

NEWSLETTER

Annual Meeting Report

By CYNTHIA DOTY, BOARD CHAIR

ON MARCH 22, THE BLOCK ASSOCIATION held its Annual Meeting, convening in the lobby of the Master Apartments. Many thanks to the Master's board and staff for hosting us all.

We began by inducting the 2018 honorees into our Neighborhood Hall of Fame. Hedy Campbell led the ceremony with wonderful tributes to these very special residents, who have lived in our neighborhood for 50 years or more: Dame Vivian Hewitt; and Margaret and Chris Beels. We all especially appreciated their reflections on our neighborhood, past and present. (See more about these residents on page 7.)

We then introduced and elected our new board members and thanked our outgoing co-chair, Terence Hanrahan, for his many years of service.

(Continued on page 4)

Spring Planting a Success!

By MARK SCHNEIDERMAN

NEARLY TWO DOZEN RESIDENTS of the neighborhood got together to clean, plant, and mulch 25 tree wells on April 21, a sunny day that seemed to herald the beginning of spring. Subsequent rains have served to make the flowers even more beautiful.

Many thanks to all who lent a hand, especially Michael Stearns, who helped purchase and transport the plants.

(Continued on page 2)



Annual Block Party: "Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall"

THE WEATHER FORECASTERS PREDICTED IT AND IT CAME TRUE: Rain and unseasonable chilliness descended on Saturday, May 19, the Block Association's *juju* finally ran out, and we had to cancel our planned Block Party/Yard Sale. No one remembers when we last canceled because of weather, but the city no longer permits rain dates, so postponement was not an option. There's really no way to have the event without closing off the street to traffic and parking.

Most of our volunteers were prepared and warrant special thanks, as they worked right up to cancellation time. Jane Hopkins accepted enrolled vendors and assigned spaces. Meanwhile, recognizing that rain was in the forecast, Sue Maderer cleverly held off on depositing the checks, and the vendors were made whole quickly. The publicity committee, Terence Hanrahan, Ginger Lief, Caitlin Hawke, Bob Aaronson, and Jane, posted flyers, put the event on local listserves and Craigslist, and notified the youth hostel (thanks, Ben Puterbaugh). The raffle sales group, Cynthia Doty, Camille Colon, and Celia Knight, flogged raffle tickets between rainstorms. The winner will be chosen at the next Board of Directors meeting (always open to the public) on Tues., June 12. The winner's share of the split pot is \$256.

Hedy Campbell, leading the bake sale and refreshment table preparations, cajoled a worthy cast of volunteers: Susan Dessel, David Reich, Deborah Lott, Sue Maderer, Rosemary McGinn, Nancy Wight, Gillian Engberg, Margaret Beels, and Ruth Helfrich. Thank you all — we hope your loved ones got to share the bounty. We'd also like to thank Luciano from Sal & Carmine's and Lee Seinfeld from the Dive Bar, who were generous in their donations toward refreshments, as well as the management and staff at the St. Luke's Halfway House, led by Tina Gonzales and Ray Dooley, who offered to provide tables and chairs and to help control auto traffic.

More than a few neighbors and vendors were disappointed by the cancellation, but the only thing to say is, WAIT 'TIL NEXT YEAR!

The West 102nd & 103rd Streets Block Association Newsletter

info@w102-103blockassn.org
Hedy Campbell, editor; Amy Edelman, associate editor; Brad Spear, designer. Comments and questions related to the Association or Newsletter are welcomed. Address letters to Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 1940, New York, NY 10025. Email may be sent to editor@w102-103blockassn.org. Phone messages may be left at 212-865-8524. Previous issues of the Newsletter are available online at w102-103blockassn.org.

EMAIL LIST

The Block Association maintains an email list to notify residents about important matters that arise between issues of the Newsletter. You can join the list by sending your email address, full name, home address (with apartment number), and phone number to email@w102-103blockassn.org.

GUARD SCHEDULE

Our security guard makes rounds Monday through Thursday from 6 p.m. until midnight, and on Friday and Saturday from 7 p.m. until 1 a.m. To report neighborhood security issues to the guard or to request his assistance, call him at (646) 722-2240, or call the office of Starr Security at (212) 767-1110.

