



# COMMUNITY NEWS

December 2008



PUBLISHED BY THE JOINT COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

## We Honor Our Veterans

By Dr. Leslie Rosenthal

**T**he veterans of our co-op community were recognized and honored on November 18th at a ceremony in Vladeck Hall. After the singing of the Star Spangled Banner Doris Spencer introduced the official Bronx Historian, Professor Lloyd Ultan, who traced the contributions of individuals and heroes from the Bronx area. He



**Left to right - Professor Lloyd Ultan, Sergeant Major Cristobal Rivera (of the Bronx Veterans Center), and Samuel Wesley Henderson.**

listed heroes who had served in our country's wars from the American Revolution to the current Iraqi War. It was interesting to know that Major Deegan was one of those heroes.

The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II were the first United States black military pilots. These men were mainly college students or graduates. Samuel Wesley Henderson, however, after graduating Stuyvesant High School, went to school at night to

learn typing and stenography. Then he enlisted, wishing to become a pilot. But he could not pass



the eye test because at 10 years old he had sustained an eye injury. So he worked with a i r p l a n e mechanics and

then, when help was needed in the orderly room, his skills as a typist and stenographer were utilized. In this capacity, working to support the flight crews, he rose from Private to Staff Sergeant.

The received opinion then was that blacks could not fly planes, lacking the ability and intelligence. But Eleanor Roosevelt came down to the Tuskegee Airfield and asked that a black airman pilot her, thus proving that blacks could fly, and in fact, could serve in combat: "They too want to serve their country." The Tuskegee Airmen were fighting two wars, one against our enemies abroad, and one against racism and bigotry.

*continued on page 5*

### In This Issue:

- Out of Our Past Page 6
- Shredding Event & Clothing Drive Pages 8, 9
- FF Christopher Santora Educational Scholarship Fund Page 10
- NORC News Page 12
- Co-op Composting Page 14
- Thanksgiving Dinner Page 16

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### To the Editor:

Having a Veteran's Recognition Night was a great idea. I hope it starts a new precedent. We can't recognize them enough. The speakers were very informative. Meeting Mr. Samuel Wesley Henderson, the Tuskegee Airman, was an honor. Hearing his military trials and tribulations was touching and inspiring. Thanks for a very pleasant evening.

**Philip Goldstein, 1A/4H**



### To the Editor:

Two letters in the October 2008 issue of CN voice outrage at the present role Ed Yaker plays in the community. In strikingly similar language, they disdain his honorary title of President Emeritus, bestowed by the Board last May, object to his presence at board meetings, and question his role as chair of JCAC, while managing to misrepresent the history of term limits amendments. Charming, one writer divines (from thin air) that Mr. Yaker "is still given almost limitless power over Amalgamated decisions" only to deduce that his recent proposal to amend the Bylaws "is simply a power grab by individuals who feel they lost power with recent changes." Well, which is it? The authors

don't care about such contradictions because, for them, the issue is always 'power' but never the knowledge, experience and wisdom needed to set Board policy and make actual decisions. They are so obsessed with their memorable failure to transform term limits into electoral vehicle for seats on the Board that they project their resentment onto one individual who is supposedly so power mad that he doesn't even know he already enjoys 'limitless' power and lusts for ever more. To dissipate the heat and throw some light on what the Board has done, here's another perspective from one Board member:

1) Term limits were passed by a narrow margin at a Special Stockholders Meeting that was called, not because its sponsors collected almost 400 required signatures, but as an accommodation offered by Amalgamated in a settlement of the lawsuit their sponsors brought against the co-op. The lawsuit forced a month-long postponement of the regular Annual Meeting in 2006. The sponsors withdrew the original petition, corrected flawed legal language, and the Board, desiring to hold the meeting and avoid distraction from the pending election, offered to call a special meeting in November 2006. When the term limits passed, the affected Board members retired at the end of their terms, four in 2007 and three, including Mr. Yaker, this year. They did not wait for the formal approval by DHCR to comply with the term limits even though, legally, they could have still run for re-election.

2) The opponents of term limits warned that the effect would be to cause a massive disruption and deprive the Board of years of experience. But this was exactly what the sponsors wanted and exactly what happened. The Board must now deal with the consequences, including the fact that almost two thirds of its current members have been serving less than a year and a half. It is beyond the scope of this letter to discuss the various ways in which term limits have damaged our co-op except to say that the harm will be felt for quite some time.

