

Civic News

The Newsletter of the Park Slope Civic Council | www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org

Summer 2012



Transformation and Preservation

How one man helped turn Park Slope around, and how his legacy is moving forward today

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Remembering Everett Ortner

The obituaries and tributes published after Everett H. Ortner's death at age 92 listed many of the milestones in his life: his birth in Lowell, Mass., in 1919; graduation from the University of Arkansas in 1939; his heroic service during World War II that led to his being awarded the Bronze Star with a "V for valor"; his harsh imprisonment as a prisoner of war; his 33-year editorial career with *Popular Science* magazine. Also mentioned was his marriage to Evelyn in 1953, as well as their purchase of a Park Slope brownstone a decade later. The numerous organizations that Everett belonged to, and the prominent roles that he and his wife played in what has come to be called the Brownstone Revival Movement, were also cited. Yet some important parts of his long life story were missing.

In 1963, when Everett and Evelyn moved to Park Slope, the neighborhood was in decline. Crime had become a serious problem, landlords were losing tenants, rooming houses were being abandoned, and many brownstones were for sale by homeowners who wanted to leave the neighborhood. Nonetheless, the Ortners purchased their house on Berkeley Place, largely because it retained much of its original detail, so that their Victorian furnishings would have an appropriate setting.

At that time, there was a consensus that the only way to restore Park Slope into an attractive, vital community would be by enticing people to purchase, renovate, and move into the houses that were for sale, including those that had been abandoned. Even as Park Slope residents were bemoaning the neighborhood's decline, however, little was being done to reverse the trend.

When Everett and Evelyn joined the Park Slope Civic Council and began publicizing its house tours, they knew much more had to be done to encourage people to move here. Few outside of Brooklyn were aware of the existence of Park Slope, let alone that it contained many brownstones that could be transformed into handsome homes at a reasonable cost.

The Ortners, Joe Ferris, and a few other like-minded residents tackled this problem by conducting three different tours of Park Slope houses: one focusing on houses for sale needing work, another for those under renovation, and a third for the few that had been fully refurbished. They also encouraged the Brooklyn Union Gas Co. (now National Grid) to purchase and transform a dilapidated brownstone on Berkeley Place into a modern two-family home featuring a variety of gas appliances.

Everett also worked with the gas company to organize fairs for potential homebuyers that included bus tours of several brownstone neighborhoods. The fairs demonstrated how one could acquire and turn an old, worn-out row house into a lovely, modern home in an attractive community, minutes from Manhattan, and all at a reasonable cost.

Another major impediment to buying a brownstone that the Ortners tackled came from experience. "When we wanted to buy our house in Park Slope," he said, "we went to 12 banks before we could get a mortgage." At that time, almost all banks were unwilling to provide mortgages for row houses in any of Brooklyn's integrated historic neighborhoods. Everett confronted the redlining problem by writing a letter to David Rockefeller asking why Chase Manhattan Bank wouldn't mortgage brownstones. In response, he was invited to meet with the head of the bank's mortgage lending. After several discussions, Chase committed to \$100 million in community mortgage lending in New York City.

Everett and Evelyn also led a successful effort to change the thinking of mortgage officers in other banks by hosting several cocktail parties for them in handsomely renovated brownstones. Through his contacts with senior mortgage officers, Everett often helped buyers obtain loans when their mortgage applications were rejected.

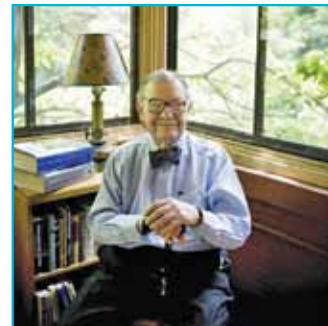
The Ortners also had the foresight to anticipate problems that would come with a successful revitalization. They

Third Street between Fourth and Fifth Avenues in the 1960s, when Park Slope was 'a neighborhood in decline.' Photo courtesy The Brooklyn Paper.



Everett Ortner, who passed away in May, was one of the most influential leaders of the revival of Park Slope and of older urban areas across the country. Working with his wife, Evelyn, he devoted his energies to transforming a community on the downswing since the 1960s into the vibrant Park Slope we know today, and to ensuring that the neighborhood remained a great place to live for years to come.

