

ROGUE DRIVERS

Cyclists: Cars still zoom in P'Park

BY COLIN MIXSON

Old habits drive hard.

Drivers are regularly taking illegal shortcuts through Prospect Park despite the mayor's permanent ban on vehicles inside Brooklyn's Backyard, bikers claim.

"I'm in the park everyday, and it's rare that I don't ride through and see at least one or two civilian vehicles," said Prospect-Lefferts Gardens resident Stanley Greenberg, who with other locals and officials is part of the Prospect Park Community Committee, which engages with meadow caretakers on behalf of residents.

The wayward motorists are taking advantage of temporary barriers on roads into the park that don't fully cover their entrances, maneuvering around the blockades — the same as those used to corral crowds along parade routes — by driving onto curbs and into the green space, according to another cyclist.

"They have what are called

Continued on page 14



TAKE A SQUAT!: Bathroom expert Shawn Shafner preps for his talk, "How the Potty Trained Us" at the Kumble Theater on Feb. 20. Photo by Caleb Caldwell

POTTY MOUTH

Lecture takes on poop shame

BY JULIANNE CUBA

He's No. 1 when it comes to No. 2!

A Flatbush expert on excrement will drop some knowledge about how to fix our crappy waste-filled world during his one-man talk "How the Potty Trained Us," at Long Island University on Feb. 20. People are reluctant to discuss their pooping habits, but it is impossible to improve our waste systems without first getting to the root of the problem, said the taboo-breaking talker.

"What it means to be a person who has a body — it does lots of beautiful things and things that aren't really beautiful — and our society only focuses on the beautiful," said Shawn Shafner. "Because s--- is ugly and smelly, but it's real, and the denial of that s--- means we don't build cities with

access to public toilets."

Shafner is flush with knowledge about human waste, but his childhood was filled with taboos about discussing the loo, and he would hold in his poo as a way to assert control over his life, he said.

"I was a shameful s-----, I was one of those kids that didn't want to poop outside of the house," said Shafner. "It became this way I had control over what else was happening."

People's individual inability to discuss fecal matters is directly related to society's failure to provide enough toilets for women, for those outside the gender binary, or to provide public toilets at all, he said.

"It's called fecal denial — it

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Coney creek reek

BY JULIANNE MCSHANE

Illegal sewage hookups must still be pumping poop into Coney Island Creek even a year and a half after the state caught a nearby apartment complex dumping up to 200,000 gallons of raw sewage into the creek every day, according to lo-

cal environmental advocates who test the waters for bacteria.

"I'm sure there are more illegal hookups," said Rob Buchanan of the Water Trail Association.

The state Department of Environmental Conser-

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LOOK SHARP: Julia Greer and Abby Awe play teenage fencers in the new play "Athena." Mike Edmond

Cutting-edge fencing play

BY ALEXANDRA SIMON

She's getting right to the point.

A Crown Heights playwright will launch her new coming-of-age story about swashbuckling teenage girls at a Clinton Hill theater next week. "Athena," opening at Jack on Feb. 15, follows two

rival fencers as they forge a friendship while competing for an Olympic slot. Playwright Gracie Gardner was inspired by her childhood experience with the sport and its isolating nature, she said.

"I was a fencer in high school, and it's a pretty dis-

tinctive sport because it's just you and no team — it's just you up against other people," said Gardner.

Those other people are your competition, but they also help you become a better fencer. And repeatedly drawing steel on the same

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Dive signs off in Red Hook

Van Brunt Street bar closed with bang

BY JULIANNE CUBA

It was a reel blowout!

Loyal patrons of a beloved Red Hook dive bar took their last swigs at the liquor-slinging pub on Jan. 27 during a rowdy final farewell party that bested any other night in the nearly 15-year-old spot's existence, according to its now-former owner.

"I can die alone, because I've had my wake for seven f--- days. I know it's not me, it's my bar, but same difference," said Barry O'Meara, the proprietor of Bait and Tackle. "It had come to an end, but you can't be sad about something so beautiful."

O'Meara opened the Van Brunt Street watering hole in 2003, and kept it afloat after superstorm Sandy ravaged the waterfront community in 2012. But the skyrocketing cost of doing business in the changing neighborhood became too much to afford, so he decided to close up shop and serve his final round at an all-day rager, the owner said.

"It was such a fun day," he said. "All family coming together, having drinks. It was a great time."

O'Meara plans to travel South America on what he called the trip of a lifetime now that he shuttered the dive, he said.

And the former booze peddler is not yet sure whether he'll man another bar, but said he'll definitely be dropping anchor again in Red Hook following his travels.

"To have this opportunity at my age — I'm just taking it. I don't have any kids or wives that I know about," O'Meara said. "But this



ONE LAST RUN: Danie Hutch, who manages neighboring bar Sunny's, dressed for the occasion. Photo by Jason Speakman

will always be home."

The farewell bash was more bittersweet for those locals who made the watering hole their home over the years, according to one patron, who said its end reminded her of the near death of another neighborhood institution, Sunny's, which locals and this newspaper helped save last year.