3) Term limits apply only to the Amalgamated. They do not affect the A.H. Consumers Society. The Joint Community Activities Committee, which publishes Community News, has members



### IDEAS, COMMENTS?

*We look forward to receiving articles, letters to the editor or other comments from cooperators. Send them to the Co-op Education Office at 98 Van Cortlandt Park South (Building 14B) or call us at 796-9300.*

appointed by the three participating boards – Amalgamated, A.H. Consumers, and Park Reservoir. Mr. Yaker serves on JCAC as a representative of A.H. Consumers, and it is the members of JCAC who elected him the Chair of that committee.

4) The Board unanimously conferred the honorary title of President Emeritus on Ed in recognition of his long service as Amalgamated President and, even more importantly, his superb leadership and unmatched wisdom in his stewardship of the co-op's affairs. That's what the title means. It is purely honorary - Ed is not a member of the Board, does not propose motions and does not vote on anything.

5) The Board is acutely conscious of the untoward consequences of the rapid and massive changeover in its membership. To counterbalance, at least to some extent, the foreseeable (and foretold) damage that the proponents of term limits have caused, it has invited Ed to sit in on its monthly meetings. To repeat: Ed does not conduct these meetings, does not vote, and does not advocate. He graciously provides some background on issues that come up before the Board, answers questions from the less knowledgeable members (and that's all of us), and sometimes points out aspects of the issues and complications that he thinks ought to be considered. That is the extent of his role: only this much and, yes, *that much*. There is not a single member of the Board who is not grateful for his contribution.

**Jerzy B. Warman, 1A/13E**

### **To the Editor:**

In the mood for good Indian food? Check out the new restaurant in the neighborhood. You need not get into your car and head up to Johnson Avenue. In the last three years the little Indian restaurant at 156A West 231st Street has undergone many changes in name and management. Recently, it reopened under the name of Tandoori Night. This is not the only change. Although still a small restaurant, it has undergone some very nice changes in appearance. However, it is the not change in management or appearance that I found so appealing; it is the food. A few weeks ago, my son and I

went there for dinner. To start with, the service is tops!—courteous and accommodating. The food stands up to any restaurant on the Upper West Side.

I am not a restaurant critic, so my comments are those of someone who enjoys good food. The Lamb Madras was absolutely divine. Right away, I was able to detect that the spices used were not some ready-made concoction, but expertly brought together by a chef with many years' experience in London. (If you have ever been to London, which has a very large South Asian population, you are familiar with the glorious Indian and Bangladeshi restaurants in town.) The flavors of cardamon, cumin, mace, and turmeric of my dish had been combined to result in a delicate, yet scrumptious dish. The Chicken Vindaloo that my son ordered was equally tasty, not just hot. In so many restaurants, the hot spices mask the lack of flavoring spices, but not here. (They will season the food to your liking, from mild to very hot.) We also ordered a very light Puri, the puffy bread that is a favorite of ours. We recently went there again for lunch and enjoyed lamb Kashmiri, a delicate dish made with bananas; we took advantage of the 50% off lunch special.

I was also impressed by the number of vegetarian dishes. Whereas most restaurants offer a paltry six or seven choices, here they offer twenty-one; the take-out menu lists twenty, starting with a mixed vegetable curry to a mushroom shag. When my daughter, who is a vegetarian comes to town, I will be sure to take her to Tandoori Night. I really enjoyed my dinner and lunch there, and I will go back and try it again. It's my new little spot. If you are looking for outstanding food, friendly service and an intimate atmosphere, Tandoori Night is the perfect place.

**Irene Diaz, 7G/64**

## **COMMUNITYNEWS**

**Ed Yaker, Chairman - JCAC  
Doris Spencer, Editor**

*Editorial Policy is set by JCAC. Signed articles and letters are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of JCAC or its three sponsoring boards.*

**To the Editor:**

I have always enjoyed reading the Community News. The articles are informative and they reinforce the reasons I love living in Amalgamated. I was not pleased about the letters regarding Ed Yaker. I believe most cooperators know Ed to be a dedicated, hard-working individual. He has been on the Board of Directors and president of the co-op for many years. He has given a lot of his personal time to the co-op. He is also involved with other co-op organizations, like the Coordinating Council of Cooperatives. Ed was part of the committee that helped bring the AmPark Neighborhood School to fruition. Our cooperative has benefitted from his numerous years of service. Isn't it possible that the newer Board members appreciate and respect Ed Yaker for his wisdom, knowledge and experience? Being on the Board of Directors is a great undertaking. It is quite obvious that Ed took his role seriously.

Under the "Rights & Responsibilities of Shareholders" in our Cooperators Handbook, it notes that "If we cannot help, we should not obstruct!

**Diane Dowling, 1A/6F**

**To the Editor:**

October 4th BBQ Picnic--Weather? Weather? Will it rain? Will it be very cold? What to do?