BLOCK ASSOCIATION UPCOMING EVENTS

Monthly Board Meetings

306 W. 102nd St., 8 p.m.

June 12

July 10

Sept. 11

Fall Newsletter

Early Sept.

Tree-Well Cleanup/Mulching

Sat., Oct. 13

Halloween Parade and Party

Wed., Oct. 31

Solstice Caroling

Thurs., Dec. 20

Help Wanted

THE BLOCK ASSOCIATION is seeking new board members! Our immediate need is for people who are willing to make an ongoing commitment to the Block Association. The best way to keep the organization fresh and moving forward is to welcome new ideas, new leadership, and new energy. Plus, many of our board members have served for decades! Although they agree that it's a satisfying role, they're ready to kick back and/or redirect their energies. Our monthly meetings (second Tuesday of each month, at 8 p.m., 306 W. 102nd St.) are quick and to the point and seldom last more than 90 minutes. Our camaraderie is robust. There are usually cookies. There aren't many circumstances in which you get to share your ideas, have a laugh, and make an impact on your neighborhood without taking more than a few steps from your own front door. Join us by coming to a monthly meeting or email info@w102-103blockassn.org.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTS OFFICERS

The following directors were elected to our board this spring:

BOB AARONSON

Block Party coordinator

HEDY CAMPBELL

newsletter editor; Solstice Caroling coordinator

CAMILLE COLON

guard service liaison

CYNTHIA DOTY

chair

JANE HOPKINS

newsletter ad sales; Halloween event coordinator

CELIA KNIGHT

recording secretary

GINGER LIEF

archivist; WSFED rep

SUE MADERER

co-treasurer

KOMAL RATHI

co-treasurer

MARK SCHNEIDERMAN

tree-well care

(Continued from page 1)

Spring Planting a Success!



Volunteers took advantage of a bright, sunny day to clean up our tree wells and plant annuals and perennials. Credit: Celia Knight.

In addition, we had a lot of assistance from residents of the treatment facility on W. 102nd St. And special thanks go to the residents and staff, Eddie, in particular, of 878 West End Ave., whose sidewalk we commandeered for the duration of the event.

If you'd like to help keep our trees healthy and make our neighborhood more beautiful, keep your eyes peeled for event posters come fall. In October, you'll have the chance to clean up the tree wells, spread mulch, and otherwise tuck in our trees for the winter. Contact trees@w102-103block.assn.org for more information or to volunteer.

What's New at the Website

By CAITLIN HAWKE

Editor's Note: Each issue, we cover news about the Block Association's website. If you are not visiting it, you are missing a regular blog, the newsletter archive, Block Party and membership information, and more. With this column, we decided to bring the blog to you. Below is an adaptation of a post written on April 30, in memory of one of our neighborhood businesswomen. To read the blog regularly, visit: www.w102-103blockassn.org/blog

In Appreciation and Remembrance: Kumiko Imamura

By CAITLIN HAWKE

ALITTLE MORE THAN THREE YEARS AGO, I wrote about a beautiful neighbor on this blog: Kumiko Imamura, a woman who worked as hard as anyone I've known, and always had a warm hello or good-bye and a smile.

Really, her smile started in her eyes — the smize — and then made its way across her whole face, like sunrise, at Sun-Chan, our local Japanese *izakaya*.

The quintessence of a hostess, she owned Sun-Chan with her husband, Tokishige, and her way was to welcome you in, tuck you into her apron, make sure you had a hot cup of green tea, and take care of you while you were "hers" — in her care at her hearth.

If you've been to Sun-Chan, you know her hearth was, in fact, a red-hot grill. So this genuine hospitality was in spite of standing long hours in the yakitori's scorching heat, with constant motion around her coming from her loyal staff, in a very tight space.

I wrote about her *robata* on the blog in a piece in the "Hyper-Local Eats" feature entitled "Sun-Chan on My Corner Makes Me Happy" on December 26, 2014. Here's an excerpt:

The front is run by the loveliest of lovelies, owner Kumiko Imamura, who daintily helms the robata. An inferno. Unflappable come long lines or relentless heat, Kumiko is the Goddess of Umami.

