This is a reversal of a decade-plus policy not to plant trees in all but the widest medians across the city.

The replanting would transform medians from 69th to 91st Street which currently contain a ragged mix of healthy, dead and dying trees as well as shrubs and flowers. Despite this uneven set of plantings, the medians are a welcome presence down the center of the 34th Avenue Open Street.

“One of the primary considerations for approving this site for new trees was the presence of active tree stewards,” NYC Parks Assistant Commissioner Jennifer Greenfeld, wrote to Council Member Daniel Dromm on February 25 of this year. Dromm and JHBG had previously requested trees to replace those that had died.

Newly planted trees, such as those planned for 34th Avenue, need extra attention in their first few years after planting, something that NYC Parks lacks staffing to provide, hence its reliance on volunteer groups.

Greenfeld confirmed she meant JHBG’s Tree LC team, active on 37th Avenue for nearly a decade, and since late last year, on 34th Avenue as well. “Yes, JHBG’s program are the active stewards we had in mind,” she wrote in an April 19th e-mail to me.



The JHBG committee cares for street trees and is responsible for creating and maintaining nearly 50 street-tree gardens, most on 37th Avenue. It ranked as the third most active among tree-care groups across the city in 2019 and is currently in second place as of late April.

The 66 trees are likely to be planted over two years, with the first set expected by spring of 2022, Greenfeld wrote.

Asked why the replanting would not extend the full length of the Open Street, to Junction Boulevard, Greenfeld wrote that the medians beyond 91st Street are lower, making trees more vulnerable to being hit by cars and trucks.



## JHBG’s Dog Run Hero

BY JERRY GOLDMAN

**S**piro Veliotis is our Dog Run Hero. He is a dedicated, daily—often twice a day—JH Crew volunteer who generously donates his time toward maintaining the park. “Neither rain, nor snow...” nor pandemic, has kept him from his self-appointed rounds. He picks up litter (human & canine), stocks supplies, rakes leaves, bags the trash and completes any other tasks that help keep JH Crew a clean and hospitable environment.

A Queens native, Spiro grew up in Elmhurst and is a 25-year resident of

Jackson Heights. He and his wife, Susan, have been regulars at the park since opening day; at the beginning with the late “Jake” and now with their terrier “Chase”.

For several years and up until the onset of the pandemic, Spiro served as a volunteer at Regal Heights Rehabilitation Center, located just around the corner from the dog run, where he has brought friendship and good cheer to residents and staff.

Thank you, Spiro, for your dedication and hard work for the community!

For more information on the JH Crew dog run, visit us at [www.jhbg.org/programs/jh-crew](http://www.jhbg.org/programs/jh-crew)

# “At the Epicenter of the Epicenter” A Tour of Jackson Heights

JHBG Participates in the Annual Jane’s Walk 2021

BY MELISSA ZAVALA



This year, JHBG participated in the annual Jane's Walk series, featuring a Scavenger Hunt titled “At the Epicenter of the Epicenter”. For anyone unfamiliar with the Jane’s Walk programs, they



are yearly celebrations of Jane Jacobs' birthday. Jacobs was an author and urban activist best known for defeating Robert Moses' plans for the Lower Manhattan Expressway (LoMEX), which was never built. Her insightful work on what makes neighborhoods livable continues to inspire urbanists of all ages. The Municipal Arts Society of NY commemorates her each Fourth of May by offering walks around the city's neighborhoods led by individuals and/or organizations featuring urban highlights from environmental features, to architecture, city history, and more. This year's citywide programs took place over the course of the entire week rather than as the usual one day event. Events ranged from lectures to meet-ups, virtual tours, and more, in response to pandemic regulations discouraging large



social gatherings. The description of our neighborhood tour reads:

What kinds of infrastructural amenities and social patterns contribute to the spread of diseases? This scavenger hunt leads participants around what became “the epicenter of the epicenter” of the Coronavirus as the pandemic began its spread across the U.S., beginning with New York City. This event is an introduction to Jackson Heights, a vibrant immigrant neighborhood unique and yet also



