



## Scholarships Awarded to Outstanding John Jay Graduates



*Daneah Willis*



*Idalia Tlatelpa*



*Marcus Smith*



*Sofia Vazquez*

Photos by: Joe Rydell

The Park Slope Civic Council awarded Community Service Scholarships to four outstanding high school students at the year-end membership meeting on Friday, June 4, 2021. The recipients of the scholarships are graduating seniors attending high schools at the John Jay Educational Complex in Park Slope and have exemplified an impressive level of volunteer and community service. Each student received a \$2,500 scholarship to assist them with their post-secondary education.

Scholarships were awarded to Daneah Willis from the John Jay School for Law, Idalia Tlatelpa from the CyberArts Studio Academy (formerly the Secondary School for Journalism), Marcus Smith from Park Slope Collegiate, and Sofia Vazquez from Millennium Brooklyn High School. Ms. Willis will attend New York University, Ms. Tlatelpa will attend St. John's University, Mr. Smith will attend Fordham University, and Ms. Vazquez will attend the State University of New York at New Paltz.

The Community Service Scholarships are funded from proceeds from the Civic Council's food and drink tasting fundraising event, Food For Thought, and by private donations. Although forced to forego our October, 2020 fundraiser due to the Covid pandemic, we aim to resume this wonderful event in 2021. Save the Date! Wednesday, October 20.

Many thanks to all who have participated in and attended Food For Thought in past years. Your contributions to this event have made these scholarships possible.

*-Joe Rydell, President*

## Council Candidates Address 39th District Constituents at Old Stone House Forum



Photo by David Wood

**Contenders for the 39th District Council seat vacated by Brad Lander assembled before a crowd of nearly 400 at the Old Stone House**

Glorious weather and a tremendous crowd of nearly 400 people turned out on Sunday, May 23, for a PSCC Forum for candidates running to succeed Brad Lander as the City Council Member for the 39th District.

Described by *NY1.com* as “an event that combined the spirit of the city's spring reawakening with the beginning in earnest of campaign season,” the Forum, sponsored by the Civic Council and six other neighborhood organizations, was one of the first in New York to be held outdoors, on the athletic field at the Old Stone House. Attendees brought their blankets and chairs, and all seven candidates in the June 22 Primary— Shahana Hanif, Mammun Haq, Justin Krebs, Briget Rein, Douglas Schneider, Jessica Simmons and Brandon West—eagerly responded to questions posed by two local Brooklyn reporters, Ben Verde and Sadef A. Kully.

PSCC President Joe Rydell opened the Forum, welcoming the audience and thanking the co-sponsoring organizations: Old Stone House, Community Board #6, Park Slope Parents, Park Slope Neighbors, the 5th Avenue Business Improvement District, and the Park Slope Chamber of Commerce.

The candidates engaged in lively discussion on a range of important topics, including reopening public schools, revitalizing small

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## Reflections from our departing President, Joe Rydell

### *The Phone Call In The Middle of the Night*

Approximately 27 months ago, I was enjoying a much-needed vacation in Southern California when two days into the visit, my phone rang at 5:30am. The proverbial “call in the middle of the night” is rarely good news--sometimes serving as a harbinger of impending loss or emergency. The caller ID revealed the number of a good pal and fellow trustee from the Civic Council. It was a Saturday morning at 8:30 in New York and my friend was aware that I was on the west coast. When I answered, I heard the words “Everything is OK here, but check your email and call me right back.” I complied with the request and discovered that our then co-presidents had abruptly resigned from the Civic Council. I returned my friend’s call and we processed the news.

A little background: At that time, I had served as the vice president of the Civic Council for five years. I had previously been approached and declined the possibility of serving as president. I felt that I possessed neither the ambition nor aspiration that I postulated the position might require. Additionally, my vantage point within the organization provided me with a discerning level of awareness regarding the time and emotional commitment involved in such an endeavor. I had previously observed good friends explore this presidential terrain and resolved that I was simply not inclined to pursue this level of undertaking. All of that changed in an instant.

Later that morning, the remaining members of the Executive Committee and I met over a conference call and brainstormed as to what our next steps might be. I was duly impressed with the alacrity and resourcefulness of this group, even as we were separated by 3,000 miles of continent. Although my reticence was still apparent, I was encouraged by my fellow trustees to take the leap and serve as presi-

dent. In that moment, my reluctance was eclipsed by the passion and devotion of these valued members. We would work together as a team and rebuild the organization we loved and unite as volunteers to explore our civic visions.

