



# NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2019

VOL.49, NO. 2

## Service Personnel and Longtime Resident Honored at March Meeting

By CYNTHIA DOTY

**T**HIS YEAR, AT OUR ANNUAL MEETING, in addition to inducting one resident into our Neighborhood Hall of Fame, which honors those who have lived in the neighborhood for 50 years or more, we also honored some of the service staff who have worked in our buildings for 25 years or more. Fourteen individuals representing six buildings were acknowledged and thanked for their service.

The meeting began with the presentation of our financial report and a review of the activities of the past year. Hedy Campbell then introduced Ginger Lief, our newest Hall of Fame member. Hedy gave a wonderful tribute to Ginger, highlighting her history in the neighborhood (see p. 11). We were pleased to thank Ginger for all she has done and continues to do as a neighbor and loyal board member.

We then honored the people who do so much for us as door staff, porters, and supers. Neighbors shared special memories of staff helping them in ways above and beyond their usual duties. Certificates of appreciation were presented to: Alex Rylos, Robert Lisowski, and Luis Maturana (305 Riverside Dr.); Eric Allen, Pedro Aguilar, and Nick Pacheco (300 Riverside Dr.); Zuffer Omeragic and Bobbie Schraud (308 W. 103rd St.); Maria and Mario Vella (240 W. 102nd St.); Rafael Herrera (315 W. 102nd St.); and Eddie Graham, Jaime Zavala, and Roselio Salas (the Broadmoor).

Our board of directors was elected at this meeting as well (see p. 4). During the Q-and-A period, residents expressed a variety of concerns, including the abundance of scaffolding throughout our area, the construction on the Broadway mall, and excessively loud sirens, particularly on Mt. Sinai ambulances. The issue has been brought to the attention of Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell. He has written to Mt. Sinai and is also circulating a petition to ask that the ambulances' volume be turned down.

## Block Party a Resounding Success

By BOB AARONSON

**S**ATURDAY, MAY 18, began as a mild, cloudless, low-wind day, and neighborhood vendors, bargain hunters, and buyers turned out in record numbers for the Block Association's annual Block Party. Setup went smoothly, as St. Luke's volunteers, led by Tina Rodriguez, put up and manned the traffic barriers and provided tables and chairs for the bake sale, silent auction, and raffle-ticket sales. Jane Hopkins, Bob Flanagan, and Celia Knight checked in all the vendors and directed them to their spaces. Hedy and Ed Campbell brought in the refreshments (provided by Jill Chase, Camille Colon, Susan Dessel, Deborah Lott, Sue Maderer, Barbara Peck, Judy Pietrasiewicz, David Reich, Chris and Charlotte Symons, Nancy Wight, Nancy Gropper, and Hedy herself), coolers, and ice (thanks to Lee Seinfeld at the Broadway Dive Bar). Hedy and her staffing crew (Margaret Beels, Nancy Gropper, Eliza Lansdale, Deborah Lott, Alexandra Davidge, Sue Maderer, Barbara Peck, Chris, Charlotte, and Olivia Symons, and Nancy Wight) then managed to sell out all the baked goods and pizzas (supplied at a deep discount by Luciano of Sal & Carmine's) over the next six hours.

Sue Maderer revived the silent auction (see page 7 for a list of those who donated and those who took the time to bring those donations in), and Deborah Lott took it over the top with an elegant display and careful supervision during the day. By the time you read this, she'll have contacted the winners and they'll have begun enjoying their winnings. Speaking of winnings, thanks are due to the raffle-ticket pre-sales organized and supported by Cynthia Doty, Alexis Waggoner, Sue Maderer, Celia Knight, and Ginger Lief, as well as sales throughout the day by Sue Maderer, Camille Colon, Jane Hopkins, and Komal Rathi. The drawing was done at 4 p.m. sharp by two Law Enforcement Explorers program volunteers. Camille Colon won the raffle and donated \$100 of the winnings to the Block Association.

We would like to thank those behind-the-curtain helpers who posted notices and fliers in the weeks leading up to the

*(Continued on page 7)*

## The West 102nd & 103rd Streets Block Association Newsletter

[info@w102-103blockassn.org](mailto:info@w102-103blockassn.org)  
Hedy Campbell, 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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.

## Help Wanted

**T**HE 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](mailto:info@w102-103blockassn.org).

### BLOCK ASSOCIATION UPCOMING EVENTS

**BAiP Presents (see p. 10)**  
Ben Barrack Auditorium  
The New Jewish Home  
120 W. 106th St.  
7:00–8:30 p.m.

**"Fall Risks and Effective  
Fall Prevention"**  
Thurs., June 20

**"Planning for Caregiving  
at Home"**  
Thurs. July 25

**Fall Newsletter**  
Early Sept.

**Fall Mulching and  
Tree-Well Cleanup**  
Sat., Oct. 5

**Halloween Parade & Party**  
Thurs., Oct. 31

**Solstice Caroling**  
Sat., Dec. 21

### BLOCK ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

Regular Block Association meetings are usually held on the second Tuesday of each month at 8 p.m., 306 W. 102nd St.

