



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Volume 35, No. 4
Winter 2024

Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

www.JHBG.org

Jackson Heights – “A Garden in the City”

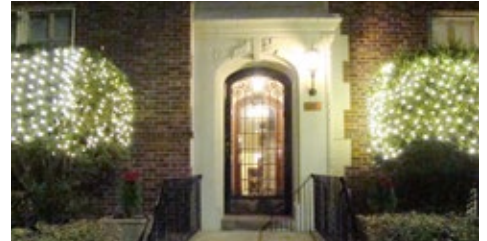
Diversity of Holiday Rituals



Help the JH community by volunteering at our cleanups and other events!
Go to JHBG.org or e-mail info@jhbg.org to sign up!

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On the cover: Art by Kirsten Magnani.
 I love walking through Jackson Heights by night during the holiday season to see the gardens come alive with sparkling fairy lights. This image is inspired by Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity Mirrored Room* at the Bronx Botanical Garden, where visitors experience moments of magical infinite universes.



President's Message

BY LESLIE ELLMAN



Dear Neighbors,

One of my favorite things to do in December is to walk around and see the holiday lights on display throughout the neighborhood. With summer a distant memory and days of diminished sunlight hours, Holiday lights can offer warmth and beauty while our urban forest and gardens hibernate. They also inspire and invite us to come together to bask in the warmth of gathering with family and friends. JHBG's annual holiday lighting is one of the ways we contribute to the spirit of this season. We hope you are able to come out and join us at the Post Office this year, gathering as a community to celebrate our capacity to see and feel light in the darkest season of the year. We also hope that you find warmth, comfort, and hope this holiday season and continue to carry it with you throughout the winter months.

—Leslie Ellman, President

Nota acerca de la sección en español de esta edición

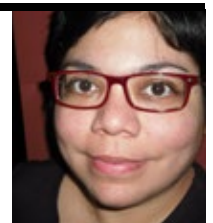
Por favor disculpen la omisión de la sección en español en este número. Debido a circunstancias atenuantes, tuvimos que tomar la difícil decisión de finalizar esta edición sin ella. Esperamos tenerla de nuevo para la primavera.

Note on This Issue's Spanish Section

We apologize for the omission of the Spanish language section in this issue. Due to extenuating circumstances, we had to make the difficult decision to finalize this edition without it. We expect it to return in the spring.

Editor's Message

Seasons Greetings! BY MELISSA ZAVALA



An epic leap year closes marking continuing warfare abroad; widescale elections around the world; political shake-ups at home; two attempted assassinations of a former president, his reinstatement following the stepping down of the outgoing one, and the strong candidacy of the first Black and Indian woman for that office; monster hurricanes; an earthquake; and three heatwaves in one summer. Where can we turn to for solace during turbulent times? This is often where faith resides. Religions needn't be divisive. With so many religious traditions celebrating holidays at the end of the solar calendar year, we focus on faith in this issue to celebrate the diversity that brings us together through shared values like family and hope in new beginnings.

Two articles highlight holiday celebrations: one describes the family rituals celebrated

by neighbors of different religions/sects showing how traditions and faith come together at this time of year, and the other explains the Basant Festival of Kites from the Punjab region. Other stories include updates on two of our local churches, where to find meaningful gifts during this season of giving, on Jackson Heights' own real life Betty Boop, and a reminder of the love and companionship our pets represent, among others.

We are always thankful for your support and look forward to another eventful year ahead in the city's friendliest neighborhood. Send us story suggestions and ideas for people to feature. Please share your thoughts by emailing us at info@jhb.org or writing to us by mail at JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

Winter Events in Jackson Heights



Join JHBG, neighbors, and friends for caroling, crafts, and celebration to ring in the holiday season!



Annual JHBG Holiday Lighting

Join us for Holiday fun at the **11372 Post Office**, 7802 37th Ave., on **December 7!** Holiday crafts between 4-5pm, followed by caroling at 5pm accompanied by hot cocoa and treats.

Arts Events

The Jackson Heights Art Club

Meets at **St. Mark's Church**, 3350 82nd St., offering classes for children and adults.

En Construcción Reading Series

Marquen la fecha: **el 7 de diciembre** en la **Librería Barco de Papel** a las 7pm, lecturas de escritores presentados por En Construcción, completamente en español: 4003 80th St.

Art Retail Therapy

84-26 37th Ave.
(718)406-9444

★ CLOSING PARTY FOR ART SHOW

Nov. 30, 7:30-9pm FREE
"Local Breach" a collection of acrylic paintings based on the immigrant experience and relationships to food. With a window into modern Latin American vibes, music, and drinks.