"It's going to be eerie, the neighborhood is so small," said Danie Hutch, a manager of the more-than-century-old Conover Street bar. "It's a weird thing that one lived, and one died."

And Bait and Tackle isn't the only clubby bar to leave Van Brunt Street this year.

Hope and Anchor, just a few blocks away, will shutter later this month after 15 years of serving the nabe, its owners announced on social media in January.



LAST CALL: Bait and Tackle owner Barry O'Meara hosted the beloved Red Hook bar's last party on Jan. 27. Photo by Jason Speakman



PERENNIAL WILT: Ted Giannopoulos last week closed his flower shop, Blooms on Fifth, which occupied a Fifth Avenue storefront that hosted a plant peddler for more than 100 years. Community News Group / Colin Mixson

HISTORY IN SOIL

Florist vacates century-old flower-shop storefront

BY COLIN MIXSON

He's uprooting tradition.

A Park Slope green thumb with four decades in the floral business closed his Fifth Avenue flower shop on Jan. 31, vacating a space that locals flocked to for fresh cuts for more than a century.

"[The original owner] had it from 1917," said Ted Giannopoulos, the now-former owner of Blooms on Fifth. "It was time to shut down, unfortunately."

The 64-year-old, Bay Ridge-raised immigrant from Greece opened the shop between Eighth and Ninth streets in 2000, taking over the space once occupied by Daniel's Florist, which shopkeeper Ernest Daniels operated for decades.

Giannopoulos, who hails from a family of gardeners that at one time owned five shops throughout the borough, said he labored tirelessly to make his business a success, working holidays and weekends and gaining a reputation for falling asleep at the dinner table.

"Work doesn't scare me," the florist said.

"I scare the hell out of work."

The store, nearly empty when this reporter visited last week, once overflowed with greenery, attracting customers including Mayor DeBlasio, whose wheelings and dealings as a former Park Slope councilman often required a floral touch, Giannopoulos said.

The charming boutique also drew the attention of big- and small-screen producers, who shot scenes from the 2017 film "Unforgettable" and commercials for HSBC Bank inside it, the florist said.

Giannopoulos, who's been in the floral business since 1974, said that arranging bouquets became as elemental as breathing over the years.

The longtime florist said he found true joy in creating custom arrangements, such as a recreation of the New York Jets logo with deftly placed buds.

But his budding business providing plants for weddings, funerals, and other events took a hit with the rise of nearby supermarkets with their own floral departments, not the least of which being Third Avenue's Whole Foods in Gowanus, which caters to the same types of functions in addition to selling fresh stems, he said.

And floral wire services including Bloomnet and Teleflora — which fulfill customers' orders via local shops — stopped giving Blooms on Fifth the large arrangements that made the companies' subscription prices worthwhile, instead only funneling cheaper ones that, after deducting the cost of delivery and other fees, netted little-to-no profit, Giannopoulos said.

"I said, 'Give me the big fish and I'll give you the little ones free,'" he said. "But they stopped giving me the big ones, so I had to cut it down."

The florist now faces a novel concept — free time — with the closing of his shop, and said he looks forward to getting his hands dirty with something other than blooms.

"My hobby was flowers," Giannopoulos said. "I guess I'll have to find a new one."

NY Islanders' long goodbye

Team to cut Bklyn games

BY COLIN MIXSON

This island hopping is on the taxpayers' dime.

New Yorkers will shell out millions so the New York Islanders can spend less time playing in Brooklyn over the next three years before the team abandons the borough altogether, Gov. Cuomo announced on Jan. 29.

The state is coughing up \$6 million to bring the squad's former home, Long Island's Nassau Coliseum, up to National Hockey League codes by installing high-tech ice-making equipment and broadcasting infrastructure, which will allow the athletes to spend nearly half of their next three seasons competing at their old haunt ahead of the squad's permanent move from the Barclays Center.

But the Islanders never really fit in at the Prospect Heights arena after taking its ice in 2015, because venue honchos tended to favor its home basketball team, the Brooklyn Nets, according to a Greenpoint fan.

"The Islanders felt like the red-headed step child of Brooklyn sports," said Robert Metzler. "It never felt like Barclays wanted them to be there."

Developers designed the stadium with basketball and live performances in mind, skimping on concession stands in certain balcony seats above the rink, some of which lacked a clear view of one of the goals, Metzler said.

"Barclays was never built for hockey," he said. "It's very desolate in terms of vendors in the upper tiers, and wherever you're sitting you feel a little askew."

But more telling of the Islanders's rocky relationship with Barclays Center is the squad's home-game attendance, which this season is the lowest of any franchise in the league. As of press time on Wednesday, the team drew an average of 11,984 fans per game, according to ESPN statistics — roughly 4,000 under the arena's capacity.



NOT SO BRIGHT: Gov. Cuomo announced on Jan. 29 the state will spend \$6 million to upgrade Long Island's Nassau Coliseum so the New York Islanders can play nearly half of its next three seasons' games there, before the team permanently vacates the borough when its new Belmont Park arena is finished.