In the subsequent 804 days I served as president (but who’s counting?), I was continually impressed and humbled by the individuals who put themselves forward as volunteers in service to our amazing community. The vast array of experience, intelligence, intuition, and selflessness that our volunteers have exhibited has been truly impressive. These attributes have informed and enabled the Park Slope Civic Council to navigate the pandemic waters for the last 15 months and remain relevant and productive in our pursuits in the face of possible mortality and prolonged uncertainty. I am honored and profoundly fortunate to have worked in the midst of these remarkable human beings.

As fate would have it, it was not simply a foreboding “call in the middle of the night,” but rather a creative “collective call to action” that has driven us. We have collaborated and explored this journey together. As determined by the Council’s bylaws, mandatory term limits have signaled the closure of my nine years of service as a trustee. However, my involvement and unconditional support of the organization are unwavering. I extend much praise to our members, volunteers and trustees. As a result of their capacity and perseverance, The Park Slope Civic Council is striving, surviving, and most importantly, thriving.

*With respect and gratitude,*  
**Joe Rydell, President**

## Newly Opened Center for Community Health Delivers Ambulatory Care



*The Center for Community Health at New York-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital has opened its doors to serve our Park Slope community and beyond. The Center is described by the hospital as a world-class ambulatory care center offering a wide range of services, and includes infusion, ambulatory surgery, and diagnostic imaging centers.*

Photo by Stephen Copek



Established 1896 as the South Brooklyn Board of Trade.  
Incorporated 1938.

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**Erica Stauffer, Second Vice President**  
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The Park Slope Civic Council is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization

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Peter Bray, Mark Caserta, Stephen Copek, Ryan DeLorge,  
Leslie Gallagher, Timothy Gilles, Ezra Goldstein, John Mazurek,  
Joe Rydell, David Schiffer, Erica Stauffer,  
David Wood and Candace Woodward

# The Park Slope Civic Council Working for a Lively, Safe, Green & Beautiful Park Slope!

## PSCC SCHOLARSHIPS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

- The Food for Thought Gala funds four college scholarships for community service

## VOLUNTEERISM & GRANTS

- Awarding grants to diverse organizations that enrich the community
- Partnering with neighboring organizations on issues of mutual concern

## ADVOCACY

- Creating NYC's largest historic district
- Campaigning for mass transit improvement
  - Promoting more livable streets
- Supporting local merchants and businesses



## HONORING SERVICE & ACHIEVEMENT

- Ortner Awards for projects preserving the character and grace of the neighborhood
- Lovgren Awards honoring individuals and organizations for professional and volunteer service

## COMMUNITY MEETINGS

- In recent years PSCC has sponsored Town Hall meetings on the future of 4th Avenue, reducing our carbon footprint, and expanding the historic district

## SUSTAINABILITY

- Civic Sweeps and neighborhood cleanups
- Partnership with Prospect Park Alliance Mulchfest

## SPONSORSHIP

- The Halloween Parade
- PSCC Historic House Tour
  - Art Slope
  - Food for Thought

## Our Mission Statement

The Park Slope Civic Council promotes the health, vitality and character of the Park Slope neighborhood and advocates for the interests of residents, businesses and others with a stake in the community.

## Support Your PSCC

and help us to

## Sustain the Relevance, Viability and History of This Community We Call Home.

Make your check payable to **The Park Slope Civic Council** and mail with this form to:  
**Box 172, 123 Seventh Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11215, or sign up online at [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org)**

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Other Adult Members of Household (if applicable)

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Email

Business/Professional: \$100

Benefactor: \$250

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address

Student/Elder Community (65+): \$25

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
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**LEARN MORE! at [parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://parkslopeciviccouncil.org)**

Like us on Facebook: Park Slope Civic Council  and follow us on Twitter: @PkSICivCouncil 



## Recognizing our Preservation Legacy

### Historic District Landmark Expansion Initiative Gets HDC Boost



Photo by Peter Bray

Photo by David Herman

*At left, the lushness of a spring day brightens a brownstone-lined block on the south side of Garfield Place between 7th and 8th Avenues; at right, honoring the recently erected Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, the 1887 building at the northwest corner of 7th Avenue and 10th St. was built by owner Charles Nickenig and designed by architect, W. H. Wirth.*

The Civic Council's decades-long effort to protect Park Slope's architectural heritage was triggered by the passage of the New York Landmarks Law in 1965. It empowered the newly-established Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to designate landmarks and regulate changes to them. A campaign by a group of Park Slope activists then led to the 1973 designation of the 1800-building Park Slope Historic District on blocks near Prospect Park.

