

RIOC Record

Roosevelt Island Special Commemorative Edition Publication

December 2010

What A Year! Roosevelt Island's Past Forty Years of Development

Island Youth

Two of the Island's Youth Programs
and what they have to offer

The Tram Returns!

Back and Better than Ever



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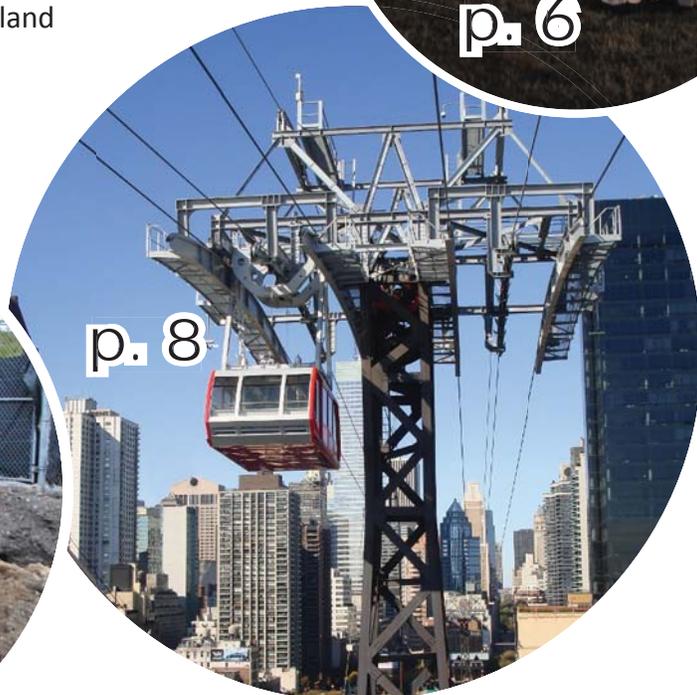
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A Message from the President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation



Leslie Torres, Esq.

President & Chief Executive Officer
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation

In my time here on Roosevelt Island, I have come to marvel at the bustle of developments that keep the island in a constant state of revitalization. Exciting events make this safe island community ideal for families just as increasingly sustainable infrastructure makes the island ideal for residents and visitors alike. I really have been so pleasantly surprised at the community's good will and the impressive capability of the island employees.

It is fitting that the 40th anniversary of Roosevelt Island's Development Plan should fall on a year such as this with vigorous work underway on an assorted list of renewal projects. While the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation continues building new parks, enhancing roads, walkways, parking, and lighting, and maintaining all old and new infrastructure, we also seek to engage with the residential community. By creating a dialogue between our administration and the community we hope to better inform future development. Recent community engagement initiatives

include implementing a new Roosevelt Island 311 emailed comment service (RI311@rioc.com) and setting office hours for citizens to bring grievances to the RIOC offices (Wednesdays from 3:00-5:00 pm).

I recently came upon a quote from FDR on the subject of civilization and community that rang especially true to me: "We must cultivate the science of human relationships – the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together, in the same world at peace." I relish opportunities to unify diverse groups and see Roosevelt Island as a community striving to do the same, hence my interest in working with a public benefit corporation like RIOC.

Given the progressive RIOC employees and island residents, I have ample opportunity to support initiatives which follow FDR's emphases on community involvement, environmental conservation, and scientific creativ-

ity. The hybrid buses, subway access, brand new aerial tramway, increased "green" infrastructure as well as our great new greenspaces show our commitment to environmental responsibility. Surrounded by beautiful views of the East River and New York City's skyline, we are reminded to redouble our efforts at preserving the natural elements that make Roosevelt Island such a special place to live and work.

In this special commemorative edition we highlight many recent changes in recreation and community support programs. The publication also details the contributions of a few exceptional residents and employees. Please enjoy reading about this wonderful island and its ongoing renewal.



Department Highlight: **Engineering**



TOM TURCIC
DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING



SANTO VERTA
PROJECT MANAGER



ROBERT GREENE
PROJECT MANAGER



From fountains to water drainage, from street lighting to paving and roads, from everyday maintenance to the major constructions such as the future Southpoint Openspace or the newly renovated Octagon Soccer Field, Roosevelt Island's Engineering and Maintenance Departments keep the island running in more ways than you might imagine. Island projects are in a constant state of transition, requiring adaptive design from RIOC engineers and a diverse skill set from the Maintenance staff. It is the responsibility of the Engineering Department to plan the logistics of all island projects, managing projects and relationships with builders and contractors. Oversight of construction projects and maintenance of all facilities - such as laying Z-bricks on Main Street - are the bread and butter of Engineering.

Director of Engineering Tom Turcic will retire this year - read about his time with RIOC on page 17!

Above: The Engineers are awarded a plaque in recognition of their work on the Octagon Soccer Field.

Contact Information

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Visit our website at
rioc.ny.gov
for updates and information!

The Fortieth Anniversary of Roosevelt Island's General Development Plan:

What a Year!

ROSINA ABRAMSON
VICE PRESIDENT OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Like New York City, Roosevelt Island continues to renew itself. Originally, this community was created because the City had abandoned its outmoded social welfare system which had relied almost exclusively on isolated institutions on what was then known as Welfare Island. The planned community concept was launched by New York City and State in December 1969 when a General Development Plan (GDP) and 99 Year ground lease was signed between the two, tapping President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" mixed income housing and new community programs. According to these founding documents the object of this "New Community" was "to make the maximum contribution to the present needs of the City..." emphasizing affordable housing and more open space for all New Yorkers. Now, having concluded forty years since the Roosevelt Island idea was launched, seems a good time to perform a "mid-course" review.

In September 1973, immediately after Welfare Island

was re-named in honor of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, an editorial in The New York Times explained the significance of the occasion and the intent of the Roosevelt Island GDP, saying that Roosevelt Island "...is to become a...model town within this old city, ...a demonstration of modern planners' capacity to harness technology for human use, while enhancing rather than degrading the natural environment," describing it as "...the strip of land, surrounded by water that is to be dedicated to a spirit of renewal in the nation's first city."