His efforts to bring about this dramatic change touched the lives of many. Here we present a few of their memories.



recognized that an influx of new homeowners would be quickly followed by real estate developers, and that renovations of brownstones might not always be in keeping with the appearance of the neighborhood. This led to their efforts to protect Park Slope from irresponsible development and alterations by working with the Landmarks Preservation Commission to create a historic district in Park Slope.

The agency indicated that, even though it wanted to landmark much of the neighborhood, it had only a small staff to do the required research. Everett, Evelyn, William Younger, and several neighborhood volunteers helped speed up the process by identifying, researching, and photographing the buildings on these blocks. (You can download the designation report at on.nyc.gov/1973-Park-Slope-report.) As a result, almost a quarter of Park Slope was landmarked in 1973.

The published tributes to Everett Ortner also left out another important aspect. Besides changing Park Slope, he and Evelyn transformed the lives of the many families who moved here in the 1960s and 1970s. Had we not

moved to Park Slope, most of us would have led very different lives, remaining apartment dwellers in Manhattan or becoming homeowners in the suburbs. Instead, we came to Park Slope and created an incredibly close-knit community.

Life-long friendships were formed with many of the neighbors whom we met in the playgrounds, at block association meetings, and on lines waiting for our children after school. We shared backyards, tools, renovation ideas, and recipes. We helped one another with construction projects and babysitting. We agonized over child-rearing techniques, school choices, and which pediatricians and contractors to use. We shared potluck meals, exchanged house keys, and served as parental surrogates during emergencies. We established active block associations, a political club, the Food Coop, and several nursery schools.

Our block parties were something to behold. On Berkeley Place, children acted in plays, participated in contests, and played games while their parents socialized over drinks on the stoops. Block cleanups were annual affairs and block patrols were occasional events. Over the years we celebrated the births, graduations, and weddings of our neighbors' children and recently, the births of our neighbors' grandchildren. Surprisingly, many of us who moved here in the early years are still here.

Everett and Evelyn Ortner did more than change our lives — they *enriched* our lives. Their legacy is the Park Slope community of today.

— *John Casson is a trustee of the Civic Council and a Park Slope resident for more than four decades.*

The Power of Everett

I only had the good fortune to know Everett Ortner for the last 15 years. When he first asked if Green-Wood Cemetery could use some young volunteers to help with preservation efforts, I readily accepted. Yet I wondered why young French people would pay their own way to the United States and then be willing to work for free. Well, I just did not know the persuasive powers of Everett Ortner, and every year since 2002 we have had at least a half-dozen wonderful young people here working on various projects.

One of my fondest memories of Everett took place

Third Street today: renovated homes, and a revitalized playground. Photos: David Herman (left) and Levi Stolove (top).





'Everett worked with [Brooklyn Union Gas] to organize fairs for potential homebuyers that included bus tours of several brownstone neighborhoods. The fairs demonstrated how one could acquire and turn an old, worn-out row house into a lovely, modern home in an attractive community, minutes from Manhattan, all at a reasonable cost.'

shortly after we lost Evelyn in 2006. Everett was visiting Green-Wood, checking up on his charges. They were working on the mausoleum of Dr. Valentine Mott, a prominent surgeon who, upon hearing that President Lincoln had been assassinated, took ill and never recovered. We had to negotiate a steep bank to reach the mausoleum, and there were

'Now, this is a long story. Are you ready?'

Online: The New York Preservation Archive Project's oral history with Everett and Evelyn Ortner, conducted in 2003. You can read the interview at www.nypap.org/content/everett-and-evelyn-ortner-oral-history-interview.



no stairs in sight. I offered a hand, but Everett would have none of it. Employing his walking stick, he climbed the bank to get in the faces of his young disciples, urging them on to work harder. Classic Everett!

When Evelyn passed, the inseparable couple that they were, I thought Everett would join her rather quickly. Again, I underestimated the power of Everett. He still

had work to do. He had to make sure that Preservation Volunteers was in good hands. Over time, he passed the reins to the remarkable Dexter Guerrieri and made certain that Preservation Volunteers will live on as a perpetual tribute to the Ortners.

Tireless

— *Richard J. Moylan is president of the Green-Wood Cemetery.*

Few private citizens have had the impact on New York City that Everett Ortner achieved. His vision, shared and supported by his late wife, Evelyn, transformed not only Park Slope but also brownstone neighborhoods throughout the city.