June 11

July 9

Sept. 10

## April Showers Brought May Flowers

By MARK SCHNEIDERMAN

**T**HE BLOCK ASSOCIATION'S annual spring planting on Sat., April 20, was a success, if a damp one. In somewhat dour weather, Michael Stearns, Celia Knight, Alexis James and her family, Nancy Gropper, Cynthia Doty, and Tina Rodriguez, along with my family and others from the neighborhood planted 13 flats



of flowers. Eleven bags of mulch were spread on tree wells.

We are planning on several improvements for next year. The larger plants were a hit and are easier to plant, so we will buy more of those. Also, we will hold the event in early May, when the weather is more likely to be warm. Many thanks to all who attended.

Even though the event is in the past, there's still a way you can help. Especially when—if—we have a hot, dry spell, take

a few minutes and water the plants in the tree well closest to your home. Some of the planted tree wells aren't watered regularly by building personnel; you'll help the flowers stay healthy through the fall if you give them a drink once in a while.

In other horticultural news, the Block Association has authorized a modest budget to repair or replace the iron tree guards. If your building would like a new tree guard or has a damaged one that might be repaired, send me an email at [trees@w102-103blockassn.org](mailto:trees@w102-103blockassn.org). Hopefully, your building will share some of the cost. I will arrange for permits and for the work to be done. Meanwhile, enjoy our spring flowers!

# Artist Scott Benites Captures the Corners of Bloomingdale

By CAITLIN HAWKE

*[Editor's Note: The Block Association website is filled with information to tide you over between issues of our newsletter. Caitlin's interview below with a young artist appeared in a longer format on our blog recently, and we share it as one example of what you might be missing if you are not visiting our site. To check out the blog, go to: w102-103blockassn.org/blog.]*

## I LOVE IT WHEN BLOG READERS

TURN ME ON TO something they've seen in the neighborhood. That happened not too long ago when neighbor Terence Hanrahan shared that he'd encountered a young painter, Scott Benites, right outside his building. He snapped a shot of Scott at work and sent it to me. This, in turn, led me to this rising artist, who cites Edward Hopper and Edouard Manet as among his influences, and discusses his fondness for painting "en plein air," his training, his drive, and zhis passion for art. Earlier this year, I conducted this interview.

**Q:** Why did you choose to paint at the corner where Terence Hanrahan met up with you?

**A:** I was born and raised on the Upper West Side, and I was always inspired by the cityscapes and, specifically, the architecture of this city. Last summer I planned to create a unique oil-on-canvas cityscape collection. What better [choice] than to paint the scenes en plein air? After doing my first plein-air painting of W. 96th St. and Columbus Ave. and receiving so much positive feedback from

the neighborhood, I figured I should continue to paint local sites because it was so much fun. My plan was to first paint every avenue, and then continue down the city blocks to create a unique collection.

**Q:** I love the originality of that idea. It seems, though, that you have a particular fondness for positioning your easel at the southwest corner or west side of the street, looking toward the northeast corner of intersections. True?

**A:** Yes, it is true. Painting from a distance allows me to draw the preliminary sketch of the buildings' perspective. From this distance, I can see the light of day play on the forms of the buildings. I can also determine the composition of the painting. I strive to capture the strong contrast of light and shadow of the block. That contrast of light adds a dramatic feeling to my work.



Scott Benites's canvas "en plein air" at the corner of West End Ave. and W. 102nd St. (Credit: T. Hanrahan)

**Q:** Do you have any special connection to this neighborhood of W. 102nd and 103rd Sts. near Broadway?

**A:** The entire UWS is very special to me as well as to my family, who also grew up in the same neighborhood. My main subjects are Manhattan buildings from Riverside to Central Park. Every time I complete a new plein-air cityscape painting, I become completely moved and inspired to create more, as well as to connect with other artists and admirers from around the neighborhood.

**Q:** Can you tell me a little about yourself?

**A:** I am a born and raised Yankee, and I have been interested in the arts since I was 16. I knew at that age that I would commit the rest of my life to the arts. During my teenage years, I participated in a MoMA after-school program, where I had my first exhibition and met mentors who guided me to the best art colleges and exposed me to the galleries and salons of Pablo Picasso and other well-known artists whose works hang at MoMA.