File photo by Paul Martinka

Cuomo announced in December that the Islanders won a bid to build a new home at the state-owned Belmont Park, and team honchos plan to invest a cool \$1 billion into constructing an 18,000-seat arena there. But it isn't expected to open until sometime during the league's 2021–22 season.

Another local hockey fan said he's sorry to see the Islanders go because of the Barclays Center's inexpensive tickets and central location.

"The games at Barclays are cheap, and now I feel like I didn't take advantage of seeing the team there," said Bushwick resident John Bowers, who is "not heartbroken" that the team is leaving Brooklyn, but will miss it in a "vaguely regretful way."

And Meltzer called the squad's move a blow to the borough and its hockey fans alike, because its arrival presented a great opportunity to grow the sport in Brooklyn, he said.

"It was a genius idea. It had the potential to spread the fan base," Meltzer said. "I would have loved for it to have worked. A lot of people would have."

NEW DOG FIGHT!

Startup pulls its curbside kennels after city cracks down

BY COLIN MIXSON

The city sent these dogged entrepreneurs to the pound.

Local transit officials forced a Brooklyn-born tech startup that provides canines with curbside kennels to remove its rental doghouses from sidewalks across the borough — after the mayor's office invited the company's founders to represent the city at an international tech conference last year.

"It's a classic situation of the right hand not talking to the left hand," said Dog Parker co-founder Chelsea Brownridge.

The entrepreneur and her business partner founded Dog Parker in 2014, and its pay-as-you-go pup palaces — which rent by the minute and hour — started popping up outside Kings County storefronts

the next year. The company grew to operate more than 40 canine retreats for more than 1,000 active users throughout the borough at its peak, Brownridge said.

Shop owners paid the startup to park its doghouses on sidewalks outside their stores, which allowed customers to securely stow Fido while they did their business inside the establishments.

But unlike coin-operated novelty rides and certain freestanding signs, city code doesn't specifically permit doghouses on public sidewalks, leading Department of Transportation officials to fire off a letter last November that threatened to round up the company's kennels, according to an agency rep.

"Everything permitted on sidewalks is there through a legal pathway,"

the spokesman said. "One does not exist in this case."

Brownridge claimed she and her co-founder sought clarity on how to tailor their product and business model to city regulations when they were just getting Dog Parker off the ground, and first contacted various agencies — including the transportation department — for more information back in 2014.

Someone at the agency in response referred Brownridge to a section of the city's administrative code known colloquially as the "three-foot rule," which prohibits a property owner from placing an object on the sidewalk more than three feet from his or her building, according to Dog Parker co-founder Todd Schecter.

But that's where the help ended, according to

Schecter, who said agency workers refused the entrepreneurs' requests to further interpret the law and discuss their business prior to setting it up.

"We had to make our best read of the law, and that's what we did," he said. "We didn't have any clarity from the city."

The transportation department instead waited to crack the whip until after the company rolled out its doghouses, finally doing so while its founders were attending the 2017 Smart City Expo World Congress in Spain at the request of the Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation, according to Brownridge, who said she initially deemed the agency's threatening missive a simple mistake.

"We thought the first letter was a misunderstanding," she said. "There was



NO PARKING: The heads of Dog Parker pulled nearly all of its curbside kennels after Department of Transportation officials threatened to crack down on the business.

Dog Parker

no citation of what the violation was."

A subsequent meeting with the mayor's office led Brownridge to believe the city would work with the company, but transit honchos kept threatening to remove its doggy digs, forcing the entrepreneurs to pull nearly all of them from

local streets on Feb. 1, she said.

"They were threatening to impound them so we took them off the streets ourselves," Brownridge said.

The remaining kennels sit safely outside of Brooklyn Public Library's central

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GRACE PERIOD

Nuns cancel seniors' early eviction after protest

BY JULIANNE MCSHANE

The Sisters of Mercy lived up to its name — and bowed to loud public backlash — by backing down on the early eviction of the Narrows Senior Center from the Angel Guardian home.

The nuns who sold the sprawling former orphanage in Dyker Heights gave up their plan to evict the seniors months before the end of their lease after the oldsters rallied with local pols on Feb. 2 to protest their imminent ousting. The Sisters will now allow the senior center to stay in the building until June 4 — when its lease ends — and the organizer of the rally said she felt vindicated that the nuns wouldn't be kicking them to the curb in the freezing February temperatures.

"At least we got until June," said senior Pauline Castagna. "The goal that I was hoping for with the rally was to have the seniors be able to stay until the summer."

A group of the center's seniors gathered outside the 63rd Street entrance of the city-block-sized campus bound by 12th and 13th avenues on the day they were originally supposed to leave to protest the Sisters' secret sale of the 119-year-old building, which is forcing the center's move to a Borough Park basement a mile away that many of the seniors consider inferior.