She churns out caramelized rice balls packing salty salmon or spicy cod roe. If her yakitori menu were an LP, it would be my desert island disc because I never get tired of any of it: chicken meatballs with a sweet-salty glaze, toro salmon and scallion skewers, roasted ginkgo nuts, scrumptiously salted yellowtail collar, smoky mackerel. Each morsel comes off her iron grill in the requisite slow-food time it takes to make something this authentic.

With great sadness, on April 30, I learned from Kumiko's husband that we'd unexpectedly lost this beautiful woman.

In Japanese, depending on how it's written, her name means "beauty," "forever," "child." ... To paraphrase James Joyce: She was Kumiko by name and *kumiko* by nature. And her loss is immense to the Sun-Chan family, which of course includes her own family, but also her staff and this community.

She weathered a terrible bout last year with the restaurant losing its gas, and she and Tokishige rebounded from the anguish of that saga with her arms spread wide to welcome her customers back. It's quite a cruel twist that she's now gone.

In mourning, Tokishige closed the restaurant in the first days of May to bid her farewell and on May 20 planned a memorial for her at the restaurant.

Kumiko is a neighbor who will be missed dearly, and Sun-Chan's community mourns alongside her husband and staff.

New Column to Spotlight the Lesser-Known Among Us

By KATE MCLEOD

EVER SINCE I MOVED to the Upper West Side decades ago, I have walked out of my building and into the street thanking the universe that I live in a place where I hear four languages before I get to the subway and share the street with people who are from so many different backgrounds.

I proposed an idea to the editors of this newsletter: Let's find out who these neighbors are. Where are they from? How did they get here? How did they end up in our 'hood? How did they find their way to doing what they do? What do they miss, if anything, from home? Are they able to go back and visit? Who are their family members? Do they have children? Are their kids happy here? Can they tell us something most of us don't know about the culture of their country of origin—or if they are from the U.S., what was it like growing up there, and what is it like being here now?

There is so much we can learn from knowing the folks who have businesses here. I've been thinking about this for a while now. And though this space would ordinarily have been occupied by an interview, life/work got in the way. I am looking forward to introducing the people behind the takeover menus, the groceries, the fruit stands, the hardware stores. See our Fall Newsletter for my first column!

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Meet Your Talented Neighbors

By JULIA C. SPRING

ART EXHIBITS AND MUSICAL PERFORMANCES FOR YOUR SUMMER PLEASURE.

BETSY GOLDBERG

We can catch the end of Betsy's oil-painting exhibit *Skies* at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism (15 W. 86th St.). It goes until **June 20** and is open **Thursdays, 4:45–6:00 p.m.; Fridays, 2–5 p.m.; Saturdays, 12:30–2:00 p.m.; and Mondays, 4:45–6:00 p.m.**

RUTH KOZODOY

Paintings by Ruth Kozodoy will be on exhibit **June 5 to July 7** at Vartali Salon (lobby level, Galleria, 115 E. 57th St., between Park and Lexington). Her works, in oil, include abstractions and landscapes.

DORIS STEVENSON

Doris, classical pianist, will be in two Masterworks Series chamber concerts this summer at Bargemusic, Fulton Ferry Landing (right under the Brooklyn end of the bridge). On **Sat., June 30, at 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.**, she, Mark Peskanov (violin), and Evan Drachman (cello) will perform trios by Beethoven and Arensky. On **Sat., July 14**, again at **6 p.m. and 8 p.m.**, she and Mark will play a Beethoven sonata for piano and violin as well as solos by Bach, Paganini, and others. For tickets (\$40; \$35 seniors, \$20 students) and directions: bargemusic.org

BLOOMINGDALE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

The annual Percussion Festival sounds like fun: **June 16, 3 p.m.** (323 W. 108th St.). The same day, at **4 p.m.**, the various orchestras of the school will perform their semi-annual concert at Broadway Presbyterian Church (601 W. 114th St.). On **June 22, 7 p.m.**, the Transcendental Heart Strings, a collaboration of faculty members, gives a concert at the school that includes works by Berlioz and Previn. Also at the end of the month are several student recitals. See bsmny.org for the schedule.

