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Terri's Annual Tree Lighting



Photo by Kari Lleras
Story on page 8



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Canarsie Courier

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Happy New Year, Canarsie

By Jibreel Jalloh

As we welcome 2026, I want to extend my warmest wishes to every Canarsie family for a healthy, peaceful and hopeful New Year. This moment gives us the opportunity to reflect on how far we've come, while recommitting ourselves to the work still ahead — especially at a time when many families are feeling the real pressures of a rising cost of living.

For more than a century, the *Canarsie Courier* has told the story of our neighborhood. As it approaches 105 years of service, it remains a trusted voice rooted in community, history and truth. Publications like the *Courier* help preserve our collective memory and ensure that the voices of Canarsie residents are heard, respected and amplified — particularly as working families navigate unprecedented economic challenges.

This past year was a powerful one for our organization and for the community. Together, we launched the first annual Safe Canarsie Basketball Tournament, creating a space that brought young people, families and neighbors together around safety, teamwork and pride. We also cut the ribbon on the Canarsie Third Space Initiative, an important step toward building welcoming, community-centered spaces where residents can gather, learn and grow. In addition, we trained new cohorts of local

advocates — neighbors committed to standing up for Canarsie and shaping its future from the ground up.

As the cost of housing, food and everyday essentials continues to rise, our work has taken on even greater urgency. Families should not have to choose between staying in the neighborhood they love and making ends meet. That is why building community power and advocating for fair, people-centered policies remains at the heart of everything we do.

Looking ahead, 2026 is a year of even greater ambition. We will continue to advocate for meaningful investments in our beloved community — investments that address public safety, improve transportation, strengthen economic development and confront the cost of living crisis facing Canarsie residents. Our community deserves solutions that allow people not just to survive, but to thrive.

None of this work happens in isolation. It happens because of the trust, partnership and support of residents, volunteers and allies who believe in Canarsie's potential. For that, I am deeply grateful.

May this new year bring continued strength, unity and opportunity to Canarsie. Thank you for your continued support, belief and commitment to our neighborhood.



Happy New Year, Canarsie.

Jibreel Jalloh is an award-winning organizer and the Founder and Executive Director of The Flossy Organization, a nonprofit dedicated to closing the advocacy gap through education and activism. Over the past few years, he has helped lead efforts to end gun violence, expand public transit and secure investments in local green spaces. Jibreel is a 2024–2025 Obama Foundation Scholar at Columbia University. Learn more at theflossy.org and follow @theflossyorg.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

COMMUNITY
EVENTS
CALENDAR –
VOL. 106, NO. 2

SAT. JANUARY 10TH

Mulchfest '26
Marine Park – Avenue U
Parking Lot
3244 Avenue U
9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Register at
<https://www.marineparkalliance.org/volunteer>

SAT. JANUARY 10TH

Winter Waterfowl Hike
Shirley Chisholm State Park –
Hendrix Creek Patio
1750 Pennsylvania Avenue
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Register at
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Man Struck by Brick During Verbal Dispute

By Linda Steinmuller

The NYPD is asking for the public's assistance in identifying an individual wanted in connection with an assault on a 67-year-old man in Canarsie.

The incident occurred around 12:05 a.m. on Tuesday, December 30th, in the vicinity of East 94th Street and Avenue J.

Police said an unidentified male struck his victim in the left arm while they were having a verbal dispute.

The suspect, who is described as a 5'9" black male, about 20 to 30 years old, with a

medium build, fled northbound on East 94th Street, toward Flatlands Avenue. He was last seen wearing a black jacket, a brown hoodie, black pants and black shoes.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at 800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 888-57-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging onto the Crime Stoppers Website nypdonline.org, or on X @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.



East Flatbush

Detectives Searching for Clues in Church Avenue Stabbing

By Baqir Ahmad

Police from the 67th Precinct responded to a stabbing at 3113 Church Avenue on Monday, January 5th, around 11:25 p.m.

A 31-year-old man was stabbed multiple times in the torso, police said. EMS took the victim to Kings County Hospital where he was listed in stable condition.