Just as New York City has affirmed its promise as the "nation's first city," so the State has maintained its commitment that Roosevelt Island remain a "model town ... dedicated to the spirit of renewal." This commitment has been realized first via the Urban Development Corporation, which was responsible for the original development, and now through efforts by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) which operates the Island on behalf of the State. Although it has taken a little longer than the



Left: "Mainstreaming to Main Street" Event at Goldwater Hospital

Opposite page, clockwise from top left:

"A Kaleidoscope of Island Life," at Sportspark; Outdoor Summer Movie Series at Firefighters' Field; "Welfare Island: A Spirit of Place Past" Photography Exhibit at the Octagon Gallery



ten years envisioned by the Times in 1973, now in its fortieth year, the Roosevelt Island plan is nearing completion with a strengthened sense of renewal. The GDP, being so much more than a blueprint for bricks and mortar, inspires continual re-examination of how well our New Community continues to meet the goals set for it in 1969.

Roosevelt Island's fortieth year has seen exceptional progress in ongoing renewal. The world's first mass transit Aerial Tramway has been completely rebuilt so that it is once again the most modern cable urban transportation system in operation, featuring high efficiency engineering, modernized aesthetics and its trademark spectacular views. Construction of the long awaited Four Freedoms Park, a memorial to FDR designed by architect Louis Kahn, is well underway. Work on the adjacent gardens of Southpoint Park will be completed and opened in spring 2011. The beautiful, landmarked Good Shepherd Chapel has undergone a much needed modernization of its heating and ventilating systems so that it can better serve its purpose as a commu-

nity center. Sportspark, which has been outfitted with a new gym floor, pool surface and lighting, is poised to be rediscovered by swimmers, basketball players, Ping-pong enthusiasts and other active folks. Octagon field has been resurfaced and night lighting installed, making this a four season, round the clock athletic field.

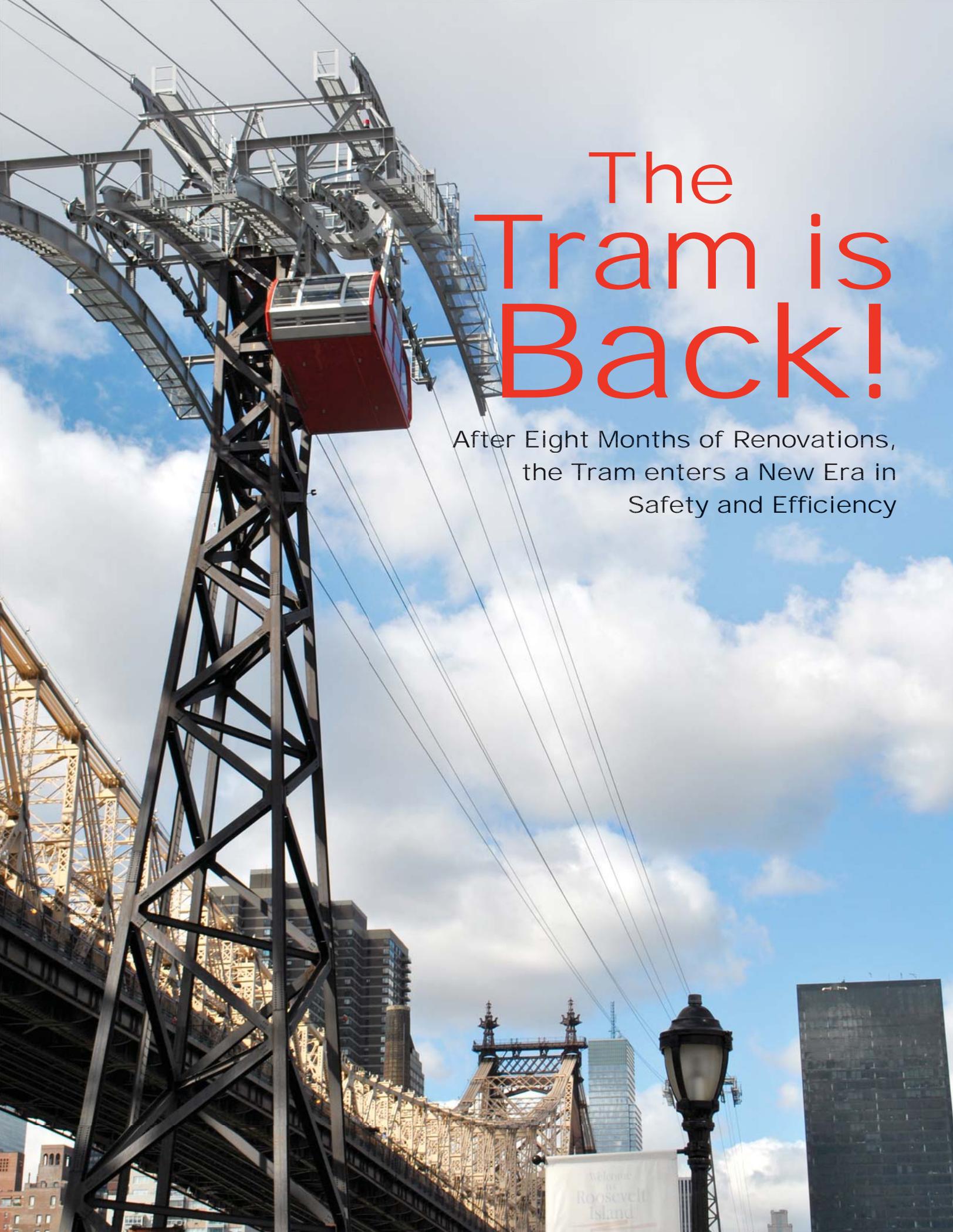
Roosevelt Island has celebrated

“Roosevelt Island’s origin was grounded in a spirit of serving as a ‘model’ of what New York could accomplish.”

its fortieth year in many ways, including a summer outdoor movie series showing films which featured the Island, a Panel Discussion at Coler/Goldwater Hospital discussing founding principles which emphasized universal disabled accessibility long before it was mandated by Federal statute; the AVAC system, still hauling trash underground at forty miles per hour, was the subject of an exhibit at the RIVAA Gallery, a panel discus-

sion at the Wagner School of Public Administration and served as a host site for Open House New York. A photographic exhibit documenting the remains of Welfare Island and early planning for our “new community” is currently on view at Sportspark.