Well it started out at on the plaza at the Towers. But the cold came and the rain came. Our staff, the Education Department

and the Service Department, moved the festivities to Vladeck Hall! What a party it turned out to be. The barbecue grills were on the sidewalk, outside

the Vladeck Hall. The tables were all set inside, and the people were there. The food was great. Everyone mingled. What a wonderful way to spend the afternoon with friends. Nobody wanted to leave. It was after 3pm and the Hall was filled.

My feelings -- schedule it indoors and we can come to enjoy the afternoon without fear of the weather. Thank you all who helped to make another happy Co-op Day.

**Beatrice Simpson, 8C/6F**



**BBQ Picnic moves into Vladeck Hall, and there's something for everyone. Above - Lisa Dubin, chair of the Ceramics Club, offers crafts for sale.**



**Left - John H. Johnson, III, of the Office of Recycling Outreach & Education, gave a presentation and distributed free recycling tote bags.**



**Recycle... cardboard, mixed paper, beverage cartons, bottles, cans, metal and foil. It helps the environment, and it helps our co-op.**

*Photographs in this issue (as well as the March, June & October issues) were taken by Jules Ira Rubenstein, Jerzy Warman, and Ed Yaker.*

## We Honor Our Veterans

*continued from cover page*

Wesley served in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Germany. He was overseas for two years and two months. After the war in Europe ended, he was sent back to the US to help train other African-Americans to fight in the Far East. He received an honorable discharge and a bronze medal.

The meeting ended with the veterans informally sharing their remembrances. Desserts were delicious but the chocolate cake with a picture of the American Flag was very special. Deep appreciation is extended to the Education Department and the NORC staff and committee for their efforts in planning and carrying out this event. We hope it will become an annual celebration.

---

## A Tribute to Our Veterans

By Archie Hunte

I was privileged to spend an eventful evening in the presence of such luminaries as our own veterans of the co-op. It was well-attended by family members of veterans present and some now departed along with a host of fellow cooperators.

Our Education Director, Doris Spencer and NORC Nurse, Shelley Stieglitz opened the affair by informing us that it had been a long time desire



to recognize and pay tribute to our veterans.

We enjoyed a historical walk back in time as

Professor Ultan, our own Borough Bronx Historian, traversed the military encounters from the Revolutionary War to our present military engage-

ments and the Bronx citizens that served in them. Many of the streets and parks were later named after some of them.

I was also quite moved by the remarks of guest speaker Sergeant Major Rivera (featured below with Shelley and Doris) of the Bronx Veterans Center. He has served in all of the military encounters since Viet Nam until this present crisis. He has been wounded several times. With such devotion to duty, the veterans truly have an inspired advocate working on their behalf to see that their needs are met.

The medal he had designed for the veterans was beautiful, and he plans to finance it at minimal cost to the them. He came well-equipped with many brochures and pamphlets packed with information that could be useful to some of our veterans.

I was pleasantly surprised to learn that our final guest speaker and fellow cooperator was a member of the famous Tuskegee Airman, the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the first Black Air Force Unit during World War II to serve with distinction in combat in spite of severe racial abuse.

The Red Tails as they were called because of the red painted tails of their aircraft, have indeed etched their place in history. After many decades the 99th Pursuit Squadron was given a beautiful medal in recognition of their distinguished service to our country by then President Clinton.

It also brought back memories of stories from both of my brothers. One was a World War II Vet and the other a Korean War Vet. They told me of the biases that they endured South of the Mason Dixon Line during those years. The input from the Veterans in the audience was also quite moving, some were prisoners of war, others had been wounded. They were Map Makers and Military Police that aided in the desegregation of the University of Mississippi, all heeding the call of their country. A widow of a Veteran shared a touching poem from her fiancée, at the time, sent to her from overseas and published in Life Magazine. The evening was most informative and concluded with delicious refreshments served by some of our NORC Committee Members.

## Out Of Our Past

### Good Earth Broken For First Veteran Unit

**A**t least 30 local veteran families are now a step nearer to realizing their dream of 'an apartment' when excavation began with a thunderous staccato last week on the north end of our Norman Avenue sites.

Months of anxious preparation, trips to Washington and sleepless nights by our Manager preceded the first shovelful of dirt that marked the beginning, and only the beginning, of our first 30 family, walk-up unit. The end under normal conditions should come about 6 months later, January or February. But no one should be surprised if even this small 'experimental' unit will drag on toward spring.

For such are the tribulations of honest attempts at building these days, even for all-priority veteran projects. Every effort is being made to maintain and improve the high standards of construction and design which characterized all our buildings. The investment of \$500.00 per room, which formerly represented actually one-third of cost today represents less than a one quarter, yet no raising of the investment is contemplated because most veterans are in no position to do so. The maintenance, without tax exemption, and with present costs of materials and labor, will have to be between \$16.00 and \$17.00 per room, per month – which is still 'a bargain' indeed compared to new commercial rentals anywhere in the Metropolitan area.

