



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

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Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

Jackson Heights – “A Garden in the City”

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

A Time to Say Thank You

By Len Maniace

Many good things have been going on in Jackson Heights, for which I give thanks, both for those events and to those who’ve made them possible. Here are a few.

A great big thank you to the 200 people who attended JHBG’s Good Neighbor Award Dinner that livened up Sat., Sept. 26 in Jackson Heights. You made it a success. The Good Neighbor Awards are a celebration of the people, businesses and organizations that make Jackson Heights a wonderful community—truly a small town in the big city.

For the first time, this year we asked the community for candidates, a call that produced three dozen worthy nominees, and ultimately 15 winners. We may have missed a few deserving folks in the process; if so, we hope to recognize you next time.

In addition, the event brought in much needed money to pay for both high-profile efforts such as plantings, concerts and graffiti removal, as well as less obvious but essential items such as insurance, storage space, mailing costs and our website.

Finally, I am thankful for the JHBG Board for its work and especially the Good Neighbors Award Committee, Evie McKenna, Pat Glunt, Rodrigo Salazar, Doris Wurgler, Nuala O’Doherty, and the panel’s chair, Leslie Ellman.

I want to thank Frederick Wiseman, whose documentary *In Jackson Heights* opened to rapturous reviews. The master documentarian and crew were all over Jackson Heights in summer 2014. Eventually, he focused on our swirling, diverse immigrant community, which makes Jackson Heights a crossroads of the world. (cont. p. 2)

Feeding the Hungry in Jackson Heights: Lion’s Share Food Pantry

By Evie McKenna



Lion’s Share Pantry

If you thought that all the hungry people you see in the news reside in conflict zones or in the poorest parts of the country, it’s time to tell you about those in need in our very own neighborhood and about the vital work being done by Lion’s Share Food Pantry at St. Marks Episcopal Church. Food distribution takes place on the second Saturday of each month, during which time Lion’s Share helps feed 80 to 100 families and seniors. Volunteers begin at 8 a.m., assessing how much food has been collected and deciding how to stretch it so that they can serve everyone who will come to the pantry between 10 a.m. and noon that day.

A personal surprise for this writer was seeing the line of people waiting before the doors even opened, and noting how much it resembled historic photographs of Depression era breadlines. Could this be the same Jackson Heights with its fabulous weekly Sunday Farm Market, this time feeding neighbors once each month with this level of food insecurity? Sure, Jackson Heights is a mixed-income neighborhood, but the overwhelming food needs of families and individuals, many of whom are seniors, is something I thought of as happening in the big “elsewhere.”

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

(cont. from cover)

JHBG was happy to make a tiny contribution to the film; one of Wiseman’s early stops here was for coffee with us at Espresso 77. There we named people, places and organizations he needed to know about, including elected officials and Make the Road New York, an organization that works with newcomers from other lands. Wiseman went to a JHBG Town Hall meeting with police, but came away with something closer to his ultimate theme. He met a group of gay and transgender people meeting at the Jewish Center of Jackson Heights. Like Make the Road New York, this group was featured in the film.

More than 3,000 marchers in costumes, from angels to zombies, marched down 37th Ave. on Oct. 31. JHBG’s 25th Children’s Halloween Parade also included a healthy handful of grown-ups. For this I thank John McCaffrey, Nuala O’Doherty and Ed Westley, the JHBG board members who cochaired the event.

Thank you to Terry Collins and the New York Mets for bringing the World Series back to Queens, and for the promise of greatness to come. Just wait until next year.

Finally I want to thank all our volunteers, a figure that easily topped 100 in 2015. They included students at The Renaissance Charter School who weeded at the Jackson Heights Post Office; Garden School students who planted bulbs on the 34th Ave. mall; volunteers who worked at JHBG Green Zones from 69th St. to Junction Blvd.; the many who cared for our street trees and also counted them for NYC’s Tree Census 2015; as well as those who helped get this newsletter produced and distributed.

JHBG is now looking for more volunteers, especially those with experience in nonprofit administration and organized doers who can help lead our activities. Though these jobs are volunteer, those who take them on are paid with a deep sense of accomplishment and feeling of community.

To volunteer, please contact JHBG at volunteer@jhb.org.

JACKSON HEIGHTS IN THE MOVIES

Frederick Wiseman, the famous film maker, has completed his documentary titled *In Jackson Heights*. It received a glowing write-up in the *New York Times* on Nov. 3, which said the film “plunges you into Jackson Heights like a no-nonsense tour guide, dropping you into the ’hood and immersing you in sights and sounds.” For more information on the movie and the film festivals where it will be shown, check out its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/InJacksonHeights



Day of the Dead

Editor's Take

By Lila M. Stromer

Welcome to this issue of *Views from the Heights*.

The saying goes that it takes a village to raise a child. It can take a village to do a lot of other things too.