I credit my artistic "discovery" to my high school graffiti friends. They inspired me in ninth grade with their black-book sketches and lettering. After one of my close friends passed away at 19, my desire to pursue the arts in a more professional manner grew. I am 27 now, and a passion for the arts is still [in] me. It was a struggle to complete my bachelor's degree; [I had] to attend three different colleges. My burning desire is what pushed me to persevere when my financial circumstances restricted me in any way. If I was short on money, art is what set me free. Over the past two summers I have sold over 80 paintings.

**Q:** I can see from your website, *scottbenites.com*, that you paint a lot of exteriors but also note there are portraits. How would you characterize your style?

**A:** My work explores the style of realism. Most of my works reflect the four seasons of the city. You can see in my paintings how the stores change their window displays and how the figures change their attire to fit with the feeling of the seasons and temperature. Selections of my works reflect my favorite season, the Christmas holiday.

**Q:** Do you draw inspiration from any particular artists?

**A:** Many. But my top five include Edward Hopper, Norman Rockwell, Fairfield Porter, Rackstraw Downes, and Edouard Manet. I love their painterly approach to life drawing and the form.

**Q:** I take it that your career as an artist is gaining momentum. What is the ideal way to balance your artistic goals with the pressures of the high cost of living in NYC?

*(Continued on page 4)*

## 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

### **NANCY GROPPER**

### **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

### **ALEXIS JAMES WAGGONER**

# On Broadway



By MARK SCHNEIDERMAN

## OPEN

★ The **CVS** at the southwest corner of W. 110th St. is officially open. Somebody there felt the need to make it nice, really nice. I question their judgment; it has carpeting.

★ **Nobody Told Me** opened at 951 Amsterdam Ave., between W. 106th and W. 107th Sts. It's your classic amazing-drinks-with-good-food-in-a-nice-place joint. I've been waiting for it to open for about a year. I hope they let me in after it starts to get crowded.

★ **West End Taqueria** is open on the northwest corner of West End Ave. and W. 96th St., the former home of a different taqueria. There is a new chef and I like the food. I also have a fantasy that they will serve coffee to the drivers lining up at that corner to turn west toward the highway.

## CHANGED

★ **Schatzie's**, the butcher shop and burger joint at 2665 Broadway, between W. 101st and W. 102nd Sts., did some remodeling. The butcher counter plus takeout remains, but the sit-down restaurant side has closed; that space is currently for rent.

★ The former home of **Il Gatto Nero**, at the corner of Broadway and W. 106th St., has been totally gutted, with all the restaurant fittings removed. What will come next?

## CLOSING

★ **Starbucks**, a coffee and coffee-milkshake restaurant at the northwest corner of Broadway and W. 99th St., is closing on July 24.

★ The **Walgreens** on Broadway between W. 96th and W. 97th Sts. is closing on June 3. That's going to be a big space to fill.

## CLOSED

★ **West End Hall**, the bar and beer garden at 2756 Broadway, between W. 105th and W. 106th Sts., has closed.

★ **Manchester Diner**, on the northeast corner of Broadway and W. 108th St., has closed. Your future diner cravings will need to be satisfied by Metro Diner (northwest corner of Broadway and W. 100th St.) or the Broadway coffee shop (east side of Broadway between W. 101st and 102nd Sts.).

## ALSO...

★ According to signs posted on the **Broadway malls**, the ongoing renovation project will reconstruct landscapes, pavements, fences, and benches at several malls along Broadway from W. 102nd to W. 104th Sts.

(Continued from page 3)

## Artist Scott Benites Captures the Corners of Bloomingdale

**A:** It is my burning desire to be successful as a visual artist. My artistic career has been my number-one priority for the last 10 years, and it's now off to a great start. My ideal way is to run my own online business, selling latex original giclée prints to my fans and supporters to fund my work and continue my collection of plein-air cityscapes. To make it, I also currently work for a museum in Soho called the Color Factory. I'd like to sell my works

to private collectors and museums. It is extremely challenging for an artist to afford living and working in NYC at my age. To be successful as a visual artist, you need to have superior skill, discipline, and the right connections and people skills. Learning essential business skills throughout the artistic curriculum is a valuable asset in a young artist's career. This is something a lot of art schools leave out. The artist is then forced to rely on a gallery to

help with painting sales and logistics. Many artists have to learn this on their own, the hard way. Affordable housing for artists, I would say, would be the best thing to advocate for.

To see the illustrated version of the blog post from which this piece was adapted, visit: [w102-103blockassn.org/blog/seen-in-the-neighborhood-8977321](http://w102-103blockassn.org/blog/seen-in-the-neighborhood-8977321).

# Meet Your Talented Neighbors

By JULIA C. SPRING

**F**ROM THE SUBMISSIONS I RECEIVED, it looks like summer might be a little quiet this year. Yet there are still some enticing choices, including a ukulele-strumming group, a Japanese culture festival in Bryant Park, and new bird sculptures on the Broadway mall at W. 96th and W. 105th Sts.