As the city's economic recovery accelerated in the 1990s, there was a growing awareness about the need to preserve many other Park Slope blocks, but those efforts fell on deaf ears at the LPC. Beginning in 2007, the Civic Council upped its game. Its reconstituted Historic District Committee developed a master expansion plan, reviewed it with the LPC and then engaged in outreach to residents and elected officials. This time, the LPC proved more receptive, and the extensions to the historic district approved in 2012 and 2016 added a total of 1,000 buildings in the South and North Slope.

However, these successes once again induced a state of somnolence at the LPC, which reflected its indifferent leadership and a City Hall that prioritized development at all costs. As a result, the landmarking of another 1500 buildings in the Center Slope has languished.

To inject new life into the preservation effort, PSCC reached out to the citywide Historic Districts Council (HDC) and secured its selection as one of HDC's 2020 Six to Celebrate neighborhoods. With HDC's help, the aim has been to highlight the Center Slope's architecture and to put further extensions on the LPC's agenda.

And then the pandemic hit!

*continued on p.9*

### Ortner Award Winners Recognized at Council's April Meeting



*This year's award for the Rehabilitation of a Historic Structure, pictured above at 192 Prospect Park West, was presented to Hidrock Properties, Kaptive Development, M&R Construction Group and Building Studio Architects.*

Decorative period embellishments of the original 192 Prospect Park West structure, including cornices and large plate glass widows set atop raised wood paneling, have been handsomely revived to emulate the original building's early style and detail. Ample Hills, a Brooklyn born ice creamery, is the first tenant at the newly rehabilitated PPW site, and recently opened its doors where a one time Ice Cream Parlor served sweet treats nearly a century ago.

The Ortner honor for Community Betterment/Neighborhood Intervention was awarded to 2nd Street neighbor Amy Globus who sought to beautify her neighborhood during a year of great change and upheaval in our community. With the permission of her 2nd St. neighbors and at her own expense she orchestrated the expansion of 7 tree beds, arranged with the City for the planting of missing trees, and commissioned the installation of attractive wrought iron railings around the beds as pictured below. "It's been an atypical year for all of us, so I'm really hoping it will bring some joy to our neighborhood," Amy said. "I have big dreams to make our neighborhood as great as it can possibly be!"



*The Ortner Awards, sponsored by Tarzian Hardware, commemorate Evelyn and Everett Ortner, long-time Park Slope residents and community advocates who, beginning in the 1960s, played a pivotal role in transforming our then declining neighborhood into the vibrant community it is today.*

## Celebrating our Spirited Community



### Council Awards Grants to Innovative Community Groups

*Each year the Civic Council awards community service grants to local organizations for their work and commitment to improve the health, vitality and diversity of our community. Awards are given for projects in the arts, education, youth programs and civic improvement.*

*Community grants are typically funded by the Civic Council's annual House Tour. We were unfortunately unable to have the House Tour this year, but, thanks to a group of generous benefactors, we were able to raise funds to continue our annual Community Grants program. The winners of this year's grants include:*

Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, the **Brooklyn Arts Exchange (BAX)** is a multigenerational arts organization founded in 1991 as a small, pioneer performing arts organization on an industrial block in the Gowanus area of Brooklyn. BAX has grown into a powerful supporter of artistic innovation and education in dance and theater and is a vital community-based performing arts center dedicated to developing artists of all ages, from children to professionals. The organization offers community access to arts and culture, supporting the creation of new work by emerging artists, engaging diverse audiences and providing arts education to low-income youth and families.

With funding from the Park Slope Civic Council, they will be able to support coaching compensation and provide more professional development resources and workshops.

**Brooklyn Seeds** has been gardening with kids in Brooklyn schools since 2010, teaching them to plant organic food as well as planting and caring for native plants that support native wildlife. In the past 10 years they've run gardening programs for hundreds of kids at PS 331, PS 133, PS 9 and the Montessori Day School among others. With plants provided by the Greenbelt Native Plant Center, over 800 students at PS 133 planted 1,200 native, rare and threatened plants around the school perimeter. This spring students will continue to plant and care for the native garden.

The Civic Council grant will allow Brooklyn Seeds to install interactive signage for students, parents, teachers and neighbors to identify the plants, and educate the school and community about the native wildlife that cannot survive without the native plants.

The **Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club** promotes waterfront stewardship while raising awareness of sewer overflow issues that affect the Gowanus Canal. Activities are conducted on the canal and shoreline, with occasional voyages to neighboring waterfront communities of Red Hook, Sunset Park and Brooklyn Heights. Since 1999, it has empowered people to care for the Gowanus Canal/Park Slope shoreline through advocacy, conservation, and education.