It was daring to invest in a Brooklyn brownstone when the Ortners bought theirs. It took charm and tenacity to persuade others to join them. And Everett had a day job. In later years, Everett was a dapper and enthusiastic presence at preservation events — encouraging others to fight on and modestly accepting the awards and thanks offered.

Everett also saw the need to involve the next generation. He worked with our late architect Roger Lang and sketched out plans for a volunteer organization that would recruit young people and let them get hands-on experience in historic preservation projects.

Both Everett and Evelyn were tireless boosters of historic

districts, and believed in the benefits and rewards of urban living in older houses. Thanks to them, thousands of others now share those benefits.

— *Peg Breen is president of the New York Landmarks Conservancy.*

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

Long before I'd met Everett Ortner, and long before I knew what a "preservationist" was, I had become one. I'd explored the hidden alleys of Boston's Beacon Hill, the grand boulevards of the Back Bay, the quiet squares of the South End. But I had no knowledge of preservation as a cause. The beauty and the deep sense of place that these old buildings exuded was so powerful, so profound, that it was inconceivable they could ever be threatened.

Some years later I stepped in the history of my wife's parents' row house in Brooklyn Heights. They had helped to fight the early preservation battles against the Jehovah's Witnesses, who back then were knocking down row houses to construct bland dormitories. Thus I learned of the city's powerful landmarks laws and of the importance of landmarking.

Many years later, after my wife and I settled in Park Slope and joined the Civic Council, I began to learn about the Park Slope Historic District and to appreciate the enormous contributions of Evelyn and Everett Ortner. I continue to marvel at the enormity of their accomplishments and at their continued engagement with preservation on an international level. Their designation report for the original Park Slope Historic District, in 1973, continues to be an indispensable tool as we put together each year's Park Slope House Tour.

I only had the privilege to meet Everett Ortner a few times: at fundraisers for Develop, Don't Destroy Brooklyn, and at Civic Council events. He even had the kindness to attend one of the early meetings of our Historic District Committee, when we had no idea what we were doing, in order to share his advice and insights.

Each time I met him, Everett urged us on to greater efforts to expand the district. He never failed to renew our sense of urgency; he insisted that we not fall back into complacency and take our beautiful neighborhood for granted, but to actively campaign for its protection and preservation.

Thank you, Everett — we truly stand on the shoulders of giants.

— *David Alquist, a former Civic Council trustee, helped launch the successful effort to expand the Park Slope Historic District beyond its original 1973 boundaries.*

Top: An ad for the Brooklyn Union Gas Co.'s Brownstone Information Center.

Preserve and Protect

In my 30 years of living in Park Slope, one of the days I will long remember is April 17, 2012 — the day the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to add more than 600 buildings in the South Slope to the Park Slope Historic District.

At the LPC's public hearing that day, I honestly did not expect much in the way of ceremony, just a routine bureaucratic action. When the item's turn came on the agenda, the chair would call for a vote, the commissioners would duly respond, a "Resolution Passed" would be pronounced, and then it would be on to the next item.

Even though an affirmative vote on this expansion was never in doubt, I couldn't have been more surprised and pleased by what actually happened. When discussion at the hearing turned to Park Slope, a map of the South Slope extension was projected behind the 11 commissioners.

An LPC staff member recited an executive summary of the proposed action (which can be downloaded from on.nyc.gov/2012-Park-Slope-report). Park Slope looked glorious in the PowerPoint presentation that followed, photographed in early spring with tree blossoms in full bloom.

LPC Chair Robert Tierney then launched a discussion of the South Slope extension by remarking upon the positive relationship between his agency and the Park Slope Civic Council throughout the four-year evaluation process. He then asked each commissioner to comment. Michael Goldblum spoke about having lived on 10th Street for 18 years, and how the new addition forms a "seamless extension" of the original historic district and is "remarkably intact despite its age." He praised the fact that the area will be

protected from the prevalence of "Miracle Whip" buildings rising on Park Slope's fringes, which lack the materials and craftsmanship that generations have appreciated in Park Slope's 19th-century homes.

