A gallery owner takes questions from the audience during a community meeting about dollar van service in Brooklyn. A private bus service is being proposed as an alternative to the dollar vans. The dollar vans are a controversial mode of public transportation that has been in operation for over 30 years. They are operated by entrepreneurs and are known for their low fares and flexible routes. However, they have also been criticized for safety concerns and lack of regulation.
Kendall Christiansen Takes On Big Social, Economic Challenges

Kendall Christiansen plays an active role making a difference in three distinct but challenging quality of life issues: improving the environment, advancing Brooklyn’s economic well-being and bringing leadership to the nursing home industry.

The 23-year-resident of Maple 2 sits on the boards of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce and the New York Congregational Nursing Home (NYCNH) on Linden Boulevard between Bedford and Rogers Avenues, which has played a vital but quiet role providing long- and short-term comfort and care to Brooklyn’s frail and elderly for more than 100 years.

At the Chamber of Commerce, Christiansen is involved in efforts to help small businesses grow and attract new business.

His consulting practice—Gaia Strategies—helps environmentally-related businesses shape their policies, practices and public profiles. He crosses over the U.S. and Canada on behalf of JoLessEater, the world’s leading manufacturer of food waste disposers, engaging cities, environmental groups and trade associations in the compelling issue of diverting food scraps from landfills to produce renewable energy and compost.

“I help Mayors answer the ‘banana peel’ question: throw it away, compost it, or send it down the sink disposer?”

During his 25 year tenure on the NYCNH board, 20 of which he served as chair, he oversaw its $25 million expansion from 67 beds to 200 beds. The Nursing Home enjoys a reputation as one of the best long-term care facilities in the city.

The stately-looking building’s roots in PLG are deepened even further in that it houses district offices for U.S. Rep. Yvette Clarke and City Councilman Matthews Eugene, where they host a steady stream of constituents. And the Maple Street School operated there temporarily while transitioning to Lincoln Road.

Christiansen is married to his wife of 25 years, Carol Shuchman, a senior manager of real estate for the Federal Reserve Bank. They raised three children in their Maple 2 home: Ben, 23; Rachel, 21; and Noah, 17.

April holds fond memories of attending school at P.S. 92 on Parkside Avenue where the racial diversity she found in her classrooms reflected the diversity of the neighborhood in general.

“As a child growing up in the hood, I had no fear,” she says. “We kids were a tight group and we looked out for each other. It takes a village... Our parents taught us good manners, respect for our elders and our surroundings. We put garbage in garbage cans.”

The Lefferts Manor of her youth, Epps recounts, was also bustling with businesses including a candy store called Barbara’s. And there was Goldberg’s soda shop, on the corner of Ruland and Flatbush: “French fries in a greasy brown paper bag, egg creams and yummy cheeseburgers. Oh yeah!” she swoons.

Epps has found the influx of newcomers to Lefferts Manor over the years to be, in a word, “amazing.”

“We’re a magnet for good people because we have good people here,” she says. “Anyone that might appear stand-offish, may not be used to a ‘neighborhood.’ I have heard some people say that they never knew their neighbors in other places they have lived. Diversity comes in many forms. I think it makes us all students. There’s something new to learn everyday!”

Epps, trained in reflexology, certified in Reiki and a licensed New York State acupuncturist, recently took time out to respond to The Echo’s questions about the ever-expanding practice she has been running from her home since 2006.

Your company’s name is Chi Flow. What does that mean?

In traditional Chinese Medicine “Qi” or “Chi” (pronounced “CHEE”) is considered to be the life force that flows through us. It is likened to the blood that flows through our veins. When your Chi is stuck or stagnant, disease occurs. I help get your Chi flowing.

What is Reiki?

Reiki is a spiritual healing practice that returns the body back to balance, mentally, physically and emotionally. A Reiki practitioner uses a light touch, which reduces stress, pain and anxiety. It creates a sense of well being. It does not treat disease, it strengthens our natural ability to heal and regain balance.