Jane Jacobs

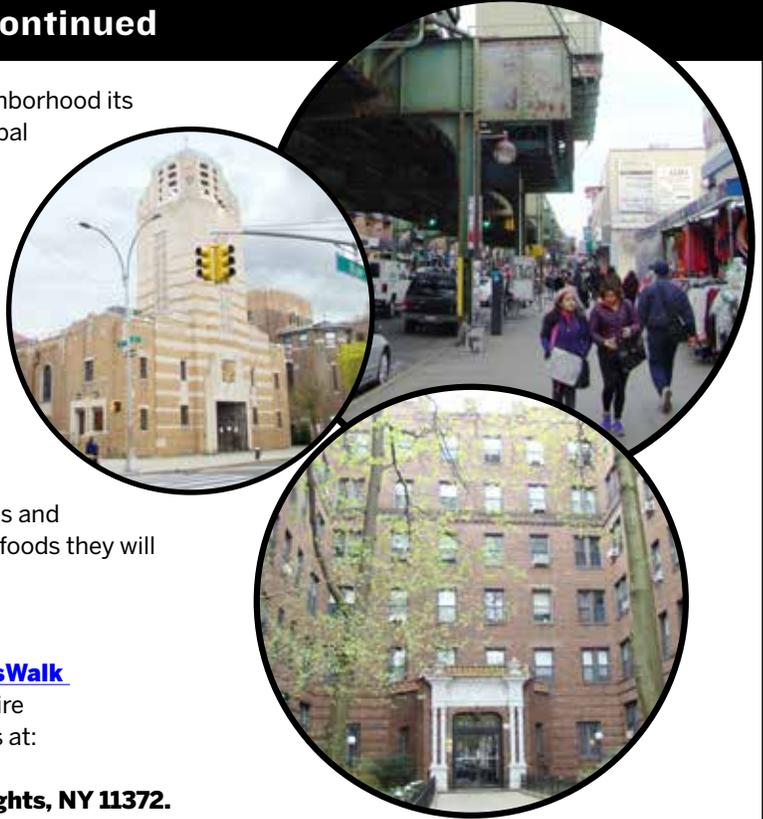
## “At the Epicenter of the Epicenter” continued

emblematic of the American experience. What lends this neighborhood its vitality ironically also contributed to its weakness before a global pandemic that decimated neighborhood residents. This event does not consider the area as a site of spectacle, and instead prompts consideration of infrastructure and the nature of urban life as factors in healthful living as we strive to make urban centers much more livable and resilient. This self-guided scavenger hunt and walk utilizes Facebook and Twitter for enhancing the shared experience while using maps, historic clues, and visual aids to help visitors navigate the 27-block length of this Queens neighborhood. Visitors can attend on their own time and engage the tour at their own pace. Attendees will need to download PDF files available on our organization’s home page, wear comfortable walking shoes and stretchy pants to make room for the delightful array of ethnic foods they will find they must savor along the way!

Materials for the event were made available on our website, [www.jhbg.org](http://www.jhbg.org) and on the Facebook page for the event, Jane’s Walk – Jackson Heights, [www.facebook.com/JHJanesWalk](https://www.facebook.com/JHJanesWalk)

If you participated, mail in your completed trivia questionnaire for your prizes! Please also share your feedback by emailing us at: [info@jhbg.org](mailto:info@jhbg.org) or writing us at:

**JHBG, Attn: Melissa Zavala, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.**



## What Long-Time JHBG Members Have To Say...

This is the first installment of what will be an ongoing series highlighting the lives, contributions and ideas from long-time JHBG members.

### Mary Elizabeth “Betty” Morris BY DANIEL KARATZAS

**M**y dear friend Betty Morris is the ideal person to begin this column and series. It is only because of the JHBG that I came to know Betty. I first met her in 1989 when I was doing research for my book, *Jackson Heights—A Garden in the City* (1998), when a neighbor of hers said to me “You have to talk with Betty, she has been here forever.” Well, “forever,” turned out to be 1924. Sadly, on the morning of April 12, 2021, Betty passed away peacefully in her Chateau apartment of over 70 years. She had turned 100 in December. So, while I cannot speak for her, I will briefly write about her, and her love for Jackson Heights.



location given his role as a surgeon. I am sure his wife, Edna O’Neill Morris, wanted a large house in a neighborhood where there was enough outdoor space so the children could burn off all of their excess energy. Luckily for us, they

found that in Jackson Heights, moving to a house on 87th Street between Roosevelt and 37th Avenues. Then in 1950, Betty and her mother moved to an apartment at the Chateau on 80th Street.