Roosevelt Island’s challenges continue for another sixty years under the GDP. This continuing mandate focuses on planning and operations as priorities, including the provision of even more environmentally sustainable operations and infrastructure and encouraging a sense of community between all of the Roosevelt Island residents and visitors with its innovative technology, open space, sports facilities, fresh air and unparalleled views. Roosevelt Island’s origins were grounded in a spirit of serving as a “model” of what New York could accomplish, the outcome of the Roosevelt Island experiment will ultimately be measured by what RIOC continues to accomplish to fulfill the promise to the people of New York made some forty years ago.



The Tram is Back!

After Eight Months of Renovations,
the Tram enters a New Era in
Safety and Efficiency

Welcome
to
Roosevelt
Island

ISLAND DEVELOPMENT



Left: Test run of the North Cabin. **Above:** Hoisting of the First Cabin.

ANNA RANKIN
COMMUNITY RELATIONS
GRAPHIC ARTIST INTERN

The Roosevelt Island Tram has been a lifeline to thousands of Island residents for decades, appeared in films, television and books and achieved the status of a New York City icon. The Island's most direct route into Manhattan was not intended to achieve fame, however – it was originally seen as a temporary solution for Island commuters during the long-delayed construction of a subway line. Today, with a newly renovated Tram back in service, native Islanders and visitors alike can enjoy the sight of the New York City skyline while they travel hundreds of feet above the East River.

When it was installed in 1976, it was the only aerial tramway system in the world specifically used for urban mass transit – similar systems were primarily seen on ski slopes and mountainside resorts. Even today, there are only two companies in the world that manufacture systems that meet Roosevelt Island's requirements. POMA of Grenoble, France was chosen as the best company for the job. The company certainly has some impressive design credits under its belt, including the very first lift in the world in their native France as well as a more recent commuter gondola lift in Medellin, Colombia. Roosevelt Island's brand new tramway system has

received the benefit of POMA's expertise through new state-of-the-art features such as improved stability in high winds, the ability to operate each side separately and four backup generators to ensure the operation of the Tram's electrical systems.

Thirty-four years ago, it was never imagined that the Tram would become so popular. The original tramway was planned to remain in service for seventeen years, at the end of which time the subway would be in operation to take commuters into Manhattan. When the time for reevaluation came, however, the Tram had become a necessary additional means of transportation as well as an integral part of Roosevelt Island's identity. The Tram continued to run for twice its projected lifetime until early 2010, when it was finally decommissioned in preparation for modernization. With new parks opening at Roosevelt Island's southern end and the expectation of increased traffic, the improvements couldn't have come at a better time.

Although the old Tram holds a place in history and in the hearts of many New Yorkers, we can be sure that Roosevelt Island's new Tram will have a lifetime just as exciting and useful as that of its predecessor!

A New Southpoint

Construction at Southpoint opens up Roosevelt Island to residents and tourists



LUTHER CLEMENT
COMMUNITY RELATIONS ASSISTANT

The Openspace of Southpoint

The lush greenery and fascinating buildings of Southpoint's greenspaces, along with its spectacular views, have long been coveted by the few who know it but they will soon be recognized and used by many more.

Realizing the Dream

On March 17, 1974, renowned architect Louis Kahn was walking through Manhat-

tan's Penn Station with a briefcase containing his constant companion, a sketchbook. On this particular day, the sketchbook held drawings of what he hoped would be his first construction in New York City. He was 73 and still vigorous and creative. His project was a park memorial to be built on an island in the East River as a small but majestic gesture to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's noble career. The island had been renamed after the 32nd U.S. President the previous year and

it provided unrivaled panoramic views of Manhattan, Queens, and the lower extent of the East River. But the result of his design was not for Mr. Kahn to see as he suffered a fatal heart attack there in the train station.

A year before his passing, Kahn presented his commissioned design at a ceremony to rename Welfare Island as a dedication to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Still, due to New York City's financial crisis that followed in 1975, the project was tabled for

Above: Rendering courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park, LLC

Top Right: Governor Paterson, Mayor Bloomberg, Ambassador vanden Heuval, NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn & Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney at the FDR Groundbreaking Event

Bottom Right: Model of the Memorial - photo courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park, LLC

years. With the concerted efforts of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute and some devoted public officials, ground was finally broken on the project in 2010. Ambassador William J. vanden Heuvel, founder of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute (FERI), describes the impediments to achieving the park as a “perfect storm” of obstacles, predominantly financial. Even the support of then Governor Nelson Rockefeller was not sufficient to build the park. Problems were compounded when Rockefeller was named vice president and left for Washington.

After all this time, Ambassador vanden Heuvel points out that it is appropriate and impressive that this monumental piece of infrastructure will be built during the nation’s largest financial crisis since the great depression, the quagmire from which President Roosevelt’s New Deal rescued the country.

Elected officials and those involved in the evolution of the park assembled on September 13th to welcome the granite to be used for the monument as it was



unloaded from its barge. When the 24 granite blocks, weighing 36 tons each, landed on the dirt levels at Southpoint after their long truck ride from North Carolina followed by a short boat trip from New Jersey, Governor Paterson and Mayor Bloomberg were there to receive them. They were joined by park project representatives and elected officials: Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, New York State Assembly Member Micah Kellner, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, and New York City

Council Member Jessica Lappin.