For example, a few weeks ago I saw a small kitten outside my apartment building. I knew someone in the building fostered kittens—I'd seen her come and go with carriers and knew she was a volunteer with the ASPCA, but I had no clue what apartment she lived in or her name. I left a note near the mailboxes and in the elevator asking her to come to my apartment to talk about the kitten. I was afraid that the note in the elevator had been taken down because my husband came home and said he hadn't seen it. As the words are still coming out of his mouth about not seeing the note, there's a knock on our door. The woman I wanted to reach, who I found out lives on the fifth floor, was holding the note in her hand. We talk, but can't finalize anything so quickly. She leaves and I barely get back into the kitchen to prep dinner when there is another knock on the door. I presume it is her, but it is a neighbor from the first floor. He had seen my note by the mailboxes, and he wanted me to know what he knew about the kitten. The next morning there is a handwritten note on my note near the mailboxes that someone on the second floor is also concerned about the kitten. I happen to run into my fifth-floor neighbor on the street, and we decide a meeting of interested apartments would be helpful. I put up another note about the "Clermont Kitty Rescue Society" (named after our building), and leave a date, time, my apartment number and my phone number. I soon get a call from the second-floor neighbor that another person on the first floor wants to help, but she's Deaf. My second-floor neighbor is a professional ASL interpreter, but she can't make the meeting at the appointed time, so we decide to add a second meeting later that day. Through these meetings, a plan is hatched. Anna from the first floor and I will be the designated feeders. The Society ironically runs into each other on the street, and decide to capture the kitten by MacGyvering a hardsided carrier with a string, and when he goes in to get the food, Anna or I, whoever is on duty, will pull the string. We realize this is a great idea... in concept.

The next day I run to Lowes to get a humane trap. Once it is set up, Anna and I work closely. I knew very little—in reality, nothing—about the Deaf community, but with the aid of either her iPhone or mine, we text each other while standing side by side. We do this for several days in a row. I find her to be a very warm-hearted woman so worried



about Clermont Kitty, and I get to meet her two children. On the day we decide to do the capture, she and I work like a well-oiled machine with a lot of pointing and gesturing as there's no time for texting. I set the trap and put in a few bits of bait (Bumble Bee tuna) and she guides Clermont Kitty to the trap by waving the can of tuna a few feet from his nose as he hunkers near a car. Remarkably, over the course of these last few days, many people in our 60-unit building, and people on the street, want to know how we're doing with the trapping. I knew none of these people prior to the furball making an appearance in our yard.

Much like Clermont Kitty, now named Houdini and living with our neighbors on the second floor, much of what is reported in this issue took a village to make happen. The story on Lion's Share Pantry (see the cover) is about a small army who help feed the hungry right here in Jackson Heights the second Saturday of each month. Please, if you can, join the village who donate to help those in our neighborhood. That village can never be too large.

There is the village of tenants who live in Fairway Hall fighting to get their building landmarked (p. 4). You'll also read on page 4 about the village who cleaned up the Leverich family burial ground, taking it from an eyesore and wasted space to a community area. It took a village from around NYC to count the trees for the Tree Census (p. 8). And, of course, on Oct. 31, it took a village to raise JHBG's 25th annual Halloween Parade (p. 6); and another village to pull off JHBG's Good Neighbor Awards (p. 10). As you can see, there's plenty of volunteering to be done with all the villages going on! If you'd like to volunteer for one of the many JHBG events, please write to volunteer@jhb.org or mail in the form on the back page. We'd love to have you join us!



Polar Bear

I am happy to report that my apartment building now feels much more village-like since five apartments worked together to capture Houdini. My husband and I knew one other apartment prior to this event. Now we recognize more people and they, us. It's nice to have a village.

Until next time...

Battle for the Landmarking of Fairway Hall

By Melissa Gordon



Fairway Hall

You are probably familiar with Fairway Hall, commonly referred to as “The Castle” because of its turrets (in need of repair) and Tudor-style slate roof. Designed by Joshua Tabatchnik and built in 1937, this beauty at 76-09 34th Ave. has been on the docket for possible landmarking since September 1990.

On Oct. 8, 2015, the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission held a hearing for all the backlogged Queens properties, including Fairway Hall. (It is also known as Fairway Apartments; the Queensmark name is Fairway Hall.)

Anxious to preserve its beauty and the neighborhood, six tenants of Fairway Hall attended the meeting in support of it being landmarked and to expose the owner’s unscrupulous tactics, such as asking tenants to sign a petition “for repairs” and then submitting this list of tenants as being against the landmarking. Without landmark protection, the tenants feel the needed repairs will be substandard, performed by unlicensed contractors and without benefit of a Department of Buildings Permit. Tenants are also concerned that the slate roof will be removed.