It is hoped that the new 'experience' in building now-a-days, and the flow of more materials by spring will enable us to make a start on the second all-veteran 100 family project to be erected on the south end of Norman Avenue (facing the Reservoir and P.S. 95) to accommodate the 8 or 10 local

veterans, who won't be able to get into Unit 1, and some 90 outsiders' equally desperate and deserving of decent homes.

All this and many more details were explained by Manager Kazan to some 400 applicants at a meeting in the Vladeck Hall Auditorium last Tuesday, August 20.

A very limited number of 4 and 5 room applications, from veterans only, are still being accepted for the second unit. Former applicants are urged not to call for information on 'progress.' They will be duly advised if there is any news.



**Cooperators enjoyed hearing the veterans' stories, as well as the refreshments. Thank you to Trader Joe's for their donations.**

**Left - Mr. Henderson shows his Congressional Medal of Honor!**

*Editor's Note: This above article is a reprint from the August 1946 issue of Community News. The veteran building referred to in the article is Building 11, and Norman Avenue is now Hillman Avenue.*

**Save Electricity**  
It Burns *Our* Money!

# CONGRATULATIONS CONGRATULATIONS

CONGRATULATIONS  
CONGRATULATIONS

## *Birthday Wishes!*

Birthday wishes to **Doris Santana Velez**, 1A/2A, September 21st; **Connee Santiago**, 1B/19B, September 29th; **Carmen Arias**, 7E/14, and **Jose Velez**, 1A/2A, October 1st; **Keith Clarke**, 12B/5A, October 4th; **Giancarlo Luna**, 1A/4A, October 6th; **Joseph Gonzalez**, 7E/54, October 9th; **Beverly Chong**, 7D/14, October 17th; **Jay Etheridge**, 4/4D, November 2nd; **Nestor Ortiz**, 7B/11, November 8th; **Anthony Santiago**, 13B/7E, November 14th; **Esther Soto**, 4/5F, November 21st; **Madge Aiken**, 1B/11F, November 23rd; **Eric Parrish**, 7B/12, November 25th; **James Vasquez, Jr.**, 4/11A, December 7th; **Nathaniel Lanzo**, 7F/33, December 9th; **Ana Arias**, 1A/4A, December 12th; **Roberto A. Pagan**, 7B/21, December 14th; and **Michelle Soto**, 4/5F, and **Christopher Cruz**, 13B/10D, December 18th, **Nina Isakova**, 8C/3E, December 28th; **Tomasito Batista**, 7H/54, December 29th

### *Happy "80th" Birthday* **Walter Watson**

Walter is a long-time co-op employee; he has been working for the co-op since July 1, 1955. Walter works in the Boiler Room.

*If you'd like to include your birthday and/or other announcements in this column, please send it to the Co-op Education Office at 98 Van Cortlandt Park South (Building 14B) or call us at 796-9300.*

## *Celebrate Cooperative Living*

*Amalgamated Housing Cooperative* - November 1, 1927 was the move in date for 303 families. Amalgamated was the first housing developed by Abraham Kazan, who was president from 1927 through 1957. This was Kazan's home.

*Park Reservoir Housing Cooperative* - On December 9, 1957, cooperators moved into Park Reservoir. It was built by the United Housing Foundation under the leadership of Kazan, "Father of cooperative housing in the United States."

**Ronda Hauben, 13A/8E**, received the 2008 Silver Elizabeth Neuffer Prize for Excellence in Journalism in print and online media. In awarding her the silver prize, the judges wrote that it was for "interesting and provocative coverage of issues at the UN, notably about the consequences of the permanent five's stranglehold on the Security Council. Ronda has reported from the UN for OhmyNews International since 2006. She won the award this year for articles she wrote between September 1, 2007 through August 31, 2008.



**Millie Alvarez, 8B/11E**, announces the birth of twin granddaughters, **Ava & Isabella**, born on September 22nd. Proud parents are Christopher & Rebecca Alvarez, and big sister Sofia Ana.

**Iris Suarez, 8B/4A**, is proud to announce the birth of her twins **Emmanuel**, 6lbs. 12ozs. and **Ana Marion**, 5lbs. 3ozs., born on October 13th.

Congratulations to **Sharon Gumerove, 1A/17E** on the birth of her twin boys, **Hunter Ross**, 6lbs. 14ozs. and **Matthew Benjamin**, 6lbs. 10ozs., born on November 11th. Proud grandparents are **Lillian & Robert Gumerove, 1A/15C**.