There are no arrests, and an investigation is ongoing.

Detectives are searching for a male suspect, described as approximately 6 feet tall and wearing a black North Face jacket and a Nike Tech hoodie at the time of the incident. He fled on foot in an unknown direction.

Anyone with information regarding this stabbing is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at 800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 888-57-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging onto the Crime Stoppers Website nypdonline.org, or on X @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.



East New York

Ambulance Flips Over While Responding to Call for Help

By Baqir Ahmad

Emergency responders rushed to the scene of a two-car accident, involving an ambulance and an SUV, at Stanley Avenue and Linwood Street, around 10:15 p.m. on Sunday, January 4th.

The collision, which involved a private ambulance and a Honda CRV, caused the ambulance to roll on its side while responding to a code for help.

Members of the NYPD, FDNY and EMS responded to the scene, and firefighters used specialized equipment to extract one injured person from the SUV.

There were four people injured due to the accident; all were transported to Brookdale Hospital in stable condition.



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Leaders Fighting Hate Honored by The Bridge MCP at Annual Unity in Action Holiday Celebration

By Brenda Cox

It was standing room only at the “Annual Unity in Action Holiday Celebration and Award Ceremony,” on Sunday, December 21st, in honor of four extraordinary individuals who were recognized by The Bridge Multicultural and Advocacy Project (The Bridge MCP) for their remarkable achievements and unwavering dedication to not only the communities they serve, but also society as a whole.

The ceremony, held at 1894 Flatbush Avenue, included a lavish dinner and was emceed by Annesa Ali, director of Special Projects at The Bridge MCP. It commenced with prayers by Bishop Ebony Kirkland from Church of the Living God, Honorable Judge Menachem “Mendy” Mirocznik and Hassan Bakiriddin who represented the Jewish and Muslim faiths, respectively. In her opening remarks, Ali stated, “Unity is very personal to me. It’s not just a word but how I live my life. Tonight, we’re not just ending the year; we’re celebrating connection, compassion and the people who showed up for us when we needed them the most, and that’s what The Bridge is all about.”

Mark Appel, founder of The Bridge MCP, welcomed the honorees and over 300 guests who braved the cold to be there. “Today is a strong message of celebration,” he told attendees. Appel expressed thanks to the Lord for keeping everyone throughout 2025 and prayed for the same in the coming year. “In a world which is so different, divided by differences, ethnicities, gender and other facets, at The Bridge MCP we see people as people. One people. One God,” he added. Before introducing the honorees, Appel also gave a report of the Foundation’s numerous achievements during the past year, which included the expansion of *Bridge TV* network.

Honorable Vijah Ramjattan, executive director of NYC Mayor’s Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes, was recognized for his advocacy on antisemitism. “When I walked in the room this afternoon, what I saw was New York City in its glory. I saw every race, every faith, every culture. So, when people tell me that unity is not possible in New York City -- just look at this room,” he told the gathering, glancing from side to side. The former counselor at Rikers Island jail spoke about a press conference his office held in Crown Heights recently, “to denounce the stabbing of a Jewish man who was stabbed just because he was Jewish.”

Ramjattan reiterated his mantra -- “Hate has no place in New York City” -- and referenced the musings of one of the rabbis at the press conference. “What does light look like during Hannukah? Where does the light come from?” the rabbi wanted to know. He found the answer to his question by looking at those who surrounded him. Seeing people of different colors, different communities, different faiths, the rabbi admitted, “Hate has no place in New York City” and acknowledged, “That is the light in Hannukah.”

Dr. Alix Desulme, mayor of North Miami, Florida, was also recognized for repudiating hate and bigotry and had



Unity in Action honorees, elected officials and The Bridge MCP members.

received numerous accolades for his efforts -- notably for holding an “Israel Solidarity Rally” in the aftermath of the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel. Recently, at the “North American Mayors Summit Against Antisemitism,” the Haitian-born Desulme was awarded the Combat Antisemitism Movement’s (CAM) Mayors of Courage Award, an honor conferred on leaders who confront hatred and support Jewish communities.