LISA PALAZZO

When Lincoln Plaza Cinemas closed

on Jan. 28 after losing its lease, the Upper West Side of Manhattan mourned a beloved cultural landmark and the neighborhood's premier independent art theater. Now a film-loving group of volunteers has incorporated as New Plaza Cinema to carry on Lincoln Plaza's legacy. New Plaza has begun seeking a site for a new theater. To contribute your time, money or skills, or get on the mailing list: newplazacinema.com

Do you have an upcoming publication, release, concert, exhibition, or other arts event, physical or virtual? Let me know. Send questions or notices for inclusion in the Fall 2018 Newsletter (or beyond) to creative@w102-103blockassn.org. Do it today, before you forget!

On Broadway

By KERSTIN HASENPUSCH

★ **The West 96 Deli** opened on W. 96th St. between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave.

★ The store on the southwest corner of Broadway and W. 98th St., formerly RCI, now has plywood surrounding it. According to sources, a physical therapy business will be located in the cellar of the building; no news yet about the main floor.

★ **The NuYu Revolution** exercise studio, on the west side of Broadway between W. 99th and 100th St., is now open for business. Located on the second floor above the former Turquaz restaurant, the studio offers a full schedule of spin, yoga, cardio, strength-training, and Pilates classes. Grand-opening packages as well as single-class rates are available.

★ **The UPS Store** formerly located on the west side of Broadway between W. 105th and W. 106th Sts. has moved eight blocks south to 2585 Broadway, between W. 97th and W. 98th Sts. The store continues to offer all of the same services previously available at the first

location; soon the shop will have the capability to print posters.

★ **The Muscle Maker Grill**, which opened within the past few years on the west side of Broadway between W. 104th and W. 105th Sts., has closed.

(Continued from page 1)

Annual Meeting Report

The commanding officer of the 24th Precinct stopped by to talk about the new neighborhood community officers who will be patrolling our area, and our neighbor Joan Martinez, from the auxiliary police officer patrol, talked about her work.

We then had a discussion about saving our local small businesses. Judith Norrell, owner of the Silver Moon bakery, told her story and explained the struggles she had dealing with her landlord to negotiate her new lease. After that, Yannis Tritas, from Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell's office, explained pending legislation to protect small businesses. Many asked what we can do, and the main answer was to support our local businesses by choosing them for our daily purchases rather than big chains or online retailers.

Again, thanks to all who helped make the evening a successful event.

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New Affordable-Housing Units Coming to W. 108th St.

THIS SPRING, with the support of Community Board 7 and Borough President Gale Brewer, the New York City Council voted to create 279 units of affordable housing on West 108th St. for seniors, families, and the formerly homeless. The plan was approved despite an extensive review process that was in part initiated by the efforts of Save Manhattan Valley, a community group formed when plans were announced to demolish a series of parking garages to make way for the development.

According to City Council Member Mark Levine, who was heavily involved in getting this project approved, the deal includes the following:

- A new turf athletic field for MS 54 (Booker T. Washington Middle School)
- A 6,000-square-foot community health center in the building
- Upgrades to the adjacent Anibal Aviles playground, including two new public restrooms, a sitting area for seniors, and the addition of a Parks Department worker
- Two public meeting spaces in the building for community programming
- Three parking spaces for the Central Park Medical Unit's off-duty ambulances
- Storage space for the Bloomingdale Family Preschool Program
- Thirty-three new street parking spaces on W. 104th St. between Amsterdam and Manhattan Aves.

Levine calls this a "huge win" for the neighborhood. "Enhanced parks, better school facilities, expanded healthcare, and new, affordable homes," he adds, "will make our community safer, healthier, and more livable."

Save Manhattan Valley has a very different response to the announcement. Their spokesperson reported that the interests of their more than 3,000 supporters were largely ignored by Council Member Levine, the Community Board, and the City Council. Of serious concern to the group was that

no attention was given to the independent environmental expert study SMV funded or the issues the findings raised for the community, although the city's own report did not contradict those findings. Concerns include: added traffic, potential vehicular accidents, increased air pollution, heavy-metal contamination resulting from demolition, shadow impacts on the school and playgrounds, and the breaking of the neighborhood's protective zoning, in particular.