## Shredding Event

Cooperators took advantage of an opportunity to get rid of large amounts of old documents, papers, junk mail, etc. ProShred's truck parked in front of Vladeck Hall and cooperators were able to watch their stuff being shredded! Many were queried about their thoughts on this first-time event.

**Phyllis Fishman:** "I've had papers since 1970! They've been sitting there, and I don't have a shredder."



**Ken Solomon:** "It was great to clean out our closets and file cabinets. We've gotten rid of stuff from over 30 years of accumulating!"



**Aaron Olshan:** "A fantastic idea -- great for the environment."

**Elsie Martinez:** "This is the best idea I've ever heard of."

**Kenny Wilkerson:** "It's always a good thing to help people...the turnout was good."

**Hilda Zimpler:** "I think it's great...I was worried all the time. What am I going to do with all this stuff, and I was afraid of identity theft."

**Ruth Rosenzweig:** "It's a wonderful idea -- It should be more than once a year."



**Tomás Navarro:** "It gives us a chance to get all this stuff out. If you try to do it at home, you'll

never do it there. \$5 is a great price."

**Beatrice Simpson:** "People were so happy --they were willing to pay \$10!"

## Annual Clothing Drive

By Harriet Blaiwas

Another successful clothing drive in spite of the inclement weather. This year, we were joined by the Shredding Event. It was pouring rain all morning; we thought it was going to be a washout. Luck-



ily it wasn't! When I arrived at Vladeck Hall, at 8:30am, Shelley was already there. Signs and tables had been put the night before. People arrived early with their offerings, and so it went.

The volunteers were wonderful, and even more important, we had a greater number of young people who volunteered this year as you can see



**No one got past our beautiful guard, Bea Simpson, without their \$5 fee!**

by the group photo. The drive went smoothly. POTS (Part of the Solution), and Good Will collected the canned food, coats and clothing, right on schedule. And then, the volunteers were treated to a

tasty pizza lunch from our local store, Sorrento's Restaurant & Pizzeria. Another successful clothing drive. Same time next year.

Cooperators were donating clothing, and they were shredding their documents and papers. It was a busy and very productive day! We collected more than 300 bags of clothing.

Have a Merry Christmas and a healthy and Happy New Year.



**Volunteers of all ages separated and bagged men's, women's and children's clothing.**



**Left - Carl Stein and Tom Flynn were the designated volunteers to drive around and pick up donations.**



**We know we can count on the Amalgamated Nursery School children each year for their donations of canned food!**



Every year, there is an appeal for strong men and women to help at this event. Well, this year that request was met; we had a full force of **strong** women, men and children!

They helped with separating clothing, handling large black bags, and so much more. Glenn Fleischman even helped load the Goodwill donations truck. What a crew!

Thank you very much, and we look forward to seeing all of those (and more) hot bodies next year!

*D. Spencer*

# FF Christopher Santora Educational Scholarship Fund

By Ed Yaker

When George Crethan expressed wonder over his grandson climbing several flights of stairs wearing heavy equipment on a humid summer day, with temperatures over 95 degrees to help people get downstairs during a fire, Chris simply replied, "it's my job."

Christopher Santora had followed the footsteps of his mother Maureen and grandmother Veronica and become a teacher. But that was while waiting for the career he really wanted. As the only boy in a family with four sisters, Chris had listened to his dad tell stories of fighting fires. Chris loved excitement, and wanted to become a firefighter like his father, Al.

When the chance came, Christopher was accepted for the FDNY Fire Academy. After graduating the Academy, he had a little over two months as a Firefighter and was a member of Engine 54/Ladder 4 in midtown Manhattan. He was there on the morning of September 11, 2001, and is one of the 343 firefighters who lost their lives that day.

Christopher's career choices were not surprising. Public service is a way of life for the Santora family. Sisters have gone into teaching and into the military. There is also a strong tie to our co-op housing family.

George Crethan was a one of the founders of the Coordinating Council of Cooperatives (CCC). A Queensview pioneer, he served many years on its board, including several years as president. Al and Maureen settled in Queensview and raised their children there. It is still home to the Santora family, with Al on the board, currently president, and representing Queensview at the CCC.

Christopher loved learning, and particularly loved history. In his memory, the family established the Firefighter Christopher Santora Educational Scholarship Fund. Each year they award scholarships to the students from the schools the children attended or teach at, including the Firefighter Christopher Santora Early Childhood School. Elementary and intermediate school winners receive savings bonds, with high school winners receiving scholarships of \$8,000 spread over the four years of college.

In addition to students at the schools, there are scholarships for children of firefighters. Last year, the scholarship list expanded to relate directly to us here. There is now a scholarship for a high school senior living in a CCC member cooperative, which includes both Amalgamated and Park Reservoir.