Honorable Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte-Hermelyn, another honoree, praised Appel for his vision in creating a safe space “where we could all come together to fellowship and to fight.” The Brooklyn Democratic Party Leader, who has made significant accomplishments in healthcare, education, housing, economic development, criminal justice and election reform, stated, “We are here because we have a purpose” and reminded all that “no matter what race, nationality, origin, religion, color of your skin, gender, orientation, whatever or whoever you are, however you identify yourself, we are one. One people.”

A community advocate and civil rights litigator, Honorable Benjamin Pinczewski who often provided pro bono service to many in his community, was also acknowledged. A staunch supporter of human rights for marginalized persons in particular, Pinczewski shared the story of how he once stepped up to defend a young couple who was being harassed and disrespected by the waiter at a restaurant, because he believed they were gay. “I don’t tolerate anything like that. I have to speak up!” Pinczewski told the gathering. Unbeknownst to him at the time, the “altercation” was all an act and part of *WABC*’s TV show, *What Would You Do?*

During the ceremony, there was the traditional lighting of a menorah which was performed by community leader Dr. Sima Karetnaya, Lana GL and Desulme. There were also brief remarks by Councilwomen Farah Louis and

Mercedes Narcisse, Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, Debbie Louis from the Office of Governor Kathy Hochul, NYPD Deputy Chief Richie Taylor, and Alex and Bessie Kuravsky, parents of 11-month-old Binyomin Zachariah Kuravsky who was tragically killed by a malfunctioning steam radiator in their apartment.

The Kuravskys mentioned the anguish they experienced in losing their baby and in such a horrific manner and that they are now striving to turn their pain into purpose. They expressed their gratitude to Councilwoman Louis for her support and for pushing to get the Ben-Z Law, which the dad referred to as “a call for child safety,” passed. Ben-Z law mandates (among other things) biennial inspections of steam radiators in apartments housing children under the age of 6 and in building common areas.

The couple was comforted by Bichotte-Hermelyn who had also suffered the tragic loss of a baby through someone else’s negligence. Like the Kuravskys, she was propelled by pain to do something to prevent that tragedy from happening to others. Bichotte-Hermelyn’s efforts resulted in the passage of the Jonah Bichotte Cowan Law, which establishes parameters for treatment when an expectant mother presents at a hospital with concerns about being in preterm labor. As Appel put it, the grieving mother was able to turn her tragedy into a blessing for others.

While embracing the Kuravskys, the assemblymember applauded Appel, stating, “Mark brings all of us together when we are happy and when we are sad, when we are celebrating and when we are mourning.”

“The essential message that should resonate in our communities must be one of unity, regardless of our political or religious beliefs,” Appel asserted.

The ceremony also featured uplifting music which included Bob Marley’s “One Love” and culminated with a lively hora that several guests joined.

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Community Education Council 18 Hosts Winter Holiday Jam

By Kari Lleras

The bitter wind could not keep holiday revelers away from the Winter Holiday Jam, held by Community Education Council 18 (CEC 18) on Friday, December 19th, on the lower level of the District 18 Office, located at 1106 East 95th Street.

The venue was festively decorated and offered gift bags, hot chocolate, snacks, music and more. The evening was also an opportunity to collect socks and much-needed winter accessories for students and parents in temporary housing.

Children delightfully danced around to holiday music and visited the variety

of well-planned stations of activities, as parents gathered at the delicious hot chocolate station. Parents and children lined up for their turn to play a round of Connect 4 on the unbelievably giant 4-foot wide game frame, while some of the children knew the well-supplied art station was the place to be -- complete with ornaments to be decorated with markers, stickers and pom-poms, as well as canvases to be embellished with paint, glitter glue, construction paper and pipe cleaners.

CEC 18 hosted another successful event that encouraged community, music, festivity and good vibes.