Frederick Bland added, "I have to wonder why the South Slope was not designated in the 1970s," an idea that triggered a very personal set of reflections. While I spent my childhood years in Indiana, Park Slope was in my roots, as my grandparents and father settled here in the 1920s not long after emigrating from Russia. My grandfather opened a hairdressing business that he operated for decades in the storefront where Carroll Cleaners is now. My earliest memories are of visiting Brooklyn — being awed by its size and mesmerized by the visual splendor of its brownstones. My young eyes — accustomed to the plain white box of a 1950s ranch house — found magic in the tall ceilings crowned by plaster moldings, rich wainscoting, parquet floors, and tiled fireplaces. I wanted to live in a brownstone when I grew up!

The desire to call Park Slope home was not universally shared in the 1950s and '60s. When I went to college nearby, I became aware of the forces behind the decline of neighborhoods like Park Slope — such as bank redlining, growing automobile use, the exodus of manufacturing to the South, block-busting tactics, and federal policies favoring suburbs over cities — and began to follow the dynamics of neighborhood change.

Through my close connections to Park Slope, I heard



Peter Bray

Photos: Jonathan Lief (right) and David Herman (below)



about Everett and Evelyn Ortner (see page 2): how their activism was changing perceptions of Brownstone Brooklyn and encouraging families to come back to the city. Perhaps their crowning achievement, by virtue of their unrelenting advocacy and research, was to secure the designation of the Park Slope Historic District in July 1973. No other single event so marks the renaissance of Park Slope.

At that point, I could only appreciate this accomplishment from afar. In 1974, however, I interviewed the Ortners for a term paper on modern architecture. What could be more modern than the new appreciation for 19th-century neighborhoods? It represented my first contact with the Civic Council.

Some 20 years later, at a table selling House Tour tickets, I asked then-Civic Council President Terry Ash what it was doing to expand the historic district. She said some-



thing that I've come to appreciate more in my five years chairing the Historic District Committee — in essence, “If you want to see the historic district expanded, you should volunteer yourself to work on it.”

Fortunately, she referred me to David Alquist, a neighbor who had prodded the Civic Council to move forward with the expansion effort. He was glad to have my help; before I knew it, we formed a committee and recruited many like-minded volunteers. I was aware of the example set by the Ortners and others, who devoted themselves to saving Park Slope from “urban renewal” and the bulldozer. The risk to Park Slope in the 21st century is quite the reverse, however, stemming from the neighborhood’s popularity and city policies that favor development over stability.

At the outset, David and I did not understand much

about how to extend landmarking. After walking every block in the neighborhood, we approached the LPC with a request to study a roughly 70-block area. The agency told us to return with a master plan comprising much smaller expansion phases. So began a five-year odyssey — and our constant effort to prod the LPC to action — that culminated with the LPC’s vote in April on the first of three or four more phases, including an upcoming extension in the North Slope. It will be another 10 to 15 years of concerted community organizing until we achieve our goal of preserving the major part of Park Slope’s historically and architecturally significant buildings.

In accepting the Civic Council’s George Lovgren Volunteer Award at the Civic Council’s Annual Meeting in June (see page 9), I remarked that I am grateful to the Council for offering me an opportunity not only to work on a project I’ve felt passionate about for my entire life but also to be associated with so many other Park Slopers who care so much about their community and are willing to be involved in improving our local quality of life.

Park Slope is and will always be one of the greatest urban neighborhoods in the nation. If you don’t believe me, just ask the American Planning Association, which formally dubbed it so a few years ago. In two decades, our efforts will lead to the Park Slope Historic District reaching its ultimate proportions. Only this action will ensure that it remains one of the truly great places to live in the United States, the largest historic district in New York City, and a place that future generations will appreciate as much as we do.

As the Ortners did for us, this is the legacy that we will leave to them.

— *In addition to receiving the Lovgren Award at the Civic Council’s June General Meeting, Historic District Committee Chair Peter Bray was also voted in as a Civic Council trustee (see page 9).*

A View from the South

It’s not easy to pick out individual buildings to highlight in the recent Historic District expansion, since the “whole” of Park Slope is always greater than the sum of its parts.

That being said, what truly stands out are the Ansonia Clock Works complex (right), which once housed the largest clock factory in the world and employed many Park Slope residents, and the buildings that housed its workers. One need look no further than the small rowhouses on 13th Street (below) and in the multifamily buildings in the blocks around it to get a feeling for how this small part of our city functioned at the turn of the century. Their preservation captures part of the city’s essential history, when locally based manufacturing employed a significant part of its population.



employed a significant part of its population.