In order to qualify, students must be American citizens and write an essay of 500-700 words on a selected social studies topic. Essays go to judges with identifying numbers in place of names, to assure fairness.

Here is last year's high school essay question (to be answered in 500-700 words):

*The President of the United States is responsible for many things.*

- ◆ *What three things do you feel our next President must address immediately? Why did you choose these?*
- ◆ *What do you think will be the implications of our next President not addressing the issues you have chosen?*
- ◆ *What three things do you feel our next President should address in his future planning? Why are these issues important to you?*

Remember, these questions were posed in the early spring, before candidates were certain, before the election, before the sub-prime crisis and the financial meltdown. Perhaps you would have enjoyed writing an essay on the question posed, with or without a scholarship as a prize.

Also in 2008, a children's book was published, written by Maureen Crethan Santora and illustrated by Patricia Santora Cardona entitled, "The Day The Towers Fell - The Story of September 11, 2001". Both mother and daughter are experienced early childhood educators who want to help young children understand this terrible event.

Awards are presented at an Annual Dinner Dance held in June. For high school seniors, a notice will be distributed when the question for 2009 is ready and it is time to prepare essays. To learn more about Christopher and the scholarship fund, visit ChristopherSantora.com or come in to the Education Office to see last year's journal, including the winning essays.

## Amalgamated Nursery's Halloween Party

By Jarrett Murphy

For obvious reasons, the Amalgamated Nursery School's annual Halloween Party did not incorporate "speed carving" into the lineup of events inside Vladeck Hall on Sunday, October 26th. But the party did offer more than 150 children, their parents and grandparents a chance to decorate a pumpkin, dress up a cupcake, design a trick-or-treat bag, make a mask, get a tattoo and mix a batch of Sparkly Spider Potion.

It also featured a "creepy crawling maze" that, if screams of horror and delight are any measure,



might have been the most popular event of the day. Chris Harwood's design of the maze and the use of gooey miniature skeletons to decorate it deserve much credit for the activity's

popularity, but so does the unidentified youngster whose ghost mask and massive blade had kids fleeing from the maze in terrified joy.

While princesses seemed the most popular costume overall, as they were in 2007, witches made a strong showing. Spiderman's popularity last year clearly lost some ground to Batman in 2008; there were several Caped Crusaders, one of whom came with a much taller Robin in tow. Superman also made an appearance, as did the Green Lantern. There were several Transformers, a few pirates, at least two Buzz Lightyears, two Tinkerbells, one Dorothy from "The Wizard of Oz," a Mickey Mouse, a doctor, a robot, a flower, insects, a dragon, a dog, a martial artist, several mice, and a clown, among others.

The party was a financial success thanks in large part to the efforts of fundraising chairpersons Cecilia Astacio and Candace Deler as well as

treasurer Wendy Cosgrove. More importantly, the event served its perennial purpose of bringing the school's families together in cooperative action. For the second year in a row, Sandra Nachtman led a hard-working kitchen crew that supplemented hot dogs and cupcakes with steamed vegetables and other healthy treats. It isn't often that people rave about tuna fish sandwiches, but they did in Vladeck Hall! The other parent volunteers who washed pumpkins, moved tables or manned the tables made the event what it was. Thanks also to our volunteers - Rachel Margolin, Charlene Dubin, Ariel Nieves, and Madalina Logigan for helping.

## Co-op Composting

A group of cooperators are organizing a composting program for the coming year. Among those interested are Stephanie Chellappen, Karen Armstrong, and Jason Godlewicz. In addition, Doris Spencer is planning an organizational meeting which will include us, Jodie Colon, Compost Educator at Bronx Green-up, Cristina Taylor, Executive Director of Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, and John H. Johnson, III, with the Council of Recycling Outreach & Education.

For those not familiar with composting, it is the transformation of material (plant matter) through decomposition into a soil-like material. Invertebrates (insects and earthworms), and microorganisms (bacteria and fungi) help in transforming the material into compost. It is a natural form of recycling which continually occurs in nature, the making of humus-rich soil from food scraps, such as: coffee grounds, eggshells, fruits/vegetables, nut shells, food scraps (excluding grease, bones, dairy products, and meat).

Some of the benefits of composting are reducing the amount of waste each household produces, providing soil for use in our own community gardens, lessening the burden on our landfills and, at the same time, saving taxpayer money.

Please watch your weekly Co-op Bulletins for additional information.

*Irene Diaz  
Glenn Fleischman*

## NORC News

By Rudeane Murray, Chairperson

**W**e're pleased to welcome to Bayla Butler, who has joined the NORC/AmPark staff as the Program Director. She is a licensed social worker with more than 14 years of experience working with older adults.