Len Maniace, president of JHBG, and City Council Member Daniel Dromm both wrote letters in support of these concerns. The tenants and others are hopeful that the commission will rule in the favor of landmarking one of JH’s iconic buildings. Even Bank of America is using a 1937 picture of it, with the long-gone golf course, in its neighborhood advertising at its ATMs. This building clearly represents historic JH, and preserving it is important to retaining the feel of this neighborhood. The commission is expected to make a decision in 2016. If you would like to add your voice to this issue, please send letters to:

Ms. Meenakshni Srinivasa
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor, North
New York, NY 10007

Unlocked and Reimagined: Leverich Family Burial Ground Comes to Life

By Beatriz A. Gil

There are no visible tombstones to identify it as such, yet a historic site is home to the Leverich Family Burial Ground, locked in by private homes, residential buildings and businesses behind Leverich St., at 35th Ave. and 71st St. The Leverich family were 17th-century early settlers when this section of Jackson Heights was part of Old Newtown, Long Island: imagine farmland, homesteads and horse-drawn carriages. (For a full account of the family history, visit www.leverichgenealogy.org.) Three hundred years later, the neighborhood has been urbanized, and this piece of land was so forgotten that it became a blight spot. The site remained relatively unknown except for family historian Tom Leverich, one of the remaining descendants, and a few Jackson Heights residents concerned by its abandoned state.



Hibridos Collective Volunteers: Leverich Gate

Hibridos Collective joined revitalization efforts in 2013, helping clean a cemetery-turned-dumping-ground by removing debris, glass, trash, overgrown weeds and rubble. In 2014 it initiated clean up, gardening, community planning and art making through a series of public conversations called Unlocked and Reimagined in 2015. Neighbors found their way through an alley, curious and intrigued to unearth a cemetery. Many people found solace and comfort in the wildness of the shady space and took delight in cleaning out broken glass and weeding. Several neighbors came back week after week. During those summer Saturdays, a new garden community bloomed and conversations with neighbors started to pollinate a collective imagination with ideas for a community space.

Hibridos Collective hosted cross-pollinating activities, including gardening, public art installations and a space for the community to gather and converse. Visitors are
(cont. p. 12)

Lion's Share Food Pantry

(cont. from cover)

Seeing the charitable work done at Lion's Share Food Pantry opened my eyes to the needs right here in Jackson Heights.

The logistics of the project is a challenge that the corps of volunteers cheerily accepts. These people do an impressive job of advising and respecting all the visitors, and they continue to look out for these folks throughout the year. This means, among other collections, a coat drive in the winter, a raffle for turkeys and hams around Thanksgiving, school supplies in September, and clothing swaps occur regularly. There is no storage space at St. Mark's Church, which means that collections cannot be held for long periods before the materials are distributed.

The pantry's preferred foods include those that are nonperishable and not in glass jars (the exception is baby food). Even the little toiletries you get at hotels find a great home here. Additionally, baby and adult diapers can be added to the list, along with pet foods. Pets can be a great comfort to people who have so little or live alone, so helping feed pets is important too. When asked about other needs, Jorge Sanchez, another principal volunteer, said, "We need everything! Especially all sizes of resealable plastic bags." For a list of donation ideas, see the box in the next column.

The volunteers even advise on best nutritional choices and how to make food last. Blandina Salvador, a principal volunteer, explained, "Oatmeal goes a lot further than boxed cold cereals, which will be gone in a day or two." Fresh organic vegetables and surplus fruit from the FarmSpot CSA held two days before might feed 20 families, but what about the others? For some, there simply is no fresh fruit or vegetables to be distributed. It's a small consolation to know that, at least for the children, NYC public schools mandate that each student get a piece of fresh fruit with lunch.

At this point, with the holidays (and winter) just around the corner, you may be asking, "How can I help?"

Although food donations made on the day of distribution are best, alternate arrangements are possible. Food and/or financial donations are accepted in the church office from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. on weekdays (at the 82nd St. entrance, right inside the front door), and before 9 a.m. the second Saturday of each month.

The pantry is working on applying for nonprofit status. While it does not yet actively solicit financial donations,

tax-deductible donations can be made to St. Mark's Church with a note specifying that the money is for the Lion's Share Food Pantry. Their treasurer will ensure that 100 percent of such donations are used only for the food pantry, and not for any religious purpose or to support general church function. Checks can be made out to St. Mark's Church (with Lion's Share Food Pantry in the memo line) and mailed to 33-50 82nd St., Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

The pantry also accepts online donations through Dwolla and PayPal. PayPal accepts credit cards, and Dwolla facilitates transfers from checking accounts. These apps can be accessed through the church's website at www.saintmarks.net. Both Dwolla and PayPal options have boxes to leave special instructions or memos to write in that the donation is for the food pantry.

Lion's Share Food Pantry welcomes volunteers to drop by and help with distributions every second Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon. They can also use volunteers for other tasks, including building a website, translations into Spanish or other languages and writing grant applications. If interested, send an email to foodpantryjh@gmail.com.

Lion's Share Food Pantry was a recipient of JHBG's recent 2015 Good Neighbor Award, held this past Sept. 26. JHBG wants to shine a spotlight on this very worthy cause, particularly at this time of year. The Lion's Share Food Pantry won for its dedicated service to the needs of the poor in Jackson Heights.