The expansion area also encompasses rows of stately houses, including the Queen Anne homes exemplified by 470 Ninth St., between Seventh and Eighth Avenues (right of center



in the photo on previous page). The new extension of the historic district also encompasses Eighth Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues (above), which may be without parallel in the neighborhood for its remarkable consistency and integrity. — Peter Bray



Honors for Serving Our Community in Need

“I think we are all responsible for each other,” Sister Mary Maloney said recently, “and that we are all our brothers and sisters.” This deeply felt belief has helped Sister Mary lead Park Slope Christian Help — better known as CHIPS — for a quarter-century, and is one reason why she has received this year’s George Lovgren Award for Professional Service from the Park Slope Civic Council.

CHIPS was founded in 1972 by a group of parishioners from St. Francis Xavier Church to help the poor, homeless, hungry, and those facing temporary crises. After returning from volunteer work in Africa in the late 1980s, Sister Mary was asked to serve for a year as the temporary replacement for the sister who had been running CHIPS; she has been running this nonprofit organization ever since.

“The services here are really appreciated by the community,” Sister Mary said, “and it’s the people in the community who do the work — through the Park Slope Food Coop, individuals, schools, and churches and synagogues. It’s not only financial donations that help us but donations of food and clothing, too. Our home really is Park Slope.”

Under her guidance, the breadth of services that CHIPS provides and the number of people that it assists have grown significantly, with such resources as a soup kitchen and a shelter for teenage mothers. CHIPS now owns and occupies a four-story building on Fourth Avenue near Sackett Street.



French Interior by Josephine Trotters

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Sister Mary Maloney at CHIPS.

With the help of dedicated volunteers, CHIPS prepares and serves more than 200 nutritious meals daily, six days a week. It also distributes more than 100 bags of groceries each Friday, and operates a shelter for nine young homeless mothers and their infants and toddlers.

Sister Mary had an impressive career before her arrival at CHIPS. After becoming a registered nurse, she worked at St. Peter’s Hospital in Brooklyn, followed by a decade at St. Michael’s Medical Center in Newark as director of nursing and of its School of Nursing. Wanting to provide more direct service to the poor, she volunteered in clinics in Brazil for seven years. When she returned to the United States, she became executive director of the Franciscan Federation in Chicago. She then volunteered to go to Africa for seven years, ministering to the poor in small villages where she established clinics and maternal-child programs. Somehow, Sister Mary found sufficient time to earn a bachelor’s and two master’s degrees.

After decades of helping the community here in Park Slope, Sister Mary had been planning to retire — until Sept. 23, 2011. A little after noon that Friday, a fire started in the auto-supply store next door. It soon turned into an inferno that gutted the building. The people having dinner at CHIPS, the residents of its shelter, its volunteers, and Sister Mary quickly evacuated. The heat and smoke from the fire together with the water used to fight the conflagration destroyed just about everything within the CHIPS building.

Nonetheless, CHIPS was able to distribute brown bags of snacks to the needy the following Monday. On Tuesday, when an emergency cleanup crew started tossing just about everything from the building, sandwiches were added to the lunches. Because of Sister Mary’s tireless leadership, the efforts of the organization’s volunteers, and the generosity of many individuals and institutions, CHIPS has been fully renovated.

The organization will continue to provide invaluable assistance to the needy in Park Slope and neighboring communities in the decades ahead. Sister Mary will remain as president of the CHIPS Board of Directors, and sees herself “working on grants and fundraising, because we don’t have someone who does that regularly.”

To volunteer or donate to CHIPS, head to chipsonline.org.

The Lovgren Awards — one for local volunteers, the other for professional services — have been given to community leaders and organizations for their commitment to Park Slope every year since 1979. For more on the award, presented at the Civic Council’s General Meeting in June, turn to page 9.

— John Casson is a Civic Council trustee; additional reporting by Civic News editor David Herman.

Slope Library to Reopen in September

Park Slope residents have been waiting three years for renovations to the Park Slope branch of the Brooklyn Public Library on Sixth Avenue and Eighth Street to be completed. It might seem even longer, as the initial reopening date last fall came and went without the project having been completed.

