

New York City Housing Authority Journal

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July 2005

Mercedes Ruiz's Purpose-Filled Life

By Heidi Morales



Resident Association President Mercedes Ruiz

It was a particularly warm day on June 3rd and I set out to meet someone who everyone at the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) described as truly amazing. Once we found the address, I walked into a bright lobby with bulletin boards decorated from corner to corner with brightly colored flyers announcing what is to come for the 91 senior citizens who reside in NYCHA's 175 Eldridge Street. "Are you looking for Mercedes?" asked a petite lady with a look of concern. I was led to an office and when I looked in front of me I saw a white haired woman sitting behind a desk talking authoritatively over the phone. She waived me in and gave me a big smile and gestured me to sit.

"¡Hola! Soy Mercedes Ruiz," she said as she extended her hand to shake mine. With that I began to ask her questions about her work with NYCHA, the positions she holds on various boards, and more importantly, her past — who and what contributed to the formation of an extraordinary lady — and so began the journey down memory lane.

Serving Residents

"I've been living in this building for 17 years," Mrs. Ruiz said. For eight of those years she's been the Resident Association President of this NYCHA senior only building on the Lower East Side. She also serves as Manhattan South Council of Presidents Secretary, is a member of the Resident Advisory

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(Above) The new name of the Hudson Guild's flagship location is prominently featured over the main entrance. (At right) Whoopi Goldberg, a former resident of Chelsea-Elliott Houses with NYCHA Chairman Tino Hernandez.

New Upper West Side Playground



It must have hit ninety degrees in the sun on the late afternoon of June 9th, but that didn't stop NYCHA residents and staff from joining City Council Member Gale Brewer on Manhattan's Upper West Side to celebrate the official opening of a newly renovated playground at Amsterdam Avenue and 89th Street in NYCHA's West Side Urban Renewal Area. Although NYCHA and Council Member Brewer provided the approximately \$380,000 necessary for the renovation, the idea came from Oracle Corporation President Charles Phillips, who happens to be a neighbor. Mr. Phillips said he thought the old playground, which was completed in 1965, was "an eyesore." "I started writing letters, sending faxes, generally harassing people," he explained. **Shown above (from left to right, first two rows) are NYCHA Board Member JoAnna Aniello, Council Member Brewer, 589 Amsterdam Resident Association Vice-President Angelina Ramirez, Wise Towers Resident Association President Victor Gonzalez, NYCHA General Manager Douglas Apple, DeHostos Community Center Coordinator Marta Colón, Manhattan Borough Director Carolyn Jasper, 201 West 93rd Street Resident Association President Milagros Stanley, Capital Projects Deputy Director James Gleba, and Mr. Phillips with his son. In the very back row (left to right) are Capital Projects Assistant Deputy General Manager Constantino Sagonas and Deputy General Manager for Operations Robert Podmore.** Special thanks to 589 Amsterdam Resident Association President Creola Kelly for all of her hard work. "I attended all the meetings," said Ms. Kelly, "but unfortunately I wasn't able to attend the ribbon-cutting."

MAKIN' WHOOPI AT HUDSON GUILD RE-OPENING IN CHELSEA

By Eileen Elliott

If the opinion of Chelsea-Elliott Houses Resident Association President Phyllis Gonzalez is any indication, the Hudson Guild has done a wonderful job renovating its three story, 20,000-square-foot community center, now known as the John Lovejoy Elliott Center. On May 25th, a year-and-a-half after the groundbreaking and in the midst of an \$11 million capital fund-raising campaign, the Hudson Guild hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the facility. "It's fantastic inside," said an enthusiastic Ms. Gonzalez.

The fully accessible Center occupies the two bottom floors and basement of a 12-story senior residence in NYCHA's Chelsea-Elliott Houses. And like a fair number of the people who gathered at the Elliott Center Plaza on 26th Street in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan to celebrate, Ms. Gonzalez is mobility impaired, so the renovation has a particular significance for her. "They put an elevator in front, right at the entrance," she said happily.

NYCHA Chairman Tino Hernandez was equally enthusiastic. "I am amazed at the work that went into this," the Chairman said. "We were here 18 months ago for the groundbreaking, so much work had to be done and so much money had to be raised. Congratulations!"

Named for the social reformer

who founded the Guild more than 100 years ago, the new Center promises to help further the Guild's mission, in the words of Board President Arthur Aufses II, who also spoke at the event, "of advancing social progress by bettering people's lives one person at a time."

Guild Executive Director Janice McGuire beamed as she opened the program, recalling the cold, windy November day when many of the same supporters gathered for the groundbreaking.

"Today we are thrilled to be here," Ms. McGuire announced from a stage set up in front of the building's bright, modern green and glass facade. The theme of community once again emerged, as Ms. McGuire described the

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MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Record High Test Scores On City English Language Arts and Math Tests



Last month I used this space to highlight the record gains by New York City's fourth-graders on the State's English Language Arts (ELA) exam. This month I am very pleased to announce that New York City's public school students in grades 3, 5, 6 and 7 this year achieved the largest one-year gains ever on the City English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics (math) tests, as well as the highest overall scores ever on the tests.

The number of students meeting or exceeding standards in these grades combined increased by 14.4 percentage points in ELA and by 7.5 percentage points in math from last year. For the first time, 50% or more of all of the City's students in these grades met or exceeded the ELA (54.8%) and math (50.0%) standards for their grades. In addition, Black and Hispanic students achieved their greatest one-year gains and best performance ever on both tests.

Over the last two years we have begun to bring order and accountability to a system that had been dysfunctional for decades. These results make it clear that the reforms we put in place are working. By providing students with the resources they need and holding them, their teachers, and ourselves accountable for producing results, our schoolchildren are now receiving the education they deserve. These results, like the achievement and gains on the State test scores released two weeks ago, are remarkable and a sign that things are moving in the right direction. I congratulate the students, teachers and parents that have worked so hard.