Ideas for Lion's Share Food Pantry

- Protein foods: nut butters, canned fish, canned meats, etc.
- Breakfast foods: oatmeal, cereals, pancake mix, etc.
- Pastas, rice and pasta sauces
- Canned goods: beans, veggies, soup, etc.
- Baby food (glass bottles are okay)
- Pet food
- Coffee, tea and powered milk
- Household products: toilet paper, paper towels, garbage bags, dish soap, laundry detergent, etc.
- Condiments: ketchup, mustard, cooking oil, etc.
- Toiletries: shampoo, conditioner, hand soap, etc.
- Baby and adult diapers
- Plastic bags

JHBG's 25th Annual Halloween Parade

By John McCaffrey

Ghosts, goblins, superheroes, and princesses were on display along 37th Ave. on Sat., Oct. 31, when JHBG's 25th annual Halloween Parade kicked off at noon.

JHBG's Halloween Parade is the largest children's parade in New York City, which can be witnessed by the fact that at the end of the parade 3,200 goodie bags were given out!

Hundreds of children marching with their parents, schools with large contingencies of students marching behind the banners of their schools, local school marching bands and community figures all made for a very festive event.

JHBG began hosting the parade as a means to provide local children with some fun. What started out small has turned into something huge and has become a holiday staple in the community; no one ever envisioned that two and one-half decades later, JHBG would still be organizing this parade. The Halloween Parade Committee is headed by JHBG Board Members John McCaffrey, Ed Westley and Nuala O'Dougherty.

One thing that hasn't changed about the parade is that the focus is on the children. Over the years, various groups and companies have asked to submit floats, as there are in other parades. JHBG's answer has always been to politely decline. One reason is so that the streets can be closed to vehicular traffic, allowing the children to enjoy their parade safely.

Another fixture of the parade, and one for which JHBG is grateful, is that local merchants fund the parade. This year's grand marshals were Jason Ferreira, Vice President of Foodtown; Leslie Ramos, Executive Director of 82nd Street Partnership; and Pavel Santos, Vice President of Capital One Bank. All three organizations have been long-time donors to the parade (see the sidebar on the next page for the complete list of donors).

For the second year in a row, the fantastical poster was created by artist John Cebollero. He also created the poster for JHBG's recent Good Neighbor Awards ceremony. John has created work for the Cartoon Network, DC Comics, Milestone Comics, Marvel Comics, and Warner Brothers. All three of the posters he has created for JHBG might just become collectors' items one day.

Parades of this size don't just happen, of course. Dozens of volunteers filled the goodie bags the night before, blew up dozens of balloons on Saturday morning and distributed the goodie bags during the parade. The morning of the parade about a dozen volunteers were fed a hearty breakfast before blowing up those balloons, and each school in the parade had a designated color balloon to carry. Watching the parade along the route, it was easy to see the glorious, colorful balloons as far as the eye could see.

This year's parade included Council Member Daniel Dromm, Assembly Member Francisco Moya, State Senators José Peralta and Toby Ann Stavisky and Public Advocate Letitia James. And the schools and their bands! P.S. 149 and band, P.S. 69, P.S. 212, I.S. 230 and band, P.S. 148, P.S. 222, P.S. 225, P.S. 280, The Renaissance Charter School, 82nd St. Academics, St. Joan of Arc, Girl Scouts Daisies Troop #4315, Brownies Troop #4545, Garden School, Urzúa Queens Center of Performing Arts, Performing Arts Conservatory of New York, and G. Gentil's Shirkan Karate School were fabulous. Other marchers included the Queens Community Board 3, Jackson Heights Early Learning Center, Ethical Humanist Society and Queens World Film Festival. Deep apologies to anyone who might have been missed from this list.

A unique feature of JHBG's Halloween Parade is that at the end children receive a goodie bag. Dime Savings Bank provided the bags and parade volunteers supplied the work. Thanks to Gabe Commentucci, NYPD & Auxiliary, Newtown H.S. Key Club, St. Joan of Arc Holy Name Society, and dozens of volunteers, 3,200 goodie bags were distributed in less than two hours!

Patti Lowenhaupt and JHBG Board member Rodrigo Salazar, along with Lila Stromer, captured all of the magic, some of which is scattered throughout this issue and much more is on JHBG's website (www.jhbg.org) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/JHBGNY). Finally, after the parade, all of the volunteers, grand marshals and invited guests were treated to a well-deserved reception. JHBG Treasurer Janet Kelly and volunteer Emma Brant did a magnificent job coordinating it.

The 25th Annual Children's Halloween Parade took an army to organize and a neighborhood to enjoy it! If you are interested in volunteering for next year's Halloween Parade, please write to volunteer@jhbg.org.