The Park Slope Civic Council grant is targeted to support the expansion of Gowanus Dredgers' Street Art walking tours of the Gowanus area. Gowanus Dredgers believes that outdoor based art walks are an ideal method to further connections with art and place that will help Park Slope residents reacclimate to a post-COVID world. Partnerships with Gowanus Mutual Aid, Old Stone House, Arts Gowanus and like-minded community organizations are leveraged at each monthly walk.

-Erica Stauffer, 2nd Vice President

### 2021 Lovgren Winners Honored at Annual Council Meeting in June

The Park Slope Civic Council has identified and honored an organization professional and an individual for outstanding service to the community each year since 1979. The awards are named for George Lovgren, the Park Slope activist who in the 1960s worked tirelessly to save the Union Street Firehouse from closure.

This year's Lovgren Awards were presented at the Council's year end meeting on Friday, June 4: the Award for Community Service by a Professional was presented to the Brooklyn Relief Kitchen (BRK) and accepted by Kent Adams, Deacon at Old First Reformed Church. The honor for an Individual for Outstanding Community Service was awarded to Park Slope neighbor, Burnley Duke Dame.

The **Brooklyn Relief Kitchen (BRK)**, located in the Old First Reformed Church on Carroll Street and 7th Avenue, was initially organized by Andy and Piper Wandzilak to help people facing hunger as a result of Hurricane Sandy. Now their commitment is to help those suffering food insecurities because of the COVID Pandemic.



Food is prepared by volunteers at Old First and then distributed by Brooklyn Relief Kitchen partners such as CHIPS, Worker's Justice Project, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Camp Friendship, Heights and Hills, and the Caribbean Women's Health Association.

**Burnley Duke Dame:** A leader of her Block Association and former Editor of the Park Slope Civic Council Civic News, Burnley Duke Dame has received this year's Lovgren award to an Individual for outstanding volunteer service to the Park Slope community and to the Civic Council. Council Trustee, Candace Woodward, accepted the award for Burnley at the Council's June meeting.

For several years, Burnley has volunteered her design services in support of many Civic Council community initiatives including: the design of the highly effective No Flyers sign seen throughout Park Slope; posters for the Fall and Spring Civic Sweeps; the design, coordination and installation of the Annual Historic House Tour street banners; and the design of the House Tour ticket and signage for House Tour shuttle buses and bus stops. Burnley has also served as a volunteer for the House Tour and the Civic Sweep, and writes house descriptions for the House Tour brochure.



-Candace Woodward, Trustee



## Beautifying our Streetscape

### Civic Pride Blooms!



*From left to right our talented team of gardeners, Civic Council Trustee and bookstore owner, Ezra Goldstein, Civic Council President, Joe Rydell, and landscape gardener and volunteer, Jan Schmidt.*

Members of the Park Slope Civic Council recently planted annuals around the tree bed in front of the Community Bookstore on 7th Avenue.

Earlier this year, thanks to an anonymous donor, the Civic Council had tree guards installed on both sides of the street on 7th Avenue between Union and Sixth Streets. The guards protect the trees on 7th Avenue and add to the attractiveness of our urban environment.

The installation of the tree guards has truly been a community effort. If you would like to contribute to the beautification of Park Slope and the tree guard fund, please visit our website to donate at [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org).

The Civic Council is grateful to Trustee John Ciferni of Tarzian Hardware, for his donation of flowers and to Trustee Candace Woodward for her oversight of the installation of the tree guards.

*-Joe Rydell, President*

### Spring Sweep Cleans Up on 7th Avenue

Making a clean sweep of our neighborhood, Park Slope friends joined the Civic Council at the annual spring beautification, recycling and clean-up event, the **2021 Spring Civic Sweep**, on Sunday, April 25, in front of the John Jay Educational Campus on 7th Avenue. Neighbors had the opportunity to bring their unwanted electronics for recycling by the Lower East Side Ecology Center; computers, monitors, printers, scanners, keyboards, mice, TVs, VCRs, DVD players, cables, phones and more were dropped off at the Sweep's recently relocated 7th Avenue location. The Council provided refreshments, as well as tools and supplies for cleaning up along 6th, 7th and 8th Avenues. Volunteers left wearing "I Made Park Slope Cleaner Today" stickers.

Many thanks to our Media Partners, Park Slope Parents and Park Slope Neighbors, for helping to make this event a great success.



*Our thanks to Brooklyn and Manhattan students from UNIS (the United Nations International School) who teamed up to clean up litter on the sidewalks of 7th Avenue, and earned community service credits for their hard work.*

*-Candace Woodward, Trustee*

*Council Candidates continued from cover page*

businesses, the Gowanus rezoning and affordable housing. A video recording of the Forum will be available at the PSCC website: [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org).