★ OPENING PARTY FOR ANNIVERSARY GROUP ART SHOW

December 7, 6:28-10pm FREE! "OFF BRAND 3.0" in collaboration with JH Art Talks—over 20 Queens artists in different media and two performance pieces by artists (one at 6:28pm and one later in the night) all displaying at A.R.T. **Through February 1.** It's a party so come ready for fun. Drinks and live music!

★ SATURDAY MORNINGS BIG KIDS ART CLUB

Saturdays, 9am & 10:30am
Media taught changes weekly. Call to RSVP.

★ THURSDAY EVENING ART CLASSES 5:30-7pm

For the after school and after work crowd to explore new art forms, make mistakes and have fun creating. Different lessons every week. Call to RSVP.

★ MONDAY FIGURE DRAWING!

Mondays, 7-9pm. A cozy friendly living room vibe for sketching muses in Queens. Call for more info and RSVP.

★ FIESTA DECEMBRINA HOLIDAY PAINT NIGHT

Fri. Dec. 13, 7:30-10pm
A night for adults to come on down to A.R.T. and have fun painting something new, learning a new skill,

and sharing with traditional Latine holiday traditions from different countries. All in a safe and friendly welcoming environment where folks are allowed to BYOB.



School Announcements

82nd Street Academics

81-10 35th Ave., currently has some PreK seats available as well as a new afterschool program offering themed groups tailored to students' interests. For more information, call (718) 457-0429.

THE JACKSON HEIGHTS BEAUTIFICATION GROUP PRESENTS



JACKSON HEIGHTS ORCHESTRA



RYAN ALLAIS
GUEST VOCALIST



ALEX WEN
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

DEC 11, 2024
7:30PM

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
31-18 37TH STREET ASTORIA, NY 11103
PROGRAM:
SMETANA, MA VLAST; NO. 2 MOLDAU
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS, ON WENLOCK EDGE
BEETHOVEN, SYMPHONY NO. 5

@JHORCHESTRA

JHORCHESTRA.ORG

Onwards and Upwards! JH Orchestra Expands

BY CHAD TINDEL

The Jackson Heights Orchestra is excited over the significant membership growth following last season's appointment of Alex Wen as Artistic Director. This surge, however, has led us to outgrow our cherished home at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, which generously hosted our rehearsals and performances this past decade. We are profoundly grateful to the St. Mark's community for their support over the years.

As we embark on this 2024-2025 transitional season, The Renaissance Charter School has kindly offered its space for our rehearsals, allowing us to continue crafting our music close to home. Unfortunately, while both PS 69Q and Louis Armstrong Middle School undergo renovations, there is a shortage of performance venues in Jackson Heights with capacity to accommodate our audience size.

As a result, we're bringing music not only to Jackson Heights but also to neighboring Queens communities, expanding our reach and sharing our music with wider audiences. Mark your calendars for our winter concert on

December 11th at Trinity Lutheran Church in Astoria, 31-18 37th St., Long Island City. We invite all our friends from Jackson Heights and beyond to join us for a magical evening culminating with Beethoven's powerful Symphony No. 5—a performance not to be missed! ♦



Jackson Heights Tree-Planting Boom Spurred by Federal Bucks

BY LEN MANIACE

The stars have aligned for a tree-planting surge in Jackson Heights aimed at greening and cooling the neighborhood in the face of global warming. Well, maybe not so much of the stars aligning, as our tax dollars at work.

The biggest of several money buckets will pay for 2,000 trees to Jackson Heights, Corona, and Elmhurst over five years and comes from the 2022 federal Inflation Reduction Act, which also covers environmental sustainability programs. The local effort, *Stewarding Canopy and Community in Central Queens*, is slated to spend \$5 million across the three neighborhoods, also covering extra tree maintenance so important for the survival of vulnerable young trees.

Some 1,000 trees are to be planted in parks, along curbs, on school grounds and other city property. An uncommon stipulation calls for 1,000 trees to be planted on private property that is publicly accessible or viewable, such as

private homes and apartment buildings.

The project is overseen by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, Trees New York, and Partnership for Parks. The Jackson Heights Beautification Group—NYC's leading volunteer tree-stewardship program—is one of three participating community groups.

The new plantings come on top of NYC Parks' usual street-tree and park plantings, said the department's James Kaechele, who heads the effort. Even more trees will come from participatory-budget measures voted in 2023 and 2024 by residents of City Council District 25, represented by Shekar Krishnan. The federal program was to plant upwards of 50 trees this fall. The 2022 participatory budget tree plantings also were to start this fall.