**JHBG thanks the following for supporting the
2015 Halloween Parade**

82nd Street Partnership
 82nd Street Tenants Corp.
 Armondo's Restaurant
 Astoria Federal Savings
 Black Tie Cleaners
 Brown's Army & Navy
 Bryan Pu-Folkes, Esq.
 Burger King (on 82nd St.)
 Capital One Bank
 Coca-Cola Bottling Company
 COSTCO
 Dime Savings Bank
 Abraham Dyzenhaus, DDS
 Exxis Inc. (Taco Bell)
 Foodtown
 Frank's Pharmacy
 Friends of the Parade
 Ho's Florist
 HSBC Bank
 Inda House
 Italian Farms
 Jackson Heights Jewish Center
 Jackson Heights Vision Center
 Jackson House Restaurant
 Joseph Lock and Alarm
 Kiwanis Club of Jackson Heights
 Suzanne Knobel
 Koepfel Nissan
 Lety's Bakery & Café
 New Peking Kitchen
 Newtown High School—Key Club Members
 Noah's Ark Pet Clinic
 Olivos Opticians
 Pramukh Health Foods, Inc.
 San Andresito Jewelry
 Schnier Eye Care Center
 TD Bank
 Toyota



Stuffing Treat Bags



Parade Marshals and JHBG Board President Len Maniace



Brownie Troop #4545



José Peralta, Joe Ricevuto, Daniel Dromm &
Toby Ann Stavisky

Operation LeafDrop Is On Again In Jackson Heights

By Lenny Olsson

Fall is upon us, and as the temperatures drop, so do the leaves that shaded our neighborhood for the last seven or so months. This time of year is a mixed blessing of spectacular leaf colors and the chore of cleaning up those leaves when they hit the ground. An untold number of large bags of leaves are placed at the curb to await pick up by the Sanitation Department, with the ultimate destination of burial in a landfill. However, there is an alternative to this outcome. Why not drop off your bagged leaves at the JH SCRAPS compost site during Operation LeafDrop, which is every Saturday in November.



JH SCRAPS is open year-round from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. (except in extreme weather), and is located at 69th

St. and 35th Ave. Throughout the year, it collects food remains for composting.

JH SCRAPS uses these leaves to balance out the nitrogen-rich food scraps collected throughout the year. Now is the time of year we stock up on this composting necessity. Dried leaves are an important component in the diet of the plethora of organisms (that is, earthworms, fungi and bacteria) found in a compost pile. As a rule, it takes more than two cubic feet of leaves for every 50 pounds of food scraps JH SCRAPS receives. Depending on how much is received, we can go through leaves very quickly.

JH SCRAPS asks that leaves be bagged either in *clear plastic* or *brown paper bags* that can be found at most home improvement stores. This request is made for two reasons. First, it has been JH SCRAPS's experience that occasionally someone accidentally includes a bag of regular garbage because everything is in black plastic bags. Second, depending on the volume, it may not be possible to process all the bags when they arrive, so they are stored at the site until they can be weighed and spread out with the contents in the leaf bins. Having them in black bags gives the impression to neighbors that JHBG is storing regular garbage. By having them in paper or clear bags, there can be no mistaking what is inside the bags.

Help us help the soil in Jackson Heights...and clean out your yard...by dropping your bags of leaves this November at JH SCRAPS during Operation LeafDrop.

More Than 3,000 Trees Counted in Jackson Heights

By Melissa Zavala

This summer marked the start of the third decennial citywide tree census. Much like the previous two censuses in 1995 and 2005, this year's count is expected to yield data on the overall health of the city's street trees, their numbers and distribution throughout the five boroughs. In addition to this general information, this census will be particularly insightful, given the ambitious enhancements made to the urban canopy via the MillionTrees Program begun under former Mayor Michael Bloomberg and completed under the current administration. The millionth tree was scheduled to be planted in the Bronx on Oct. 21, but it was postponed.

Seeing the opportunity to contribute to this important endeavor, JHBG jumped at the chance to participate and promptly reserved all blocks within the traditional boundaries of Jackson Heights, or between 69th St. and Junction Blvd. and Roosevelt Ave. and Northern Blvd. This area, encompassing 115 blocks, was completed by September, well before many other Queens neighborhoods.



Measuring Circumference of Tree

Because the Department of Parks and Recreation designated "Jackson Heights" to include East Elmhurst (stretching to LaGuardia Airport), JHBG held additional events in East Elmhurst to complete as much of the area as possible before the data collection period came to a close. A total of 10 events were held throughout the summer and

the start of fall. This work was ongoing until Nov. 1, after which the Parks Department will complete the count with limited help from volunteers. JHBG's calls for volunteers resulted in committed neighborhood residents taking part in the count, even attracting a number of individuals from different neighborhoods in Manhattan and other parts of Queens. By attending JHBG's events, these volunteers were treated to an array of tree species, including some unexpected types, such as the evergreen bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and growing number of Kentucky coffeetrees (*Gymnocladus dioica*) featured along 37th and 35th Aves. The total number of trees counted: a whopping 3,172.