Of particular interest to the Civic Council, candidates were asked whether they supported the Council's proposal to expand the Park Slope Historic District to include important brownstone-lined blocks in the Center Slope, and the responses were generally quite positive. That topic was the focus of a story about the Forum in the *Bklyner* that quoted Trustee Peter Bray, Chair of the PSCC Historic District Committee. Bray said he was pleased that the candidates "all sounded like they were open to a dialogue with the community."

In its report, *NY1.com* said "residents say they have rarely seen

such intensity in a council race, which they only expect to build into June." The story also quoted Trustee Kim Maier, Director of the Old Stone House, commenting on the strong field of candidates. "It's an embarrassment of riches," she said.

Several candidates told us afterward that this was the single best event of the campaign so far. The unexpectedly large turnout and extremely positive audience response show the opportunity that exists, as we emerge from the pandemic, for the Civic Council to be a more visible and impactful organization, promoting and advocating for the Park Slope neighborhood.

Links to stories on *NY1.com* and the *Bklyner* will be posted on the Civic Council's website.

*-Tim Gilles, Membership Secretary, President-Elect and Forum Planning Committee Chair*



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Now celebrating its 14th year, EnviroBliss' mission is to help our community and clients by becoming aware of environmental problems that affect their homes, offices & workplaces. A leading specialist in indoor air quality and remediation, EnviroBliss is located in the heart of Park Slope at 325 Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn, New York where the owner Pierre M. Cajuste and his crew specialize in the least toxic and effective remediation of water damage and mold contamination to homes and offices. In contrast with conventional mold remediation firms, EnviroBliss uses non-toxic products that have stood the test of time, which not all green products do. Their vision is to enable sustainable cleaning using the least toxic methods to enhance the quality of overall life. EnviroBliss promotes cleanliness in all surroundings to ensure safety, home health, comfort, and productivity. Their goal is to boost higher productivity through high skilled engineering in the removal of mold and other indoor inhabitants that threaten the safety of the environment of millions of homes and businesses throughout the tri-state area. Pierre is licensed and highly experienced in mold remediation. He has spent 25 years performing all levels of hygienic maintenance, and refurbishment work on heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. Pierre is also certified by the ACAC, American Council for Accredited Certification, formerly known as the American Indoor Air Quality Council. EnviroBliss only staffs experienced, licensed technicians. They supply cleaning solutions that bring value to their clients whether at home or the workplace. EnviroBliss' concern is to make the lives of all their clients stress-free and as smooth as possible.

*Hidden toxic black mold behind bathroom walls of a private residence*



*EnviroBliss technicians performing mold remediation at a private residence*



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## The Business of Keeping Businesses Going

“Long days, high stress, lots of pivots, even a touch of danger”

*The past year has not been an easy one for Mark Caserta: long days, high stress, lots of pivots, even a touch of danger. It may be premature to say the worst is over, but Caserta has at least earned the right to ease up a bit, and even to enjoy a bit of optimism for the year to come.*

Caserta, a Civic Council trustee, is Executive Director of the Park Slope Fifth Avenue Business Improvement District (BID), prime booster for the businesses that line the avenue and several side streets from Dean Street to 18th Street. According to Park Slope Patch, 66 of the 520 storefronts in the BID were empty at the height of the pandemic in October, the highest vacancy rate since the BID was formed 12 years ago. That number is now down to 60 with several more establishments in the pipeline. In all, Caserta says, 40 places closed but 51 either opened or are in the process.

The BID launched several initiatives over the past year to keep businesses going, from helping owners secure Payroll Protection loans to launching the Park Slope Gift Card, good for purchases at hundreds of locations all around the neighborhood. Nothing, however, has helped more than Open Streets which ran from last July to December and resumed on March 13.

Several stretches of 5th Avenue are closed to traffic Saturdays from 11am to 10pm. The program's success is obvious not just in the crowds, the packed outdoor seating spaces, and the bustle of wait staff back at work. There's a spirit up and down the avenue, a weekly celebration of survival and release from isolation. Restaurants and bars report doing more business on Open Street Saturdays than on typical Saturdays before the pandemic. Caserta says the success of Open Streets has been a major positive factor in helping fill all those vacant storefronts.



*Park Slope Fifth Avenue Business Improvement District (BID) CEO, Mark Caserta, and Deputy Director, Joanne Tallantire, at the Candidate Forum for City Council hopefuls at the Old Stone House in May.*



Photo by Campbell Brice, 5th Avenue BID

*On a typical weekend strollers can stop to listen to music up and down 5th Avenue, enhancing the feel of an extended block party.*

But if we who enjoy the elan of Open Streets take it for granted, we should know that it has come into being only through massive effort.