Since childhood, she and her three siblings participated in the many activities and clubs Jackson Heights had to offer. She learned tennis at the Jackson Heights Tennis club (now the site of IS 145) and continued to play the sport at Forest Hills well into her 70s. In the post-war years, the siren call of the suburbs never lured Betty away. After graduating from Mount Holyoke in 1943, she went to work for Time Inc.

in Manhattan, remaining there until she retired in 1986. Betty greatly enjoyed her 42 years there, during the “heyday” of magazine journalism. I met Betty a few years later, right after the founding of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group (JHBG).

During the JHBG’s early years she was an eager volunteer, even agreeing to supervise some local youth who had been directed to do community service in the neighborhood. She always attended JHBG functions and was willing to do what she could to support our efforts. Most of all, throughout all of her ten decades, she was proud to call Jackson Heights home. From the days when there was a twelve-hole golf course and tennis club, to now, as we have become one of the most diverse neighborhoods in not just New York City, but the whole United States.

While things have changed in Jackson Heights over the years, many of the houses, apartment buildings and storefronts, built nearly a century ago, remain. And I am sure Betty

would agree that in both the 1920s and the 2020s our well-planned neighborhood has created a pleasant environment that continues to foster a sense of community—in an even faster moving and more diverse city.

Finally, most telling of all, was that in her obituary, Betty’s family asked that donations in her memory be made to the Jackson Heights Beautification Group. I think that says it all regarding Betty’s opinions on Jackson Heights and the JHBG. We will miss her greatly.



**Betty and her nephew, George, at a dinner.**

## Mensaje de la Presidenta

POR LESLIE ELLMAN

Escribo este primer mensaje como presidenta con un profundo sentido de apreciación por el ritual de transición, la historia y el trabajo del Jackson Heights Beautification Group (JHBG). En sus 31 años de servicio a nuestro vecindario, el JHBG se ha convertido en un miembro vivo de nuestra comunidad. Fundado en el amor a nuestro vecindario, este grupo ha perdurado gracias al trabajo y el compromiso de sus miembros, voluntarios, mesa directiva y líderes anteriores. Asumo esta función con reverencia hacia el pasado y con un ojo en el futuro. Sabemos que ha sido un año muy difícil, pero tenemos esperanza y entusiasmo por un mañana más positivo.

Esperamos que compartas con nosotros el optimismo por el futuro y, para usar las palabras de mi predecesor, Ed Westley, inos vemos en el vecindario!

## Mensaje de la Editora. Continuamos con orgullo las tradiciones e introducimos innovaciones

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

¡Hola, vecinos! Me entusiasma asumir el papel de Editora del boletín cuatrimestral de nuestra organización, posición anteriormente ocupada por Louise Mulvihill bajo la dirección de Nuala O'Doherty. Desde ahora, para facilitar la lectura daremos prioridad a artículos más cortos acompañados de más fotografías y apoyos visuales,



de acuerdo con el tema que organice cada número. En esta edición, vamos a comenzar a presentar a los talentosos y entusiastas miembros y voluntarios del Jackson Heights Beautification Group (JHBG), que hacen todo nuestro trabajo posible. También vamos a comenzar una sección regular titulada "Jackson Heights Notables", en la que mostraremos figuras públicas que viven o han vivido aquí a lo largo de los años. Esperamos que disfruten el nuevo formato. Si tienen opiniones o ideas que nos ayuden a mejorar, pueden enviar un email a [info@jhbg.org](mailto:info@jhbg.org) o escribirnos a **JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.**

## Las azafraes honran las pérdidas humanas causadas por el COVID-19

POR EVIE MCKENNA

Esta primavera, las primeras en florecer a lo largo de la franja central de la Avenida 34 fueron las pequeñas azafraes moradas. Un grupo de voluntarios las plantó el otoño pasado como tributo a las pérdidas sufridas a causa de la pandemia del COVID-19. Por algún tiempo el JHBG ha tenido un papel importante en el mantenimiento de la franja central. Entre quienes apoyaron el otoño pasado, queremos mencionar a Lucia K., Sheree C., Wan Pen, Nuala y su grupo, Kathy O., Kirsten M., Dorothy M., Melissa Z., Leslie E., Alexandra, Portia K. y familia, Chris R. y yo. El JHBG recibió fondos para comprar los bulbos gracias al esfuerzo de Len Maniace. Disfrutemos las flores ahora y esperemos seguir exhibiendo más plantas a lo largo de la hermosa franja central de la Avenida 34.