## DEB RABBAI

*Broadway's Next Hit Musical* ([broadwaysnexthitmusical.com](http://broadwaysnexthitmusical.com)) will start performances soon at the Jerry Orbach Theater (1627 Broadway, at 50th St.). This hilarious show is the only unscripted musical show where master improvisers (including Deb) gather hit-song suggestions from the audience and create a spontaneous evening of music, humor, and laughter. Each night the audience votes for its favorite song and watches as the cast turns it into a full-blown unique musical. Performances are **Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.: June 6, 13, 20, and 27.** More dates may be added. Tickets start at \$28 and can be purchased at [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com) or by calling the box office at (212) 921-7862.

## THE NEW YORK BUDDHIST CHURCH

Located on Riverside Dr. between W. 105th and W. 106th Sts., NYBC has several regular arts activities:

The New Uke City Strummers Circle meets two Saturdays a month at the church at **12:30 p.m.**; this month

they will meet on **June 8 and 22.** Bring a ukulele; informal instruction is available. For further information, contact Richard Gross, the director, at [rrg144@gmail.com](mailto:rrg144@gmail.com).

Both the Tachibana dance group and its Soh Daiko drumming group have end-of-the-year performances: Tachibana's annual recital is at the NYCB on **Sun., June 16, 2 p.m.**; and Soh Daiko presents its 40th-anniversary performance at the Miller Theater (2960 Broadway) on **Sat., June 22, 2 p.m.** Tickets are \$35 at door, \$30 at <https://40th.sohdaiko.org/>. Soh Daiko and other groups will be performing **Sun., July 14, 1-5 p.m.**, as NYBC sponsors its annual Obon Festival of Japanese culture in Bryant Park. I've seen the Soh Daiko drumming, and it's really exciting to watch, so catch it one place or the other.

## RIVERSIDE CLAY TENNIS ASSOCIATION

As it has for at least the past 20 summers, RCTA will host concerts on the lawn by the tennis courts (in Riverside Park at W. 97th St.), **Saturdays at 7 p.m.**, starting **June 15.** (Ron McClure, jazz) and continuing through **Aug. 24** (except for July 20). Choose blues, pop, classical... Details at [rcta.tennisgroups.us/rcta/summer-concerts](http://rcta.tennisgroups.us/rcta/summer-concerts). If you or your guests haven't been there before, make sure you also check the directions to the courts—it's easy to get lost.

## BROADWAY MALL ASSOCIATION

A new public art installation will be up from **June 2019 to Jan. 2020** at various **Broadway** malls. The reclaimed wood sculptures by Nicolas Holiber are *Birds on Broadway*, the *Audubon Sculpture Project*. It calls attention to American endangered species; the W. 105th St. bird is a double-crested cormorant and the W. 96th St. sculpture is a brant.

## RIVERSIDE PARK CONSERVANCY

Summer on the Hudson includes all sorts of events, not just "arts" performances. There's yoga, the Limón dance company, tai chi, movies on the pier, and educational sessions: [riversideparknyc.org](http://riversideparknyc.org).

*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 2019 Newsletter (or beyond) to [creative@w102-103blockassn.org](mailto:creative@w102-103blockassn.org). Do it today, before you forget!*

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# News from TriBloomingtondale

**T**RI BLOOMINGTONDALE IS OUR INITIATIVE, TOGETHER WITH BAIP AND THE W. 104TH ST. BLOCK ASSOCIATION, that offers neighbors even more opportunities to connect. Check out the list of activities below. If you wish to join any of these activities, or if you have an idea for a tri-organizational pursuit, contact Caitlin Hawke: [chawke@bloominplace.org](mailto:chawke@bloominplace.org).

## READ SCI-FI WITH US!

The TriBloomingtondale Sci-Fi Reading Group is led by Jandy Warner. Members share their love of favorite classics, such as Robert A. Heinlein's *Double Star*, as well as newer titles like Terry Pratchett's *Making Money* and John Scalzi's *Redshirts*. Jandy is a fan who has enjoyed the genre for more than 50 years. The group meets on third Thursdays at 7 p.m.

## WALK FAST WITH US!

For brisk walkers, our fast Sunday-morning walk may be just right for you. Meet up at 8 a.m. with neighbors each Sunday and get your heart pumping by walking at a pace of 3.7 MPH. The walks are led by Teresa Elwert.

## NETWORK YOUR BUSINESS WITH US!

Networking in the Neighborhood is our monthly meet-up group for neighborhood sole proprietors running a business from home. Learn best practices and get advice for building your website, managing your social media, and handling clients and billing. This group ranges from accountants to graphic designers to business consultants and more. Monthly meetings are held on first Friday mornings and led by Harriet Hoffman, a seasoned networker and sole proprietor.