The seniors carried signs condemning the Sisters, such as "Sisters have no mercy for our elderly," "money talks — seniors are out," and "these ma-



NO MERCY: The seniors of the Narrows Center condemned the Sisters of Mercy for evicting them from the Narrows Center after selling the Angel Guardian property to a mystery developer.

Community News Group / Julianne McShane

jestic buildings must be saved." One stalwart of the center said the nuns' sale of the property to a mystery developer who does not plan to keep the center or include affordable senior housing in the space shows the Sisters are greedy.

"The Sisters want to take over this place and throw us out," said Jean Detorre. "Money is all they're interested in. They don't care about the senior citizens."

Another elder who has been attending the center since it opened in 2003 said the nuns were making a moral mistake by kicking out the oldsters.

"It's not the right thing to do," said Paul Pandolfo. "This is a second home for us."

Local pols — including councilmen Justin Brannan (D-Bay Ridge) and

Carlos Menchaca (D-Sunset Park), state Sen. Marty Golden (R-Bay Ridge), and Assemblyman Peter Abbate (D-Bensonhurst) — joined the seniors in condemning the Sisters. Abbate said the seniors should not have to vacate their space, and that the nuns weren't living up to the Sisters of Mercy's values.

"The seniors deserve this," Abbate said. "Those nuns who are there today are a disgrace to this order."

Golden concurred, vowing to stand by the seniors as they fought to stay.

"It isn't right for our Narrows seniors, and we're not going to take it," Golden said.

Menchaca, the councilman who represents the district, said he and neighboring Brannan — who has come out swinging against

the Sisters — would work together to save the center.

"We want to save this senior center," Menchaca said. "They need to listen to us."

Brannan first publicly castigated the Sisters last month in his inaugural appearance on Brooklyn Paper Radio, saying that the nuns were "giving our neighborhood the finger as they leave."

At last Friday's protest, he led the seniors in chants of "Save Our Center" and "Hell No, We Won't Go," and later said in a statement that the Sisters were further insulting locals by keeping terms of the sale secret.

"We don't even know who is buying the property or what they plan to do with it," Brannan said. "[The Sisters of Mercy] are spitting in the face of this community."

After the Sisters sold the property at the end of last year to an unknown developer who plans to include "some affordable housing and public space," the nuns told the Catholic Charities Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens — which operates the senior center — that it had to vacate the property in 60 days, by Feb. 2. But within two weeks of this paper publishing the news, the nuns offered the seniors a one-month grace period, allowing them to stay through March 4.

Then, immediately following the Feb. 2 rally, Catholic Charities issued a statement that the nuns

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AN ORPHAN'S HOME: New York Post photographer Greg Mango, who was adopted from the Angel Guardian home in 1966, is one of the many former orphans who was crushed to hear that the more than century old building will likely be demolished.

Photo by Jordan Rathkopf

Former orphans fear future of Angel Guardian home

BY JULIANNE MCSHANE

They don't want to say goodbye to all that.

Former orphans adopted from the Angel Guardian campus lamented the possibility that the historic structure they once called home will be bulldozed by the mystery developer who recently bought the sprawling property.

One former orphan said the 12th Avenue campus — which the Sisters of Mercy built in 1899 and takes up an entire city block — should be preserved, and that its destruction would prove devastating.

"It just has a feeling of another time and another place," said Greg Mango, a professional photographer who was adopted from the Angel Guardian home as a 10-month-old in January 1966. "It'd be heartbreaking [if it was torn down]. I'd be pretty upset."

The home housed thousands of orphaned children from the time the Sisters had it built until 1973, and then housed the Sisters' foster program, MercyFirst, according to the program's CEO, Jerry McCaffery, who added that the Sisters also took care of some babies in the building during the crack cocaine and AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. The nuns also took young, homeless, and unmarried mothers into the Angel Guardian home until 1959, McCaffery said.

After the orphanage closed down, the grounds housed a medical clinic for the foster program's babies and a convent for the nuns, who left about three years ago, according to McCaffery. The soon-to-depart Narrows Senior Center set up shop in part of the building in 2003.

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Ridge kids get presidential

Tykes take on current, past Oval Office occupants

BY JULIANNE MCSHANE

They're like, really smart!

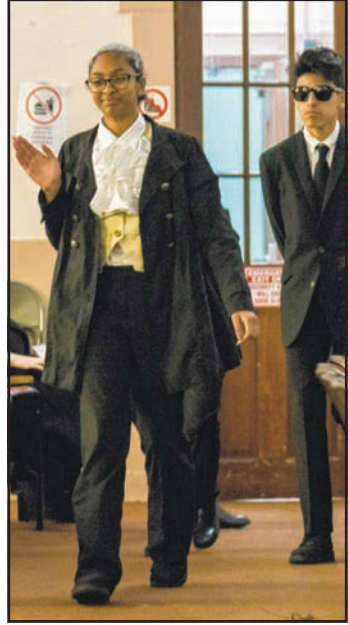
A crop of Ridge eighth graders at Holy Angels Catholic Academy donned wigs, suits, and modern-day presidential attitudes for the school's fifth-annual Presidents Day on Feb. 1, when the youngsters dressed up to portray the men who have presided over the nation from the Oval Office. The event is the culmination of five months of studying for the young scholars, during which time they're expected to become experts on their assigned presidents, according to the Social Studies teacher who coordinates the event.