El grupo de ambientalistas llamados los Veggie Nuggets contribuyen a la comunidad limpiando la calle 69.

## En busca de signos esperanzadores para este Día de la Tierra

POR JULIAN MCNAMARA

Aunque conmemoramos otro Día de la Tierra, es fácil concluir que a los humanos se nos ha zafado un tornillo o que simplemente hemos sido demasiado exitosos como especie y ahora debemos enfrentar los límites biológicos que constriñen a toda la población. Aun así, en este Día de la Tierra también podemos contar algunos éxitos menores: la Ciudad de Nueva York retomará el compostaje en las aceras, la Administración de Biden anunció planes para reducir las emisiones de carbón en un 50% para 2030, en relación con los niveles de 2005. A nivel local, JH-SCRAPS sigue incrementando su acopio semanal de desperdicios para compostar, y hemos notado la emergencia de un nuevo grupo de inteligentes y comprometidos estudiantes de escuela media en busca de formas de involucrarse con el medio ambiente. Nos alegra aconsejar y orientar a los Veggie Nuggets mientras

abren el paso a una nueva generación de activistas. Cuidémoslos.

## ¡El Día de la Tierra cumple 51 años!

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

El Día de la Tierra cumplió 50 el año pasado justo antes del cierre de la ciudad debido al COVID-19, por lo que no pudimos celebrar su monumental 50 aniversario. Para compensar y conmemorar esta fecha, este año organizamos un evento especial en nuestro centro de compost de la Calle 69, en el que ofrecemos, gratuitamente, actividades artísticas y de manualidades con materiales reutilizables. Los proyectos de manualidades giraron alrededor de la estrategia para desperdicios de la ciudad, o el "Three R's" (Tres "erres"): reciclar, reusar y reducir. Conmemora el Día de la Tierra cada semana y pasa por nuestro centro de compost. JH-SCRAPS está abierto los sábados, llueva o truene, entre 11:00 a. m. y 1:00 p. m. El sitio se ubica en la esquina suroeste de la Calle 69 con la Avenida 35. Si te interesa ser voluntario,

envíanos un email a [JHSCRAPS@gmail.com](mailto:JHSCRAPS@gmail.com). ¡Esperamos verte pronto!

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## JHBG lo consigue otra vez: nuevos árboles para la Avenida 34

POR LEN MANIACE  
NYC Parks reconoce el esfuerzo del JHBG concediéndole un papel importante en su plan para incluir 66 nuevos árboles en la franja central de la Avenida 34, desde la Calle 69 hasta la Calle 91. El comité del JHBG se preocupa por los árboles de la calle y cuida casi 50 jardinerías, en su mayoría de la Avenida 37. En 2019 el JHBG fue considerado como el tercer grupo más activo de entre los grupos de la ciudad dedicados a cuidar árboles y actualmente ocupa el segundo lugar detrás de organizaciones municipales. Jennifer Greenfeld asegura que los 66 árboles serán plantados en el transcurso de dos años y se espera recibir el primer grupo para la primavera de 2022.

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## “En el epicentro del epicentro: un recorrido por Jackson Heights”. El JHBG participará en el Jane’s Walk 2021 durante el fin de semana del 3 al 9 de mayo

POR MELISSA ZAVALA  
Este año el JHBG participará en la serie del próximo Jane’s Walk con la presentación del juego de búsqueda del tesoro titulado “En el epicentro del epicentro”. Este recorrido llevará a los visitantes a través del que se convirtió en “el epicentro del epicentro” del Coronavirus cuando la pandemia comenzó a extenderse por los Estados Unidos, empezando por Nueva York: Jackson Heights. Este

juego autoguiado y el paseo usarán Facebook y Twitter para enfatizar el elemento de experiencia compartida y acceder a mapas, pistas históricas y apoyos visuales para ayudar a navegar en las 27 cuadras de este barrio de Queens. Los asistentes tendrán que descargar los documentos en PDF disponibles en el sitio web del JHBG, llevar zapatos cómodos y pantalones flojos para hacer espacio a la deliciosa variedad de comida étnica que encontrarán y podrán disfrutar durante el recorrido. Todo el material está disponible en nuestro sitio web, [www.jhbg.org](http://www.jhbg.org), y en la [página de Facebook de Jane’s Walk— Jackson Heights](#).