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Flatlands

New Year's Day is Soup Joumou Day in Haitian History, Culture and Remembrance

By Loretta Chin

Community members gathered at 5827 Flatlands Avenue on New Year's Day, January 1, 2026, to celebrate a cherished Haitian tradition by sharing Soup Joumou, also known as Haitian pumpkin soup, a hearty and savory squash-based soup that symbolizes Haiti's independence and freedom.

Councilwoman Mercedes Narcisse first hosted the free soup giveaway in 2021 and has made it an annual tradition at her office as a delicious way to share Haitian culture and history with the broader community on what is also Haitian Independence Day.

"It marks Haiti's independence and freedom, resilience and hope for the year ahead," she said in her announcement flyer. "For generations, families have gathered on January 1st to share this meal and to reflect on where we have been and where we are going."

Narcisse introduced WNYX TV board member Jean Victor who gave opening remarks on the history and significance of the soup.

Soup Joumou commemorates Haiti's liberation from French colonial rule and slavery. Haiti declared its independence on January 1, 1804, after the world's first successful slave revolt the year before, becoming the first Black republic.

During slavery, enslaved Africans were forced to prepare the soup for their French masters in Haiti but were not allowed to eat it themselves. After independence, the soup was symbolic of victory, liberty and self-determination.

The tradition of making the soup into a national ritual is credited to Marie-Claire Heureuse Dessalines, the wife of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, leader of the 1803 rebellion and first ruler of Haiti after independence.

"It was the women's leadership that said this is how we

will move forward," Narcisse said. "She [Dessalines] said it was important and imperative, moving forward, when we declare our independence, to drink that soup and to enjoy it, our freedom and our liberation."

Several folding tables were set up to accommodate a steady stream of constituents, community members, friends, family and supporters who were served in shifts from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The soup was prepared by Dr. Michael Charles, and support for the event was provided by Transformation Life Ministries Pastor Windsor Nelson, who offered a blessing prior to the meal.

Charles said that his recipe was typical among Haitian households. The key ingredient is the round, yellow squash, distinct from the common pumpkins in the United States, which was pureed and used as the base for the pots of soup



The larger pot on the left contained meat and the smaller pot on the right was vegetarian.

served that day. The meat version used plenty of beef and cut-up leg bones. There was also a vegetarian version available with plenty of bread on the side.

The cooked and pureed squash added the sweetness, golden color and thickness to the soup that was combined with the beef, stock, leafy greens, starchy and assorted vegetables, penne pasta, green onions, garlic, hot peppers and spices to give it a touch of heat.

Charles told the *Canarsie Courier* that January 2nd, Jour des Aïeux (Ancestor's Day), is another significant date in Haitian culture when Haitian families would gather for a family dinner to honor their ancestors.

Among those attending the event were The Bridge Multicultural and Advocacy Project Executive Director Mark Appel; newly elected Supreme Court Judge, Hon. Brian Gotlieb; Police Officer Jonathan Meo from the 114th Outreach Division in Queens; and constituent Betty Chalmers with daughter, Tascha Chalmers, who is Philadelphia's commissioner on aging.

Appel shared with the *Canarsie Courier* the historical connection between Haiti and Israel's independence, noting Haiti's vote in favor of the United Nations partition plan in 1947 that helped pave the way to Israel's independence the following year.

"Haiti and my community, the Jewish community, have a very close relationship," Appel said. "Haiti was the one that participated in the final vote on Israel in the United Nations in 1948, and also, they have a very close relationship."

Attendees talked about their connection to the Haitian community among themselves and expressed their appreciation and support for Narcisse, whose district has a large Haitian-American constituency. They left with a new understanding about the significance of New Year's Day within that community.