There is no doubt that our children and our schools are performing better than they were before we instituted the Children First reforms. Our new Citywide core curriculum, coaches, professional development, interim assessments, and aggressive intervention programs for struggling students, coupled with the enormously hard work of our teachers and other school staff, all contributed to these tremendous gains. I congratulate all of our students and their parents, as well as all of our school staff, for the extraordinary results.

Michael R. Bloomberg

Help Put An End To Elevator Fires!

In the May issue of the *Journal* we reported on a rash of elevator fires in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. Needless to say, serious injuries can result from these fires, and this is NYCHA's foremost concern. In addition, elevator fires are particularly devastating and costly.

Unfortunately, the elevator fires continue. Since we last reported on them, there have been fires in nine more developments, with Brooklyn being hit hardest. These additional fires were at Brooklyn's Long Island Baptist, Boulevard, Brevoort, Farragut, Marcy, Ocean Hill, and Kingsborough Houses. There was also an elevator fire at Butler Houses in the Bronx and at Ocean Bay in Queens.

Most often, elevator fires are started using debris that should be brought to the proper disposal area in a development but instead is left in the hallways, or in the elevators themselves. Trash, furniture or mattresses are especially appealing to elevator arsonists.

New elevator cabs can cost upwards of \$60,000 to replace and it can take from six months to a year to repair an elevator after a serious fire. The total cost that has gone into elevator repairs this year is upwards of \$455,000—that's money that could be used for the upkeep and maintenance of your development.

The inconvenience to NYCHA residents presents particular problems to the elderly, people with illnesses, or people who have mobility impairments.

Reporting Information

The police and NYCHA's Inspector General have been investigating the fires but they need your help. If you have any information about those persons who may have set fire to items in elevators, please contact the Inspector General's Office at (212)306-3354, or the NYPD. You can also call the Crime Stoppers number in the advertisement to the right and report a tip completely anonymously.

Other Ways You Can Help

Please help us by disposing of mattresses, old furniture and other debris properly. These items should never be left in the hallway, stairway, lobby or elevator. They should be removed from the building and placed in the bulk pick-up area or trash collection area. If you are not sure where to dispose of such items, contact your Management Office.

Also, if you see large amounts of trash or discarded furniture please report the condition to your Management Office during normal business hours between 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM.

After hours, and on weekends and holidays, you should notify NYCHA's Emergency Services Department of the condition and location. ESD will dispatch a team to remove the hazard. Emergency Services can be reached at (718) 707-7777.

Paint Thefts...

Recently, more than \$70,000 worth of paint has been stolen from storage areas in NYCHA developments in all five boroughs. The police and NYCHA's Inspector General have been investigating these crimes, but once again, we need your help.

If you have any information about any of these crimes, please call the "Crime Stoppers" at 1-800-577-TIPS. You will remain completely anonymous through the whole process, even when you pick up your reward!

REWARDS UP TO
\$2000

YOU DON'T HAVE TO REVEAL YOUR IDENTITY TO HELP SOLVE A VIOLENT CRIME.

**CRIME STOPPERS
CALL 1-800-577-TIPS**

When you phone in a tip we won't ask your name. But if it leads to the arrest and indictment of a felon, we will give you a cash reward of up to \$2000. And because you pick it up by a code system, you won't even have to give your name to claim it.

SPONSORED BY NEW YORK CITY POLICE FOUNDATION SP273-2(4-00)

NYCHA RESIDENTS CAN APPLY NOW TO RECEIVE

\$1,000 SCHOLARSHIPS

IT'S YOUR FUTURE

If you are a NYCHA resident attending a City University of New York (CUNY) Community or Senior College, you may be eligible to receive a \$1,000.00 NYCHA Resident Scholarship.

To qualify, for the scholarship you must:

- Be enrolled full time in an Associate or Baccalaureate degree program at any CUNY, Senior or Community College.
- Be an authorized New York City Housing Authority resident.
- Be a sophomore, junior, senior. • Have a minimum GPA of 3.0.
- Demonstrate financial need. • Major in film, broadcasting, dance, drama, fashion marketing/merchandising, journalism, music, photography, literature or fine and/or performing arts.

Apply by filing out the NYCHA Resident Scholarship Application available at www.cuny.edu/nychascholarship (must be typed in lower case). The application deadline is July 15, 2005.

Scholarships will be available for a limited time.

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Summer's Here! Use Your Energy Wisely...



Wow! It looked like we were in for a mild season and then bam—summer hit with record-breaking temperatures. We've already seen scattered power outages throughout the City.

There probably isn't one New Yorker out there who doesn't remember the Blackout of 2003. We don't need any power failures to know that it's important to conserve energy during the summer. With half-a-million residents,

the public housing community can have a significant impact on our City's energy resources in the months ahead. Please help by following these few simple suggestions.

If you're buying an air conditioner for the first time, check with your development's Management Office first to arrange for the proper installation (sometimes an additional outlet needs to be installed) and to find out if there are any other requirements. NYCHA has very specific guidelines when it comes to the installation of air conditioners, devised for your safety and the safety of your neighbors.

When buying an air conditioner, it is important to make sure that it is the appropriate size for your apartment. Another way to save money and energy is by installing a setback timer that programs the air conditioner to turn off while you're away and turn back on just before you return home. The \$10 investment in a timer will pay for itself many times over.

Keeping the thermostat just a few degrees higher can have a significant impact on your electric bill. If your air conditioner is 15 years old or older, replacing it with a new ENERGY STAR model can save you (or NYCHA) up to \$56.00 a year on electric costs. Contact your Management Office to find out how best to dispose of an old air conditioner.

When it's hottest outside, keep your window blinds or shades closed to keep the heat out as much as possible. And when it's cool out, usually during the early mornings and evenings, open your windows to let a breeze in.