"They become really invested in the person that they're portraying," said Russell Berry.

Berry assigned each student a president and a book about him back in September, and on the Presidents Day, the kids presented slide shows about their president, answered questions from younger students, and signed autographs in charac-



ADDRESSING THE CROWD: (Left) President Abraham Lincoln, played by eighth-grader Joshua Coohill, recited his famous Gettysburg Address during the Presidents Day event at Holy Angels Academy in Bay Ridge on Feb. 1. (Right) President James Monroe, played by eighth-grader Amada Vipul, entered the auditorium with Secret Service detail in tow.



Photos by Taylor Balkom

ter. They also delivered actual speeches from their subjects to an auditorium full of their classmates — and one student even donned a comb-over wig to present President Trump's inaugural address, according to Berry.

Other students dressed up as former presidents Barack

Obama, George Washington, Andrew Jackson, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy, according to Berry.

And seven lucky seventh graders donned sunglasses,

fake ear pieces, and suits as "Secret Service agents" who trailed the presidents around the building. Two of them took the job to heart, tackling someone who tried to approach "Kennedy" and escorting him out of the building, Berry said.

DOG

Continued from page 4

branch, beyond the transportation department's reach because they occupy the property's lawn, not its sidewalk, according to the co-founder.

Local lawmakers including councilmen Steven Levin (D-Williamsburg) and Rafael Espinal (D-Bushwick) took up Dog Parker's cause after its founders removed their puppy pads, promising to revise the regulations used to stifle the small business.

"Instead of supporting this business, the city is using antiquated regulations to essentially put them out of NYC's market," Espinal said. "I am ... exploring legislative solutions so that our laws do not limit the potential of innovative companies like this one."

And Schecter said Dog Parker isn't waiting on the city to make its next move — the company is already in talks with mayors of other municipalities to bring its brand of canine condos around the world.

"We're gearing up to go to dozens of cities," he said.

Reps from the Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation did not respond to a request for comment.

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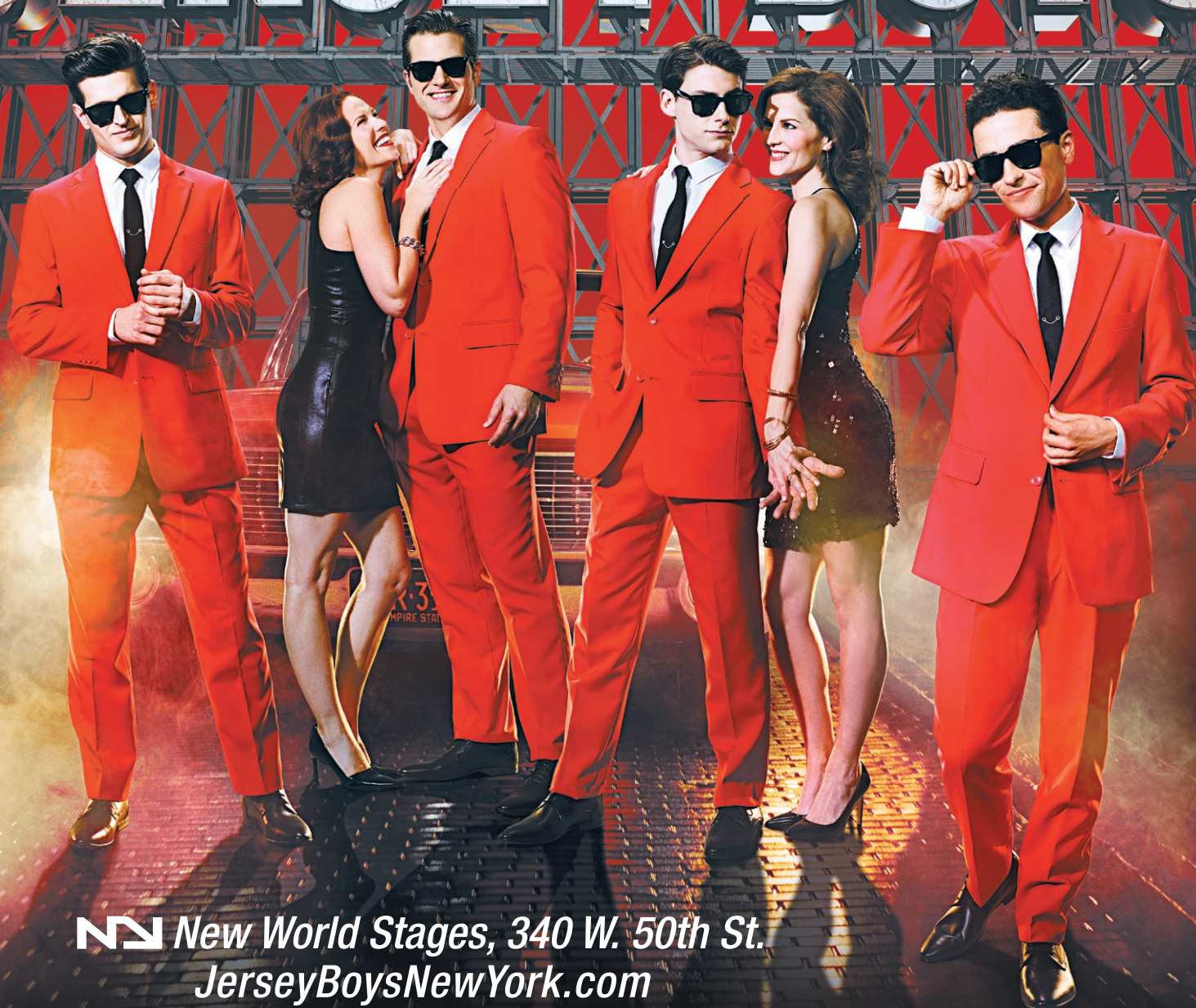