## GO GREEN WITH US!

Our newest group is It's Easy Being Green, led by Sharon Waskow and Christine Campbell. Its mission is to raise awareness of the effects of climate change in NYC and to promote easily achievable actions that neighbors can take. The group plans to build a coalition of neighbors who will work to effect changes on a personal, building, or block level. If you wish to join, you may attend monthly meetings and/or sign up for action emails that the group will circulate. Two of the group's publications are available at the Block Association website ([w102-103blockassn.org](http://w102-103blockassn.org)).

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(Continued from page 1)

# Block Party

Block Party: Michael Stearns, Margaret Beels, Anthony Bellov, Terence Hanrahan, Gerry Feidner, Ginger Lief, and Jane Hopkins. And, finally, the biggest thanks of all go to our Block Association members and neighbors, who brought the joy and community spirit.

## SILENT AUCTION

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# Work Resumes at 315 W. 103; Suit Filed

By RICHARD ROBBINS

**I**N MARCH 2019, the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) allowed the current owner of 315 W. 103rd St. to resume a project to add two stories to the top of the building and expand the rear. This ruling lifted the stop-work order that had effectively been in place since July 2009. (The original permit had been granted based on the previous owner's false claims of vacancy and compliance with code.)

In 2017, despite the stop-work order and without approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), the new owners built a six-story cinder-block wall on the expanded footprint in the rear of the building. That June, the DOB fined the owners \$24,000 for continuing work, a fine that has yet to be paid. In fact, the LPC had previously told the owners that they would need to retain the original rear wall if they wanted LPC staff to be able to approve the project without a public hearing and commission-level review, which are required for more substantial alterations.

Nonetheless, in January 2018, LPC staff issued a lower-level approval, based on the assertion that the partially completed work was grandfathered in and that LPC was only approving minor changes, such as alterations to

windows and doors. Even after this approval, the LPC's deputy general counsel said that this new cinder-block wall was "temporary," adding that an LPC permit would be required if the wall were to be made permanent. But the DOB reinstated the go-ahead for the overall project without that LPC permit.

I live next door to the building, and filed a lawsuit against the LPC for approving the project without a public hearing and commission-level review. The grounds are that because the original permit expired before the building and surrounding district was designated a landmark (June 2015), there was no valid permit that could be grandfathered in. There are a number of precedents that indicate that, in this case, the LPC is required to review the entire project, and thus a public hearing and commission-level approval is also required. In court filings, the LPC argued that "the rear yard addition itself was approved and constructed before the building's historic designation"; in fact, the rear wall was constructed in 2017, nearly two years after the designation was put in effect.

The case will be heard by the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court in September. If you have questions or would like to be notified once a date is set, please contact [315@w102-103blockassn.org](mailto:315@w102-103blockassn.org).



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# SMALL-BUSINESS CONNECTION

## Hair Today, Goodwill Tomorrow

By DAYLE VANDER SANDE

**A WOMAN WALKS INTO A BAR.** Specifically, Candida Ortiz, hair stylist and manager at the Color Room (east side of Broadway between W. 101st and W. 102nd Sts.), walks into

the Broadway Dive Bar, two doors south of the salon, after work one day and meets bartender Erin Grimmer. This was a most fortuitous meeting, as it turns out. Erin, a recent transplant to Bloomingdale from San Diego, had been looking for a hairdresser who would agree to cut her hair for free so she

could donate the long tresses to charity. In return, Erin would give the stylist her loyal business in the future. She visited and wrote proposals to many salons, but no one would agree. Candida volunteered without hesitation. Beyond that of happy coincidence, this is a story that treats of the culture of small businesses working together toward the victory and joy of benevolence.

This will be Erin's sixth donation of hair since she was 13 years old. With this recent—and most likely final—donation, she will have given 100 inches over a span of 23 years. Organizations that collect donated hair for wigs have strict requirements: It usually must be “virgin” hair, that is, untreated and uncolored, and at least eight inches in length.

There are a number of charitable organizations that one can donate hair to. Locks of Love ([locksloflove.org](http://locksloflove.org)), for example, produces wigs for “Canadian and American children in need due to medical conditions that have caused

them to permanently lose their hair.” The Clean Wave program ([matteroftrust.org/297/clean-wave-program](http://matteroftrust.org/297/clean-wave-program)) accepts donations of hair, fur, and fleece “to soak up major oil spills and help keep storm drains and waterways clean.” They responded, for example, to the

Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 with woven hair mats crafted from donations.