Other ways of saving electricity include turning off lights, fans, computers, and other electronic devices when not in use. Replacing old incandescent lightbulbs with new compact fluorescent ones will give you the same amount of light for a quarter of the cost.

Not only can you help the City save energy by following these energy saving tips, you can help NYCHA save money during this climate of ever-shrinking funding from Washington, and if you are among the 10% of NYCHA residents who pay their own utility bills, the money you save will be your own!

So, stay cool and conserve electricity!

Tino Hernandez

HUDSON GUILD

(Continued from page 1)

effort that went into the project's completion: "faith, flexibility, a sense of humor, working together toward the same end — building community."

In addition to the many people and institutions she thanked, including City Council Member Christine Quinn who contributed \$1 million, Ms. McGuire lavished special praise on Chairman Hernandez and NYCHA for its faith in the Guild's ability to raise the money and carry out the work. In addition to contributing \$455,000, kicking off the capital campaign, NYCHA also provided a 25-year lease.

To add to the excitement, special guest Whoopi Goldberg, a former Chelsea-Elliott resident, was on hand to reminisce about the role the Hudson Guild played in her life. She also accepted a specially created "Whoopi Award" or "Arts in the Community Award" from the Chairman.

"I started here in nursery school with Ms. Lily. I see all these women who kept an eye on me," Whoopi said, scanning the crowd through her signature sunglasses, and one or two stray dreadlocks. "We were the epitome of the village it takes to raise the kids."

The Center includes a newly renovated gym and a new youth lounge. The art gallery and theater have also been renovated, and a special health and social services team is now located right in the building. General community services, such as free tax preparation assistance, and conveniences, like the organic food co-op, will be more easily available.

"Everything is pretty much where it was but it all looks a whole lot better," said Board President Aufses.

DEBORAH'S DIARY

By Deborah Williams



It's Trackmania—The children of the Wagner Community Center in Manhattan weren't all that surprised when their award-winning track and field team was invited to join Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Department of Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Randall's Island Sports Foundation (RISF) Chairman

Richard Davis, and RISF trustees and donors Carl and Gail Icahn to pay tribute to Jesse Owens and to commemorate the official opening of the Icahn Stadium Track & Field Complex at Randall Island Park on April 23, 2005. The \$42 million state-of-the-art facility was built with support from the public and private sectors. It is the only International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) certified field for outdoor competition in North America. The Wagner kids and track team members Rodney Gregory, Durrel Boyd, Brian Gonzalez, Juan Gonzalez, Fatoumata Dabo, and Kadiatou Dabo were more than excited to be one of the first groups of kids chosen to run on this new state-of-the-art field, and they did so with championship quality and style. The Wagner Boys' Track Team participated in the 4x110 meter relay. The team members, including two young ladies from the Wagner Girls' Track Team, were humbled and elated as the Mayor placed medals around their necks. Plans are underway to provide an outdoor recreational program to children who live on Randall Island that will also be used by over 10,000 youth from East Harlem and the South Bronx. *Hey kids, you seem to have had a really great time at the opening ceremony. I salute you for participating in this historic event. Keep up the speed and congratulations to you!*

Self-Empowerment—Remember when your mother used to tell you to take your elbows off the table? Learning proper social and dining manners so you make a good first impression (whether at a picnic, McDonald's or even a birthday party) is what etiquette is all about. Etiquette is exactly what the Ms. Foundation teaches young ladies throughout the city. "Brooklyn Community Operations uses the Ms. Foundation Dinner Awards to give our residents some exposure," said Brooklyn Community Operations' Senior Program Manager Lisa Davis. For the past five years, girls from Brooklyn Community Centers have been attending the Ms. Foundation's Annual Gloria Awards Dinner, with a different Community Center attending each year. This year, on May 26, 2005, at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Stuyvesant Gardens Community Center Director Vicki Lamb along with residents Yesenia Martinez, Yadira Timoteo, Lelanda Jones, and Delsalny Fernandez attended the dinner. This was their opportunity to attend a formal dinner and test their etiquette. It was an evening filled with learning, intrigue and fun for the young ladies who were all dressed like princesses. "The dinner is a full four course meal and it's always very funny to see the young ladies' expressions when they see all the glasses and flatware on the table," said Ms. Davis. During the cocktail reception guests approached the young ladies and commented on how lovely they looked in their dresses. At dinner, they tried every dish that was served to them. Actress Cynthia Nixon of HBO's "Sex in the City" even made an appearance. *Well, congratulations! Learning etiquette is the first step to empowering yourself and becoming a dynamic individual. Don't stop there! Let this dinner be the motivation you need to begin your search for self-empowerment. Once you empower yourselves there will be no stopping you!*

Happy Birthday Wishes—Susie Mushatt Jones of Vandalia Houses in Brooklyn will celebrate her 106th birthday on July 6th. Although Suzie is a mere 106 years old she is a strong-minded woman able to withstand a few rounds of verbal boxing—that is she doesn't take any mess. According to her family and friends, Susie is a caring person who always gives freely from her heart. This is evident, as Ms. Jones is still an active member of the Tenant Patrol and is the oldest member citywide. Folks say she's one of a kind. That's why so many of her family and friends will come together to celebrate and honor her on this joyous occasion. **HAPPY BIRTHDAY SUSIE!**

If you have good news you would like to share with your neighbors, drop me a few lines care of The NYCHA Journal/250 Broadway, 12th Floor/New York, New York 10007 or by fax at (212) 577-1358. Or hey, make it personal! Give me a call at (212) 306-4752. I can't 100% guarantee it but I'll do my best to see that your good news makes it into this column.

Before And After, from the Archives...



SOUTH JAMAICA HOUSES in Queens will host a 65th Anniversary celebration this month. South Jamaica I, with 11 three- and four-story buildings and 448 apartments was completed in August of 1940. South Jamaica II, with 16, three to seven-story buildings and 600 apartments was completed 15 years later. The photo at left was taken in 1953, at the site of South Jamaica II and the one at right was taken at South Jamaica Houses in 1942. Happy Anniversary!