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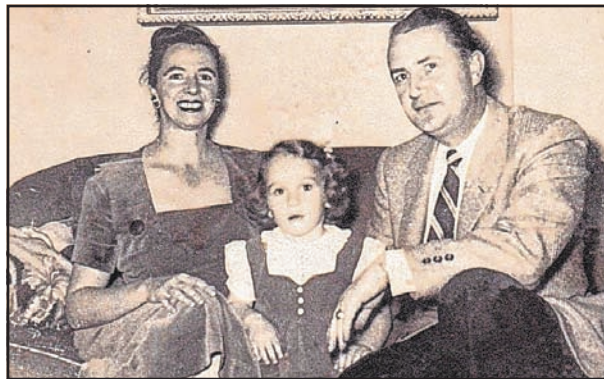
ORPHANS

Continued from page 6

Locals who called for the nuns to choose a developer who would create affordable senior housing or a school for kids of the overcrowded nabe have been sounding the alarm ever since our sister publication the Bay Ridge Courier last year broke the news of the secret sale — rumored to be worth up to \$24 million — to a developer who a spokeswoman for the Sisters said intends to include “some affordable housing and open space.”

But Mango said that he wished the nuns had sold the property to a developer who was sure to include the community in its plans for the future — and that they were more forthcoming about the details of the sale.

“Even though it’s private property and they have the right to do whatever they want with it, one would hope that the Sisters of Mercy have their thinking caps on and think, ‘How



A NEW LIFE: Angel Guardian orphan Joanne Sullivan Silva with her parents, Mary and John Sullivan, at 3-and-a-half years old after they adopted her from the home that same year.

Joanne Sullivan Silva

can we do this so we get a decent price for the property and also benefit the community in some way?” Mango said. “And if they’re not doing that, that’s a problem. It’s unfortunate that it’s all being done in a secretive way. They’re supposed to be in the business of helping underserved communities.”

Another former orphan agreed, adding that the Sisters could have honored the building’s legacy by once again making it a space for youngsters or the elderly.

“I think it would’ve been very nice if the history had come into play in determining the future of the property,” said Joanne Silva, who said her parents, John and Mary Sullivan, adopted her from the home when she was 3-years-old, in 1954. “I think the idea of a school or of having an old-age home would’ve been an excellent idea.”

Silva said she even remembers details of the historic structure because she was adopted as a toddler, rather than as an infant.

“I remember the brick and I remember the wrought-iron gate,” she said.

Silva said she is forever grateful to the Sisters for setting her up for an ideal childhood on Long Island, despite the current controversy surrounding the property. She eventually moved to Connecticut, where she raised her three children, and then to Pennsylvania, where she worked her way up to becoming executive editor of a weekly newspaper, the Chester County Press.

“I was very fortunate to be adopted,” Silva said. “I just loved my life. And I love the Sisters of Mercy, I have wonderful memories of them.”

Mango shared similar sentiments. His parents, Gloria and Alfred Mango, raised him on Long Island and gave him a childhood filled with home-cooked meals and vacations. He’s now a freelance photographer who regularly works for the New York Post.

“I couldn’t have asked for any better parents, quite frankly,” Mango said. “The

Sisters of Mercy saved my life.”

Another former Angel orphan said that she doubted the new structure could match the splendor or character of the current one, and that she feared the rumored luxury condos that may replace it wouldn’t hold the same significance for locals and for the orphans who spent parts of their childhoods in the building.

“It’s a beautiful building with a lot of character and architecture that new construction is never capable of replicating,” said Jenny Holdorff, who spent the first three months of her life in the home with her identical twin sister, Barbara, in 1973, before they were adopted together. “And what they did there, what that building was for and what they did for people, I think is remarkable and compassionate. When you go and knock something down and make it a luxury condominium, you’re just changing the entire essence of the neighborhood and what it stands for.”