Not only does Jackson Heights have a number of new and unexpected species of trees, the area is also home to quite a few long-lived, large trees reaching more than

100 inches in circumference. The London planetree (*Platanus x acerifolia*), the city's most common street tree, and the one that gives the Parks Department its iconic logo, is one of the top trees in our area that reach these impressive proportions. It is a relief to see that, despite the commonly stressful conditions faced by street trees, some hardy specimens populate our neighborhood. But we can all do more for our trees, as this summer's heat and dry conditions served to remind us. JHBG will continue to care for the neighborhood trees this fall and again next spring. If you'd like to help keep the neighborhood street trees as healthy as possible, please contact volunteer@jhbg.org to help water, mulch, add compost or clean up tree pits. Working to improve the survival rates of our newest and youngest trees, brought to us by the MillionTreesNYC program, is one of JHBG's central goals in making Jackson Heights one of the greenest neighborhoods in NYC!

Police Increase Presence at Diversity Plaza

By Len Maniace

A stepped-up police presence at Diversity Plaza appears to be showing early signs of progress. The 114 Precinct has assigned Police Officer Pratima Bhullar to patrol Diversity Plaza and surrounding commercial streets five days a week, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an additional police presence evenings and on Sundays.

The officers report they have had some success in removing several troubled individuals from the plaza, including one who has behaved threateningly to plaza users. The officers have reached out to merchants on the plaza, who have been instructed to directly contact them in the event of trouble. Pedestrians are asked to reach out to plaza merchants, who will contact the officers if they see trouble on the plaza. The officers met with Friends of Diversity Plaza on Nov. 2.

In addition, police have confiscated office furniture being sold at an illegal open-air market, originally set up on 37th Rd. and more recently on the portion of the plaza closest to Roosevelt Ave. The police say they plan to continue this practice. JHBG, which is a member of Friends of Diversity Plaza, plans to monitor conditions on the plaza. Please let us know if you see something by writing to info@jhbg.org.



P.S.280Q and Colorful Balloons



P.S.212 and More Colorful Balloons

Illegal Aliens and Their Green Card



Smart Girl and Her Cat

The Return of JHBG's Good Neighbor Awards

By Leslie Ellman

Saturday, Sept. 26 marked the return of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group's Good Neighbor Awards. Close to 200 guests attended to honor the 15 recipients whose hard work, determination, vision and love for our neighborhood garnered the attention of JHBG and the general public. The winners, selected out of more than 36 nominees, truly represent our diverse neighborhood, and the awards highlight the good work of these individuals, businesses, community groups and co-op committees. These honorees represent the best of what makes Jackson Heights the great neighborhood it is. For the winners, and why they were selected, see the list at the end of this article.

The event was held at the Community United Methodist Church on a beautiful fall evening. It began with an outdoor cocktail party, sipping wine (donated by Table Wine) in the garden while listening to the beautiful music of Bethany Wild and Friends. An hour later, the guests and attendees moved inside, to tables set with beautiful plants donated by Ultima Florals and a delicious buffet dinner catered by Armondo's Restaurant. Decadent desserts from Lety's Bakery capped off the dinner, along with, of course, the chance to win exciting raffles items! JHBG is deeply appreciative of the donations of music, wine, food, plants and raffle items to make this a most wonderful event.

While all of these elements together made the evening worth more than the \$25 ticket donation to JHBG, the most important element was the company. There was a palpable feeling of community and pride at each table and as people mingled. Long after the wine, food and fun wore off, these feelings of community continued to linger in the hearts and minds of all of the attendees.

If you weren't able to make it this time, there is no need to worry! While the last Good Neighbor Awards was in 2009, this is a tradition that has returned to stay! Pay attention to all of the good deeds of your neighbors so you can nominate a person or organization for JHBG's 2016 Good Neighbor Awards.

The 2015 Winners

Shelly Brevda: For organizing opposition to a proposal to replace a one-story structure in the historic district with a five-story building.

Don and Katha Cato: For creating the Queens World Film Festival and overseeing its growth into a cultural force serving Jackson Heights and the borough.

Central Café: For going far beyond the exterior renovations generally sought by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Gloria Daini: For a commitment that includes founding the Queensborough Houses Association, advocacy of the Jackson Heights Historic District and leadership in opposing replacement of a one-story building with a five-story building.

Delhi Heights: For its restoration of a prominent street corner to create a high-quality restaurant that invites diners to linger.

Dunolly Gardens Garden Committee: For its sensitive renovation of its interior and exterior gardens.

Espresso 77: For its interior and exterior renovations to create a casual eatery and center for the arts.

Griswold Garden Committee: For major gardening improvements, including the 34th Ave. median, between 86th and 87th Sts.

Kitchen 79: For its renovation of a storefront interior and exterior to house an unusually welcoming restaurant.

Sergio Lemarque: For providing free tennis lessons to children and adults at Travers Park.

Lion's Share Food Pantry: For its dedicated service to the needs of the poor in Jackson Heights (see the story on the cover for more on this worthy winner).

Bill Meehan: For his advocacy for equality and justice, in particular his leadership in the Queens LGBT community.

St. Joan of Arc's Youth Council: For decades-long commitment to providing the children of Jackson Heights with healthy and stimulating activities.

Table Wine: For its interior and exterior renovation to create a friendly, knowledgeable, and high-quality business.