The NYCHA "Not Wanted" List

In this issue we continue our editorial policy of publishing the names of individuals who have been permanently excluded from our public housing developments. This list is part of NYCHA's effort to keep residents informed of the Housing Authority's ongoing effort to improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers in public housing and to allow for the peaceful and safe use of our facilities. Here follows a list of the people excluded after hearings were held on February 18 and 25, and March 3 and 10, 2004. **REMEMBER, IF YOU SEE ANY OF THESE INDIVIDUALS ON HOUSING AUTHORITY PROPERTY, PLEASE CALL YOUR MANAGEMENT OFFICE OR THE POLICE! THIS LISTING IS PROVIDED TO ALL POLICE SERVICE AREAS.**

Prohibited as of February 18, 2004

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Edward Hart | Case 775/04 formerly associated with the twelfth floor of 3221 East 153rd Street, Melrose Houses, the Bronx. |
| Tysheen Trammell | Case 776/04 formerly associated with the third floor of 752 Henry Street, Red Hook East Houses, Brooklyn. |
| Carlos Corrales | Case 851/04 formerly associated with the eighth floor of 178 Avenue D, Riis Houses, Manhattan. |

Prohibited as of February 25, 2004

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Kareem Hamilton | Case 817/04 formerly associated with the fourth floor of 441 Beach 51st Street, Ocean Bay Apartments, Far Rockaway, Queens. |
| Mofaid Alsaidi
Mofa Alsaidi | Case 831/04 formerly associated with the seventh floor of 818 Home Street, Union Avenue Consolidated, the Bronx. |
| Bryan Ramirez | Case 6981/04 formerly associated with the seventeenth floor of 54 Catherine Street, Smith Houses, Manhattan. |
| Kelvin Lozano | Case 945/04 formerly associated with the fourth floor of 111 Nostrand Avenue, Marcy Houses, Brooklyn. |
| Yarira Rosario | Case 943/04 formerly associated with the eleventh floor of 765 Courtlandt Ave., Jackson Houses, the Bronx. |

Prohibited as of March 3, 2004

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Jessica Fret | Case 9560/03 formerly associated with the third floor of 1228 Clay Avenue, Claremont Consolidated Houses, the Bronx. |
| Raphael Afanador | Case 9771/03 formerly associated with the eighth floor of 2926 West 25th Street, Surfside Gardens Houses, Brooklyn. |
| Dante Deshazo | Case 968/04 formerly associated with the thirteenth floor of 765 East 163rd St., Forest Houses, the Bronx. |
| Edwin Medina | Case 1252/04 formerly associated with the sixteenth floor of 20 Catherine Slip, Smith Houses, Manhattan. |
| Robert Santiago | Case 1292/04 formerly associated with the sixth floor of 1734 Madison Avenue, Taft Houses, Manhattan. |
| Dawston Sundar | Case 7243/03 formerly associated with the fifth floor of 125 Nostrand Avenue, Marcy Houses, Brooklyn. |
| Shamel Burroughs | Case 4459/99 formerly associated with the sixth floor of 15 Mill Street, Red Hook East Houses, Brooklyn. |
| Matthew Davis | Case 1372/04 formerly associated with the fourth floor of 210 West 230th St., Marble Hill Houses, the Bronx. |
| Johnny McCoverly | Case 1392/04 formerly associated with the twelfth floor of 826 Columbus Ave., Douglass Houses, Manhattan. |

Prohibited as of March 10, 2004

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Daniel Mussington | Case 1406/04 formerly associated with the seventh floor of 1020 Trinity Ave., Forest Houses, the Bronx. |
| Kenneth Reginald
William Powell | Case 1532/04 formerly associated with the first floor of 1455 Harrod Avenue, Bronx River Houses, the Bronx. |
| Isaias Reyes | Case 1650/04 formerly associated with the tenth floor of 1785 Story Avenue, Monroe Houses, the Bronx. |

WILDLIFE REHABBER TEACHES CHILDREN ABOUT ANIMALS



Wildlife Rehabber Eileen Jones shows the children at Campos Plaza Community Center a yellow rat snake.

— By Deborah Williams —

On June 2, during "Be Kind to Animals Week," the kids of Campos Plaza and Riis Houses Community Centers learned about wildlife and created posters for a contest sponsored by the Compassionate Action Team (CAT), a NYCHA employee organization founded by Capital Projects Program Administrator Alice O'Neil. The theme of the poster contest, "Be Kind to Animals; It's Their Home Too," is all part of an outreach effort to teach youth about the dangers faced by animals living in the natural habitat in their communities.

"It's important that the children are aware of the environment. They need to respect it and other beings that live on the grounds of NYCHA developments," said Ms. O'Neil. Ms. O'Neil explained that the reason people do not actually see wildlife on development grounds is that the animals are generally afraid of humans.

For years CAT has strived to bring awareness about animal issues to communities within the city. This year, they brought in a local licensed wildlife rehabber to

do just that. "It's my job to nurse injured animals, get them back on their feet and release them into their natural habitat," said wildlife rehabber Eileen Jones.

Ms. Jones entered the gymnasium of the Campos Community Center with a mini zoo in tow. The children's eyes brightened when they saw a yellow rat snake, a domestic rabbit, a cockatoo parrot, and an American kestrel falcon, ready to perform as it does in its natural habitat. The presentation

was more than "Show and Tell." In addition to watching and listening—there was hands-on action.

"Did you know that the American kestrel is a small hawk and that it can dive at speeds of up to 65 m.p.h.?" asked Ms. Jones.