This time around, Erin chose to give her locks to the Great Cut ([thegreatcut.us](http://thegreatcut.us)), an event held in San Diego on Mar. 16, which aimed to break the Guinness World Record for most hair donated to charity in 24 hours. It needed to amount to at least 200 pounds of hair, which would require donations from 2,000 long-haired donors. The hair was being donated to Children With Hair Loss ([childrenwithhairloss.us](http://childrenwithhairloss.us)), which “provides human hair replacements at no cost to children and young adults facing medically-related hair loss.” Happily, the record was broken, with 2,834 donations received, amounting to 339 pounds in all (349 donors from all over the world onsite, and the balance

*This will be Erin's sixth donation of hair ... With this recent—and most likely final—donation, she will have given 100 inches over a span of 23 years.*

mailed in, also coming from all four corners). Candida cut 16 inches off for Erin to donate to this cause. Now she sports a perky and becoming shoulder-length “do,” crowning a face glowing with satisfaction.

Erin grew up with a background in charity. Her parents, lovingly married for 52 years, lost two children to a congenital disease, and in order to cope and not give up hope, they dove headlong into volunteerism with the Ronald McDonald House Charities ([rmhc.org](http://rmhc.org)), whose mission is to “create, find, and support programs that directly improve the health and well-being of children,” via a variety of programs worldwide to help families cope financially and emotionally during the stressful time of a child’s hospitalization for serious illness. Volunteers help families by “cooking, hosting, listening, nurturing, or by simply being there and helping out in any way they can.” Erin spends her Christmas handing out gifts to RMHC children with her home RMHC chapter. Goodwill is in her blood, and she tells me she “can’t turn it off.” Nor does she ever want to. After all, giving is itself a cyclic gift. It is her hope that her efforts will serve to inspire readers here to make a difference in others’ lives. There is always the need out there for a helping hand, and hopefully one will reach out to us should we ever be in need ourselves. Summer is around the corner. Perhaps that is a good time to use some down time for charitable volunteerism and come to realize the renewable resource of goodwill, bringing joy to those who give as well as who receive.

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# Eliano Bráz: 103rd St. Violinist

By KATE MCLEOD

**I**F YOU ARE ONE OF THE LUCKY RIDERS, you have heard Eliano Bráz at the 103rd St./Broadway subway station. And if you have heard how he plays the violin or viola, you probably have asked yourself, “How can this be? How can this amazing musician be here in the subway?”

Bráz, it turns out, is the artistic and executive director of Terra Symphony Orchestra (TSO), the first Brazilian-based orchestra in New York, founded in 2015. This 38-to-42-piece orchestra is funded in part with the donations you make in the subway station. It’s a rags to tuxedos story, in its way.

Bráz, who is about to turn 43, was born in Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil. Although he was a street kid at nine, within a year he began studying violin with Vasquen Fermanian at Social Service of Industry (Sesi-Ce) and the conservatory of the Federal University of Ceará. Fermanian is a noted musician in Brazil and has a big role in supporting the youth orchestras. Bráz joined his first orchestra at 12, played solo at 13, and composed his first string quartets a year later for a music festival that he founded. He played with a philharmonic orchestra in Brazil and studied chamber and orchestral music. He was invited to play with noted Brazilian and international musicians.

Bráz eventually followed a woman he was in love with to the U.S. That relationship did not work out (no hard feelings), but he has continued to make waves in New York, performing at Carnegie hall, Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall, Town Hall, and other venues. His band has played all over the city, including at Le Poisson Rouge, Canal

Room, Miss Favela, Zinc, Esperanto, Nublu, Zebulon, SOB’s, Cabanas, Drum, and Bembe. He has been reviewed in *TimeOut* and *New York* magazines and been featured on *The View* and the *Today* show (with Rihanna) and has appeared with Marc Anthony at Madison Square Garden and Radio City Music Hall. He performed with the band Florence + the Machine on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*.

Bráz’s favorite piece of classical music is Beethoven’s “Symphony No. 7,” the second movement, but don’t think classical is his only métier. Bráz plays a type of Brazilian dance-party music called *farró*.

The origin of the word *farró* is debated, but some say the word comes



from the English “for all.” In the 1900s English engineers were building the Great Western railroad in Recife, which is in northeast Brazil. Their parties on weekends were dubbed “for all” and that became, in Brazilian, *farró*. *Farró* is the most popular genre and dance in the northeast and it has spread throughout Brazil. Don’t try this at home unless you are sure-footed and rhythmic: [youtube.com/watch?v=LiQXAT08BUM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiQXAT08BUM)

If you are looking to explore Brazilian music, Bráz recommends *farró* music by Luiz Gonzaga, Dominginhos, and

Jackson do Pandeiro; Brazilian jazz by Hermeto Pascoal; and chorinho music by Pixinguinha.

Bráz often organizes concerts for his orchestra at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music on W. 37th St. But the best way to catch him is serendipitously at our subway stop and by checking his website for upcoming events at [terrasymphonymusic.com](http://terrasymphonymusic.com).