The tree-planting boom is part of a nationwide effort to increase city tree canopies to cope with climate change. New York City last year set a goal of a 30 percent tree canopy,



Tree plantings are generally completed by private contractors hired by the city to plant and care for young trees for three years.

equitably distributed, up from 22 percent measured in 2017. Both Jackson Heights and the borough of Queens were below the city average, with only 19 percent. The 30 percent goal followed a campaign by Forest For All NYC, a coalition of about 150 organizations, led by The Nature Conservancy. ♦

JACKSON HEIGHTS NOTABLES

Highlighting former Jackson Heights residents of notable interest for the ways in which they represent our neighborhood.

Helen Kane

The Model for Betty Boop

BY DAN KARATZAS

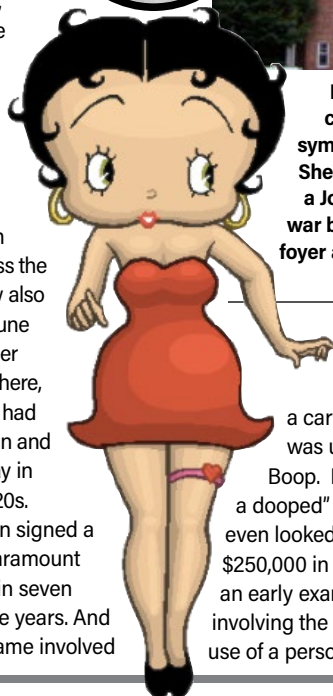
Many likely remember the cartoon character Betty Boop. But how many of you are aware that this character was based on Jackson Heights resident Helen Kane?

Born in the Bronx in 1904 to German and Irish immigrant parents, Helen was drawn to the stage at a young age, performing in school plays. Her instincts proved correct, and she toured on the Orpheum Circuit in Vaudeville at the tender age of 15. She even performed with the Marx Brothers.

Helen benefited from a booming Broadway, along with the vaudeville acts that toured the country during the 1920s. *A Night in Spain*, on Broadway in 1927, proved to be Helen's breakthrough. This was followed in 1928 by her performances at the Paramount Theatre where she introduced the song "That's My Weakness Now". It was with this song, and her rather unique voice,

that she introduced her "boop boop be doop" refrain. And in the same year, she landed a role in Broadway's *Good Boy*. Her rendition of the song "I Want to Be Loved by You" made her a sensation both in the US and across the world. That show also meant good fortune in that she met her future husband there, Daniel Healy. He had a storied career in and around Broadway in the 1910s and 1920s.

In 1929, Helen signed a contract with Paramount Pictures to star in seven films in just three years. And in 1932 she became involved



Helen Kane inspired a cartoon that became a symbol of counterculture. She lived in The Berkeley, a Joshua Tabatchnik pre-war building with a marble foyer and landscaped inner garden courtyard.

in a lawsuit against Fleischer Studios, which had introduced a cartoon character that was ultimately called Betty Boop. Betty "boop boop a dooped" just like Helen, and even looked like her. Seeking \$250,000 in damages, this was an early example of a lawsuit involving the appropriation and use of a person's likeness or image

for another's financial benefit. In 1934, the case went to trial and, unfortunately, Helen lost.

Times were changing and the Roaring Twenties came to a screeching halt with the Great Depression. Helen's career began to wane. However, Helen's signature song "I Want to Be Loved by You" was reprised twice in the 1950s. First, in the 1950 movie *Three Little Words*, where she dubbed the then ingenue Debbie Reynolds. And then in 1959, by Marilyn Monroe, in Billy Wilder's comedy *Some Like It Hot*. The song, then 30 years old, vividly recalled the heyday of the Roaring Twenties.

Helen eventually moved to the Berkeley Apartments in Jackson Heights—the building located at 77-12 35th Avenue. She and her husband, Dan Healy, spent many years there and neighbors were aware of the celebrities in their midst. Helen Kane died of breast cancer at the age of 62 in 1966. But her voice and her image—in the form of cartoon character Betty Boop—live on to this day. Her appearance in 1958 episode of the television program *This is Your Life*, can be found on YouTube. ♦

YouTube Link: bit.ly/4fmTkXd

Festive Gift Options For The Holidays!

BY MELANIA LOEWY

With the holiday season approaching, Jackson Heights' diversity makes it an ideal place to find gifts suitable for everyone.



Religious Stores For Presents

For some, the holiday season is a time to rejoice and maybe take part in faith rituals. There are various stores selling religious goods and celebrating different faiths throughout Jackson Heights.

Centro Mistico Santa Barbara, 4026 82nd Street, is a store selling various stones, rosaries, incense sticks and candles with religious figures on them for health and mystical purposes. For those who like reading religious texts, the bookstore **Christ is the Answer** may be for you, 7430 Broadway. This store offers a variety of Christian books in both Spanish and English. They also sell inspirational banners. Another intriguing store is **Butala Emporium**, 3746 74th Street, centering on Indian culture and religion. This store contains various figurines and decor. Additionally, along Diversity Plaza and toward 74th street, there are a plethora of stores selling fine jewelry like bracelets, earrings, and watches. **Amba Jewelers**, 3713 74th Street, and **Kunal Jewelers**, 3752 74th Street, are but two standout shops.