The various speeches highlighted the significance of the memorial in this particular moment and as a large infrastructure project. Governor Paterson pointed out that the construction “will employ 200 union workers during the worst financial crisis since the great depression.” City Councilwoman Jessica Lappin turned the audience’s attention to Roosevelt’s famous Four Freedoms speech, saying, “We can and we will sit out on this site and look out at the United Nations and remember what President Roosevelt stood for and what our country stands for.” She explained that she hopes that visitors to the park can take the great President’s words regarding individual freedom to heart as they encounter contemporary disputes. Truly, the consensus of the day was that visitors and Roosevelt Island residents will shortly have a beautiful and meaningful park.



The Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park

Opening in 2012, Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park will incorporate rows of Copper Beech and Little-Leaf Linden Trees with a step pyramid, a bust of President Roosevelt, and a “Room” for viewing Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn from the extreme end of the island. The Copper Beech Trees will line the northern entrance to the park in front of two walkways that will surround the step pyramid on either side. The triangular garden atop the pyramid will be itself lined with Little-Leaf Linden Trees, pointing to another section, the Forecourt. The Forecourt will be a tree-lined court that will meet the statue of Franklin Roosevelt. On the other side of President Roosevelt’s bust

will be an engraved excerpt from his Four Freedoms speech. This engraving can be viewed from the “Room”: a 72-square-foot, granite column enclosure and the ultimate vantage point of the park and the Island. Standing at sizes of 6 foot by 6 foot by 12 foot high, the columns shelter the “Room” on three sides, leaving the sky and the southern view entirely exposed.

Southpoint Openspace

Adjoining Louis Kahn’s Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial at the southernmost tip of the island is Southpoint Openspace. Formerly referred to as “Green Rooms, Wild Gardens,” this openspace was designed by landscape architects through the Trust for Public Land and is being constructed just north of the FDR Memorial

on the southern end of Roosevelt Island. The design utilizes themed “green rooms” that provide the visitor with educational, recreational, cultural and restorative activities. Within the greenspace, New York City’s landmarked Smallpox Hospital, designed by James Renwick, architect of noteworthy buildings such as St. Patrick’s Cathedral, has been stabilized and will be surrounded by the openspace’s final paths, clearings, and foliage along with Strecker Laboratory. Finally, the “Wild Gardens” are a series of native wooded areas snaking through the grounds with picnic groves, interactive landscapes, and a pedestrian gateway and comfort station. RIOC plans make Southpoint Openspace available to the public by Spring 2011.



Above: Rendering of the Southpoint Openspace Project
Opposite Page: Smallpox Hospital

Island landmarks, such as the Smallpox Hospital pictured here, will be more accessible to visitors and residents once construction on the Openspace is completed.



SPORTSPARK REVISITED

DONNA MASLY
PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Sportspark has become a vibrant recreation center with something for everyone! As obesity rates are skyrocketing and America's losing the battle of the bulge, Sportspark provides wide-ranging and fun ways to stay slim and trim. With many free and affordable programs for kids, seniors, and everyone in between, there's no reason not to get active!

Sportspark was built in 1976 and has recently undergone extensive renovations to improve its visitors' experience. It currently houses an 8000-square foot gymnasium, weight room, 6-lane pool, and Ping-pong area. There are also vending machines and locker rooms on either side of the building. Sportspark is overseen by friendly and knowledgeable staff members who will ensure your visit is both enjoyable and safe.

The Sportspark gym can

be used for a variety of activities including soccer, basketball, and floor hockey. It's currently rented out to area high schools, adult after-work recreational leagues, local teams and pick-up games with residents. Newer groups are appreciative of the massive space so centrally located in New York City, while other groups have cultivated the gym as a hidden gem

**"SPORTSPARK IS THE BEST
PLACE IN NEW YORK TO
PLAY FIVE-A-SIDE SOCCER."**

for over 10 years! Longtime patron and soccer player Rob May had this to say: "Sportspark is the best place in New York to play five-a-side soccer... The staff is excellent and very accommodating."

The gymnasium offers more than just team and group rental. Doors are opened for

free wheelchair basketball and full-court basketball on Saturdays. Everyone is invited to join a pickup game or just shoot a few baskets. It's a great way to get a little exercise and have a lot of fun!

The Sportspark Pool is another one of the best-kept secrets in all of New York City. Whether you're looking for a tranquil atmosphere to go for a casual dip with friends, or you're hoping to drop a few pounds in an invigorating, naturally lit setting, the Sportspark pool fits the bill. The six-lane, twenty-five meter pool boasts multiple open swim sessions every day of the week. For one Islander, swimming at the Sportspark Pool "is a great low-impact, high aerobic sport for all ages that will help you gain strength, maintain flexibility and teach you how to breathe better. The Sportspark pool has been a God-send for me because it has helped me stay in shape and strengthen and tone without injuring myself ... I have learned enough to become a pretty good swimmer and now I've found my 'life-time sport'!" Kids are welcome with the company of an adult, and adult swims are also offered. Swimmers of all levels can improve with the help of Sportspark programming such as affordable swimming lessons, water aerobics, and master swim programs. The pool is also the long time home base of the Roos-



Sportspark East Entrance



Firefighters' Field

Revel Island Marlins, a local youth swim team.

For those looking to improve their hand-eye coordination, one of the newest additions to Sportspark is Table Tennis, also known as Ping-pong. Longtime Roosevelt Island resident and 1989 Table Tennis Hall of Fame Inductee George Braithwaite offers his expertise for free in both lesson and open play formats. All ages and levels of players are welcome. Individual players or groups can come practice their skills against anyone and everyone they wish.

While its primary purpose is to serve as a recreation center, Sportspark has had its share of the limelight in the entertainment industry. It's played host to film and photo shoots for Nike, Nautica, and Vogue among others. When not in front of the camera, Sportspark also provides catering and holding areas for local shoots. The building is a natural fit for New York's film industry as it provides an easily accessible location, great lighting, and lots of open space. Movie posters for films featuring Roosevelt Island are now on permanent display in the building's

entrance and central corridor.