Despite the challenges of work and language, Bráz has said, “I don’t regret for one minute coming here. The acceptance of the public here is amazing.”

Does he like playing in the subway? “I love it. I love sharing my passion with others, and busking is part of the culture here. It isn’t always to raise money. I make good connections and they bring me gigs just like you are doing right now, trying to help me in your way.”

Eliano Bráz says just enjoy the music and give a donation if you have it or if you can or if you want to. He just hopes that he can inspire each listener to do beautiful and productive things during her/his day.

## AN EASY WAY TO GIVE, ALL YEAR ROUND

**O**NE OF OUR RESIDENTS, CAMILLE, has been collecting donated goods on behalf of the Department of Justice for charitable giving at holiday time for years and years. Now she’s accepting donations year-round. All items go to Womankind, devoted to helping survivors of gender-based violence in Brooklyn and Queens. Items marked with Camille’s name can be dropped off with the doorman at 305 Riverside at any time. Call (646) 805-6766 with questions.

# BAiP Presents: A New Name and a New Venue

By MARIAN ANDERSON

**B**LOOMINGDALE AGING IN PLACE PRESENTATIONS provide our community of neighbors with valuable information delivered by experts in areas that support transitions through the stages of aging in place. These presentations are free and open to all.

Last fall, with the impending renovation of the Bloomingdale branch of the N.Y. Public Library at W. 100th St., BAiP needed to find a new home for our monthly presentations. We successfully met that challenge by relocating to the Ben Barrack Auditorium at The New Jewish Home, 120 W. 106th St., midway between Columbus and Amsterdam Aves. The auditorium boasts more than triple the capacity of the library!

Any change carries with it a degree of uncertainty, and this one produced its share of worries. We anticipated neighbors' concerns about travel distance, atmosphere, and timing (now 7:00–8:30 p.m.). We are happy to report that we have been in our new home since December 2018, and none of those fears have materialized. At the first presentation, a steady stream of neighbors made their way to the registration table. They were pleased to see a clean, brightly lit space, floor-to-ceiling windows, and views of a garden, which we hope will inspire them to visit again in spring and summer. As the presentation began, it was clear that the audiovisual technology offered by this new space was superior to that of the old.

## A NEW CHAIRPERSON AND A NEW NAME

Dorothy Crouch, chairperson of the Planning Committee for the past 10 years, stepped down from that position at the end of 2018 and passed the baton to me. In this new role, I thought another change was needed—a new name for our presentation series that reflects the variety of formats and diversity of topics BAiP has come to offer over the past decade. That new name is “BAiP Presents.”

## TOPICS WE COVER

With the new space, we are able to focus on longer-range programming. You can see this year's list of topics below. (Information on upcoming presentations—we offer them monthly except in August—is also emailed to our membership three weeks in advance, and is posted on our website: [bloominplace.org](http://bloominplace.org).)

## PREVIOUS PRESENTATIONS

- Jan. 24: Photos from Our Neighbors (with Ozzie Alfonso, who leads the BAiP Photo Group)
- Feb. 28: Emergency Planning: Beyond Flashlights and Batteries
- Mar. 28: Guardianship: When Others Step in to Protect You
- Apr. 25: Overview of Sleep and Sleep Disorders
- May 23: Be a Savvy Senior Traveler

Some of the questions to which we have provided answers in previous presentations are: What is a “go-bag” and why should I have one?; What steps should I take to protect myself if I am unable to make decisions about my health or finances?; What is “sleep architecture” and how does this change with age?; What kinds of travel opportunities exist for older adults with issues of mobility and chronic illnesses? Resources related to some of our presentations are posted on the BAiP website, [bloominplace.org/presentations.html](http://bloominplace.org/presentations.html).

## UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS

- June 20: Fall Risks and Effective Fall Prevention
- July 25: Planning for Caregiving at Home
- Sept. 25: The Human Microbiome: The Life Within Us
- Oct. 23: Made for and By Volunteers: Lessons from Burning Man for Our Next 10 Years
- Nov. 20: Decluttering
- Dec. 11: An Art-Appreciation Journey (with BAiP's Linda Seidel)

A lively question-and-answer period follows each presentation. The

new venue also provides the space to foster BAiP community-building and we do so during a meet-your-neighbor session prior to each presentation, from 6:30 to 7:00 p.m.

We encourage everyone who attends presentations to give us feedback using a simple form. Suggestions can also be sent to [baippresents@bloominplace.org](mailto:baippresents@bloominplace.org).

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

Our Planning Committee meets monthly to explore topics, identify potential speakers, make changes to our processes, and develop an organizational plan for presentation day. Kudos to Lo-Yi Chan, Dorothy Crouch, Jonathan Cardon, Lydia Dufour, Roses Katz, Bonnie Mairs, Jory Plevel, and Gilbert Tauber for volunteering on this committee. An audiovisual team of four handles technical requirements. They are: Lo-Yi Chan, David Reich, Marlene Schonbrun, and Gilbert Tauber.