Centro Mistico offers a variety of merchandise for healing body, mind, and spirit (top). New jewelry shops open alongside older ones to offer culturally meaningful pieces made with excellent craftsmanship.



The Gift Store For All!

For those looking to buy or browse for gifts with no particular religious associations, **Lockwood**, 7713 37th Avenue, is a great choice! This store sells everything from mugs to postcards, planners, clothing, and baby items. There are even Taylor Swift themed hats sold (for all the Swifties out there). One can also buy aprons, jewelry and candles. This shop is a must visit! ♦

Weathering Winter

BY DAVE WATSON

In The Towers, many things happen in the winter. For example, a great deal of compost can be taken out of bins then, which we have in various places. I will encourage myself to lay down very good compost for gardens then. It will prepare the soil for frost in the winter which will thaw in the spring.

The leaves that fall in October and November get gathered and put in bins after the compost is taken out. Some gardens allow leaves on the soil in the fall. Others will not. Different gardeners will take care of their areas.

I plan to get seedlings for new plants coming up in the spring. Fall plantings are "dormant seedlings" (which we will get) in which the seed over-winters in the soil and germinates the following spring. In general, wildflower seeds have increased germination in spring after fall plantings. All planting takes advantage of cold, moist winter conditions to break seed dormancies. It promotes earlier germination and faster seedling establishment for the following spring.



Though plants and insects are dormant in the wintertime, life continues apace, albeit slower. Compost piles decompose, and life incubates in garden debris.

We also leave our native perennials standing through winter. Both fall migrants and winter birds rely on the seed heads for food.

Seeds can be purchased. Consider Sweet Joe

Pye Weed; Solomon's plume; great blue lobelia; wild iris and blue flag iris; cardinal flower; red milkweed; sky blue aster; butterfly weed; cream false indigo; and many others. ♦

Basant

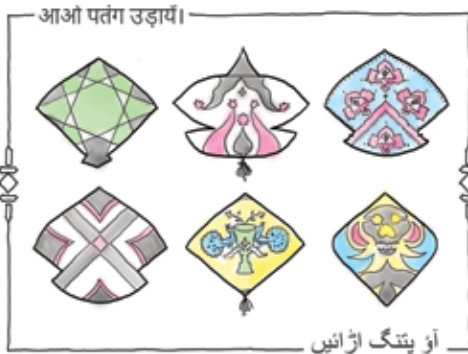
The Colorful Kite Flying Festival of Punjab

BY ZAIN SHEIKH & KELLY ARMENDARIZ

Patang-bazi is the Hindi-Urdu term for kite flying, a kite game or a bet on kites. This popular competitive activity builds deep camaraderie amongst enthusiasts, while paper kites paint the skies of Lahore, Delhi, and other parts of South Asia with streaks of vibrant colors. On one particular day in late January or early February, there are almost more kites than sky, jubilantly marking the end of winter and the approaching spring for the remarkable festival of *Basant*, celebrated throughout the Punjab region.

In Lahore, shrines honor the holiday by marinating in musical melodies about the Sufi saint and scholar named Nizamuddin Auliya. The story blends rhythm and poetry, tracing a *qawwali* (a devotional song) composed by a disciple intending to lift his melancholy and bring a smile to his face following the death of a beloved nephew. With it comes the miraculous end of a dark winter and the beginning of a legendary spring, aglow with the golden hue of endless mustard blossoms—now the traditional color of Basant.

The custom of kite-flying may also trace back to *Makar Sankranti*, during the sun's seasonal rotary shift. This astrological event was celebrated in the Mughal Empire with kites flown in vast gardens and from floral terraces,



meant to resemble glimmering colorful lamps in the heavens. No matter the origin story, today, endless rooftops continue to burst into life with kites of infinite designs so all can commune annually with neighbors.

For Desi peoples, brick and concrete

rooftops have always been a place for many domestic activities, like sun drying clothes and red chillies, or for afternoon naps with cool breezes before sharing evening chai with chitchat, or for daring the guy next door to a kite match. You might see some designing and building kites here, too. Thin tissue paper is carefully cut and layered in the shape of a stingray or a kidney bean, then expertly supported by bamboo sticks, and strung by a sharp string that sets the masterwork free in the sky. These kites, sometimes called *guddi*, are just another fun excuse to congregate above the city.