What is reflexology based on? How does it work?

It is based on the theory that our hands and feet reflect the organs and body parts. The reflexologist uses thumb and finger walking techniques to apply pressure along reflex points of the feet. This has a stimulating effect on specific parts of the body by improving nerve function and blood supply throughout the body. It addresses chronic and acute health problems, reduces tension and promotes wellbeing. It is NOT a foot massage!

How does reflexology differ from acupuncture?

Both encourage the natural healing process to work. Acupuncture is the insertion of fine needles that are placed in specific points on meridians or lines of the body. Reflexology is pressure applied to the feet. Is acupuncture just for pain relief?

Acupuncture addresses many health challenges, stress, respiratory, circulatory and musculoskeletal to name a few.

The room you treat your clients is very soothing and cozy.

It was my bedroom growing up. I have to say that I love my treatment room. It’s quite cozy.

If you had the power to create something that would be a major improvement in the quality of life in PLG, what would it be?

I would like to see a center for wellness in a space like Phat Albert’s, or even the old Caledonian campus, on Parkside Avenue, with affordable classes in nutrition, yoga, acupuncture and reflexology, of course.

April Epps can be reached at (347) 262-4099 or april@chifflowacupuncture.com. Visit her website at www.chifflowacupuncture.com.

Renee Michael-Prewitt is a New York Times research editor who lives with her husband on Sterling 2.
DELROY’S PANINI SHOP PAIRS WITH 65 FEN AND FULFILLS A LATE FRIEND’S DREAM

By Jeffrey F. Horne

Blissfully, our entrepreneurial neighbor Michael Campbell has contributed to the expansion of eating and drinking options in Prospect Lefferts Gardens with the opening of Delroy’s on Fenimore Street. He has also fulfilled a late friend’s dream.

On Christmas Day, 2011, Delroy’s celebrated the second anniversary of his wine store 65 Fen, and just as quietly, opened Delroy’s, a quaint panini, soup and salad spot directly adjacent to his popular wine shop. The new venture is named after Michael’s close friend, the late Delroy “Fatty Boo” Wilson, a hefty neighborhood character who owned a mini-bodega in the Delroy’s now occupies. He could be found Memorial Day through Halloween sitting outside the store cooking jerk chicken in his tinny, converted oil-barrel grill and selling it to passersby to supplement his income.

Through the years—he died prematurely at the age of 53 on New Year’s Day in 2011—“Fatty Boo” often told Michael of his intention to convert the mini-mar into an eatery. So in addition to creating a food establishment to complement his wine endeavors, Campbell has also fulfilled his friend’s ambition with an an eye on making money.

Delroy’s will pair paninis with wine, of course, but for now it is BYOB. Fresh bread is delivered daily to create a variety of sandwiches that can be stuffed with such traditional fillings as prosciutto, fontina cheese or fresh vegetables enhanced with gourmet mustard or high-quality mayo/naise.

Blue Roost Moves Its Comfort Foods & Homey Ambience to K-dog’s Former Location

By Roberta Wolfling

Linda Billings has moved her Blue Roost Café from its problem-plagued spot on Flatbush Avenue to the former Lincoln Road home of the beloved K-Dog and Dunnebucky café once owned by Gabby Lowe. There, six years ago, Gabby planted the seed that would spawn a mini-Restaurant Row. Now the community spirit continues with Billings’ homey hospitality and down-home food.

On a chilly Friday in mid-January, Linda gave The Echo a behind-the-scenes peak at her new and much larger cafe and told the back-story of her bumpy move from 539 Flatbush Avenue to 43 Lincoln Road.

Linda was eager to leave the tiny 288-square-foot Flatbush Avenue space almost from the day she opened the Blue Roost there a little more than a year ago.

From the get-go there were a host of issues, she says, not the least of which were unresolved building repair problems that made operating difficult. The landlord mandated “band aid” type fixes or none at all. In early December this neglect culminated in a huge flood that brought down the ceiling.