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# Meet Our Newest Hall of Fame Inductee: Ginger Lief

By HEDY CAMPBELL

**T**HE 30TH INDUCTEE INTO OUR NEIGHBORHOOD HALL OF FAME (which honors those who have lived within our territory for 50 years or more) is Ginger Lief. She's the first among the Hall of Fame members to be on the Block Association board of directors at the time of her induction. With a strong interest in historic preservation, Ginger has served as our archivist for many years. She's responsible for having collected what came to be an archive of Block Association newsletters, currently housed at the Bloomingdale branch of the public library, and has been the driving force behind all of the various events that have in one way or another celebrated the history of our neighborhood.

Ginger was born in Rhode Island and raised in California. She got her first taste of New York City when she visited with a group of friends during her sophomore year of college. After graduation, it didn't take long for her to decide to move here. For the first year, she lived at a residential hotel for wom-

en on the East Side, but as a member St. Bartholomew's Church, she had access to a bulletin board that led her to her first apartment on the West Side. Some years later, her membership in a Broadway Presbyterian Church youth group led to a tip that resulted in her move to her current home, where she's now lived for 50 years. She has the second-longest tenure among the residents there.

During much of that time, Ginger supported herself by working in the Columbia University Department of Planning, long enough, she says, to "give myself my own fellowship, enabling me to continue investigations into my interests and calling." One can discern from her apartment-hunting history that her interests center around the church. She's proud of her many years in ECW, the Episcopal Church Women, an almost-150-year-old national organization that is dedicated to the betterment of women and girls throughout the world. Ginger has served the group in many capacities, including as vice president of the national board and as editor and contributor to *Communiqué*, the organization's publication, and locally as president of the diocese chapter. She is also an active member of St. Michael's

Church, on W. 99th St. She is deeply committed to working toward empowerment for women, and remarked, as our conversation touched on the MeToo movement, that "there's nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come."

Along the way, Ginger found time to earn a master's degree in business, become a licensed social worker, and earn a master's degree in divinity studies. Yet she also found time to become a volunteer in the early days of the Block Association, responding first to a fundraising appeal to help the West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing purchase the Marseilles, then to a call for volunteers for the spring Block Party. It was a poignant moment when she received her induction certificate in the facility that resulted from that first successful fund-raising effort.

Please join me in congratulating Ginger on her inclusion in the Neighborhood Hall of Fame and thank her for her steadfast dedication and service to her community.

Bios of all of the Hall of Fame inductees are posted at the Block Association website: [w102-103blockassn.org](http://w102-103blockassn.org). If you know of someone who has lived in Block Association territory for 50 years or more and hasn't yet been included in this program, please contact [editor@w102-103blockassn.org](mailto:editor@w102-103blockassn.org).

## Grassroots Group Addresses UWS Retail Blight

By BETH KRIEGER

**T**HE UWS has become a commercial desert! What is to be done? Is anyone else as distressed as I am about the ubiquitous commercial "for rent" signs in the neighborhood? That was the cry of distress, posted shortly after New Year's Eve on Next Door (an online community bulletin board), which immediately drew shared angst from more than 100 Upper West Siders. Only three weeks later, 15 strangers got together to meet with the co-chairs of Community Board 7's Business & Consumer Issues Committee to try to understand the myriad causes of retail blight in our neighborhood, and what they and legislators were doing to address

the challenges.

After that first auspicious meeting, volunteers with UWS Save Our Stores (UWS SOS) assembled for their first meeting, to create a mission, Facebook page, and several task forces. The goal, they say, is to stop the epidemic of empty storefronts and revitalize commercial life in our community. To their great surprise, there was rapid-fire response from both press and political leaders. Indeed, by late February, State Senator Robert Jackson, State Assembly member Linda Rosenthal, and City Councilmember Helen Rosenthal were all introducing bills to address vacant storefronts.

But the work has only just begun. UWS SOS members have been meeting with these elected officials to offer

comments on their draft bills. Other members are focused on exploring ways to bring in new businesses and reimagine innovative uses of our empty stores, including doing a survey of shopping habits, which would be followed by reach-out to commercial brokers and petitions to select stores needed in our community. The group is also looking into the viability of a Business Improvement District (BID) for the Broadway corridor.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer on one of the UWS SOS task-force committees, or would like to receive e-newsletters and meeting announcements, please sign up here: <https://goo.gl/forms/L1CWyscekLIDVSLy1>. All other requests or more information can be sent to [UWS\\_SOS@gmail.com](mailto:UWS_SOS@gmail.com).

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