"Why does the kestrel have eyes on the side of its face?" the children asked back in response. They appeared to be amazed when they discovered that birds are actually descendants of prehistoric raptors and other dinosaurs such as the pterosaur, a flying reptile.

"Why is the bird biting you?" asked Victor Lugo and Antonio Torres, as the cockatoo nipped Ms. Jones's hands.

"Because he doesn't like the way I am holding his feet," said Ms. Jones. "Does it hurt?" shouted Antonio. "Yes!" Ms. Jones replied. But the worst bite of all would be the bite of a venomous snake, she explained. Fortunately, the yellow rat snake is not a poisonous snake but it will bite if handled carelessly. The children were extremely cautious when they touched and gently stroked the snake.

After the wildlife presentation concluded, the children retreated to their art shops and began creating posters of their favorite animal. The first-place winner will receive a \$50 savings bond, the second-place and third-place winners will receive books with a humane theme, and each participating center will receive a certificate of participation. The exhibit/poster contest visited one community center in each borough.

Citywide Chess Champions

Two Bronx community centers — Murphy and Bronxdale — took away the first- and second-place trophies at NYCHA's Third Annual Citywide Chess Tournament held at Brooklyn's Williamsburg Community Center on June 10th. The additional eight centers representing their boroughs were: for Brooklyn, Williamsburg and Cooper Park; for Manhattan Jackie Robinson and DeHostos; for Queens, Hammel and Woodside Houses, and Stapleton Houses represented Staten Island. Consultants teach chess five days a week at five community centers in each borough from October to June. If you're interested in participating in NYCHA's Chess Program next year, please contact Eric Espinal at (212) 306-3311 or Baffour Adjei at (212) 306-3232.



SAVE THE DATES! Harlem Summer Stage 2005

Each year NYCHA, the New York State Office of General Services and the Apollo Theater host an annual concert series on the plaza of the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building. This year promises lots of fun and live music from some of your favorite artists. Every Thursday during the months of July and August from 5:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M. the day winds down with music that soothes the soul. So, keep these dates in mind: July 7, 14, 21 and 28 and August 4, 11, 18 and 25. And don't forget to join us for some unforgettable summer fun!

HEALTH MATTERS

Quitting Smoking Is Easier Than Ever

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in New York City and throughout the nation. More than one million New Yorkers smoke, putting themselves and their families at risk for preventable illnesses and death, including heart disease, cancer and stroke. In fact, smoking kills a New Yorker about every 55 minutes.

Quitting smoking isn't easy, but it's the best thing smokers can do for their health. In a continuing effort to make it easier for New Yorkers to quit smoking, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), in partnership with Pfizer Inc., will distribute full courses of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT, or "the patch") at no cost to New Yorkers who smoke. By calling 311, New York City residents can find out if they are eligible to receive the patch. Recipients must be 18 years or older and must meet other eligibility requirements. The patch kits are worth about \$150 and will be available for a limited time only, on a first-call, first-served basis.

If you are eligible, you will receive a full course of safe and effective medicines to help you stop smoking. If you smoke, this is the most important thing you can do to improve your health.

What You Get If You're Eligible

Eligible smokers will receive the following in the mail:

- A full six-week supply of nicotine patches;
- Instructions on how to use the nicotine patch;
- DOHMH literature on how to quit smoking; and
- Pfizer's "Know Your Health" brochure, detailing how to receive personalized, online support for your efforts.

In addition, the DOHMH will contact program participants by phone after they receive their nicotine patches to offer support and advice on stopping smoking.

Other Smoking Cessation Services Available in NYC:

For help quitting smoking, call the New York State Smokers' Quitline at 1 (866) NY-QUITS (866-697-8487) or visit <http://www.nysmokefree.com>.

NYCHA'S 2005 RESIDENT ART SHOW 300 Exhibit Their Work At Rutgers Community Center

By Eileen Elliott

If you were lucky enough to take in the 2005 Resident Art Show at the Rutgers Community Center on Manhattan's Lower East Side last month, then you probably already know that there are more talented New York City Housing Authority resident artists now than ever before. From papier mâché sculptures, to time-lapsed digital photographs, to mixed media collages, to watercolor and acrylic paintings, the 300 pieces of artwork on display gave a powerful impression of a vibrant creative spirit in NYCHA developments.

As Harborview Arts Coordinator William Lucero put it, "The year for Harborview begins and ends with the Resident Art Show."

A panel of three art professionals viewed over 1,000 entries to choose the 300 pieces for the exhibit — the largest number of finalists ever accepted since the Resident Art Show began 15 years ago.

The art was created throughout the year by children, teens and seniors at over 100 NYCHA community facilities, in workshops led by NYCHA's Harborview Visual Arts staff and consultants. Harborview now employs 50 professional artists to conduct the weekly workshops which generate no less than an estimated 2,000 pieces of art a week!

NYCHA Chairman Tino Hernandez joined Board Member JoAnna Aniello, Community Operations Deputy General Manager Hugh Spence and Assistant Deputy General Manager Michelle Pinnock in the gymnasium on June 8th for the official ceremony honoring 65 seniors from all five boroughs with "Excellence In Art" awards. Over 200 youth from the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island were honored in a similar ceremony the previous day at the community center, as were 200 Brooklyn and Queens youth on June 9th.

If you didn't get a chance to stop by before the show closed on June 22nd, there's still a chance to view the work. For the first time an additional exhibit will be held at the Rush Arts Gallery located in the Chelsea section of Manhattan at 526 West 26th Street, from August 9th through the 13th. The exhibit will include not only the work of resident artists, but also the work of the Harborview artist consultants.

NYCHA's Citywide Programs Assistant Director Ukah Busgith expressed her thanks to Mr. Lucero, as well as to Harborview Arts Coordinators Josie Gonzalez and Mildred Beltré, for "working tirelessly to put the show together."



Harborview Arts Coordinator William Lucero speaking to more than 200 seniors, many of whom were honored at the Rutgers Community Center for the 2005 Resident Art Show.