When the old K-Dog and Dunnebucky space became available last October—a closure instigated by Lowe’s fatigue from a difficult relationship with the landlord—the decision to move to the prime Lincoln Road location was no-brainer. It had four times as much square footage and storefront exposure to a much larger customer base from the foot traffic of subway and bus riders, joggers, walkers and tourists going to and from the park and the two large apartment buildings across the street.

But as Linda began to explore taking over the space and communicating her intent to the appropriate real estate interests, she became aware of rumors that there was friction between her and Gabby. For the record, Linda makes it clear that nothing was further from the truth.

“Everything is good between Gabby and I,” Linda insists. “In fact, she has been super helpful and willing to answer all of my questions.”

When asked about her dealings with her new landlord, Linda says that she went into the new lease with her eyes wide open. She had heard Lowe’s stories and knew the potential difficulties, much of which was reported in the Autumn 2010 issue of The Echo.

Linda says that she was honest from the beginning with the landlord and felt that the landlord was honest with her. She is grateful that thus far the landlord has done everything promised. A positive difference, Linda says, is that there a management company is now handling the property, which wasn’t the case in Gabby’s situation.

The restaurant had a bumpy opening first month and offered only coffee, bagels and pastries. The city dropped its feet issuing necessary permits, inspectors failed to show on scheduled dates, and there were delays installing and reworking some kitchen equipment. Worst of all, the food that damaged the first Blue Roost forced Linda to shutter the place sooner than planned and the cash flow that could have been diverted to renovation at the new location dried up.

But many of those problems are now behind the new Blue Roost and it is now and offering a full menu from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. weekdays and 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekends. Linda says it’s been heartwarming how supportive the neighborhood has been to her comeback and that’s grateful to her loyal employees who have put their time in to help out.

Despite a much larger kitchen, she says the menu choices of “simple, homemade, goodness—comfort food from different cultures” will be about the same as before. House favorites like Brunswick stew, pulled pork sandwiches, homemade grits, biscuits and gravy will remain on the menu.

Growing up in New Carolina, Linda learned her way around the kitchen from her mother and grandmother who were really good cooks. When she went off to college, the food available on campus dismayed her and prompted her to visit her mom and grandma’s culinary lessons. She cooked for herself and friends, too. They were so impressed that they offered her she should open her own restaurant.

Years after that seed was planted, the Blue Roost opened and is now in full swing at its new “French country shabbie chic” location. Linda confesses it’s the only style she knows.

Patrons can dine at the Blue Roost or order online at www.thesourcibusco.com.

An architect who lives with her family on Rutland, Wolfling is also a member of the LMA board.

High School Friends Partner to Revive Café Exhale

By Melba Winslow

A high school friendship and a lifelong dream are the winds of change powering the revival of Café Exhale.

Longtime PLG resident Melissa Davis, who heretofore worked in pay-rolling for a hospital industry, says she was only answering an inner voice that had long compelled her to pursue a career in hospitality when she decided to partner with Paul Delapenha, an old high school friend and the owner of Café Exhale.

Delapenha opened the place about two and a half years ago smack dab in the middle of the whitewash that was the block between Rutland Road and Middencroft Street on Flatbush Avenue. Michelle says she was actually paid to aim walk by the place most nights and see if it empty while her soon to be partner struggled to make it more inviting and hospitable.

After four or five months of explaining her vision and plans to Delapenha—and investing in the café financially—Michelle welcomed her friend’s offer to make her a partner. Now a lifelong dream to own and operate a restaurant and bar of her own is helping to breathe new life into the ailing business.

“Since June, I’ve been doing it all,” she says. “I’m co-owner, hostess, purchasing agent, labor scheduler and digital marketer.” I just saw the light at a great business opportunity for myself. This is something I’ve wanted to do since I was 19 or 20.”