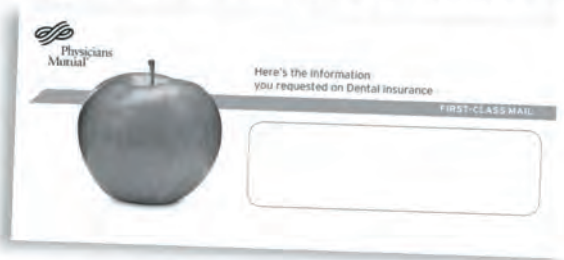
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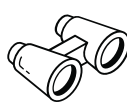
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JAN. EVENTS IN THE PARK

Mulchfest '26

Drop off your tree any time before January 11th and we'll turn it into mulch! Or register with MPA to volunteer on Sat. Jan. 10, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. At the Ave. U Parking Lot

Sun. Jan. 18, 10 am - 2 pm

Marine Park Blood Drive

Come donate! Register at: bit.ly/MarineParkBloodDrive
Carro Center

Sun. Jan. 18, 11 am - 12 pm

Birding: Winter Birds

Join the Urban Park Rangers on this walk and learn about the adaptations winter birds have to make to survive the harsh winter conditions.
Salt Marsh Nature Center

Sat. Jan. 24, 12 pm

Lunar New Year

Celebrate the Lunar New Year in style with MPA and the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, featuring dazzling costumes, crafts & more!
Carro Center

Sun. Jan. 25, 6 - 7 pm

Astronomy: The Night Sky

Come enjoy stargazing with the Urban Park Rangers.
Salt Marsh Nature Center

Sat. Jan. 31, 12 - 1:30 pm

Nature's Workshop: Eco-Bricks

Learn about sustainable architecture with the Urban Park Rangers
Salt Marsh Nature Center

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MORE EVENTS AND INFO AT
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Bergen Beach

Second Annual Tree Lighting in Honor of Terri Cadet-Donald

By Kari Lleras

Children and families decorated wooden angel ornaments to place on trees outside and inside the John Malone Community Center, located at 2331 Bergen Avenue, on Wednesday, December 17th, at the 2nd Annual Tree Lighting in memory of a beloved neighborhood icon, Terri Cadet-Donald. The event also marked the 1st Annual Terri's Toy Drive.

Millennium Development's DJ, Hector, played festive tunes that had everyone singing along and swaying in rhythm during the ornament decorating process. Santa visited and sat in appreciation, as children of all ages decorated a tree with unique and creative embellishments in honor and remembrance of Cadet-Donald, who was a constant positive presence in the Bergen Beach and Mill Basin communities.

"Terri was always instrumental in our organization; she spotlighted the kids and I agree with that one hundred percent," Millennium Development Executive Director Paul Curiale said. "Make everything about the kids," he said, referring to her commitment and dedication to the youth.

Just as the sun was setting, Santa led everyone outside to the fenced-off area around the vibrant eight-foot tree that was dedicated to Cadet-Donald last year. The Millennium students from P.S. 312 Bergen Beach School delighted the crowd with their "Jingle Bells" chant and dance and had everyone singing along to Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas" and their holiday song mash-up.

Between performances, Curiale invited Santa up to be involved in the ceremonial lighting occasion. Cadet-Donald's husband, Cal Donald, was also present and stood next to the tree holding a large sign with his

late wife's smiling photograph, a smile that was contagious. They started a countdown and suddenly the tree was sparkling with green and purple lights.

Festivities continued with P.S. 236 Mill Basin School's Millennium students singing, "Let It Snow." The last performance was by Elizabeth Dance Image on Avenue N, and they mesmerized everyone with their amazingly choreographed dances.

The toy drive was held in Cadet-Donald's honor from the end of October to the middle of December. Mill Basin Civic Association, 63rd Precinct and 63rd Precinct Community Council, Bergen Beach Youth Organization and Millennium sponsored this memorable event.

Before everyone returned inside the community center for hot chocolate, Cadet-Donald's daughter, Kalli Donald, read a poem that she wrote about her beloved mother and how much she continues to miss her. Her heartfelt poem moved the crowd to tears.

The toy drive and tree lighting was another way to remember and honor Terri Cadet-Donald's generous spirit and love for giving.



P.S. 312 choreographed moves delight the crowd.



Children put angel ornaments on tree inside John Malone Community Center in honor of the late Terri Cadet-Donald.