Bayla has a master's degree in social work from Yeshiva University's Wurzweiler School of Social Work, with a specialty in gerontology and community practice. She has served as adjunct faculty at the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work and as a mentor for nursing students during their gerontology rotation at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Her achievements



Left to right - Bayla Butler, Mickey Axelbank and Brad Silver, Executive Director of Bronx Jewish Community Council (BJCC)

have earned a citation from the Rand Corporation for creative programming and best practices in her work with older adults.

"I look forward to getting to know our cooperators and consider it an honor to work with the NORC Committee and the exceptional staff at the NORC/AmPark office and the Education Office," said Bayla. "I will strive to continue the NORC tradition of providing quality services with a caring heart."

Bayla and her husband, a clergyman, are the proud parents of two daughters and four grandchildren.

*The NORC/AmPark Office is located in Building 7E (80 Van Cortlandt Park South). Bayla and staff can be reached at 718-548-4990.*

## "See-e Me"

By Barbara 'Bobbi' Linn

**I** remember this 1970s poster so well; it read, "Look at me, not at my shell." Designed by a dear friend of mine, it was produced by the United Cerebral Palsy Association. This poster described my essence.

So often people don't look past the cerebral palsy; they assume I have no intellect, because of the way I look and sound, that smile that comes as a grimace, the drooling, the slow, slurred speech. Many times people talk over me, or else they make up their minds that they can't understand me without even listening to my words.

That woman at the travel agency who looked at me as though I were from Mars, getting so upset when I asked to purchase a train ticket. Then she picked up her phone and, almost hysterically, tells the person at Amtrak, "I have this woman here, and I can't understand her, but she wants a ticket to Washington, and needs to leave on Wednesday at three." So what was it she didn't get?

And the person at the bank shrieking over the phone three times in rapid succession, "I can't understand you," before bouncing the receiver down to leave me with a dial tone in my ear. Geez. Couldn't she have said, "Can you please repeat your words more slowly?" Or "Can you say it another way?"

Almost always waiters ask my companions, "What does she want?" Like I'm not there or incapable of giving my own order. And usually my friend is handed the check. Thanks, but no thanks. I don't need or want a free ride.

When I'm asked what's the biggest obstacle I face, I think about the long list of barriers facing the disabled community—architectural design, transportation, housing, adequate health care, but I find myself saying "attitude." With the right viewpoint, many of the issues faced by my community can be tackled with common sense. I'd appreciate it if people wouldn't make any assumptions but ask

me directly what I want and need.

For the last five years, I use a wheelchair when I go out, and now all most people see is my means of transportation.

Hey, here I am, under all this unusual window dressing. I am a fifty-eight year old daughter, aunt, friend, colleague, writer, old time civil rights activist, and disappointed Yankee fan. I have a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's from NYU, and spent twenty years leading a not-for-profit organization for people with disabilities.

I adore playing video poker in Atlantic City, cruising the malls to find the best bargains, watching "Millionaire" every afternoon, getting lost in bookstores, and playing with my three year-old great-niece, Rachel, hearing her squeal, "See-e Bobbi", as she points at me with tiny fingers.

I've lobbied the halls of Congress for passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act; and marched with comrades, through streets of Washington on many a demonstration. My colleagues and I blocked traffic in New York, and staged a sit-in at the offices of the MTA to gain accessible transportation. I'm actually a radical 'crip'.

I've been a worker, a boss, a lover, had my share of great times and some very low points. An illness, first years ago, brought an early retirement. I found myself in a nursing home for a few months with a feeding tube. It was like being in prison. There has to be enough community support so that people can live in their own homes.

A few years ago I had the opportunity to speak to a group of bank vice-presidents from, imagine, the same bank where that phone operator hung up on me. It was a breakfast meeting; and there are few events I would get up at five-thirty in the morning for. My topic wasn't supposed to be disability sensitivity exactly, but I felt that my agenda took precedence over theirs. How could they really shut me up politely after I got started? During my talk, a senior vice-president got up and left the room. It had me wondering. After I finished, she returned, and I was told training was set up for all the telephone operators. The woman, who had made the

arrangements for me to speak that day, said she had seen nothing at that bank happen so quickly! Mission accomplished.

It seems to all come together for me when I get my point across, and things in the world change just a bit for the better. I love the feeling that maybe, through my work as an advocate, I might be able to have people look inside the shell more and see disabled people as People, who just happen to have disabilities.