Basant is a time of merriment, with food, music, friendly banter, and intertwining kites. Their dramatic entanglements ultimately culminate in the cutting of strings, called a *pecha*, when the crowds on all sides cry "bo kata!" to mark victory. The festival also brings the entanglement of hearts with crushes frequently developed when eyes meet across rooftops. The experience is romantically portrayed in cinema and music—producing beloved cultural references of young love and heartbreak. In early February, look up and perhaps you'll catch a couple of kites sparring in our local skies. In the meantime, to revel in the essence of Basant, check out this playlist to set the perfect musical mood: bit.ly/3YWb9qb



Halloween Parade

Thousands gathered for the 33rd Annual Children's Halloween Parade this year! The parade Grand Marshals were Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, along with local community leaders Bert Shankle-Reyes, Director of Queens Center for Gay Seniors; Adrian Cepeda, owner of the World's Borough Bookshop; and Susie Tanenbaum, past Director of Nonprofit Opportunities at the Queens Borough President's Office. We extend our gratitude to them for participating and for their service to our neighborhood! Our thanks also go to the IS230 Marching Band; our partners, the Queens Chamber of Commerce, PS212; as well as our sponsors, Foodtown, 82nd Street Partnership, Coca-Cola, Flagstar Bank, Koeppel, and Table Wine.

A Festive Feast: Nacatamales

BY MELISSA ZAVALA

Ginamon, gingerbread, and roasted chestnuts are some of the scents that summon the holiday season. But what about simmering pork, boiling banana leaves, and masa, or corn dough? For Central Americans, those are the smells of family feasts and joy! Unwrapping nacatamales, enclosed in banana or plantain leaves and held together by string, is a bit like unwrapping a loving present that took an entire day to make. Often eaten for the holidays alongside an aromatic cup of coffee, nacatamales are eaten at later-than-usual dinners on Christmas Eve and as a way of welcoming the new year. They epitomize special occasions!

Much like the Latin American region as a whole, nacatamales reflect the merging of histories

and traditions. Indigenous Mesoamericans called the Nahua, made nacatamales with local meats from turkey and deer, cooked in corn dough wrapped in corn husks. The meal evolved to include a wide range of ingredients, from local tomatoes and achiote (a regional orange-red condiment from the annatto tree growing in the American tropics and with a peppery taste), to Mediterranean capers and olives, and African onions, now mainly consisting of pork or chicken. The wrapping, other fixings, and meat content have changed to reflect the merging of ingredients and flavor palettes influenced by Spanish and Caribbean traditions that can include African roots.

So, what distinguishes nacatamales from Mexican

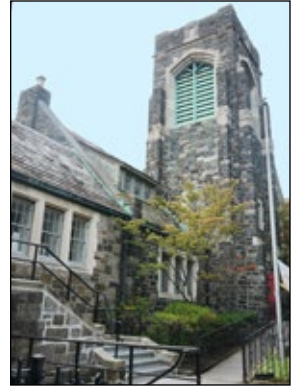


tamales? For starters, the number of ingredients (up to 15, to about seven respectively), but also their size and wrapping (Mexican tamales are still wrapped in corn husks). Why try Honduran, Salvadoran, or Nicaraguan nacatamales instead of Colombian tamales or Venezuelan hallacas? Because this regional specialty is

truly the food of the gods! Prepared to honor celestial beings, not even colonial domination could uproot this tradition. Christians instead co-opted it, making it a convention during Las Posadas (celebrations of the Nativity story). To try this Central American delicacy, visit **Mi Pequeño El Salvador**, 94-16 37th Avenue.

Community Announcements

Built in 1923, the Community United Methodist Church of Jackson Heights, 81-10 35th Avenue, is one of the first houses of worship constructed in the neighborhood. It is now part of the Historic District. This lovely building needs extensive restoration work given its age. The tower and slate roof have been leaking. It has crumbling mortar, loose stones, and rotted stained glass window frames. The small congregation has been unable to raise the necessary funds in full without help from the Jackson Heights community. The Church



Please Help Restore the Tower and Roof of This Jackson Heights Historic Landmark

Make Checks Out To **CLUMC**
Drop Contributions off at the Church Office
Or go to: onechurchnyc.com
Or use this QR Code



Scan or click to donate!

has a GoFundMe page for these much-needed repairs. Please visit the Church website at onechurchnyc.com. Checks may be made out to **CUMC** and mailed to: Community United Methodist Church, 8110 35th Avenue, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

Symbols of Unity:

World Religions Come Together in Jackson Heights

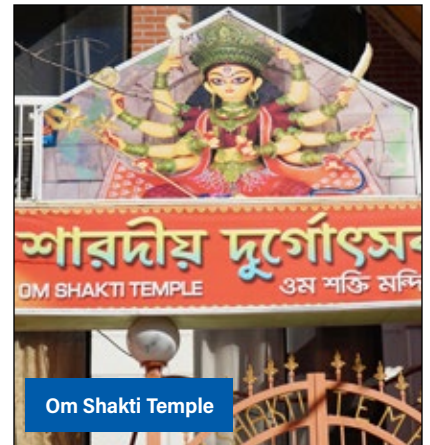
COMPILED BY MELISSA ZAVALA

Defining religion is complicated.