Our new program lineup has expanded considerably and additional new and exciting activities are being researched that will soon join the current schedule. Furthermore, both the gym and the pool have undergone renovations in the last year. If it's been years since you've last visited Sportspark or you've never been here before, the new programs, friendly staff, and close proximity make it more than worth the trip.

Please join us in bidding longtime RIOC employee and Sportspark Facilities Manager **Carol Rubino** a happy retirement. **We will miss you Carol!**

For more information on any of the activities included in this article, please contact Donna Masly, Program Coordinator, at 212.832.4563 or Dmasly@rioc.com



Sportspark Pool



Michael Smith

Sportspark Manager

As Manager of Parks and Recreation, Michael oversees all aspects of the Permitting Department, Sports Complex and the Grounds Department and has been with RIOC for three years. Mike comes to us with a variety of experience. He has worked for over 10 years in contracting, landscaping, fitness and hospitality/event planning. His experience will provide the community with a greener and more sustainable island, while implementing new athletic programs for the community.



Donna Masly

Program Coordinator

Donna's previous experiences with Rutgers University Recreation, Chelsea Piers, and Equinox Fitness have helped provide a strong background for new ideas and activities within the RIOC Parks and Recreation Department. Donna processes and schedules all permit requests for the local fields, Sportspark, special events, weddings, parties, film and photography shoots, and tennis. She's been with RIOC for four years.

POOL SCHEDULE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00							
7:00			Open Swim for All Ages				
8:00			6:00 am - 10:00 am				
9:00			Senior Water Aerobics		Senior Water Aerobics		
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							Adult Water Aerobics
1:00						Open Swim for All Ages	
2:00			Permitted to Individual Groups			12:00 pm - 3:00 pm	
3:00						Adult Learn to Swim	
4:00							
5:00						Adult Swim for 18+	
6:00		Adult Swim 18+		Open Swim for All Ages		4:00 pm - 7:00 pm	
7:00	Master Swim	6:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Open Swim for All Ages	6:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Master Swim		
8:00							
9:00	Open Swim All Ages		7:30 pm - 10:30 pm		Open Swim All Ages		
10:00	7:30 pm - 10:30 pm				7:30 pm - 10:30 pm		
11:00							

Swim Fees: \$5 for adults (ages 18-59) , \$3 for children (ages 4-17), FREE for Seniors over age 60, disabled, and infants and children under age 3

All children must be accompanied by an adult. No more than four children per adult. All infants must have one-on-one supervision with a paying adult.

ACTIVITIES

Pool Classes

Senior Water Aerobics

Wednesdays and Fridays from 9:00 am to 10:00 am

Adult Water Aerobics

Sundays from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

Adult Learn to Swim

Sundays from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Master Swim

Mondays and Fridays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Free Gym Activities

Open Basketball Courts

Sundays from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Wheelchair Basketball

Saturdays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Ping-pong Free Play

Tuesdays and Fridays from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Ping-pong Classes

Wednesdays from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

For more information on Sportspark activities, please visit rioc.ny.gov or contact Donna Masly at 212.832.4563 or DMasly@rioc.com

Building it Better: RIOC's Engineers

INTERVIEWED BY
ERICA WILDER & LUTHER CLEMENT

Tom Turcic, director of RIOC's Engineering Department, retires this December. In only three years on the island, Tom oversaw the completion of the Octagon Soccer Field, which has become one of the premier soccer fields in New York City, as well as the first phases of the Southpoint Openspace project, countless maintenance projects and improvements. Though his keen judgment, adaptability, and upbeat personality will be missed, Tom would be the first to say that the department is full of capable people that can carry on in his stead.

What construction or project here on the island has been most interesting for you to work on?

"Southpoint Openspace. It's the largest project in terms of area and it's a dramatic change from its former state. Most of the other projects we've been doing have been repairing things that are preexisting. The fact that it is completely new makes it more interesting."

Day to day, what takes most of Engineering's attention?

"It's multifaceted and no day is the same. The team is so small that there is no specialist. Everybody becomes an expert in everything. Requests for day to day maintenance

get referred to the Maintenance crew and those requests come through Engineering, which oversees successful completion of the work. There are so many new requests and new issues that arise all the time."

Could you explain the role that the Maintenance Department plays in your work?

"Any work not done by contractors is done by Maintenance under Engineering's supervision. Anything mechanical that doesn't belong to one of the residential buildings is taken care of by



Turcic on-site at the Southpoint Openspace Project

Maintenance: lighting around the island, street repair, and on and on. For instance, much of the Z-brick on the island is laid by contractors but when a patch needs to be done and we can't get a contractor here soon enough the bricklaying has been done by Maintenance. They are skilled enough to cover issues like that. Also there were 59 benches installed along the promenade next to Goldwater Hospital and that was done by Maintenance. It may not be a huge project but it's not something you would expect from a maintenance crew. It is especially impressive what they do given that if their number was doubled it would not be difficult to keep them busy. We have to carefully prioritize the projects that the Maintenance crew can address, since there's way more work than staff to do it."

What's the most common obstacle for engineering projects?

"We are a small authority that's forced to act like a big agency simply because of our location and jurisdiction. Because of our size, as in number of employees, we cannot departmentalize the labor as, ideally, we would like to. The result is that everyone is indispensable and could troubleshoot a given situation. This could become a deficit or a benefit. So again, it requires strict prioritizing and time management.

Could you explain any major projects that are currently under way?

"We are finishing up refurbishing



Project Manager Santo Verta and Turcic inspecting a rock wall at the Southpoint site

Motorgate. The first stage, painting or replacing all the rusty steel, re-lighting, and waterproofing is almost complete. The Good Shepherd Community Center is also almost finished with its improvements consisting of heating and air conditioning, water supply, and natural gas feed."

How would you compare work here with your past work experience?

"The projects here are the most interesting in my career. The government approvals involved in preparing for work and making any change is frustrating but it's part of the job. I have also worked for Dutchess County which operated by county rules and Imclone which operated with all the freedom afforded the private sector."