Terri Cadet-Donald's husband, Cal Donald, holds sign with a beautiful picture and loving words describing the life of his late wife.



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East New York Man Celebrates Fifth Year of Giving Toys to Children for the Holidays

By Bristol Hendrix

It was a bitter, cold day on December 20th, but 794 New Lots Avenue was abuzz with warmth, laughter and wrapped gifts for the community as longtime organizer Malik Sherrod continued his tradition of giving back.

Now in its fifth year in East New York, the annual toy distribution has been growing, offering hundreds of toys for area children – all without using any funding from government grants. “This is friends, family, businesses. There are no grants in here. There is no government money in here. It’s people who care,” Sherrod said.

This year’s campaign managed to raise around 480 pieces, with organizers set to hit over 600. “We didn’t meet our target at the beginning,” Sherrod said. “But a friend has just cashed out his money, so we are going to meet our target.”

The giveaway has almost doubled over the years, having begun with over 200 toys. The program originated in Orangeburg, South Carolina when the program’s founder attended South Carolina State University. He brought the program to New York when he moved back.

“My spirit just said, ‘Continue this and do it here,’” Sherrod explained. “And here we are.”

The donations are from former classmates, friends and family, as well as local businesses such as Almark Pharmacy that supports the giveaway event every year in the form of finances, as well as goods. “Half of that table, they bought that too,” one organizer said, gesturing to mounds of gift-wrapped presents from Almark.

The gifts were also wrapped by four separate groups of volunteers, another indication that the initiative was well-supported. This year’s event was also supported by the generosity of members of Emmanuel Baptist Church, located at 279 Lafayette Avenue.

Jerry Alexis, a current servant leader of the church’s Men’s Ministry, said “When Malik told me about this event, I had to be there. It’s about giving back to the community and keeping the community together, especially our young people.”

“We will not wait for anyone to help us,” Emile Vi-aud, another leader from the Men’s Ministry, stated. “We can help ourselves, and that’s what we always have done. This will continue to happen every year.”

This year’s participation occurred only a few weeks after Sherrod had hip surgery on November 24th. However, he says he never seriously thought about not hosting this event. “I’m exhausted, but I thank and praise God that we’re out here giving toys to the children of East New York.”

For those responsible for organizing, there is more at stake than just toys. “Every year, I just had to provide something,” Sherrod said. “Something they could put on their wall. Something they’ll remember.”

As families lined up, now holding brightly colored gifts in their arms, it was clear: community care isn’t just for a season in East New York.



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Sheepshead Bay

Holiday Joy and Hope for Ukrainian Children Fill Kings Highway Library

By Robert Pearl

Laughter, music and the unmistakable magic of the holiday season filled the Kings Highway Library, located at 2115 Ocean Avenue, on Wednesday, December 17th, as nearly 100 Ukrainian children and their families gathered for a festive Christmas and holiday celebration hosted by the TraNa Relief Association.

Organized in partnership with Fun On Us and the Brooklyn Public Library, the free community event was designed especially for children ages 3 and up, many of whom are part of Ukrainian refugee families displaced by the ongoing war. A separate room downstairs allowed for the festivities to take place. From the moment doors opened, the atmosphere was warm, colorful and joyful — a deliberate reminder that even in the face of hardship, childhood wonder still matters.

Fun On Us, led by Nicole, provided the heart of the holiday entertainment, keeping the children fully engaged throughout the afternoon with interactive games, lively music, dancing and energetic activities. The programming flowed effortlessly into Santa's visit, ensuring laughter and excitement as children sang, danced, played and lined up for photos, creating a dynamic and joyful atmosphere for everyone, as well as memorable photo opportunities.

Every child left with holiday sweets and a gift bag, ensuring no one went home empty-handed. Almost 100 children received gifts, a testament to the scale of the effort and the generosity of supporters who made the afternoon possible.

"This was about creating a space where children could simply be children again — to laugh, play and feel surrounded by care," organizers shared. "For families who have endured so much uncertainty, moments like this are deeply meaningful," TraNa Relief Founder Natalia Travilina said.