Michelle says one of the first orders of business was to work on Café Exhale’s image, which, rightly or wrongly, was viewed by many residents as a hangout for young hip hoppers.

“We’re hip without the hop,” she says. “We want all people to come here, all ages, all races, new neighbors, old neighbors. Just come in, this is your spot.”

The restaurant serves up a Caribbean-accented continental menu and claims to have the best fish and chips and chicken wings in the neighborhood. With its minimalist décor, Café Exhale is distinguished by its tall, black-and-white leather bar chairs with backs shaped like camera lenses.

The attractive and cheery hostesses with the winning smile says she hopes to use her engaging personality and friendliness for people as one of Café Exhale’s marketing plusses, a kind of Queen of Charm greeting new customers and old friends.

“Come by to have a drink, come to get some food, come by to see me,” she says invitingly. “Come by to talk. You might be able to give me some business ideas.”

Unlike many other eating establishments in the neighborhood that are known to rub elbows, Café Exhale is more family oriented and thus enjoy more robust pedestrian exposure, Café Exhale is in the middle of the block and too many people dash by without noticing it. But Michelle says she is soon to launch a website and is making active use of social media and networks to reach a wider audience who may have take the place for granted.

Moreover, she has started a weekly karaoke night on Thursdays that has turned out to be very popular.

“The neighborhood could be more supportive,” Michelle says, noting that many of the more affluent newcomers hardly ever come into the restaurant. “Unfortunately, I’m not getting that support and I understand because we had a certain image problem in the past. But I’m encouraged by the changes we put in place and I’m very optimistic. As my Dad would always say, “Nothing worth value comes easily. You’ve got to work hard,” and I’m willing to do that.”

Café Exhale is open Sunday through Tuesday from 4 p.m. to 1 a.m., Wednesday from 4 p.m. to 1 a.m. and Thursday through Saturday from 5 p.m. to 3 a.m.

Ocean Avenue resident Melba Winslow is pursuing a journalism degree in digital content management at Columbia University.

Sterling St. Block Assn. Tributes Eta James, Whitney Houston at Inkwell

The Sterling Street Block Association will celebrate the music and lives of recently departed blues/jazz singer Eta James and pop and R&B sensation Whitney Houston with two nights at the Inkwells on Rogers Ave. at Sterling St., April 13th and April 14th.

Live music will be performed by R/B singer Stephanie Bates and Co. from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. both nights. There is a music charge of $20 and a cash bar.
Enduro Retires Name as Lincoln Park Tavern Takes Over

Big change is coming to the neighborhood’s most popular restaurants and bars, Enduro and Lincoln Park Tavern.

James Mamary has finished a modest remodeling and completed a brighter paint job to the dining room of the Teq-Mex joint on Lincoln Road. But Enduro’s name will be dropped and Lincoln Park Tavern will become the official trade name for both adjoining eateries.

The establishment will also begin home delivery through the website www.soomlmis.com. Enduro’s kitchen will continue to offer selections to LPT patrons, but in a recent service change the menu will be scaled back to include only customer favorites.

The convenient door in the wall between the two places will remain.

The Flowers that Bloom in the Spring, Tra-La

By Mary Miller

Get ready for the annual planting of the flower barrels that line Manor Streets! The spring planting will be held on Saturday, April 28. Lefferts Manor Association Board members will be recruiting residents of their blocks to help with this project, which is a wonderful opportunity for you and your children, and in-between to join in beautifying our neighborhood.

You can help by cleaning out your barrel and topping off the soil. Barrels that are holding water should have a hole drilled near the bottom to help them drain. The classic whitewash on the gardenia, used to provide protection from the sun, is often haphazardly painted on the stems.

To join in beautifying our neighborhood.

For a stronger community, join the Lefferts Manor Association

Non-residents:
- We support the work of the LMA and would like to contribute to the small community library on the second floor of the Manor Library.

Dues: $20.00 per household or $10.00 per senior citizen household.