Almost as soon as the pandemic hit last spring, the BID began gathering petitions from bars and restaurants asking the city to shut down the avenue to traffic on weekends and open it up to pedestrians and businesses. “The minute the city gave the go ahead,” says Caserta, “they were ready to go.”

That was the easy part. Much harder was the physical closure of the streets. Caserta and Deputy Director Joanna Tallantire spent 13 hours each Saturday wrangling barriers, stopping traffic, and patrolling the closed blocks. They were aided by a few volunteers but received no money from the city and no assistance from the police, who have taken a hands-off approach to Open Streets. The only help they got was the city's donation of a hundred or so barricades, “many of which were badly in need of repair,” says Caserta.

From lessons learned and memories of exhaustion, Caserta decided to hire staff this year. The BID launched a fundraising campaign with a goal of \$50,000. To date, they've taken in \$59,000, including a \$5,000 grant from ConEd, \$2,500 from Corcoran Realty, \$29,000 from individual donations, and the remainder from bars and restaurants. This year's budget for Open Streets is \$80,000, with Sundays due to be added to the program in July, and with the BID chipping in the difference.

Caserta has used the money to buy more barricades but primarily to hire nine staffers thus far, with the hunt on for at least six more. The workers, who are obvious from their yellow vests, are all veterans of crowd control, having worked such events as the Gay Pride Parade.



## on #theother5th



“ . . . we might get out of this OK.”

“The workers get \$25 an hour and earn every penny of it,” says Caserta. Though Fifth Avenue’s Open Streets program has not been the subject of the angry, organized opposition reported in other parts of the city, it has not been without its drama. There have been numerous dangerous confrontations sparked primarily by enraged drivers.

“Several drivers have destroyed barricades,” reports Caserta. “One woman picked up a barricade and threw it at one of our workers. There have been truly terrifying moments with drivers, some of whom seemed obviously drunk, and we’ve had a number of close calls. And then there are people who are just very, very angry that we’ve blocked the street.”

“There have been other complaints, about parking, overcrowding and noise. We respond as best we can, let owners know when there are complaints, but listen, we’re running a rescue mission for businesses here. We’re talking about survival, and that comes first.”

“It breaks my heart that 40 businesses closed. We lost half of our women-owned boutiques. There was so much doom and gloom in the beginning. But I’m seeing lots of entrepreneurship out there, and that’s inspiring. Also, owners have managed to secure lots of state, local and federal funds.”

**“Now I’m thinking, cautiously, that we might get out of this okay.”**

*-Ezra Goldstein, Trustee*



Photo by Campbell Brice, 5th Avenue BID

*There’s a spirit on 5th Avenue on Open Street Saturdays, a weekly celebration of survival and release from isolation.*

*Historic District Landmark Expansion continued from p.4*

### Further Extension of Park Slope’s Historic District May Depend on the Mayor’s Race

While the lockdown put some of this new campaign on hold, the Civic Council sponsored three highly acclaimed virtual walking tours earlier this year. Hundreds of people participated

including a surprising number from out-of-state. These Zoom tours were led by Park Slope resident and architectural historian extraordinaire Francis Morrone, who took us on tours of Prospect Park West, Montgomery Place, 9th Street, the Washington Park locale, and other blocks. Many other viewers were able to access these tours on the Civic Council website.

The advent of COVID vaccines has enabled PSCC’s Historic District Committee to revive its efforts to conduct a detailed survey of the 700-800 buildings above 6th Avenue in the Center Slope. The data and photographs of each building will be used to demonstrate to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) the area’s worthiness for historic district designation.

Any decision by the LPC will be made in upcoming years. Since the decision is also a political one, the new Mayor elected in November can appoint an LPC Chair who will have the discretion to act upon further landmarking in Park Slope. The election will also decide a new Council Member to represent District 39, including Park Slope, and the outcome will determine whether we have someone to advocate on our behalf.

Stay tuned for further developments.

*-Peter Bray, Trustee*



Photo by Peter Bray

*House #360, built circa 1899, is among the lovely South Slope wood frame houses gracing the south side of 14th Street - examples of the richness and diversity of Park Slope architecture.*



## The Personal Touch of our Awesome Merchants

### Family Ties? Cheers!



Photo by Joe Rydell

**Proprietors and brothers (left and right) Brendan & Kevin Byrnes**

"... Wouldn't you like to get away? Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name. And they're always glad you came..." It's been nearly 40 years since the theme song from "Cheers" entered our collective consciousness. Thankfully, this now ubiquitous sentiment lives on in one of our cherished Park Slope watering holes: The Commissioner. The Commissioner recently celebrated its fourth anniversary, having taken up residence in the storefront previously occupied by Park Slope, and prior to that, by long-time Park Slope institution, Aunt Suzie's.