TraNa Relief Association, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, has become a vital support network for Ukrainian refugees and displaced families across New York and the United States. Through humanitarian aid, community programming and family-centered services, the organization works to restore dignity, stability and hope to those rebuilding their lives far from home.

Travilina extended deep appreciation to the Kings Highway Library for opening its doors to the entire community and providing a welcoming space for the celebration. Special recognition was given to Nicole of Fun On Us, whose engaging and interactive programming helped turn the afternoon into an unforgettable experience for the children.

The Brooklyn celebration is part of a broader series of holiday events organized by TraNa Relief this season. Similar children's holiday parties were recently held in New Jersey and on Staten Island, reflecting the organization's growing regional reach and continued commitment to serving Ukrainian families wherever they are rebuilding their lives.

As the afternoon came to a close, families lingered, children clutching gift bags and parents sharing smiles, photos and quiet words of thanks. In a library transformed by holiday cheer, the message was clear: through community, compassion and shared effort, moments of happiness and hope can still shine brightly — even in the most difficult of times.

For more information about TraNa Relief Association, visit <http://www.tranarelief.org>.



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Marine Park**Stargazing Saturn at Winter Solstice Event**

By Brian Moreno

Stargazers gathered at the Salt Marsh Nature Center, at East 33rd Street and Avenue U, on Sunday evening, December 21st, to observe the night sky on the Winter Solstice.

Throughout the last quarter of the year, the Marine Park Alliance (MPA) celebrated several Festival of Lights ceremonies -- global holidays that emphasize the importance of light, including Diwali, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. Although the Winter Solstice marks the shortest day of the year, it still shows how important light is.

"Tonight is the solstice, so we're going to see the night sky and what's in it," Chloe Zagami, a teen lead of the MPA's cultural and volunteer program, said. "We're also gonna have a bonfire, some storytelling and hot chocolate as well."

Several residents came with their own binoculars and telescopes to see our celestial neighbors, such as Saturn and its rings, along with its largest moon, Titan.

Although several outlookers gazed at the stars, many gathered in the center's backyard as Urban Park Rangers Rob Bradfield and Olivia Dossett provided attendees with heat and entertainment, lighting a bonfire and sharing historical stories of both European and Indigenous pasts.

Bradfield spoke about Sir Gawain and his journey to the Green Chapel, while Dossett spoke about the Lenape people, an Indigenous tribe that once lived in New York City, and their connection to maple trees.

"The MPA's Festival of Light series reflects the fact that many different cultures have their way of celebrating the period of the year when it's the darkest by bringing light into these dark days," MPA Executive Director Scott Middleton said. "We're here at the solstice, the last event of the year -- the shortest day of the year -- and even in harsh conditions, cold, dark, windy, there are still things that we can learn from nature."

The MPA will host Mulchfest '26 at the Marine Park Avenue U Parking Lot from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 10th, where volunteers will distribute mulch, remove holiday decorations and prep trees for the woodchipper. On Sunday, January 18th, there will be a Blood Drive at the Carro Community Center, 3000 Fillmore Avenue, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information, please visit marineparkalliance.org/events/.



Daniel G. sets up his new telescope and sees the constellations.



Urban Park Rangers Bradfield and Dossett hold an honored tradition: telling stories by a fire.

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BOYD NEW YORK LLC Articles of Org. filed NY Sec. of State (SSNY) 9/29/25. Office located in Kings Co. SSNY designated agent of LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail process to: United States Corporation Agents Inc., 7014 13th Ave, Suite 202, Brooklyn, NY, 11228. Purpose: any lawful activity.