Wink the Penguin

JHBG Winter 2015 Events Calendar

JHBG invites your participation in the following events. Stay the entire time, part of the time, offer your expertise or learn something new! JHBG provides the tools, and volunteers of all ages are always welcome. **Watch our Facebook page ([facebook.com/JHBGNY](https://www.facebook.com/JHBGNY)), our website (jhb.org) and our other communication tools for times, locations and any changes to the following.** We hope to see you out there! To volunteer, contact us at volunteer@jhb.org.

JH SCRAPS is open year-round

Every Saturday bring your scraps to JH-SCRAPS, 69th St. and 35th Ave. between 11 a.m.–1 p.m. JH SCRAPS is JHBG's composting location. For info on what is compostable, write to jhscraps@jhb.org.

November

- **Every Saturday:** Drop your leaves in clear or brown bags at JH SCRAPS.
- **Sun., Nov. 22, 4 p.m.:** Bach Concert: JHO Players and Friends / Brandenburg Concertos nos. 4, 5, 6. Location is at St. Mark's Church. This is a fund-raiser for the JHO. \$20 adults/\$10 children. Wine and cheese reception to follow.
- **Sat., Nov. 28:** Working around the gardens of Jackson Heights, cleaning up trash and leaves. Check JHBG's Facebook page, or contact Nuala O'Doherty at FODoherty@aol.com for details.

December

- **Wed., Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m.:** Jackson Heights Orchestra. Location is at St. Mark's Church. Free, but with a suggested donation of \$10 (\$5 for seniors and students). Please bring a nonperishable food item for Lion's Share Food Pantry.
- **Wed. Dec. 16, 5 p.m.:** Tree Lighting in front of the Post Office, 37th Ave.



Tigger



Treebeard



Flying Ghost above 37th Ave.



Cops on the Beat



American Pharoah



I.S. 230 Band

Letter from V. M. Gandhi

I wish to convey my personal views on the article *Tale of Two Plazas* (September 2015 issue.) I do not believe Diversity Plaza is a problem nor that it should be abandoned and cars returned to 37th Rd.

Yes, Diversity Plaza and the 78th St. Plaza are both pedestrian plazas in the same neighborhood, but there is one big difference. The 78th St. Pedestrian Plaza is located next to a park and housing, in an area that has fewer people passing through. Diversity Plaza is in a busy business area with a large amount of pedestrian traffic, especially due to the subway entrance there. What's more, unlike the 78th St. Plaza, the area around Diversity Plaza generates jobs and tax revenue for the city.

Such areas are more likely to attract homeless. But Diversity Plaza is not the only place in Jackson Heights that has had homeless in recent months. They have been present on 37th Ave. and 82nd St. Also, business districts are more likely to attract litter than a residential area.

There are cultural reasons why fewer women use Diversity Plaza [Note: The article pointed to research that found public areas with few women are often troubled places and perceived by women as unsafe.] Immigrant women from South Asia are often busy cooking, daily making fresh bread, soups and fresh vegetables. What's more, many of these immigrants are single men or married but with families waiting in South Asia until [the] husbands become established here.

Diversity Plaza was created as part of a plan to improve travel in the area only after due process, which started with the Community Board, and went to the City Council. Public hearings were held at all levels.

The dangerous intersection of 37th Rd., 73rd St., Broadway and Roosevelt Ave. was the scene of many accidents. The closing of 37th Rd. and the end of many left turns at the intersection has greatly reduced the number of accidents.

There are other improvements, too. Vehicles, including MTA buses, now take a shorter time between Roosevelt Ave. and 37th Ave. There is less noise and less pollution, too.

There can be problems in creating any plaza or even converting a two-way street to a one-way street. Some people are adversely affected by such changes, but we

have to look to the greater benefit for the community as a whole. New York City will soon spend millions of dollars to improve the plaza. I believe Diversity Plaza will have a better future.

V. M. Gandhi owns a business in the 74th St. commercial district and lives nearby. He has been a member of Community Board 3 for more than 25 years, and served as its chair for three years. He is a past president of the Jackson Heights Merchants' Association.

Response by Len Maniace, JHBG President, author of *Tale of Two Plazas*

I met with V. M Gandhi recently and am pleased that he supports Diversity Plaza. So does JHBG. The article pointed out real problems at Diversity Plaza that must and can be overcome. We agree that Diversity Plaza faces more challenges than the 78th St. Pedestrian Plaza that also was written about in the article *A Tale of Two Plazas*, but the point of this story was that such problems have been overcome across New York City and in Jackson Heights. As I wrote, Travers Parks was deeply troubled with graffiti, homeless setting up camp, and grounds littered with syringes, broken glass and dog feces before JHBG and New York City Parks teamed up. We've seen signs that a similar turnaround is beginning at this plaza; a new police initiative at Diversity Plaza appears to be addressing problems of a few troubled and sometimes threatening individuals (see article on p. 9).