Delays and setbacks are common in any construction endeavor. Even so, a community loses an important component of daily life when a library is closed to the public for several years at a time. Our libraries are not only a resource for books of all kinds but also a community space for celebrating, remembering, and organizing. With the next nearest branches of the Brooklyn Public Library all more than a mile away from the Park Slope branch, borrowing books and coordinat-

ing gatherings became a much less convenient affair.

Thankfully, a light at the end of the bookless tunnel appeared earlier this year. Councilmember Brad Lander's office held a community forum in March with Brooklyn Public Library President Linda Johnson to discuss the progress of renovations and to spread the word — that the library will reopen this

fall and will offer more to the community than before.

At the meeting, the BPL staff announced that the Park Slope Library will reopen shortly after Labor Day, and this seems like a hard deadline.

Residents have much to look forward to when the doors finally open. The renovated library will be more accessible, with a new ramp, entrance, and elevator that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The library will also provide ADA-compliant bathrooms. The space will be more

comfortable, with upgraded heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems, better lighting, and new furniture. Patrons will be greeted by an restored exterior and entrance; the new interior will feature new bookshelves and floor finishes. The library will be easier to use, thanks to computers and space for tablet technology, free wireless Internet, and self-check units now in use at other libraries nearby, including the Windsor Terrace branch.

The physical improvements to the library will also facilitate greater community use of the space. When the library reopens, it will operate six days a week, Monday through Saturday, and will be more user-friendly with updated information and database sources. At the community forum, the councilman discussed the possibility of a partnership between the library and the P.S. 39 community. Lander also hoped that the library will offer new programs to its patrons, including readings from local authors and exhibitions by area artists. The library's theater space will be updated to seat up to 75 people for community events and meetings.

Participants at the meeting also expressed interest in forming a "friends group" for the library that can work with staff and volunteers to bring programming and other services to the branch. An initial meeting of that group will be convened closer to Labor Day; contact Councilmember Lander's office at 718.499.1090 if you are interested in getting involved.

"I hope to run into many of you at the library this fall," Lander said, "as we discover new uses for this important neighborhood institution and celebrate the return of our beloved space and books." n



Interior of the redesigned library. Rendering by Thomas W. Schaller.

Giving Grows in Brooklyn

'Do Good Right Here' is a deceptively simple notion with huge implications, now being put forth by the Brooklyn Community Foundation. The motivation is simple: to make Brooklyn better, because even with the buzz, the brand, and all the new buildings, our borough is also a leader in poverty, unemployment, school drop-outs, hunger, and other areas its boosters might prefer to overlook.

Three years ago, a group of Brooklynites working in philanthropy developed the plan for the first-ever foundation for Brooklyn. Acting on a study from the Foundation Center that determined nearly 90% of all grants made by private foundations in New York went to Manhattan-based groups, these organizers decided that Brooklyn's 2.5 million residents needed a "community foundation" — a century-old model for philanthropy designed to help donors support local solutions to local challenges.

Read more about the foundation on our website:
www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/giving-grows

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A-Yards Backers Lose Their Appeal

In a final defeat for Forest City Ratner and the Empire State Development Corporation, the New York State Court of Appeals has upheld an earlier ruling that requires a supplemental environmental impact study (SEIS) for the Atlantic Yards megaproject.

The court denied the appeal by the developer and the agency to overturn State Supreme Court Justice Marcy Friedman's 2011 decision ordering a new study of the effects of construction on surrounding communities over a 25-year period.

A group of BrooklynSpeaks sponsors (including the Park Slope Civic Council), local residents, and elected officials originally filed suit in November 2009, charging that ESDC approved Atlantic Yards' 2009 Modified General Project Plan (MGPP) without sufficient study of the longer-term effects of construction. ESDC initially implied it had negotiated remedies to ensure the project would be completed on its original schedule; in fact, the agency had agreed to a 25-year time frame for the project. The BrooklynSpeaks sponsors then asked the court to reopen the case; Justice Friedman ultimately ruled that ESDC's approval of the 2009 MGPP lacked a rational basis and violated state law.

"Our elected officials must demand accountability from the SEIS process," said Civic Council President Michael Cairl. "While the arena may be nearing completion, the impact of the project on local individuals, families, and businesses is just beginning. The SEIS must develop in good faith plans and alternatives to complete the Atlantic Yards project on its original schedule."