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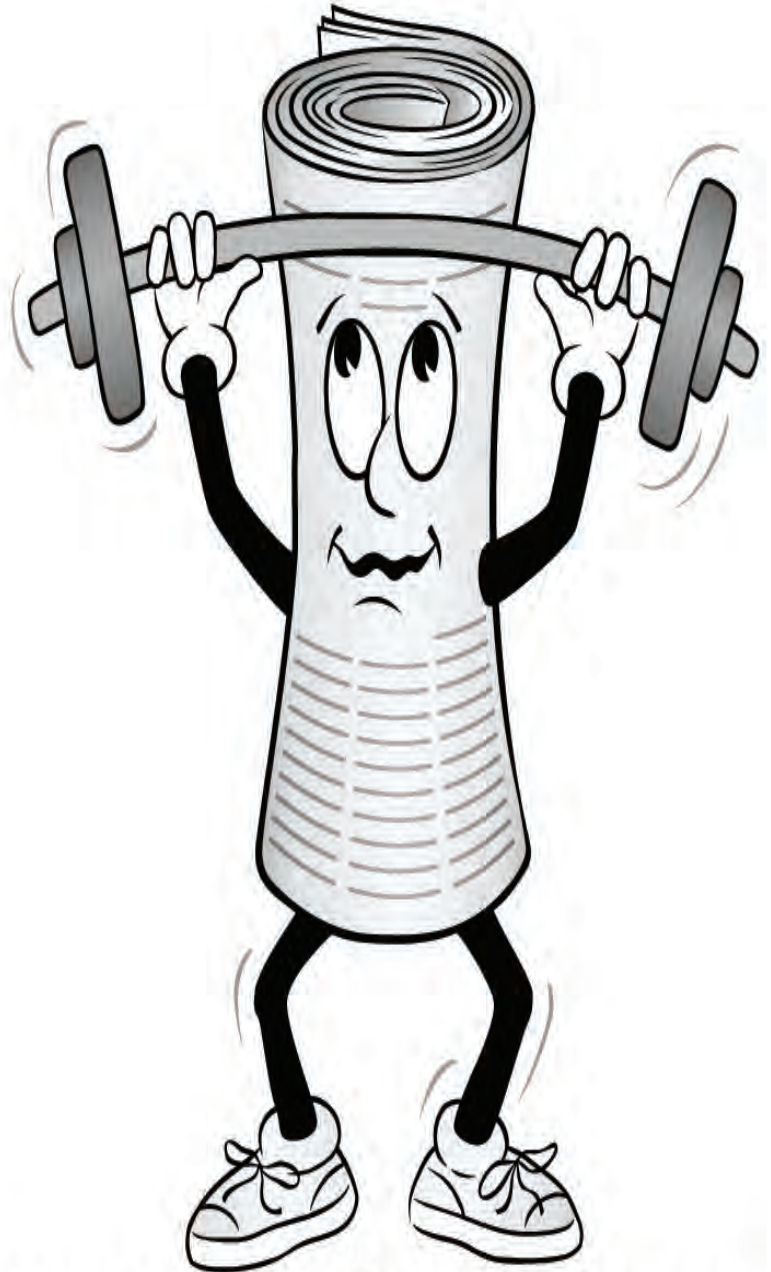
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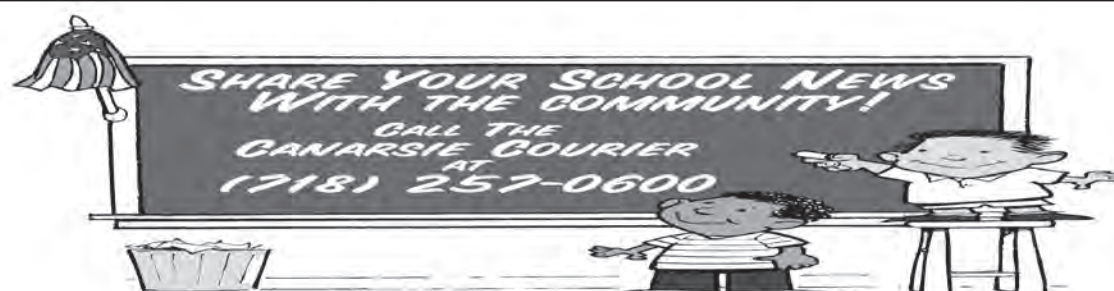
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