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## El héroe del Parque de los perros de JHBG

POR JERRY GOLDMAN  
Spiro Veliotis es nuestro héroe del Parque de los perros. Es un asiduo voluntario del JH Crew que generosamente dona su tiempo al mantenimiento del parque. Spiro recoge los desechos (humanos y caninos), abastece de materiales, amontona las hojas, coloca la basura en bolsas y realiza cualquier otra actividad que ayude a mantener un ambiente limpio y hospitalario en JH Crew. Spiro es nativo de Queens, creció en Elmhurst y ha residido en Jackson Heights por 25 años. Él y su esposa Susan han frecuentado el parque desde su apertura, al principio con su último “Jake” y ahora con su terrier “Chase”. ¡Gracias, Spiro, por tu dedicación y trabajo duro en la comunidad! Para más información sobre el JH Crew Dog Run visítanos en: [www.jhbg.org/programs/jh-crew](http://www.jhbg.org/programs/jh-crew).

## Lo que tienen que decir los antiguos miembros del JHBG: Mary Elizabeth “Betty” Morris

POR DANIEL KARATZAS

Mi querida amiga Betty Morris es la persona ideal para comenzar esta columna y la nueva serie.



Conocí a Betty gracias al JHBG en 1989, mientras hacía investigación para mi libro Jackson Heights: A Garden in the City (1998), cuando un amigo suyo me dijo: “tienes que hablar con Betty, ella ha estado aquí desde siempre”. Bueno, ese “desde siempre” resultó ser 1924. Tristemente, en la mañana del 12 de abril de 2021 Betty falleció en su apartamento del Chateau, donde vivió por más de 70 años. Había cumplido 100 en diciembre. Betty fue una voluntaria entusiasta del JHBG desde sus comienzos y una dedicada servidora de la comunidad. En su obituario, la familia de Betty pidió que las donaciones en su memoria se hicieran al JHBG. Eso dice todo de Betty y su opinión sobre Jackson Heights y el JHBG. La extrañaremos enormemente.

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## Los notables de Jackson Heights: Grace Lee Boggs, feminista y activista asiático-americana

POR DANIEL KARATZAS

Grace Lee Boggs fue, durante la mayoría de sus 100 años de vida, una feminista pionera, activista social, defensora, filósofa y autora. Se graduó de Newtown High School y de Barnard College a los 16 y vivió en Jackson Heights por algunos años. Obtuvo un Doctorado en Filosofía en Bryn Mawr en 1940, vivió

en Chicago, y a finales de la década de 1940 se estableció en Detroit. En 1953 se casó con James Boggs, trabajador de la industria automotriz y activista radical. Juntos, por los siguientes 40 años, ganaron muchas causas radicales. Después de la muerte de James en 1992, Grace continuó su labor activista hasta su fallecimiento en 2015 a la edad de 100 años. Los detalles de su vida y la variedad de actividades sociales y de derechos civiles en que participó se puede encontrar en la exposición especial en línea de la Sociedad Histórica de Queens en: [www.queenshistoricalsociety.org/current-exhibitions/grace-lee-boggs-jackson-heights-elmhurst-years](http://www.queenshistoricalsociety.org/current-exhibitions/grace-lee-boggs-jackson-heights-elmhurst-years)

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## JACKSON HEIGHTS NOTABLES

Below is the first installment of what will be an ongoing series highlighting former Jackson Heights residents of notable interest for how they represent some of the unique elements of life in our neighborhood.

### Grace Lee Boggs

Asian-American Feminist and Activist BY DANIEL KARATZAS



She was, for most of her 100 years, a pioneering feminist, social activist, advocate, philosopher and author. Yet, it is because of the biographical information we found in the recent (and still ongoing) online “exhibit” at the Queens Historical Society, that we can now call Grace Lee Boggs, a former resident of 73rd Street, one of our own.