And no account of the ceremony on June 9th would be complete without mentioning the moving performance by the NYCHA Senior Chorus.

"This is the most lively and active art show I've ever been to," said Mr. Spence. Mr. Spence also thanked NYCHA's Chairman and Board for their support.

NYCHA's Harborview Visual Arts Program holds weekly workshops for children ages 6-12 who are enrolled in the afterschool program, for teens ages 13-19 in the evening program, and also for seniors. For more information, contact Harborview at: (212) 541-5172. SEE PAGE 8 FOR A SAMPLE OF THE ARTWORK.

Willie Randolph Visits Brownsville



MAJOR LEAGUE Mets Manager Willie Randolph, who is also a former resident of NYCHA's Tilden Houses, visited Floyd Patterson Field and Tilden Houses in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn on June 9th. In a ceremony at Floyd Patterson Field Mr. Randolph received awards from local organizations, a proclamation from Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, and (most importantly) a NYCHA Tenant Patrol jacket and shirt from Tilden Houses Resident Association President Helen Harrison, amidst a crowd of enthusiastic NYCHA residents. Mr. Randolph is shown here with Saralee McWhite, who is a resident of Marlboro Houses, as well as on the staff of Brooklyn Community Operations. In a Major League Baseball career stretching from 1975 to 1992, Mr. Randolph played with the Pittsburgh Pirates, New York Yankees, Los Angeles Dodgers, Oakland Athletics, Milwaukee Brewers and New York Mets. As Mets Manager beginning in 2005 he guided the team to their first six game winning streak since August of 2003. Mr. Randolph was born in South Carolina.

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<p>BRONX Boston Secor 3470 Bivonia Ave. Bronx NY 10475 Bronx River 5185 E. 174 St. Bronx NY 10472 Webster/Morrisania 450 E. 169 St. Bronx NY 10466 Edenwald II 1154 E. 229 St. Bronx NY 10466 Eastchester 1216 Burck Ave. Bronx NY 10469 Clason Pt./Sackwern 1711 Lafayette Ave. Bronx NY 10473 Forest I 980 Tinton Ave. Bronx NY 10456 Mckinley 760 E. 163 St. Bronx NY 10456 Mitchel I 360 E. 137 St. Bronx NY 10454 Morris I 1358 Washington Ave. Bronx NY 10456 Morrisania Air Rights 3131 Park Ave. Bronx NY 10456 Union Ave./Caulwell 834 Eagle Ave. Bronx NY 10473 Claremont I 1100 Teller Ave. Bronx NY 10456 Davidson (Union Ave.) 819 E. 167 St. Bronx NY 10459</p>	<p>Gun Hill Houses 3444 White Plains Rd Bronx NY 10467 Claremont Cons. I 1128 Findley Ave. Bronx NY 10455 Claremont Cons. II 1195 Clay Ave. Bronx NY 10456 Mott Haven 340 Alexander Ave. Bronx NY 10454 Moore 535 Jackson Ave Bronx NY 10455 Pelham Parkway 975 Waring Ave. Bronx NY 10469 Bronxdale 1473 Watson Ave. Bronx NY 10472 Claremont Parkway 3820 Third Ave. Bronx NY 10457 Highbridge Houses 1075 University Ave. Bronx NY 10452 Andrew Jackson 285 Courtland Ave Bronx NY Castle Hill 615 Castle Hill Ave Bronx NY 10473</p> <p>BROOKLYN Belmont Sutter 616 Belmont Ave. Brooklyn NY 11207 Bushwick-Hylan V 24 Humbolt St. Brooklyn NY 11206 Cooper Park 275 Jackson St. Brooklyn NY 11211</p>	<p>Tompkins I 65 Tompkins Ave. Brooklyn NY 11206 Vervon Restored II 100 Vernon Ave. Brooklyn NY 11211 Brownsville II 295 Osborne St. Brooklyn NY 11212 Linden Houses 195 Cozine Ave. Brooklyn NY 11208 Tilden I 340 Dumont Ave. Brooklyn NY 11207 Breukelen I 106-09 Flatlands Brooklyn NY 11236 Long Island Baptist 428 Sheffield Ave. Brooklyn NY 11207 Marcus Garvey II 10 Amboy St. Brooklyn NY 11212 Kingsborough I 770 Kings 7th Walk Brooklyn NY 11233 Park Rock I 1636 Park Place Brooklyn NY 11233 Pink Houses II 1258 Loring Ave. Brooklyn NY 11208 Pink Houses I 2726 Linden Blvd. Brooklyn NY 11208 Red Hook East 443 Columbia St. Brooklyn NY 11231 Coney Island 3030 Surfside Ave. Brooklyn NY 11224</p>	<p>Ralph Ave/Tapscott 1196 E. New York Ave. Brooklyn NY 11233 Marcy Houses 604 Park Ave Brooklyn NY 11206 Ingersoll 16 Fleet Walk Brooklyn NY 11201 Unity Plaza I 580 Blake Ave. Brooklyn NY 11207 Fiorentino Plaza 2155 Pitkin Ave. Brooklyn NY 11207 Tompkins/Berry 442 Berry St. Brooklyn NY 11201 Howard Ave. Rehabs 583 Howard Ave. Brooklyn NY 11212</p> <p>MANHATTAN Robert Fulton 419 W. 17 St. New York NY 10011 Carver 1481 Madison Ave New York NY 10029 Dyckman 3784 10th Ave New York NY 10034 George Washington 1955 2nd Ave New York NY 10029 Douglass Houses 830 Columbus Ave. New York NY 10025 Johnson Houses 165 E. 112 St. New York NY 10029 Jefferson Houses I 228 E. 115 St. New York NY 10029</p>	<p>Taft I 65 E. 112 St. New York NY 10029 A. Phillip Randolph 251 W. 114 St. New York NY 10029 Wagner Houses V 2370 1st Ave. New York NY 10035 Fred Samuels I 2401 Adam Clayton Powell New York NY 10030</p> <p>QUEENS Arverne/Edgemere 339 Beach 54 St. Rockaway NY 11692 Carlton Manor 75-15 Beach Channel Rockaway NY 11692 Beach 41st 433 Beach 40th St. Rockaway NY 11691 Hammel 81-10 Rockaway Beach Blvd. Rockaway NY 11691 South Jamaica II 159-07 159 St. Jamaica NY 11433 Queensbridge 4107 12th St. Long Island City, NY 11101</p> <p>STATEN ISLAND Stapleton 75 Hill St. Staten Island NY 10304 Richmond Terrace 121 Jersey St. Staten Island NY 10301</p>
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Mercedes Ruiz's Purpose-Filled Life