Performing Arts Conservatory

Unlocked and Reimagined

(cont. from p. 4)

welcomed at the cemetery's entrance with a mural called Pachamama, the Andean goddess of fertility, also known as Mother Earth, created by local artist Carlos Amador (a.k.a. Onel). She holds the Earth in the palm of her hand and is surrounded by tulips, calla lilies and hibiscus flowers in her hair. A swarm of yellow butterflies also greets local volunteers. This project was installed by residents and artist Lina Montoya, from Staten

Island, who travels with her butterfly installation as a symbol of the struggle of migrants around the world.

Hibridos Collective's final community engagement in 2015 was Remember, Restore, Revive: A Celebration of Death and Life to honor Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead) by remembering the departed with a community altar. The community brought photographs and offerings, including bread, flowers and incense. The community was invited to plant tulip and daffodil bulbs donated by New Yorkers for Parks. A local Girl Scout troop helped plant over 1,000 bulbs and wrote bilingual poems in memory of their loved ones. The event closed with Newtown Literary writers, who shared their stories and poetry with the community.

Hibridos Collective has planted a seed in the community by galvanizing neighbors, gardeners and artists to imagine an alternative community space that respects the significance of the land. The project has resulted in numerous cleanup efforts and a core group of volunteers invested in maintaining this previously abandoned space. Hibridos Collective has been in conversation with historians, including Tom Leverich, along with other family descendants and other cemetery stewards across the country, who have assured this group of their approach to preserve history and build a community space.

The project has exceeded the group's expectations and unlocked the potential of a forgotten space by bringing together strangers who became neighbors and friends. With the support of Citizens Committee for New York City and the Queens Council on the Arts, Hibridos Collective has organized nine community events and engaged over 400 local residents in 2015. These engagements provided an alternative space for local residents to experience nature and connect with their neighbors. Jackson Heights is a known for its historic district and the green spaces within some private buildings. Given the population density, there is a shortage of green space for community use, although this will improve in years to come with the expansion of Travers Park and the creative transformation of underused spaces. The new garden community that Hibridos Collective has cultivated has restored a piece of neighborhood history by breathing life into the Leverich Family Burial Ground.

Beatriz is a cofounder Hibridos Collective (pronounced e-bree-dos). It is an interdisciplinary collaborative working to reenvision spaces through community-based art practices. Hibridos Collective undertook this project independently from JHBG. Learn more at www.hibridos.co



Katha Cato



Wise Owl



Mighty Lion Cub



Friendly Monster



Princess Elsa



Tiny Ladybug



Batman, Sad Mets Fan, and a Princess



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Volume 26 Number 2
Winter 2015

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JHBG Gets It Done!

Greenmarket
Halloween Parade
JH SCRAPs Compost Center
Landmark Advocacy
Tree LC
Holiday Lighting Ceremony
Historic Weekend Tours
Summer Sundays in the Park Concerts
Green Agenda for Jackson Heights
JH CREW dog park
Friends of Travers Park
78th Street Plaza & Garden
Garden School Athletic Field Purchase
69th Street Green Zone
Candidate & Issue Town Hall Meetings
Landing Lights Ball Field Restoration
Make Music New York
Jackson Heights Orchestra
Graffiti Removal
Garden Club
Community Awards
Views from the Heights newsletter
Jackson Heights Art Contest
Local history books -
Jackson Heights:
A Garden in the City,
Jackson Heights:
From Ice Age to Space Age



**Jackson Heights
Beautification Group**
Founded in 1988
www.jhbg.org
info@jhbg.org

Membership Form for Jackson Heights Beautification Group

Your annual donation/membership in JHBG helps us fund neighborhood activities, demonstrates your commitment to a better community and permits us to be your voice in the revitalization of Jackson Heights. Your support is important to the future of our neighborhood. JHBG is 100 percent volunteer—there is no paid staff. JHBG is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, and your contribution is tax deductible.

Please make checks payable to: Jackson Heights Beautification Group.

You will be mailed a receipt for tax purposes.

Please fill out this page and return it with your payment to:

JHBG — Membership
Box 720253
Jackson Heights, NY 11372

1. Please circle membership level

Individual—\$25

Business—\$50

Sustaining—\$100

Patron—\$250

Benefactor—\$500

Sponsor—\$1,000

Other _____

2. Please print the following:

Name: _____

Address (include apt. #): _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Optional: Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

3. Are you interested in being contacted about any of the following JHBG activities? If so, please circle the appropriate one(s).

Clean street

Friends of Travis Park

Garden Club (including flower planting)

Graffiti Busters

Halloween Parade

Newsletter and/or Website

Town Halls

Membership Building

Historic Weekend

Other: _____

4. Suggestions or Comments:

THANK YOU! If you have any questions or concerns, contact JHBG at 718-565-5344 or at info@jhbg.org.



Jackson Heights
Beautification Group, Ltd.
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Dated Event Material Please Deliver Promptly!
VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Mark Your Calendars

HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING!

Wed., Dec. 16 at 5 p.m.

in front of the Post Office on 37th Ave.

**And check this issue's Calendar for upcoming
JHO Concerts!**

Note the new location is St. Mark's Church