Grace Lee’s father, a successful restaurateur, built the largest house on the block, at 37-39 73rd Street. Long demolished, it is currently the site of the Birchwood House, a cooperative apartment building. Some neighboring brick houses on 73rd Street, between Roosevelt and 37th Avenues, remained standing until the early 2000s.

A graduate of Newtown High School and Barnard College (at 16), Grace Lee lived in Jackson Heights for a few years afterward. She earned a PhD in Philosophy from Bryn Mawr in 1940, lived in Chicago, and then settled in Detroit in the late 1940s. In 1953 she married James Boggs, a Detroit auto worker and radical activist. Together, for the next forty years, they championed many radical causes. After James’ death in 1992, Grace continued her activism until her death at 100 in 2015. The details of her life and varied social and civil rights activities can be found at the special Queens Historical Society’s online exhibit:

[www.queenshistoricalsociety.org/current-exhibitions/grace-lee-boggs-jackson-heights-elmhurst-years/](http://www.queenshistoricalsociety.org/current-exhibitions/grace-lee-boggs-jackson-heights-elmhurst-years/)

In June of last year, at the height of the pandemic, the Western Queens Guerrilla Gardeners, a group of local gardeners, environmental activists and community composters, “liberated” a privately-owned vacant lot in Sunnyside. New plantings and composting equipment were installed and a “Resistance is Fertile” sign was added. They proudly noted that they were taking this stand on June 27th—the birthday of Grace Lee Boggs.

# EARTH DAY TURNS 51!

BY MELISSA ZAVALA

More than half a century before the more recent environmental disaster known as the Deepwater Horizon in 2010 (the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico), there was the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, off the coast of California. The oil spill in the Gulf Coast wreaked havoc on the region, killing 11 people, injuring 17, killing and/or harming tens of thousands of the region’s charismatic wildlife and an unknown number of fish, dealing a blow to the fishing industry. Despite its magnitude, it did not provoke the kind of legislation that the Santa Barbara spill did, despite this earlier incident resulting in less deaths of wildlife. More than 10,000 birds, sea lions, seals, and dolphins, died on the California coast. These losses spurred environmental legislation and inspired what became an annual celebration that ultimately became a global event. Celebrated on April 22nd every year, people everywhere reflect on their impact on our planet and commemorate early environmental initiatives by participating in cleanups, planting trees, scheduling teach-ins, and many other activities.

Earth Day turned 50 last year, just before the city shut down, leaving us unable to mark the monumental half-century anniversary. To make up for that, this year we hosted a special event at our composting center on 69th Street to commemorate the date, offering free upcycling arts and crafts activities for everyone. The crafts projects revolved around the city’s waste strategy, or the “three R’s”: recycle, reuse, and reduce. Commemorate Earth Day every week and drop by our neighborhood’s composting center where we regularly encourage reducing and reusing waste, and where organic materials are recycled back into soil every week! JH-SCRAPS is open every Saturday, rain, or shine (with the exception of extreme weather), between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. The site is located on the southwest corner of 69th Street, just off 35th Avenue, below the railroad tracks adjacent to the BQE. Bring your coffee grinds, tea bags, food and plant waste (if it is not infested with pests). Interested in volunteering? Email us at [JHSCRAPS@gmail.com](mailto:JHSCRAPS@gmail.com). We hope to see you there soon!



Children repurpose unused DVD cases as art boxes and frames to commemorate Earth Day.

# Finding Hopeful Signs For Earth Day

BY JULIAN MCNAMARA

As another Earth Day rolls around, it is easy to conclude that we humans have lost the plot, that we have simply been too successful as a species and must now face the biological limits that constrain all populations. We have set in motion chemical changes to our planet's atmosphere that are now manifesting in unpredictable and unstable ways. We have year-round wildfire seasons, floods at any time, extended and more intense hurricane seasons, and an ice-free Northwest Passage. We have willful deforestation; we have over fished the world's oceans, and we have blown the tops off mountains to get at coal. The destruction of wild places and its effect on the creatures who live in them is widespread and in some cases irreversible.