At a ceremony following the church service, Councilman Mathieu Eugene unveiled the street sign with Laurette Jackson in our lives, but I did not comprehend the extent to which he

Dr. Jorge Suarez, Retired Pathologist and Generous Book Donor: A Neighbor’s Reminiscence

By Mary Miller

As a long-time admirer of the charitable work of Dr. Jorge Suarez, I would like to share the legacy of this wonderful neighbor who passed away last November at the age of 83.

Some of us already knew of his efforts to bring books to remote areas of his native Philippines, but his life story and largesse is even more remarkable.

Dr. Suarez was one of twelve children born to an educated couple in a small town in the Philippines. His father, a land surveyor, could read and write English. His mother, who ran a dry goods store, could also read and write, but only in the local language.

The Suarez family valued education, and all twelve children went to college. Some of Jorge’s siblings went on to become architects, lawyers and nurses. Jorge’s parents also saw to educating the children of those who worked for them. Reading materials were scarce in the Philippines so the young Jorge, a devout reader, would read the pieces of newspaper used as packing material for the dry goods shipped from Manila. He never forgot how much he craved something to read.

He attended medical school in the Philippines and came to the U.S. for his internship and residency, in order to return to the Philippines. But love, marriage, and children altered those plans, and he got a green card and then his American citizenship. His family settled in the house on Rutland 2 where his wife, Nina, had grown up, making her one of the truly long-term residents of the neighborhood.

As a pathologist at Brooklyn Hospital, Dr. Suarez trained many residents, and Nina reports that their Thanksgiving and Christmas tables were a mix-U.S. with doctors from distant countries gathered around. Dr. Suarez always encouraged them to remember those they had left at home.

During his sixty years of retirement Dr. Suarez devoted his efforts to providing his home town with the reading material he had longed for in his youth. Soliciting used books, especially children’s books, from friends and neighbors, the Suarez family packed shipping cartons after shipping carton, and sent them off to Manila where his sister would deliver them to the small community library on the second floor above his mother’s store.

Soon there were enough books to stock a school library, with the proviso that adults have access to the materials, too. Then letters came from other schools, begging for books for their children. Over the years the Suarez family has provided books for eight grammar schools, two day care centers, one junior college, one church school and one four-year college—all in the Philippines.

They also responded to specific requests, like raising money to help a village install a water pump and providing religious statues for a small chapel. With medical missions into the mountain areas, they modeled for the local population the idea that those with little could share with those with less.

Now this year-long effort has come to an end with Dr. Suarez’s death. Those who gathered are no longer able to continue, those who received will not benefit anew; But Suarez’s legacy is really the understanding that we all have the potential to share what we have with those who have less.

Nina points out that women’s shelters, day care centers, and many other entities accept books. Indian reservations in this country are also underserved. And for those of us with roots in other countries, Dr. Su- azez would always want us to remember the people and their needs back home.

Mary Miller is a board member of the Lefferts Manor Association and a long-time resident of Rutland 2.

Carmen Maloney Welch, Longtime PLC Resident, Dies at 85

Carmen Maloney Welch, a decades-long resident of Fenimore 1, died of natural causes at the age of 85 in October 2011. Only six months earlier her 93-year-old husband, Dr. Arnold Fitzgerald Welch preceded her in death.

“Carmen was intelligent, witty, and eager to learn,” states the obituary program from her funeral service held at the House of Hills Memorial Park.

“She was a central figure in the Lef- ferts Manor community who was well beloved by all,” it continues. Mrs. Welch was obsessed with education.

Born in Port of Spain, Trinidad in 1926, she had four children from a previous marriage to Wilfred Maloney. She instilled a love of education in her children and helped them to work hard and achieve college degrees.

In addition to Dr. Welch, a popular, community-active dentist who ran a medical practice with his physician-brother on Franklin Avenue, three of her children preceded her in death.

Her beloved daughter, Dr. Jacqueline Johnson Maloney and a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, friends and neighbors, sur- vive her.