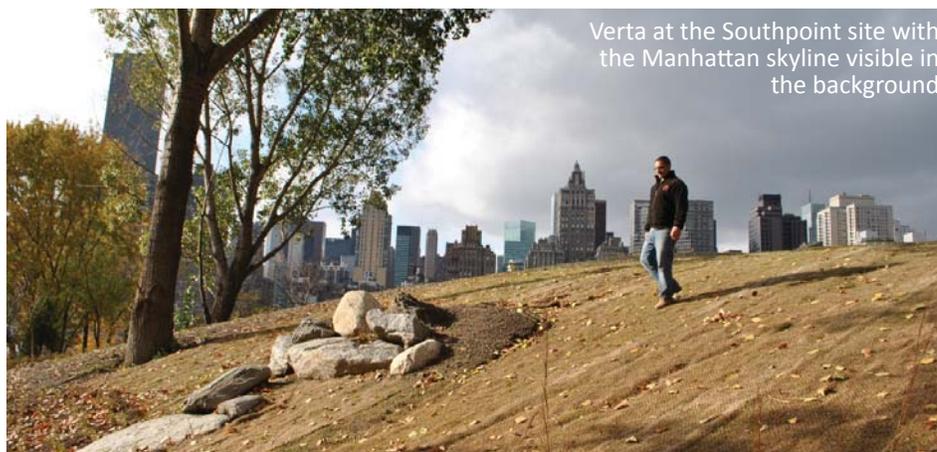
How does coordinating with other city and state agencies affect your timelines and processes?

"Government agencies require a

great deal of red tape and contracting something requires a time consuming bid process but all that bureaucracy exists to make sure everyone is honest. After all, for government agencies, it's taxpayer money that is being used. Because there are so many city and state agencies with differing jurisdictions on Roosevelt Island, there are often gaps that RIOC must fill. For instance, maintenance of the original sewers here on the Island were not retained by the City's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) when the City turned the Island over to the State for development in 1969. So, we are kind of on our own when it comes to storm drainage and sewers. The relationship with Con Edison and our electricity is similar. The best example is probably the street lights. The City's cobra head street lights along the West Drive all the way from the Tram to Blackwell Park were disconnected in the late 1980's back when the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) built the subway and were only temporarily re-wired by City DOT."

Since you are retiring at the end of this year, you must have plans for retirement.

"I have hobbies such as scuba diving, spending time with my family, and traveling with my wife which I hope to dedicate myself to more. I also plan on enjoying limited responsibility I think."



Verta at the Southpoint site with the Manhattan skyline visible in the background

This interview has been condensed and edited.

Fall for Arts

all over again

ERICA WILDER
COMMUNITY RELATIONS SPECIALIST

This year's Fifth Annual Fall for Arts Festival reinvented itself by highlighting interactive workshops for children and adults of all ages. The festival annually draws over 3,000 students, families, and community members for a day of culture, music and fun. Completely open to the general public, the event is a free of charge, one-day festival.

Conditions could not have been better for the annual arts fair, as the weather held at a perfect fall temperature for the entire weekend. For weeks and months ahead of the main event, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation worked closely with the R.I. Visual Arts Association to arrange a creative mix of hands-on learning in visual arts, poetry, literary arts, music, dance, and theater. The result was an abundance of participation from local New York artists, arts groups and schools including students from the School of Visual arts who hosted several hands-on workshops such as tie dying and mask making. Children from the Roosevelt Island Beacon program collectively worked with Island Resident mural artist Karina Aberg-Sakmar to create several 4 x 8 foot long murals which displayed a range of eye-catching

lawns near Blackwell House, creating a lasting outdoor exhibit and visual experience.

Festival goers could not keep their eyes off of the giant Plexiglas butterfly that was suspended in the air supported by a web of yellow strings. The beautiful creature was a product of local artist and fabricator of large scale art Kathleen Griffith, who aimed to engage participants in focusing on the ideas of memory, transformational beauty and hope through her "Butterfly of Memories" project. Hundreds of children had the opportunity to create their own miniature butterfly which depicted their rendition of her concept. All of their creations were then added to the web of strings in the large cohesive piece. Kathleen's workshop at the festival served as an educational outreach component to help members of the community access and become invested in her proposed sculpture, "Butterflies of Memory", an installation for which she is seeking approval to place atop the newly stabilized Smallpox Hospital. RIOC's approval awaits engineering studies, insurance and other assurances protecting the landmarked ruin. The project, if approved, will be timed in conjunction with the new Four Freedoms Memorial Park slated to open in 2012. Along the way, Kathleen will work closely with the Senior Center, the Youth and Bea-



creative patterns and colors. The murals remained on display long after the festival on the

Top: Karina Aberg-Sakmar painting a mural
Middle: Kathleen Griffith's Butterfly project
Left: Renaissance Art mural painter
Photos by Paul Hakimata (top) & Maria Casotti

Top Right: Faux-Real Theater Company's *Oedipus Rex*
Middle: School of Visual Arts clay sculpting station
Bottom Right: Sagit Shir of Hank & Cupcakes

con Program and PS/IS 217 to construct a smaller scale project in the same vein that will be exhibited inside the Motorgate Parking Garage.

The festival was also host to an abundance of roaming entertainment including a hacky sack clinic, face painting for the young and young at heart as well as an apple pressing and butter making demonstration hosted by the Wyckoff Family Farmhouse. For those looking for something more up-beat, the live energetic performances at the Meditation Steps and Amphitheatre would have satisfied that craving. The line-up of music began with the hot, edgy duo *Hank and Cupcakes* who set the Meditation Steps on fire with their original, raw, minimalist, and overall impressive sound. Since arriving from Israel two years ago, they have made waves in Brooklyn and



left the Roosevelt Island stage with a new fan base. Performances also included the funk and soul group *Sarretta Wesley and the Magical, Magnum & Mackadocious Crew* who rounded out the afternoon with classics from Bill Withers and Aretha Franklin.