Involving beliefs, values, rituals, traditions, and behaviors, religions are also filled with mystery, inspire a sense of awe as well as feelings of joy, while being structured around hierarchies of power. With a growing number of Americans identifying as *spiritual over religious* and some urban churches struggling to attract new members, how do our neighbors ground themselves spiritually? We asked a few about their holiday traditions. Their stories showcase how love and togetherness rest at the heart of all faiths, bringing us all much closer together than we realize.



Islamic Center of JH-Masjid Abu Huraira



Om Shakti Temple

Neighborhood Residents Share Their Celebratory Traditions

These accounts overlap around new beginnings, revolving around families and community. Similarities amidst differences are worth celebrating!

Islamic Traditions Change Every Year Based on the Lunar Calendar (September to January 2024)*

From commemorations of historical events among specific sects, to celebrating the birth of Muhammad and the breaking of a month-long fast, the 10 holy days and nights lead to the most celebrated day of the year, The Night of Power, when the Qur'an was sent down from Heaven.

Islamic Lunar Calendar, Changing Holidays, Calls for Charity

"Ramadan refers to the month (March in 2025) when God sent the Qur'an to Gabriel. It's commemorated by Muslims by depriving themselves of pleasures to dedicate themselves to God, to feel closer to God by experiencing everything from hunger to humility. On the Night of Al-Qadir, prayers are extra-long and more special, of better

quality than the usual five daily prayers. Eid al-Fitr is the last day after Ramadan following the lunar calendar (March 30, 2025). Eid refers to breaking the fast because for a whole month Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. Most people don't buy new clothes all the time, but for Eid al-Fitr, children have all new things, from socks to shoes, and everything else. Children are given money by every visitor, and Muslims donate money to celebrate the end of Ramadan and fulfill one of the pillars of Islam, Zakat (charity) as a way of purifying their wealth and helping those in need. Everyone prays outside, if not, in a big Mosque. My family in Morocco prays at the beach and has a feast afterward. We would spend three days visiting our grandma, family, friends and neighbors."

Hindu Traditions: October to November

Beginning in October, the festival of Navratri and Vijayadasham celebrates the power

of good over evil, promoting courage and strength. At the darkest time of the year—in the north especially—the human desire to move closer to the light is celebrated in association with different deities and events, with celebrants using oil lamp decorations. The Festival of Light celebrates Rama's return after slaying Ravana.

Judaic Traditions: From September to October, then November to December

Reenacting traditions to maintain a shared identity, Jews all over the world retain the light for generations.

Celebrating the Days of Awe, Atoning, and Reconciling with God in Judaism - Chrismukkah

"This year Hanukkah begins on December 25th. This alignment between the start of Hanukkah and the celebration of Christmas is often referred to as Chrismukkah. The last time this happened

* Celebrations are listed chronologically according to time of year.

From East Elmhurst to Jackson Heights, and Elmhurst, our area offers a diverse range of houses of worship for those seeking spiritual solace.

From left to right: Jewish Center of JH; St. Joan of Arc Roman Catholic Church; and the United Sherpa Association (USA), Inc.



was in 2005. It is a very special occurrence for interfaith families like my own. Every year we celebrate Hanukkah and Christmas to honor



and balance our family traditions. These two holidays celebrate very different significant events in very different religious traditions, and yet they both invite us to think about and celebrate miracles. Every year when we light our Menorah and decorate our Christmas tree, I am struck by our ability to continue traditions that have endured for centuries. The recurring miracle is that we are able to keep the beauty and meaning of the season alive year after year while experiencing the wonder and appreciation for the moments as if new.

When we gather to light candles and light our tree we are paying homage to our ancestors and the gifts of culture and family that we have inherited. That bigger meaning comes through when we make latkes and Christmas cookies together. Each bite tastes like love, comfort, and family."

**Christian Traditions:
December to January**

The Advent season announces beginnings, mainly the birth of Jesus, celebrated in various ways according to different Christian sects.

Advent Candles:

Lutherans Prepare for Christmas

"Advent is the first season of the Christian calendar. It begins four Sundays before Christmas. My family observed Advent with an

advent ring. Made by my grandfather, it was 16" in diameter, held 28 candles, and hung from a hook. Starting the first Sunday of Advent, one candle was lit, and an additional candle each night up to Christmas Eve. My family of six took turns selecting Advent and Christmas hymns and songs to sing. On Christmas Eve, the ring came down, the Christmas tree went up, and we went to church to celebrate the birth of Jesus."