*Editor's Note: Bobbi's piece was crafted during the 2005 NORC/AmPark writing group "Through the Looking Glass" sponsored through a grant from Poets and Writers, Inc.*

*Bobbi, a long-time Amalgamated cooperator, has published her first book, "Ode to a Diet Coke: Disability, Choices and Control." (Jimsam, 2008) [www.jimsaminc.com](http://www.jimsaminc.com)*



- ◆ **Poetry with Judy Saks** - Thursday, January 8th - 2:30pm, Towers' Community Room
- ◆ **Blood Drive** - Thursday, January 15th, 4pm-8pm, Vladeck Hall
- ◆ **Bronx Arts Ensemble** - Tuesday, January 20th, 2pm, Vladeck Hall
- ◆ **The Scan Van - Mammograms** - Thursday, January 29th, 8am-1pm, Vladeck Hall
- ◆ **Friends of Van Cortlandt Park - Winter Trail Hike** - Saturday, January 31st - 10am, Van Cortlandt Park
- ◆ **Laura Wetzler Music Classes** - begins Thursday, February 1st, 2pm-4pm, Towers' Community Room

*Watch for more details in future flyers, and participate. Your ideas are appreciated.*



*New Cooperators*  
Welcome Brunch



**Left: Playgroup chairperson Luz Frade, her daughters, her mother, and grandmother (both new cooperators) are among four generations of families living here!**



To all the new families that have recently moved in, our co-op community extends a hearty, warm welcome to you.

It is great to note that some of our new (or not so new) members are young cooperators that have grown up here (Xiomara Gonzalez, top left). They're not really new to the co-op; they've become shareholders in their own right! It is also especially important to acknowledge the many generations of families still living in the co-op.

It is imperative that all family members play a role in working toward broadening the scope of our programs and activities in this community. It strengthens the ties that bind us. I wish you all the best in your new home, and after you've settled in let's talk about ways in which you can become an active member.

So, move your furniture, unpack your boxes, get your children settled in school, and prepare to enjoy your new cooperative community.

I look forward to working with you. Remember, I can find *you*; I know where you live!

*D. Spencer*

**WELCOM E**  
**NEW COOPERATORS**

- |                       |        |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Jeannette Nieves      | 3/10D  |
| Argentina Melo        | 7F/51  |
| Miguelina Perez-Dedon | 12A/5D |
| Serzh Musaelyan       | 9D/35  |
| Carmen Ferrer         | 7D/54  |
| Miguel Rivera         | 1A/20A |
| Irvin Restituyo       | 7C/64  |
| Teresa Santos         | 7C/43  |
| Victor Cuenca         | 7C/2   |
| Silvia Morales        | 7E/63  |
| Rosa Valenzuela       | 7B/41  |
| Crystal Estrada       | 9B/12  |
| Melissa Renz          | 8B/4F  |
| Gabino Cabrera        | 8C/4D  |

*We Mourn Our Losses*

- |  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Florence Etkind, formerly<br>of Building 14A | November 3rd  |
| Shirley E. McGee, 4/2C                       | November 14th |



Cooperators always enjoy this yearly event. Neighbors, food and music makes for a great evening!

# International *Food & Music Festival*



## Reflections on *Thanksgiving Day*

A few cooperators shared their comments on the celebration of Thanksgiving Day in Vladeck Hall:



**Selma dances with her son, Ken.**

*The food was great! I was apprehensive but I enjoyed the wine and music. - Michael Gary, 7F/32*

*It was outstanding. The music was good! - Selma Weiss & family, 1A/5D*

*That's why we never moved to Florida when we retired! - Hannah Grossman, 3/6E*



*It was my first time attending and it was so wonderful to be amongst warm and hospitable people. Only in Amalgamated-Park Reservoir! I enjoyed myself. - Norma Greenfeld, 3/9A*

*It was my first time attending and it was so wonderful to be amongst warm and hospitable people. Only in Amalgamated-Park Reservoir! I enjoyed myself. - Norma Greenfeld, 3/9A*



*The best caterer we've had so far! I think the \$10 fee was too much. - Mark Gornstein, 14A/8B*

*Absolutely outstanding/beautiful, Thank you Amalgamated. - Sol Feiner, 1A/1E*



*Very folksy, warm kind of get-together that reminds me of the old days which are long gone. - Jeffrey Warren, 9D/65*



**Volunteers did a great job decorating, serving, and cleaning up!**

*Beautiful, enjoyable, and wonderful people. Best food and service that lacked for nothing. - Milton Silverstein, 1B/16F*

*The food was great! - Miriam Sherman, 7G/54*

*Karen Armstrong and I worked like Lucy and Ethel. - Debbie Orenstein, 4/3G (volunteer)*



**Kudos to our new caterers, Jonathan and Noah of the Riverdale Kosher Market! The food was great and plentiful. Each diner was served a meal and they were given a "doggie bag." Volunteers packed dinners (and flowers) for homebound cooperators.**