The Commissioner's most valuable asset is arguably in its 3 proprietors/owners, brothers Brendan and Kevin Byrnes, and cousin Jonathan Frankel. They have created a welcoming and accessible environment that serves as an inviting neighborhood hub/pub. And they do, in fact, possess a remarkable propensity for remembering their customers' names and drink orders, even after a single encounter. This attention to detail and personal touch makes for refreshing and inviting details in the customer service they provide – which is outstanding.

The personal histories of Brendan, Kevin and Jonathan factored significantly into the naming of their establishment. The Commissioner is steeped in New York City history. In the late 1940's, their grandfather, John Murtagh, was the New York City Commissioner of the Department of Investigation. Hence their homage to their grandfather and their family history. Mr. Murtagh also served as a Justice of the New York State Supreme Court in the 1960's and 70's. When Mr. Murtagh was a young man, he met his future wife, Mary Maguire, while she was working in her family's Washington Heights bar and restaurant, Maguire's Chop House.

Metaphorically and historically, it would seem that the "apples have not fallen very far from the tree" – or the family business. And speaking of the family business – it is thriving. In spite of a six-week hiatus at the beginning of the pandemic, the Commissioner has subsequently flourished by offering outdoor seating and viewing areas, take-out service, and live music. They have also benefitted greatly from the Fifth Avenue Open Streets program and the increased pedestrian traffic on Fifth Avenue.

The food, drinks, and engaging environment at The Commissioner are obvious and appreciated attractions. However, the definitive draw is the warmth and personalities of the proprietors. While "everybody" may not necessarily know your name, Brendan, Kevin and Jonathan most certainly will. The delight they derive in serving spirits and culinary offerings is contagious. They welcome you with warmth, humanity, and a sense of humor. "...And they're always glad you came..."

-Joe Rydell, President

### J&R Appliances - A Park Slope "Fixture" Since 1953



**Owner Ralph Jr. pictured above left with Store Associate "Super Mario"**

It was 1953 and Ralph DiCerbo was fresh out of radio school, thanks to the GI Bill. With a partner named Jerry he opened a shop at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Sterling Place: J&R Radio and Television Service. Around 1959 he moved the shop to the corner of Berkeley Place and then, in 1966, bought the building at 108 Seventh Avenue where J&R has been ever since.

In 1984, he took on a new partner: his son, also named Ralph, who had been working in the store off and on since he was 12. The senior DiCerbo retired in 1993, leaving the store to Ralph, Jr.

Much has changed in 68 years, besides J&R's once-modest South Brooklyn neighborhood. Repair used to be the store's mainstay but appliances, mostly, are no longer built to be fixed. The phonos and hi-fis advertised on J&R's iconic sign are barely-remembered relics. Ralph says that the store now does nearly half its business in air conditioners between May and August, "the most stressful time of the year."

What hasn't changed, according to Ralph, Jr., is the personal service the store provides plus something his father always used to say: "Big stores, big prices. Small stores, small prices." From 1953 to 2021, customers have been able to buy or order almost any appliance, at a price competitive with almost any store. That approach, and untold hours of hard work, have enabled J&R to survive vast changes in the neighborhood and the retail landscape. Here's hoping for another 68 years.

-Ezra Goldstein, Trustee

## Newly Appointed to the Park Slope Civic Council...

### Meet Hope Tarullo, our NEW Communications & Data Manager



Hope first moved to Park Slope in 2004. She had been living in northern Westchester and was looking for a quiet neighborhood with lots of green space and architectural beauty. She'll never forget getting off at the 7th Avenue subway station and seeing the lush trees and gorgeous buildings that lined the street. "Now this is a place I can live," she thought to herself, and has been here ever since.

Prior to joining the PSCC as Communications and Data Manager, Hope worked as Assistant Director of Communications at Mary McDowell Friends School, a Quaker school for students with learning disabilities in Cobble Hill. In addition to her nonprofit work, she is a certified yoga teacher and has been teaching private and group classes since 2017. When she isn't working or teaching, she can be found putting in her garden, walking her dog in Prospect Park, or attending a meeting of Showing Up for Racial Justice.

Hope currently lives in Kensington with her wife, Sara, her daughter, Bre, and their beloved pets. She is thrilled to help support the local community as a member of the PSCC team.

### Remembering Harold Derrett Dixon Jr.

Patriarch of Dixon's Bike Shop, Harold Derrett Dixon Jr. was honored by family and friends at a Homegoing service celebrating his life and vision this past Spring. In a tribute expressed at the April service, Harold was likened to a "real life super hero" who "worked hard to provide for his family and always stressed the importance of ownership . . . his children listened and have all followed in his footsteps."