In the mix of all the festivities, *The Faux Real Theatre Company* of NYC hosted a two day performance of the classic Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex* featuring an all male cast. The audience had the opportunity to watch the play as it would have been performed 2400 years ago: in brightly colored wigs, fantastical costumes, and masks that served as megaphones. The acting troupe was able to incorporate the colorful aesthetics of the historically accurate ancient performance by utilizing a broad physi-



cal style of acting powered by live music, songs and dancing. The audience was even served great tasting rotisserie meat in the tradition of ancient Greek Theater.

The overall goal of Fall for Arts is to bring the community together while introducing visitors to the Roosevelt Island spirit by providing ample opportunities for exploration in different mediums of art and to introduce the valuable art services and venues that Roosevelt Island has to offer. Island parent and mural artist Karina Aberg-Sakmar said of the event: "I've participated for 4 years now as a muralist and painter and I'm always amazed at how many people are fascinated by watching a painter do her or his thing. I often feel like a magician out there and the questions I get are proof that the Arts hold a special place in many people's hearts – especially the children who have it in them to make such beautifully free and uninhibited pictures." With artists like Karina, hands-on workshops for children, musical performances, and other festivities, the Fifth Annual Roosevelt Island Fall for Arts Festival was a great way to enjoy an amazing weekend and fall in love with the arts all over again.



"a creative mix of hands-on learning in visual arts, poetry, literary arts, music, dance, and theater"

Arline Jacoby

Artist and Long-Time Resident

a look at ISLAND ART

INTERVIEWED BY
ERICA WILDER & ANNA RANKIN



As a talented artist living on

Roosevelt Island for more than thirty years, Arline Jacoby has not only seen many of the Island's transformations through time but, as a founding member of the Roosevelt Island Visual Arts Association (RIVAA), she has played a pivotal role in bringing the arts into prominence. Recently, we had a chance to visit her apartment and speak with her. Walking into her living space is like entering a cross between a gallery and a museum – she is surrounded by artworks of her own creation that seem to vibrate with life and the creative drive that brought them into being. She opens the blinds, explaining that she chose this apartment for the view and not the size – the sight is certainly inspirational. “Art landmarks a place, a thing. Art gives importance to things that might otherwise be inconsequential,” she begins.

As a long-time resident, what do you see as the benefits of being an artist on Roosevelt Island?

“When I first moved here over thirty years ago I loved the views, the soothing atmosphere of wind in the trees and glittering reflections in the water. It's quite an inspirational environment. The community is interesting whether they are feeling playful or roused by some issue. The people in the morning, bustling and getting ready for their day, while not as crowded as in Manhattan, are wonderful to watch.”

Do you see any obstacles for an artist living on Roosevelt Island?

“Because we are so secluded and separate from the city it is relatively hard to go see a play, or an exhibit of paintings or sculptures. That's really the main problem because you have to be part of a community of artists. You have to be seeing new ideas and images and you have to be showing the ideas and images that you make.”

You've been an art instructor for many years - Tell us about your work with the Senior Center.

“I give an hour-long instruction twice a week because I

enjoy seeing people learn how to see the world as an artist. Everyone has some ability to make art, it just has to be developed. Older people are especially interesting as new artists because they have so much experience as observers. So when they develop their skill of producing what they imagine they present all sorts of interesting perspectives on things.”

As a member of their Board of Directors, what can you tell us about RIVAA's influence on the community?

“There are classes, concerts, studio space, exhibition space as well as exhibitions through schools, hospitals, and other institutions for displaying artwork. Nonmember/visiting artists can pay \$200 to have 5 pieces shown in the gallery. There are also potential mentorship opportunities for up-and-coming artists.”

You do so much to support other artists - What are your current personal aspirations?

“To get more kids involved with art. We need more kids making art here on the island and in the rest of New York. They've cut away the arts courses in the schools and it's just a shame. We should have an art studio for PS/IS 217 and all children on the island. I also want to produce a video piece about Roosevelt Island with the kids of the schools and youth centers.”

She added with a smile, “I always thought Roosevelt Island could become an island for the arts.”

This interview has been condensed and edited.



2010 RIOC

“ Here on Roosevelt Island, between Fall For The Arts, R.I. Day, Health & Fitness Day, and the Halloween Parade, **WOW!** Kids have so many great events to look forward to throughout the year! ”





EVENTS

Counterclockwise from top left:
 Tree Lighting (2009); Outdoor Summer Movie Series; Easter Egg Hunt; Octagon Soccer Field Opening; Health & Fitness Day; Fall for Arts Festival; Hispanic Heritage Month, Halloween Parade in Partnership with Urban American

Fall for Arts photographs courtesy Maria Casotti.





An Island at Play



Youth Programming

A look at two of Roosevelt Island's youth enrichment organizations

The Roosevelt Island Youth Program

BY CHARLES DEFINO
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Roosevelt Island Youth Program (RIYP) was founded in 1978 and incorporated in 1981 by a group of concerned parents as a solution to the need for youth programming on Roosevelt Island. Since then, the Youth Program has expanded to serve the population of Roosevelt Island through an expansive array of quality services.

RIYP offers classes and practice in a variety of arts, sports, and skills. Music courses in instruments such as guitar or drums are available at both the Youth Center and school locations at different times of the year. The Youth Program operates six days per week 42 weeks a year to bring the community basketball, martial arts and wrestling, dance, vocals, homework help from licensed city teachers, visual arts, and work with the Roosevelt Island Living Library. Now RIYP is involved with the City of New York in their science initiative partnership with LEGO's robotics program. The Youth Program's teams were the Junior Tram Bots and their Junior High School counterparts, the Teen Bots. The Junior Tram Bots were

the youngest team participating in the program last year, yet they finished 13th out of 26 teams and received special honors for competitiveness and team spirit. This year RIYP will participate in a city-wide initiative with the Department of Youth and Community



Development and the New York Academy of Sciences to provide activities in science, technology, engineering and math. The partnership's goals are to expose gifted yet disadvantaged youth to science and math concepts in fun, informal environments and to offer opportunities to meet and talk with scientists about what they do and how their work impacts our world.