Stormy Weather Causes Local Damage

REMEMBER THAT TERRIBLE STORM on the evening of Tues., May 15? The one that came with an extraordinarily bright flash of lightning and a clap of thunder that actually shook the buildings? The one that might or might not have been a derecho, which—who knew? — is in fact an actual meteorological term? It seems that the accompanying winds were so fierce that large panels of Styrofoam that were part of scaffolding on W. 102nd St. between West End Ave. and Riverside Dr. came loose and fell to the ground, one glancing off the rear end of a car parked on the block.

According to Raymond Dooley, who is in charge of the Mount Sinai treatment facility on the block, the panels were spread

out in front of the building as well as up and down and across the street. Residents of the facility saw some of the panels blowing up the block from Riverside Dr.

Once the storm had passed, Mr. Dooley took photos of the damage and sent them along to the hospital's real estate department, which is responsible for the building and the scaffolding that is erected there. We expect that Mount Sinai will address the safety issues with the company that erected the scaffolding. Mr. Dooley also sent a crew of residents out to clean up the debris, to prevent further damage.

There's always risk when a weather event like this blows into town. We're happy to report that no one was hurt and property damage was kept to a minimum. Thanks to Mr. Dooley and the treatment house residents for taking the initiative and cleaning up the block so quickly.

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Bloomington Aging in Place Honors Teresa Elwert with Its 2018 Sands Award

By LO-YI CHAN

AFTER A 10-HOUR FLIGHT FROM HAWAII recently, Teresa Elwert barely had time for a nap before leading her Monday 8 a.m. Brisk Walk in Central Park. Her fellow walkers were happy to have her back.

Well known for these walks and her many other volunteer activities, Teresa, a longtime W. 104th St. resident, was presented with the 2018 Sands Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service at BAiP's Volunteer Appreciation Day on April 8. The ceremony in Hirsch Hall at the Anshe Chesed synagogue was well attended by Teresa's many friends and neighbors.

The award is named for the late New York City architect Herman Sands, BAiP's original volunteer and one of its founders. Along with Teresa, BAiP recognized 150 other volunteers who make possible book clubs, a website, soup groups, Ping-Pong, salons, tech squads, singalongs, panel presentations, helping hands, and many other activities vital to older adults.

Teresa Elwert was born on Long Island and, as an infant, moved to Rutland, Vt., with her family. Her father was a consulting forester, taking care of Vermont's abundant woodlands. Her mother was a homemaker, taking care of her abundant family; Teresa was the third of six children. At the University of Vermont, she majored in theater and

minored in French (yes, she studied Molière).

In 1974, Teresa came to New York to start her career in the theater. She acted in off-off-Broadway plays and summer stock, then became a stage manager, and finally a production manager. After three years at a marketing and distribution firm (Platoon) and a brief stint at Miramax Films, she left the entertainment world in 1988 to join Mercer, a global human resource consulting firm, where she eventually worked in the new field of Knowledge Management (think Best Practices). After what she describes as "25 ever-exciting years at Mercer," Teresa retired in 2013.

Teresa's goal in retirement was to stay physically active and to meet new people. She was already a volunteer, serving as president of the W. 104th St. Block Association (sweeping her street was among her duties), a member of her co-op board, a gardener in Riverside Park, and a tree counter for a citywide tree census. Yet with time on her hands and a goal in mind, Teresa approached the newly formed, all-volunteer BAiP. It proved to be an excellent match.

Teresa describes her motive for volunteering as "enlightened self-interest." She has a passion for walking, so why not invite her fellow West Siders to share her passion? Thus was born her five-days-a-week BAiP Brisk Walk. More than 50 walkers have signed up to follow Teresa in this and her other outings. Often a dozen will walk with her, all year long, whether it's sunny or snowing, for an hour in Central Park, followed by coffee and conversation at Whole Foods. Teresa has expanded her walks to include art around the city, historic houses in all five boroughs, and gardens in Westchester, and has added outings for baseball in Staten Island and for tennis at the U.S. Open.

Teresa sees walking in groups as both a means to better health and a way to create a community of neighbors. This is the very essence of BAiP's mission, which is to help older adults lead vital, safe, connected, and comfortable lives as their needs change. With the Sands Award, BAiP celebrated Teresa Elwert and the many BAiP volunteers for all that they do to achieve this mission.

The neighborhood is in good hands.