And yet, on this Earth Day we also count minor successes—NYC will resume curbside composting, the Biden administration announced plans to cut carbon emissions by 50% relative to 2005 levels by 2030 spearheading an aggressive climate policy that includes encouragement for electric vehicles and investing in agriculture to store carbon in soil—quietly ushering in a Green New Deal. Locally, JH-SCRAPS continues to increase our weekly intake of food scraps for composting, and we note the emergence of a new, motivated, smart, committed and media savvy group of middle schoolers looking for ways to engage climate change with practical responses. We are happy to advise and mentor the Veggie Nuggets as they lead the way for a new generation of activists. Look out for them.



The Veggie Nuggets, a group of young environmentalists from JH, cleaning up along the 69th Street Corridor.



Volunteers help sift compost at JH-SCRAPS, the neighborhood's Community Composting Center.

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# Jackson Heights Beautification Group's Podcast Series

Interviews with NYC Council Candidates in  
Districts 21, 22 and 25 Discussing Criminal Justice,  
Quality of Life, Immigration, Health, and More

BY JEFF SIMMONS

**T**he Jackson Heights Beautification Group (JHBG) has unveiled an online voter guide for constituents to learn about council candidates in three New York City districts in a series of podcast interviews in advance of the June 22 primary election. The series is introduced by JHBG Director, Ed O'Keefe Westley, and interviews are conducted by WBAI 99.5 FM Radio Show Host, Jeff Simmons. All installments are featured on the JHBG website at: [www.jhbg.org](http://www.jhbg.org).

"For 33 years, the JHBG has been committed to improving the quality of life in our neighborhood and our borough, which is always a concern among voters," Westley said. "As Queens recovers from this pandemic, we want to make sure that voters are informed about who the candidates are, what they stand for, and what they will do if elected."

The JHBG invited all candidates, and those who participated discussed their background and vision for the office, weighing in on a range of topics, including criminal justice, development, Open Streets, immigration, education and healthcare, among others.



In the series, constituents can listen to interviews with:

**District 21** (East Elmhurst, Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, and Corona in Queens, including Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Lefrak City and LaGuardia Airport)

Ingrid Gomez, Francisco Moya, and George Onuorah

**District 22** (Astoria, East Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, Woodside)

Leonardo Bullaro, Tiffany Cabán, Edwin DeJesus, Catherina Gioino, Evie Hantzopoulos, Felicia Kalan, and Nicholas Velkov

**District 25** (Jackson Heights, Elmhurst)

Suraj Jaswal, Shekar Krishnan, Manuel Perez, Alfonso Quiroz, and Carolyn Tran

To learn more about the June 22 primary, visit [voting.nyc](http://voting.nyc). Voters must request absentee ballots by June 15, and absentee ballots must be mailed in by June 22. You can also find your polling site at [www.findmypollsite.vote.nyc](http://www.findmypollsite.vote.nyc).

To learn more about Ranked-Choice Voting, visit [www.vote.nyc/page/ranked-choice-voting](http://www.vote.nyc/page/ranked-choice-voting).

## IN MEMORIAM: Steve Knobel

BY EDWIN O'KEEFE WESTLEY

**T**he neighborhood has clearly been enriched by the good work of Steve Knobel. Steve created a weekly piano lesson program for nine children that included a yearly recital.

The doors of the New Jackson Heights Jewish Center have been open to concerts; town hall meetings; dance performances; puppet workshops and shows; senior citizens programs including an opera and a theater performance. In many ways, it is our Community Center. The PS 69 choral group and band performs each year on the first Monday in June. Oh, and by the way, if you want to experience the best breakfast of your life, you should stop

by the Jewish Center on the morning of the Pride Parade. These are just a few of Steve's many contributions to the neighborhood.

His positive attitude was always his strength; whatever life's journey, Steve was there meeting it head on.

Steve held many positions over his career including a stint at the Copacabana for five years as kitchen steward. I could go on and on recounting his work experiences, so instead I will focus on his vocation, the New Jackson Heights Jewish Center.

In 2001, the center was forced to downsize as its congregation dropped. The process began in 1998 under the guidance of Marty Gallant president of the board of directors at the time. The JHBG was instrumental in bringing together Marty and the family trust that owed the property. But the synagogue still needed a person to operate the center. Steve was vice-president of the board of directors at the time and he was the right person for the task. He had the background and the chutzpah to make this new location thrive, and in the process, to make the center a very good neighbor. He grew in the job and became president. Or as Steve would say, no one else wanted the job. The baton has now been passed to Suzanne, his wife. She is now the Executive Director, and her compensation is the joy it brings to Jackson Heights.