SENIORS

Continued from page 6

offered a verbal agreement allowing the seniors to stay through May 15. And within two hours, Catholic Charities received verbal confirmation from the Sisters that the seniors could stay through the lease’s original termination date of June 4, according to spokeswoman Lucy Garrido-Mota, who added that its legal team was finalizing paperwork.

The Sisters of Mercy did not respond to a request for comment by press time.

Castagna, who organized the rally, vowed to continue the fight to stay in the building forever — though she admitted that may prove difficult, since the developer will likely bulldoze it.

“It’s gonna be a little difficult to stay forever if they sell the buildings. How can we stay?” she said. “But we’ll do our best.”

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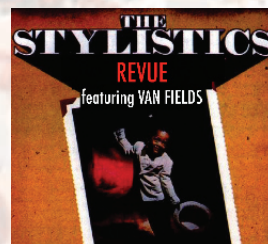
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CREEK

Continued from page 1

vation issued a \$400,000 fine last month to the Beach Haven apartment complex for illegal dumping, which the management says was accidental and the state said ended in September 2016. But the consistently high levels of fecal bacteria that Buchanan's group detected in the creek last summer suggest that other illegal sewage discharges — intentional or not — continue to foul the waters and require aggressive action, he said.

"There may even be [illegal hookups] that happened accidentally, like they're claiming in the Beach Haven case," said Buchanan. "But I think there needs to be a thorough program of inspection, block-by-block, and lots of further investigation."

The Water Trail Association's weekly tests of the water near the storm drain at W. 21st Street showed levels of a fecal bacteria well over the state standard for swimmable waters on 13 out of 16 weeks between June and September last year — with two tests even showing levels of the poop 14 times the state standard.

"The high levels of bacteria are a reflection of the amount of sewage pollution," Buchanan said. "The

point is it's well beyond the level of swimmability under the law. It's too dirty, and the city needs to work to do its best to reduce those numbers."

Heavy rains can sometimes overwhelm the city's water-treatment infrastructure and cause sewers to overflow into the storm-drain system, but Buchanan said his group detected elevated bacteria levels even in dry weather. So the raw sewage must be coming from illegal discharges either from intentional diversion, or even antiquated hookups dating back to before the city's modern water-treatment system, according to another local environmental advocate.

"Someone could be living in a home for half a century and have no idea that their sanitary line is incorrectly hooked up to a storm water line," said Ida Sanoff, the executive director of the Natural Resources Protective Association.

The local district manager said the community board is aware of the problem, but acknowledged that it can't be solved overnight.

"There are illegal outfalls. It's just that we don't know where they're coming from, but it takes time to investigate," said Eddie Mark.

The city's Department of Environmental Protection plans to dedicate more resources to monitor

the creek as part of its forthcoming city Stormwater Management Program, according to a spokeswoman, who said the agency is also investigating additional illicit discharges. The agency did not respond to an inquiry about how many sewage discharges it has found in Coney Island since Beach Haven allegedly stopped in September 2016.

Sanoff said the city should speed up the process by hiring more inspectors.

"There could certainly be more illegal hookups in Coney — but tracking them down is a very slow task," said Ida Sanoff. "If the Department of Environmental Protection had more staff assigned to tracking down illegal hookups, it would make the track-down process go a lot faster."

The state Department of Environmental Conservation said the \$400,000 fine from Beach Haven will go to groups working to clean up the creek, but not to fund more inspectors.

Keeping the creek free of feces will be a costly, long-term proposition, said Buchanan, but would be worth it.

"The bottom line is they probably have to spend more money on keeping a place like Coney creek clean, which is important to people," Buchanan said.

ATHENA

Continued from page 1

opponent can create an unusual bond, she said.

"Spending a lot time with someone, while also being at odds with them is a very unique part of that sport," said Gardner.

The play follows 17-year-old Athena, a fencer who competes against fellow teen Mary Wallace. When Athena realizes that they make stellar opponents, she insists on dueling the other girl more often. A guarded friendship develops, but at a certain point, the two know that they must fight for a spot at the Olympics.

"She realizes that she matches well with Mary and asks her to start training with her to get better," said Gardner. "It's really about their relationship and learning how they negotiate this situation where they'll be head-to-head."

The 80-minute play will feature plenty of flashy sword-play. The two actresses worked with a fencing coach and choreographer to perfect their lunges, attacks, and ripostes — something rarely seen in

plays set in the modern day, said Gardner.

"I'm excited about the sword-fighting — it's kind of died out unless it's being done in old theatrical plays, so I'm excited to see contemporary teens doing this sport," she said.

Gardner said she wanted to tell a story about real girls with real concerns, as a way to foil stories that often portrays teenage girls as frivolous airheads. She hopes that the play will help audiences to empathize with their plight and struggles.

"It makes me sad when I see teen girls portrayed as frivolous and people who don't matter. I wanted to show these young women as funny, resilient, and smart," she said. "I hope people can walk away with that and remember that they were a teen not long ago, and see how these girls were forced into adulthood beyond their control."