(Continued from page 1)

Board. I'm out of breath just running through this list, but Mrs. Ruiz, an 84 year-old grandmother and great-grandmother, goes through her list of positions and obligations as eagerly as a child reciting a fun trip to the park.

"How do you have time for all that and all this?" I asked, gesturing at all the paperwork on her desk. "I love to give and I love to do. Ever since I was a young woman I've always kept myself very busy. I don't waste time; I measure it.

"I have a timer at home which I use to time myself while I do things." She assured me that this is the only way she can get everything done. "I'm a one [wo]man operation."

Mrs. Ruiz plans and executes many of the activities for the seniors in her building, everything from the food or coat drives which take place each year to summer-time family days.

Carmen Rivera, Director of the University Settlement After School Program, located in Mrs. Ruiz's building said she also began an art program for the children. "Mercedes is so active and self-directed. She observes where she's most needed. We're so lucky to have her."

According to Mrs. Rivera, so is a five year-old Asian boy who participates in the Foster Grandparent Program. "There's a child who just arrived from China and he doesn't speak a word of English and she [Mercedes] doesn't speak Chinese but somehow they understand each other. It's truly amazing."

During our interview Mrs. Ruiz mentioned this shy boy who she has taken under her wing, as she put it, and nurtured. She said the boy is now all laughs and giggles. I was able to witness for myself the wonderful relationship Mrs. Ruiz has with all the kids, who all appear to love her—she's everyone's grandmother.

Mrs. Ruiz wakes up at 5 o'clock in the morning to help get everything ready for the senior breakfast program, which feeds all the seniors in the building for only 50 cents a day. A program which, by the way, she brought to her devel-

opment along with an exercise program every Wednesday and a monthly food program where hundreds of dollars in groceries are donated from the Brooklyn Food and Nutrition Program to help feed the seniors. But not all has been hard work; Mrs. Ruiz takes some time out to play too.

Life Before NYCHA

Mrs. Ruiz spoke to me about her experiences as a student at the old all girls' Wadleigh High School in Harlem, where she was known as the school's best dancer. "I used to dance up a storm," she said chuckling. She was very active in school activities especially when they involved dancing. She choreographed various shows like *The Bolero*, *The Tango* and *Cachita*.

"I've always been the leader, eager to organize, and I had a following. We invented clubs...like sororities. I still have old high school friends I talk to and visit when I am in Puerto Rico. We talk about our old Wadleigh days," she said with a silly laugh, nodding her head as if remembering all the mischievous things they did.

After high school she started working as a secretary, which was a common profession for many women in the 1940's. In 1945 Mrs. Ruiz married a young soldier by the name of John Olan.

"He was honorably discharged from the Army and we married right away. He was adorable; he was cute and smart." Their marriage produced a little girl by the name of Patricia, who now works as a bi-lingual teacher in Puerto Rico.

At that point Mrs. Ruiz became what she called a "real housewife" but she juggled those responsibilities with being a Girl Scout leader and with the Grand Regents of the Catholic Daughters of America, among other things. But when her daughter turned 10 years-old, Mrs. Ruiz decided she wanted to work part-time and eventually she landed a job as an assistant to the Director of Housing of Barnard College where she stayed for close to 10 years.

But tragedy soon hit this happy, positive woman. In 1970, the day of her daughter's bridal shower, her

John, as she called him, collapsed in the shower of a massive heart attack.

"He was pronounced DOA (Dead On Arrival) when we got to the hospital. I couldn't get over my grief." But somehow Mrs. Ruiz found the courage to keep going.

Now that her daughter was an adult and her husband had passed, she dedicated her whole self to her work and to community involvement. She worked for the government of Puerto Rico for many years, then in tourism and hotel management, and even held a high ranking position at a small airline where she also began to take flying lessons in DC-5 airplanes from World War II. It is quite evident that Mrs. Ruiz has led a very exciting and interesting life, but despite the interesting work and the event planning and the travelling and the recognition, she never forgot the principles by which she lives—family, friendship, faith and fortitude. "Those are my four F's," she said.

I couldn't get over how she still remembered so much of her past. The details, the sequence of events, the names of people and places, exact addresses of buildings that perhaps don't even exist anymore—these seem to have been tattooed on her brain and heart. Perhaps because Mrs. Ruiz believes that, "Everything you learn in life has its place and its purpose."

Of all the activities she oversees and all the work she does, Mrs Ruiz dedicates most of her day to serving her fellow residents, a job which she takes very seriously—so seriously, in fact, that the 17 year-old elevator in the building looks brand new—a true testament to her commitment to the residents.

All the kids in the After School Program call her grandma—it was apparent to me that Mrs. Ruiz forms real, solid, lasting bonds with people. The words of Carmen Rivera sum up what many people expressed to me.

As Ms. Rivera said, "I admire her. I personally have learned so much from her. She's really amazing."

Indeed she is.