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Three Inductees Join the Hall of Fame

By HEDY CAMPBELL

AT THE BLOCK ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL MEETING in March, I had the pleasure of inducting three local residents into our Neighborhood Hall of Fame, which honors those who have lived within our territory for 50 years or more. This is a process that I look forward to every year, as I interview each of the candidates, getting to know people I often have never met before. Our inductees have shared their personal stories with me, allowing me an up-close and personal peek into their lives—and into their apartments! It's always interesting to ask them to compare the neighborhood then versus now and to hear how they describe the similarities and differences.

The program was initiated in 2010 as a corollary to the West End Preservation Society's ultimately successful effort to achieve landmark status for West End Ave. While WEPS made the buildings and their histories their priority, the Block Association made our focus the people who live in the buildings and the stories they have to tell. You can read the full bios and see resident photographer Gus Butera's beautiful portraits of the six couples and 18 individuals we've inducted over the years by clicking on the Neighborhood Hall of Fame tab on the home page of our website. In alphabetical order, here are our newest inductees:

Margaret and Chris Beels moved into the neighborhood in 1967. Margaret grew up on Riverside Dr. a little to our north, but Chris was raised in



Dame Vivian Davidson Hewitt. Credit: Gus Butera.

Oklahoma, and moved many times before landing at Columbia University and settling here. They credit a savvy real estate broker with helping them find their home, which they accomplished in 48 hours. Together they have devoted their entire working lives to the field of mental health, specializing in family therapy. Books, art, and theater are close to their hearts, as are social welfare and political change.

One of the features of the neighborhood that drew the Beelses here originally was its sustainability for people of all ages, and they believe that hasn't changed a bit. Similarly, they praise the area's built-in sense of community and the beauty of Riverside Park. The biggest change in the neighborhood, they say, is the presence of Bloomingdale Aging in Place. They're big, big fans. Chris is a former board member of the organization and Margaret is an enthusiastic participant in the stitchery group; together they enjoy the Blooming Hour cocktail gatherings. They do miss the greengrocers and other small shops that served over the years as impromptu gathering places for people, especially older residents.

Dame Vivian Davidson Hewitt — yes, she is an official recipient of the British title — moved here in 1964, preceding the Beelses by just three years. If I listed all of the firsts that Dame Vivian can lay claim to, there'd be no room for other articles in this newsletter!! She was the first African-American chief librarian for the Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Council on Foreign Relations, and was the first African-American president of the Special Libraries

Association. She is believed to be the first African-American librarian to work in the city of Pittsburgh. She and her late husband, John, amassed an enormous, highly regarded, and finely curated collection of African-American art, which was purchased by the Bank of America in 1998 and spent 10 years touring before settling into its permanent home, the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture in Charlotte, N.C. The



Margaret and Chris Beels. Credit: Gus Butera.

collection includes works by Romare Bearden, Margaret Burroughs, Jonathan Green, Jacob Lawrence, Elizabeth Catlett, and Henry Ossawa Tanner. Dame Vivian has also written a memoir, *The One and Only*, which is for sale

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Hall of Fame

at Amazon.

Closer to our collective home, she was among a very small handful of families of color who managed to purchase a townhouse on West End Ave., which was strictly off limits to non-whites in the early 1960s.

Dame Vivian observes that the neighborhood has changed for the better. "If there is still racism, at least it's covert," she says, before speaking passionately about the change for the worse nationwide that "that bully in the White House" has inspired, and comparing today's West End Ave. to the Upper East Side's East End Ave. She also reflects that the neighborhood continues to be a fertile home base for intellectuals, culture, and the arts.



Try TriBloomingdale!

The TriBloomingdale initiative is a way to connect neighbors from the West 102nd & 103rd Streets Block Association with members of the W. 104th St. Block Association and BAiP. TriBloomingdale currently offers a brisk Sunday-morning walking group and a monthly neighborhood networking group for sole proprietors working from home. Please email Caitlin Hawke for more information or to start your own TriBloomingdale group: chawke@bloominplace.org.

Details are here: w102-103blockassn.org/tribloomingdale-initiative.html

Bloomingdale's Choicest Choice: Schatzie's/Richie's Burger Joint

By DAYLE VANDER SANDE

THE COW HAS COME HOME! And she's in front of 2665 Broadway, welcoming you in to try the superior offerings at Schatzie's Prime Meats.