Born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1936, Harold emigrated to the United States seeking a better life. Harold and his wife married in 1966 and settled in Brooklyn where together they opened Dixon's Bicycle Shop on Union Street in Park Slope, building it up with their children to become an ongoing neighborhood institution over 50 years later.

Mayoral candidate Dianne Morales tweeted "I'm saddened to hear of the passing of Harold Dixon, the owner of Dixon's Bike Shop for more than 50 years. I visited Dixon's this past weekend because the neighborhood institution Harold built w/his sons, Chris and David, was so highly recommended – his loss will be felt deeply."

Harold is survived by his wife Marie of 55 years and large extended family including his nine children, siblings, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, cousins, nieces and nephews, and friends.

### Incoming Trustees Welcomed at Council's Annual Meeting

Lifelong Park Slope resident **Sarah Murphy Gersowitz** is a past Civic Council trustee and former Co-Chair of the Outreach Committee and the Food For Thought fundraiser. Mom to two young girls, Sarah is a Family Law attorney and a member of the Alumni Advisory Board at the Berkeley Carroll School; Born and raised in Brooklyn, new Civic Council trustee **Rickie James** has served as a preservationist for the Natural Trust for Historic Preservation. He is also a trustee at the Park Slope United Methodist Church where his responsibilities include the preservation and upkeep of the of the church and parsonage; Brooklyn native **Michael Mallon** serves as Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for Queens Borough President, Donovan Richards Jr., where he oversees the Borough President's Civic Engagement Committee. He previously served as Communications Director for the NYC Council's Finance Chair. Michael is an advocate and activist for LGBTQ causes, a fighter for better mass transit, and a founding member of the Riders Alliance; **Stephen Painter** is a North Carolina native and moved to Park Slope in 2006. He is an Enforcement Attorney at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. Stephen has served on the Board of Directors of the Brooklyn Symphony Orchestra as President and Treasurer, and where he is also an accomplished violinist; Lifelong Brooklynite and recent college graduate **Emmitt Sklar** served as Student Body President at Davidson College where he studied public policy, political science and Arabic. He has strong ties to the Park Slope community where he refereed little league sports, volunteered for a City Council Member and currently serves as a public member of Community Board 6; Recently relocated to Brooklyn from Boston in 2019, Brooklyn-born **Donna Stein** has had a diverse career that includes corporate and private event catering management and a range of non-profit roles. Donna is excited to be part of the PSCC community and to work with other trustees to make our neighborhood great. **Mitch Szpicek** is a lifelong Brooklyn resident. Since retiring from the NYPD after 20 years of service, Mitch has owned and managed Little Things Toy Store on Seventh Avenue for ten-plus years. As a Civic Council Trustee, he hopes to advocate for small businesses and enhance the environment for visitors and residents of Park Slope.

We greatly appreciate  
the generosity of our sponsor  
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**Save the Date !!!**

*It's Back . . .*

**Food for Thought Tasting Fundraiser**

*At the*  
**PICNIC HOUSE**  
**October 20th**  
**6:00 - 9:30pm**

[www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org)

### WHAT'S NEW at the '21 NYC BALLOT BOX

- ★ Vote by Mail ★ Early Voting ★
- ★ Ranked Choice Voting ★

It's time to learn about big changes at the Ballot Box in NYC for 2021. With first-time Ranked Choice Voting in NYC and candidates vying for key positions including Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, Borough President and City Council Member it's important to be prepared for making your voice heard at the polls. Here's what's helpful to know:

**Important Dates for voting in 2021:** Primary Election Day is **June 22 (early voting starts June 12 through June 20)**; General Election Day falls on **November 2 (early voting starts October 23 through October 31)**.

**Find your voting site and polling hours at:**  
[findmypollsite.vote.nyc/](http://findmypollsite.vote.nyc/)

**Learn about Ranked Choice voting at:**  
[vote.nyc/page/ranked-choice-voting](http://vote.nyc/page/ranked-choice-voting)

**To register to vote in-person, by mail or online - learn your options at:**  
[vote.nyc/page/register-vote](http://vote.nyc/page/register-vote)

**Find out how to request and track an absentee ballot at:**  
[nycabsentee.com/](http://nycabsentee.com/)

**Qualifications for voting are available at:**  
[vote.nyc/page/voter-qualifications](http://vote.nyc/page/voter-qualifications)

**Your Vote Matters in 2021!**



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**PARK SLOPE CIVIC COUNCIL**

The Park Slope Civic Council promotes the health, vitality and character of the Park Slope neighborhood and advocates for the interests of residents, businesses and others with a stake in the community.