Catholics Celebrate the Spirit of Giving, Beyond St. Nick and the Magi

"In my family, we celebrate the birth of Jesus and how children can learn about devotion in any kind of faith. Christmas is when Baby Jesus is born, and my grandchildren put the baby in the crib. It's the end of the year and the beginning of a new one. Christmas brings families together, regardless of anything, which brings happiness. The colors of the lights brighten up the world and people seem more friendly. It's about more than just Santy Claus."

On the Twelve Days of Christmas: Episcopalians Celebrate Christmastide

Many Episcopalians in the neighborhood are traditionally Roman Catholics, resulting in similar traditions and practices. However, the symbolism is different, with Episcopalians understanding the eucharist more figuratively than Roman Catholics who do so in more literal terms. Episcopalians' main service takes place on Christmas Eve and gift-giving revolves around simple gifts during the season of giving.

Proclaiming the Birth of Christ: An Eastern Orthodox Tradition

"The Greeks are bigger with Easter than Christmas."

This short sum of the holiday is another distinction between western and eastern traditions: the former commemorates the visit of the three Magi while the latter emphasizes the Epiphany, also called Theophany. Both words refer to God's manifestation in human form. Celebrated with the blessing of the waters on January 6, this date commemorates Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. Jesus' resurrection at Easter, signaling eternal life, is the most sacred festival.

Coptic Christians Offer a Celebratory Feast

"The Eastern Orthodox calendar follows the Julian Calendar. Christmas is celebrated on January 7th. It's simply called Christmas, not Orthodox Christmas. The year begins with Christmas rather than ending with it. The holiday marking the start of a new calendar year is therefore filled with hopes and dreams. We typically dress in our finest attire, known as 'Holiday Clothes,' attend church, and visit family. If families are too large to gather indoors, they often meet in parks or public plazas. Christmas Mass is held on January 6th, usually starting around 6 or 7pm and continuing until approximately midnight."

**Buddhist Traditions:
December to April**

Based on ethnic backgrounds, traditions celebrating the full moon depend on the country, and can involve dusting off Buddha statues, commemorating the day Buddha achieved enlightenment, and more, with dates ranging from December 8th to mid-April marking various events, Buddhists celebrate Bodhi Day in diverse ways. ♦

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Fairy Tales Can Come True... BY MELISSA ZAVALA

Adrian Cepeda grew up in Jackson Heights, across the street from where he now owns the only neighborhood general bookstore, **The World's Borough Bookshop**, 3406 73rd Street! "My mom used to take me to the Barnes & Noble on Austin Street in Forest Hills when I was little. But I noticed there was no representation [of people of color] in the books I read, or in my neighborhood even in terms of bookstores," he recounts. An idea was born in a young reader, now a father to a daughter of his own. It took about eight years of selling books online and at small maker markets in Astoria and across the city, before Cepeda realized his dream of bringing a bookstore to his neighborhood.

Thanks to grants from the Citizens Committee of New York City and especially from the Queens Economic Development Corporation, The World's Borough Bookshop celebrated its first anniversary this summer. And the investment in this small business has paid off: the shop is flourishing, granting opportunities to Queens artists Cepeda met through the maker market networks that offered him a start. He now helps artists and writers by hosting regular events at his shop, showcasing their work weekly, hosting block parties, and spotlighting authors from underrepresented communities as well as local writers. He says of the challenges faced by authors outside the mainstream: "These are voices that are not that well published and aren't amplified by the media either. Children should imagine going on adventures that look like those in their cultures. For adults too, it's important to be represented". Cultural understanding is advanced not just by representation but also by exposure to other worlds.



The World's Borough Bookshop opens up new worlds to readers of all ages!



While reading can be popularized by big booksellers, nothing beats small independent bookstores, of which there are only five in Queens. Jackson Heights now hosts one of those locations, honored in the recently released Queens, NY Edition Monopoly board game. The cart outside the bookshop is free to all. Cepeda warmly welcomes everyone, providing an intimate feel unlike the corporate tone at large bookstores. He says of the importance of small shops and community leadership, "I didn't expect to be in that position [of being a local leader as a small business owner]. Leaders should be from the neighborhood and should do things for the community". With its motto being *por y para la comunidad* (by and for the community), this Latino-owned bookstore is representative of Jackson Heights, where exploring our world through books and handicrafts is as original as this shop. As the opening line of the song "Young at Heart" goes, which gives this article its title: fairytales can come true, it can happen to you—at least it happened to Adrian Cepeda! Stop by his shop and support one of our local businesses this season. ♦

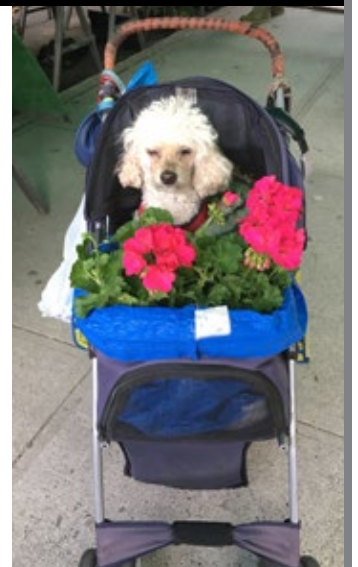
COMMUNING WITH CITY CRITTERS A Dog Whisperer reports on the healing connection between people and pets.