Steve remembered his father telling him, "If there's not enough in the check book, you have two choices: either increase the cost to the membership or get new business". He followed the latter because of the low membership. The center now leases space to a lawyer, two Dominican churches and Queens Community House.

Thank you Steve for making Jackson Heights one of the greatest neighborhoods in New York City and beyond.



Steve Knobel and  
his wife, Suzanne.

# Crocuses Honor Losses From COVID-19

BY EVIE MCKENNA

**T**his spring, the first flowers to bloom on the median along 34th Avenue were tiny purple crocuses. They were planted by volunteers last fall as a tribute commemorating all of the losses suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic. As we all know, our neighborhood was among the first to be hit hard, presenting a need to memorialize those losses. Remembering is a way of healing, and what better way than to find hope in seasonal flowers?

Crocuses are elegant blooms, tiny and jewel-like. Detecting them in early spring is a sign that we have survived the darkness of winter and a new season of hope has arrived! In this spirit, daffodils were planted in city parks as remembrance of the 9/11 attack on NYC in 2001. The crocus tribute is intended as a reminder to our Jackson Heights neighborhood of the compassion, community sharing and resilience that was shown here during this long year.

JHBG has played a central role in the median's upkeep for some time. The plantings have long been cared for by volunteers in partnership with NYC parks. Before the Open Streets program, workdays required the closure of a few blocks along 34th Avenue. This was accomplished with the help of the 115th Precinct, also serving as volunteer garden helpers. Students from local schools, particularly from IS145, IS230 and the Garden School, would gain gardening experience as well as community service credits working on the median. In addition, gardeners from St. Mark's Church, The Towers co-op, and various others, attempted to keep this green strip in good shape, with some good years and some not so great. NYC Parks Green Streets division is responsible for the primary maintenance, but they constitute a small crew with one team working all of Queens. To supplement their care, our volunteers often prune, water and pick up trash on the



median. Please thank them when you see them, and if you can help with cleanup on your own, please do.

There has recently been a concerted effort to restore the median to a lush green strip. A number of perennial plants, daffodil bulbs and various shrubs have been planted over the years. They are being replaced where needed. The 3,000 crocus bulbs now reside among the tulips, lilies and sunflowers already established there. Various blocks are being cared for by individuals since the pandemic started and we should see even more variety and color this year as a result. Last fall's helpers, whom we would like to name here are Lucia K, Sheree C., Wan Pen, Nuala and crew, Kathy O., Kirsten M., Dorothy M., Melissa Z., Leslie E., Alexandra, Portia K. and family, as well as Chris R. and me. JHBG received grant funding to purchase the bulbs through the efforts of Len Maniace. All of these volunteers busied themselves digging holes, planting bulbs, and looking forward to a time when COVID-19 would recede from our most immediate concerns, at a time when the mood here was dark. A shout out to the Open Streets group for their work and generosity. Lastly, the beauty and challenge of gardening during the pandemic is that many people and dogs are enjoying the median which was previously inaccessible. But in order to ensure that the crocuses survive and multiply for future seasons, we will need to keep dogs off the median and avoid their digging there. Let us enjoy the flowers now and look forward to a continued display of blooms and plantings along this lovely strip of 34th Avenue in Jackson Heights for everyone to appreciate.



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**VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS – Summer 2021**

## ONGOING EVENTS

**Saturdays, 11am-1 pm**  
**JH-SCRAPS (composting)**  
69th St. & 35th Ave.  
For info on what is compostable,  
contact [info@JHBG.org](mailto: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](http://www.jhbg.org)

**Daily**  
**JH-CREW dog run**  
69th St. between 34th & 35th Aves.  
To join, go to [www.jhbg.org](http://www.jhbg.org)  
for application. Suggested  
donation, \$25/year.

## FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS:

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

Go to [www.JHBG.org/donate](http://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:

- |  |   |  |
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If you're interested in being contacted about any JHBG activities, please email  
**[info@JHBG.org](mailto:info@JHBG.org)**.