The youth center has extended its weekend hours to accommodate the needs of island children until early March when baseball season begins. Though RIYP is a "Youth" Program, it also

offers services for families. Each year RIYP helps fund and coordinate Roosevelt Island Day, the Halloween Parade and Festival and many more island activities. Programming has included concerts, family movies, family game nights, men's basketball, body sculpting classes, and a very popular weight training program. Over 100 committed volunteers enable the Roosevelt Island Youth Program to achieve its most important goal: bringing all Roosevelt Island residents together.

As part of the Roosevelt Island Youth Program, Roosevelt Island's Beacon Program provides recreational and educational after-school pursuits for elementary and middle school students. The Beacon Program utilizes both PS/IS 217 and 506 Main Street in addition to the public amenities of Roosevelt Island to host its over 40 activities during the course of its operational year, July 1st to June 31st. These programs consist of open gym and structured basketball leagues for ages 5 and up, indoor and outdoor soccer leagues, and a free Little League sanctioned baseball program (programs are unisex). Additionally, flag football and a host of various outdoor and indoor recreational activities keep the community's children fit

for life.

In the summer, RIYP offers an 8 am to 6 pm Summer Camp for over 200 youth ages 6 to 13. At the camp, children receive breakfast, lunch and a snack, swim every day, and take field trips at least once per week. The staff is comprised of many Island residents and past campers. In fact, over the past 30 years, Roosevelt Island Youth Program has been the largest employer of Island youth. Even more, RIYP has helped more than 1,000 youth go to college and assisted another 50 youth to receive apprenticeships in over five different fields.

Email the Roosevelt Island Youth Program at riypsid@aol.com.

Island Kids

BY NIKKI LEOPOLD
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Island Kids is a not-for-profit organization that provides top quality, individualized programs and services to all families and children living on Roosevelt Island. They are currently in the process of expanding to meet the needs of the community, thereby filling the gaps where no current programming exists. While balancing affordability with quality is a constant challenge, the organization is able to offer classes comparable to those in Manhattan at significantly lower prices and provide scholarships to ensure that the largest number of children can take advantage. Island Kids' goal is to provide top quality, fun, exciting, diverse and affordable programs and services, specifically designed for all the families and children of Roosevelt Island.

The Program's enrichment activities include Music, Art, Tumbling for Toddlers, After School Programming for School Aged Children with a focus on

the arts and sciences, and a summer camp. In addition, Island Kids facilitates a New Parents Support Group, an important resource for Roosevelt Island families. As rewarding as parenthood can be, it is often wrought with isolation, frustration and uncertainty. The support program is designed to address this reality, by providing a safe environment for parents to receive support and discuss issues of importance.

The program's highly successful summer camp for children aged 4-10 allows campers to enjoy a summertime of fun and exploration through a well-balanced program incorporating swimming, sports, arts and crafts, field trips and more. High quality instruction for all activities is ensured by hiring professional teachers/instructors for all programming. Island Kids is sensitive to the needs of the younger campers especially, ensuring that programs are not only high caliber, but that they help nurture and develop skills, build confidence, and challenge and support them. For many younger campers, the Island Kids Day Camp is their first experience in a full-day program and it helps them prepare for their entrance into Kindergarten. For returning campers, it provides an opportunity to play "big brother/sister" as an experienced camper. While Island Kids may not be able to run the Camp completely free of charge, the program does strive to keep Camp pricing affordable, particularly in comparison to similar Manhattan-based Day Camps. For the 2010 Camp Season, \$30,000 in Scholarships were awarded to kids who might otherwise have been without structured summer activities.

Island Kids continues to pursue grants that allow further growth. In the near future,

the organization hopes to identify an appropriately sized, larger permanent space on the Island. This would allow the program to further expand its offerings to include a social service component, providing much needed resources that currently do not exist on Roosevelt Island. To that end, the organization has already implemented a Support Group for Foster Families and hopes to expand into support services for single parents as well as GED services.



Island Kids believes that quality children's programming, available to everyone, is imperative in a small community like Roosevelt Island. A supportive network of adults is the greatest step to achieving children's goals. Accordingly, Island Kids welcomes suggestions and input from parents who have program ideas, or who see a void in youth service offerings that Island Kids can step in to fill.

Email Island Kids at islandkidsri@gmail.com.



Lighthouse Park/East Promenade

Upcoming Events on Roosevelt Island

DECEMBER

R&R Holiday Concert Sat. Dec. 18, 8 PM -10 PM

As part of the R&R Concert Series, join us for the Holiday Concert at the **Good Shepherd Community Center**

FEBRUARY

Black History Month Celebration Sat. Feb. 26, 6 pm

Good Shepherd Community Center plays host to a free celebration of Black History Month featuring live music, educational speakers and great food!

Good Shepherd Sunday Concert Series Sun. Feb. 6, 2:30 PM

Treat your ears to great Classical music at the **Good Shepherd Community Center!**

MARCH

Women's History Month Celebration Sat. Mar. 19, 3 pm

Speakers, artists and musicians will provide inspiring lessons at the **RIVAA Gallery** as a part of the Island's annual Women's History Month celebration.

APRIL

Annual Easter Egg Hunt Sun. Apr. 17, 2 pm

Bring your children (ages 1-10)

to the newly built **Southpoint Openspace** for a great family weekend event. Children can spend time hunting for eggs, playing games with family and friends or taking pictures with the Easter Bunny. Children must be accompanied by an adult to participate.

Earth Day Event Fri. Apr. 22

Join us for a fun and informative event focused on preserving our planet!



Photo from the 2010 Outdoor Summer Movie Series

New Year's Resolution?

Come to

SPORTSPARK

and take
advantage of your
community sports center!

For pool, facilities and special events schedules please visit rioc.ny.gov!