BrooklynSpeaks sponsors have argued that ESDC fast-tracked approval of the 2009 schedule concessions demanded by Forest City so it could meet a deadline that would allow its arena bonds to be tax-exempt. "ESDC's actions saved the developer hundreds of millions in interest payments," said Michelle de la Uz, executive director of the Fifth Avenue Committee, "but at the cost of thousands of units of affordable housing being delayed for decades. Now ... the Cuomo administration has a responsibility to put the public's interest first, and ensure that housing and jobs are delivered as soon as possible."

To learn more about this decision, visit www.brooklynspeaks.net.

Celebrating a Good Civic Year

The Park Slope Civic Council honored the work of organizations, volunteers, professionals, and students who keep our community great, at this year's General Meeting on June 7. The annual celebration was held in New York Methodist Hospital's Cafeteria and Garden.

Among those in attendance were the recipients of the Civic Council's annual scholarships for community service, given to three graduating students in the secondary schools based in John Jay High School. This year's winners of the \$1,000 college scholarships were **Imani Johnson** from the Secondary School for Law (top, with Civic Council President Michael Cairl and Scholarship Committee Chair Joan Emerson), who will be going to Spelman College; **Isabel Mendoza** from Park Slope Collegiate (center, with counselor Lisa Calderon), who will be attending City College; and **Luisaidy Manzueta** of the Secondary School for Journalism (bottom, with retiring principal Abby Reade), who is planning on attending the Alfred State College of Technology.

The George Lovgren Awards for community service followed on the evening's agenda. The honors are named for the Park Slope resident who worked tirelessly to save the Union Street firehouse (today, Squad 1) from closure in the 1960s. Former trustee David Alquist introduced Historic District Committee Chair Peter Bray, the volunteer recipient (see page 5), while trustee John Casson listed the accomplishments of the Professional Award winner, Sister Mary Maloney (see page 7).

Greg Sutton, Grants Committee chair, talked about the 13 local groups who received nearly \$8,000 in this year's Civic Council community grants.

Also, the entire slate of new Civic Council trustees was approved: Peter Bray, Joni Kletter, Kim Maier, Thomas Miskel, Jeff Roth, and Joe Rydell. You can read more about these trustees in the spring issue of *Civic News*.

Finally, our thanks to New York Methodist Hospital for hosting the party, as well as to everyone who celebrated with us by bringing some great food and drink to the always-fun potluck dinner that followed the official meeting.



Community within a Community



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Taking Root:

Kickoff for Fourth Avenue Trees Program

The inaugural event for the Forth on Fourth Avenue Committee's comprehensive tree-care and maintenance program was a great success. Longtime and brand-new FOFA members and volunteers from the Arias building joined together on Saturday, June 16, to bring 14 street trees into adoption and care at 150 and 126 Fourth Ave.

The Park Slope Civic Council committee received a "mini-grant" of \$700 from the MillionTreesNYC program in late May to launch its program of maintaining trees on Fourth between Bergen and Carroll Streets; creating a pamphlet for Fourth Avenue residents and merchants emphasizing the environmental and economic benefits that healthy trees offer; and helping new adopters of neighborhood tree beds with inexpensive tree guards, assistance in the first cultivation and planting of the beds, training in maintenance, and tool kits from MillionTreesNYC.

People who helped out at this first event scouted out the area, started weeding, picked up some great compost from our friends at the Gowanus Canal Conservancy, mixed it into the soil, started planting, watered, engaged the help of passersby (no matter how young), applied mulch from MillionTreesNYC, and then stepped back to admire what they accomplished.

Our thanks to Marisa Denby with Arias Park Slope management, who provided water and snacks; Paul Bregianos with 126 Fourth Ave. management; Hans Hesselein and Eymund Diegel with the Gowanus

Canal Conservancy for the compost and help with weeding and cultivating; Andrew Newman, Susan Kornacki, Shalini Beath, and the SteWagon staff for their assistance in coordinating the afternoon event; the Civic Council's Sustainability Committee for the signs made by P.S. 321 students; and Joe Ciccone for his own signs.

In other tree news, the MillionTreesNYC program just announced its My Tree NYC: Beautiful Tree

Bed Contest. Participants should "like" the MillionTreesNYC Facebook

page (www.facebook.com/MillionTreesNYC/app_254553244581393) to sign up and upload a photo of their beautiful tree bed. Prizes are available to Best Tree Bed in Brooklyn and Best Group Work.