Tony Schatz, fifth-generation butcher.

The longtime established shop was on Broadway and W. 104th St. in the 1920s, and, after stints in the Bronx and on Madison and Amsterdam Aves., it is now back in our neighborhood, sharing its space with Richie's Burger Joint. This is thanks to Richie Schatz ("Schatzie junior"), who conceived of having a "case-to-table" restaurant

in the shop for the freshest, most delectable down-home meal you could ask for.

Tony Schatz, known as "Schatzie," has been a butcher for 50 years. His five-generation family business,

which opened its first American shop in Astoria in 1911, offers the same time-honored excellence as his great-great-grandfather did in Speyer, Germany, in the early 19th century. Decades of photos adorn the walls of the new shop,

sharing that proud history. Schatzie's has been kept alive as a family business steeped in tradition, and now, with the addition of the restaurant, it thrives on innovation.

Richie's Burger Joint (RBJ) is a casual dining experience that feels like you're in your own backyard, except you wish you could grill so expertly. Ever-congenial yet no-nonsense, Richie is always present, and makes you feel like

one of the family when you arrive.

First, try one of Richie's hand-selected small brewery craft beers, which are Grade A and change seasonally. His house wines, also rotating, are selected by the neighboring Grape Collective, whose expertise matches Schatzie's own high standards. The menu is comprehensive,

BROADWAY DIVE
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yet focused on making magic out of USDA Choice prime meats — case-to-table provides a unique experience by giving the best, freshest possible fare. You would be hard-pressed to find something of this quality that's so unpretentious and so affordable anywhere else in the city. No new-age designer food found here: just good, reliable, better-than-home-quality, meaty delights.

One item on the menu rivals the next. I like my burger medium-rare, and RBJ delivers it perfect every time. I recommend both the "Schatzie," which is made from their proprietary prime-blend burger ground in-house, as well as the Hudson Valley grass-fed, which I find distinct in flavor and equally excellent. "Any or all toppings" are included! Sometimes it's hard to answer the burger craving when I know that the world's best brisket is also to be had here! This opinion has been shared by many of my friends — not so much in words, as in head-nodding, wide-eyed, cud-chewing grunts when asked. One friend described the pulled pork as "the juiciest, most tender and delicious thing" he could imagine. On my last visit, I tried the wings cooked with honey-mustard sauce (one of six choices), which is not cloyingly sweet, as you usually find, and has a mildly spicy kick to it. These are from free-range poultry, and that makes these bigger and meatier than you're likely to find elsewhere. My mother devours the

all-beef hot dog — that's all you need to know about that.

Every sandwich comes with perfect hand-cut fries, but then there are the sides. Run, don't walk, to try the Brussels sprouts with pancetta! Heaven in a bowl. The onion rings and sweet-potato fries are superior, but I have yet to try the Belgian-style fries with rosemary and truffle oil. They sound delicious, as does the "famous" mac and cheese.

Sometimes it's hard to answer the burger craving when I know that the world's best brisket is also to be had here!

Oh, yeah — there are salads. House and a kale Caesar. I'm sure they're good, too.

New innovations are coming this September. RBJ will offer an entire steak menu of various cuts for the mouth-watering carnivore. And though house wine is sold, BYOW is encouraged so that you may pair it with the steak to your liking. Richie tells me that the 10 best steakhouses in the city all get their meat from the same place, so minus the fancy atmosphere and white-glove service, you can get

the same meal — and fresher! — right around the corner and won't have to wear your tiara. (Make note that while Schatzie's accepts credit cards, RBJ currently only accepts cash until later this year when it, too, will take plastic. It does have an ATM on the premises.)

Richie's Burger Joint is also a neighborhood hangout. When there's a big game on, people congregate to watch it on two television screens. Sports are Richie's "official passion," and in his spare time, he coaches football at the Fieldston School in Riverdale.

Perhaps my enthusiasm makes it seem too good to be true. I can only recommend you try it for yourself and tell me what you think — that is, if you can stop chewing to speak. You'll probably find I held back.

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From left to right: Elder son Richie, proprietor of Richie's Burger Joint, Tony, and younger son Jimmy.

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