ART SHOW

(Continued from page 5)



"Ganesha" Ages 6 to 12, Farragut Houses Community Center, Brooklyn



"Mask of Panama" Jeremiah Brunson, Age 11, Whitman Community Center, Brooklyn



"Penguins" Victoria Vasquez, Age 10, Jacob Riis Community Center, Manhattan



"Chillin' Chris with His Earphones" Jeffrey Morin, Age 13, Boulevard Community Center, Brooklyn

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Sports Program Summer Schedule

Citywide Carnival

Track & Field

Sports Education Field Day

BRONX


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@ Central Park
(E. 97th Street & 5th Avenue)

Tuesday July 26, 2005
@ Van Cortlandt Park
(242nd Street & Broadway)

Wednesday August 3, 2005
@ Van Cortlandt Park
(258th Street)

BROOKLYN EAST

Thursday July 21, 2005
@ Prospect Park
(Nethermead) 

Wednesday July 13, 2005
@ Red Hook Park
(Bay St. Bet. Columbia & Clinton St.) 

Tuesday July 19, 2005
@ Prospect Park
(Parkside & Ocean Avenue)


BROOKLYN SOUTH/WEST

Thursday July 21, 2005
@ Prospect Park
(Nethermead) 

Thursday July 14, 2005
@ Red Hook Park
(Bay St. Bet. Columbia & Clinton)

Wednesday July 20, 2005
@ Prospect Park
(Parkside & Ocean Avenue)

MANHATTAN


Tuesday August 9, 2005
@ Central Park
(E. 97th Street & 5th Avenue) 

Thursday July 28, 2005
@ Riverbank State Park
(W.145th Street & Riverside Dr.)

Tuesday August 2, 2005
@ Central Park
(E. 107th Street & 5th Avenue)


QUEENS

Wednesday August 10, 2005
@ Baisley Park
(150 St. Bet. Rockaway & Conduit)

Friday July 15, 2005
@ Baisley Park
(150th Street & Rockaway) 

Friday August 19, 2005
@ Baisley Park
(150th St & Rockaway Blvd)

STATEN ISLAND

Friday July 22, 2005
@ Clove Lake Park
(Clove Lake Road) 

Wednesday July 27, 2005
@ Corporal Thompson Park
(Broadway & Henderson)

Thursday July 7, 2005
@ Clove Lake Park
(Clove Lake Road)



CITYWIDE OLYMPICS
Thursday August 11, 2005
@ Riverbank State Park



CITYWIDE KIDS WALK
Wednesday August 17, 2005
@ Clove Lake

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NOTICE

Modification of New York City Housing Authority Agency Plan 2005

In accordance with Section 5A of the Housing Act of 1937 as amended, the New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA") is proposing to modify its agency plan for FY 2005. The proposed modification amends NYCHA's Tenant Selection and Assignment Plan (TSAP) by giving a need based priority to families with children in foster care whose only barrier to reunification is housing and who are not eligible for rental assistance through the City's Housing Stability Plus program. These families must be referred by the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

Availability of Modification to the Plan for Public Inspection

The public is advised that the proposed modification to the Plan will be available for public inspection at NYCHA'S principal office, located at 250 Broadway, 12th Floor, Reception Area, New York, NY, starting on June 17, 2005 through August 3, 2005 between the hours of 9:30 AM and 4:30 PM. The proposed modification to the Plan will also be available at the following locations:

- On NYCHA's webpage, which can be located at <http://www.nycha.gov/nycha>
- At the Management Office of each NYCHA public housing development during regular business hours.
- At the Community Centers listed below during the hours of 9:00 AM to 7:30 PM:

Polo Grounds Community Center 2965 8 th Avenue New York, New York	Bronx River Community Center 1558 East 174 th Street Bronx, New York	Lafayette Gardens Community Center 442 DeKalb Avenue Brooklyn, New York
Rutgers Community Center 200 Madison Street New York, New York	Blood Community Center 133-36 Roosevelt Avenue Flushing, New York	Brooklets Community Center 715 East 105 th Street Brooklyn, New York
Classic Center of Melrose 286 East 156 th Street Bronx, New York	Ocean Bay/Bayside Community Center 57-10 Beach Channel Drive Far Rockaway, New York	Staten Island Community Operations Borough Office 140 Richmond Terrace Staten Island, New York

Public Comment:

NYCHA will invite public comment on the proposed modification to the Plan, as well as the draft FY 2006 Annual Plan, at a public hearing to be held on Wednesday, August 3, 2005, from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM at

The New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge
333 Adams Street
(Between Fulton and Tillary Streets)
Brooklyn, New York

The location listed above is both handicapped accessible and can be reached using public transportation. Written comments regarding the modified plan are encouraged. To be considered **submissions must be received not later than August 3, 2005**. Comments may be sent either through the internet address set out above or via ordinary mail (fax submissions will not be accepted) to the address set forth below:

New York City Housing Authority
Public Housing Agency Plan Comments
Church Street Station
P.O. Box 3422
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Tino Hernandez, Chairman



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Tino Hernandez, Chairman
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- 4 REPLACE** damaged cords on electrical appliances. Use only UL-approved extension cords.
- 5 REMOVE** "octopuses" from electrical outlets and extension cords.
- 6 DISCARD** old and unneeded flammable liquids such as cleaning fluids and paint thinners.
- 7 MOVE** flammable liquids stored near stove or other heat source to a safe, distant location.
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Develop a home escape plan with your family in case of fire. Practice it. Have a pre-arranged meeting place somewhere outside.
- ✓ **HOME SAFETY INSPECTION**
Conduct a safety inspection of potential fire hazards in the home. Eliminate them. Make every room fire safe.



SUMMER FUN NYCHA has a contract with the Fresh Air Fund to provide one-day field trips for 1,000 children, ages 6 to 12, and weekend camping trips for another 600 this summer. These youngsters were at Brooklyn's Farragut Houses on June 8th, when the Fresh Air Fund was registering for summer camp.