Next up for FOFA is the design and construction of tree guards for the newly adopted tree beds. If you are interested in participating in the committee that will oversee design and construction, e-mail us at fofa@parkslopeciviccouncil.org. 



Photo by Talia Wallner

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Ideal Situation

Ideal Properties Group LLC donates to the Park Slope Civic Council's House Tours and Civic Sweeps. The firm also sells our "No Flyers" signs. We already have many reasons to thank them for being a good friend to the Civic Council.

Now, managing director Aleksandra Scepanovic has made a gift of more than \$350 to the Civic Council — money Ideal Properties received from sponsoring a throw-and-dunk game in front of their storefront at 78 Seventh Avenue during the Seventh Heaven fair on June 17.

We applaud Ideal Properties Group LLC for their generosity and good neighbor policy!

A Community Court Transforms a Neighborhood

For more than a decade, a court for people who live in and around Red Hook has emphasized problem-solving over jail for many criminal offenders. Its success has helped change the neighborhood for the better.

The Red Hook Community Justice Center has served as a model court where the goal is rehabilitation and remediation, so that the offender does not wind up back in court but rather contributes positively to the community. In May, trustees of the Park Slope Civic Council visited the center, at the invitation of Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes, to get an inside look at a progressive, humanist approach to criminal justice.

The center, housed in a converted school building, grew out of a low point for Red Hook, in 1990. While searching for a student who had run out of local P.S. 15 after a fight, Principal Patrick Daly was killed in gang crossfire. Hynes successfully prosecuted the principal's killers. He also made a commitment to create criminal justice solutions for Red Hook, then one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the city.

Hynes has become a national leader in "diversion" strategies. He believes violent criminals belong in jail, but nonviolent offenders and the community at large can best be served by sentences that focus on rehabilitation, education, and prevention. Diverting nonviolent offenders from prison also saves the community money, as rehabilitation, education, and prevention programs cost about half as much as incarceration.

The approach is particularly valuable in addressing the problem of youth crimes. "Juveniles have a 78% recidivism rate within three years," Hynes told the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Mincing no words, he added: "The institution [of juvenile detention facilities in New York], objectively speaking, is an obscenity for the government. They're ticking time bombs with no reentry skills."

The court handles only nonviolent misdemeanor cases, but these can include drug and domestic violence cases,

landlord-tenant disputes, and family-court matters. Judge Alex M. Calabrese is the sole judge; he treats everyone with respect, often praising offenders for positive steps. Affirmations like "you've done a good job" and "congratulations" can be heard over and over in his courtroom. Simply put, this judge cares.



When crafting sentences, the judge strives to address the needs of the victim, compensate the community, and offer the defendant services designed to reduce the chances for recidivism. For example, a high school student before the court on a marijuana charge might be told that all charges will be dropped if he stays out of trouble with the law and improves his grades. A panel of peers might review his case, and he might be given a community-service assignment.

The court provides offenders with services and incentives to stay out of trouble. Calabrese made it clear, however, that if they take advantage of the system by not doing the right thing, they will get even tougher sentences than in other courts. These harsher punishments are imposed to protect the broader community, which is the system's ultimate goal.

Court systems from around the world are beginning to emulate this model for community justice, from as far away as Liverpool, England, and New Zealand.

The Community Justice Center has also helped transform Red Hook from one of the most dangerous neighborhoods into a thriving community — one of the 15 safest in the city. It will serve as a model for the next such court, slated for Brownsville, another troubled area.

— *Cathy Sokil Milnikiewicz is a Civic Council trustee.*

Civic News

The newsletter of the

 PARK SLOPE CIVIC COUNCIL

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Cover photos: 1960s Park Slope, courtesy of

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Organized as the South Brooklyn Board of Trade in 1896, the Park Slope Civic Council is one of the oldest civic associations in Brooklyn. We identify and address quality-of-life issues important to the community; create and support projects geared to improving and protecting the neighborhood; and assist local nonprofit organizations that benefit those living and working in Park Slope. Our many ongoing programs include the Halloween Parade, the Civic Sweeps, community forums, and a holiday toy drive. Our annual House Tour raises thousands of dollars for neighborhood initiatives. All are welcome to join. To learn more about us, go to www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org.

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