The Gift of Companionship BY GAIL SIEGEL

Pets can make the difference between being happy and loved, and being lonely and sad. Otherwise, TV is used by many as the antidote to loneliness and isolation. Unfortunately, TV, radio, and news outlets promote messages of fear, discouraging people from getting out and mingling with friends and neighbors. Cats are lovely and great companions but without the need to go out, possibilities for socializing are not facilitated by even the most loving, wonderful cats. But having a small friendly

dog that needs to go out several times a day can have a huge impact on how many people you speak to who enjoy spending time with you. If the expense of owning a dog is daunting, perhaps finding someone nearby who would like to share the care and feeding as well as veterinary cost and visits might be the answer. Sharing a dog with a neighbor and friend could enhance all the lives the dog touches. Dogs bring joy with their love of the sights and smells of every street, stoop, tree or fellow dog. A small, friendly, possibly

happy-to-be-carried-in-a-bag dog could make all the difference to a group of aging, solitary neighbors whose social circles sometimes shrink rather than expand. This is something to consider during the holidays, especially as a site like [petfinder.com](https://www.petfinder.com) can help those searching to find the perfect small companion—not a puppy (which might need a lot of training), but a not-too-old companion who can provide unconditional love, fostered while a prospective adoptive parent can explore if the match will be a good one. ♦



Statement in Support of Preservation and the Creation of Parkland Over a Large Development in the Backyard at St. Mark's Episcopal Church



The backyard at St. Mark's presents an opportunity to impact planning and amenities in Jackson Heights and it is important to consider the neighborhood's different needs at all stages.

The Jackson Heights Beautification Group (JHBG) has been advancing conservation efforts in our community since 1988, resulting in the Landmarks Preservation Commission voting to designate part of our neighborhood as a historic district five years after our organization's inception. This recognition of our area's architectural legacy is based on exceptional structures like St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 3350 82nd Street. We recognize that small churches are struggling, and that St. Mark's is currently in need of revenue. However, we urge the Vestry, Rector, and parishioners, as well as the Bishop of the Diocese of Long Island, to consider preservation and our community's needs for open space instead of building another multi-story unit which would aggravate congestion and population density in an already compactly constructed area.

Jackson Heights suffers from a shortage of parks. Council District 25, which includes most of JH and parts of Elmhurst, ranks 50th of 51 Council Districts for park space, New Yorkers for Parks reports. What's more, JH has a tree canopy of only 19 percent when last measured, compared with the citywide average of 22 percent, far below the citywide goal of 30 percent, according to The Nature Conservancy. A healthy tree canopy is crucial for helping our city cope with extreme heat caused by climate change. **Preservation of the church's backyard—the last open, undeveloped lot in our zip code—could help increase our tree canopy.**

St. Mark's Episcopal Church has the opportunity to assist Jackson Heights and the city at large to create open space in a metropolitan region in need of nature and parkland, in a city that has historically been a leader in park construction. With

the obvious environmental, psychological, emotional, and communal benefits of park space for cities and their residents, we call on St. Mark's to consider partnering with the local government to preserve nature in our own backyard, adding to the beauty of our neighborhood, and improving our collective health and well-being.

We ask that supporters of parkland over a large development project sign the petition promoting the construction of a park at that site: chnng.it/tLJbPvjyxx.

Please also contact the Bishop of the Long Island Diocese to express your support of preservation and parkland construction by emailing him at lprovenzano@dioceseli.org, by calling him at (516) 248-4800 ext. 131, and/or by writing his office at The Episcopal Diocese of Long Island, Attn: Bishop Lawrence C. Provenzano, 43 Euston Rd, Garden City, NY 11530. ♦



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VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS – Winter 2024

**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 info@JHBG.org.

Saturdays 10:30 am

Meet at the gardens at St. Mark's
Episcopal Church on 34th Ave.,
between 81st and 82nd Streets.

Daily

JH-CREW dog run

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

To join, go to info@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/membership 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) non-profit organization, so your contribution is tax deductible.

Please check membership level:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Please print the following:

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