"Athena" at Jack Theater [505 Waverly Ave. between Fulton Street and Atlantic Avenue in Clinton Hill, www.jackny.org]. Feb. 15–March 2, Wed–Sat at 8 pm; Sun at 2 pm. \$25 (\$18 for those under 30).

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VEHICLES

Continued from page 1

French barriers, but they don't stretch entirely across the road, so [drivers are] just putting two tires on the sidewalk and going around," said Dennis Hrehowsik, president of the Brooklyn Bird Club, who claimed he bikes through Prospect Park almost every day.

Mayor DeBlasio booted the last legally allowed four-wheelers from Prospect Park in January, when he indefinitely closed the East Drive to Downtown-bound drivers who used it as a weekday shortcut during the morning rush. Hizzoner previously barred Coney Island-bound drivers from using the park's West Drive as an alternative evening-rush route in 2015.

And four-wheelers careening through the meadow in the wake of the mayor's park-wide ban are far more dangerous to pedestrians because they're explicitly outlawed, Hrehowsik said.

"It's one thing when cars are expected, but now that they aren't,

private cars traveling through the park at 35 miles per hour are much more dangerous than a slow-moving vehicle," the bike rider said.

Greenberg said he had a close call while pedaling through the meadow the night of Feb. 1, when a driver behind the wheel of an orange muscle car cut him off after running a red light at the intersection of Center and West drives.

"A big orange muscle car almost hit me!" he said.

And Greenberg isn't the first to encounter a car on West Drive since DeBlasio banned all traffic from it — last December, a motorist illegally cruising the road hit and injured a jogger as she ran along it.

The president of meadow steward the Prospect Park Alliance, which oversees the lawn in conjunction with the city, told attendees of a Jan. 16 Prospect Park Community Committee meeting that caretakers intend to install more substantial wooden barriers to better obstruct the entrances to park roads, according to Greenberg.

And the cyclist said that Alliance honchos hope to receive even safer barricades under a \$50-million initiative to increase the number of bollards protecting public spaces across the city, which DeBlasio put in place following deadly terrorist and other vehicle-based attacks last year.

A Department of Parks and Recreation spokeswoman said that "more permanent fixtures" to block four-wheelers from accessing meadow roads will be installed in the coming weeks. A Department of Transportation spokesman said the agency was unaware of the issue.

Officers with the parks department's Park Enforcement Patrol have issued one summons for an unauthorized vehicle in Prospect Park since the mayor's permanent ban on autos kicked in earlier this year, according to an agency rep.

The Police Department did not respond to a request for comment on its own summonses issued for illegal four-wheelers in the park by press time.

POTTY

Continued from page 1

means that we're just not integrating the reality of waste into our system. Cities that don't really account specifically for the need for public toilets, and there's lots of people that affects, whether it's a cab driver, or someone who is disabled, or a parent out with a child," he said. "And the taboo plays out in the global sphere: 40 percent of the world lacks access to safe, clean toilets. We can't solve it if we can't talk about it."

His talk at the Kumble

Theater will be a scaled-down version of his award-winning show "An Inconvenient Poop." Shafner includes voice-overs from different experts, including a woman who explains the proper etiquette for cutting the cheese, but he can vary from the script if something potty-related comes to mind, he said.

"What I like about the stand up version, it's a lot more casual, more real," said Shafner. "Just me having a conversation, and I can speak with the audience loosely if a story comes up in the news."

The audience will not be able to hold in their laugh-

ter, and may feel relieved to finally be understood, said Shafner.

"Everybody poops and I think as much as we don't talk about it, what I found over the seven-and-a-half years doing this work, is once you start the conversation, people have a lot to say," he said. "I'm just excited to spread the message to my home 'hood in the beautiful Kumble theater."

"How the Potty Trained Us" at the Kumble Theater at Long Island University (1 University Plaza at Dekalb Avenue Downtown, www.kumbletheater.org). Feb. 20 at 6:30 pm. Free.

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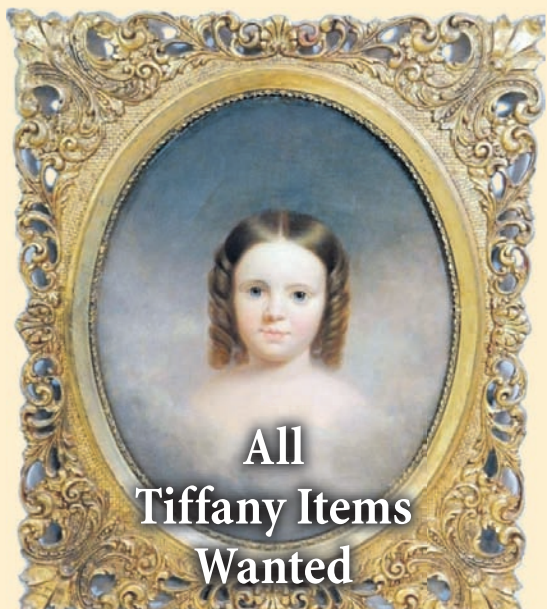
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