

The 42nd Annual
**PROSPECT LEFFERTS GARDENS
House & Garden Tour**

Sunday, June 3, 2012 • Noon-5pm

SPONSORED BY The Lefferts Manor Association

TICKETS/\$20 IN ADVANCE AT:

65 Fen Wines 65 Fenimore Street
Blue Roost Café 43 Lincoln Road
Trixie's Pet Supply 575 Flatbush Avenue
and online, <http://2012plghouseandgardentour.eventbrite.com>

TICKETS/\$25 ON TOUR DAY AT:

Blue Roost Café 43 Lincoln Road

SPECIAL TICKET OFFER • With your PLG Tour Ticket/Guidebook you can purchase a ticket to the Boerum Hill House Tour (also June 3rd) for just \$10, a \$15 savings! For details about the Boerum Hill tour, visit boerumhillassociation.org

• Nine turn-of-the-20th-Century residences and private gardens • Complimentary refreshments and complimentary wine tasting at 65 Fen • Discounts from neighborhood restaurants and merchants • Music and art from PLG Arts at the Inkwell •

Gather ideas and resources from contractors, homeowners and designers including:

John Loecke and Jason Oliver Nixon
MADCAP COTTAGE INTERIOR DESIGN

Bette Cunningham **Roberta Woelfling**
YELLOW JESSAMINE FLORAL DESIGN ROBERTA WOELFLING ARCHITECT

[NOTE: No children under 12 except infants in front packs only]

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: 718-284-6210 OR 718-462-0024
E-MAIL: plghousetour@earthlink.net VISIT: leffertsmanor.org

PARTICIPATE IN PLG HOUSE TOUR 2012!

Tour Guides Volunteers are needed to work 2½ hour shifts and receive free tour tickets in return for participating. To volunteer, contact Carole Schaffer at 718-462-0024 or acschaffer@juno.com

Food Donations Cookies, brownies, cakes, cupcakes, muffins, crudites with dips, etc. are needed. These should be brought to 27 Rutland Road on Saturday, 6/2, 3-5pm or on Sunday 6/3 (Tour Day), 9:30am-noon

Full coverage of House Tour 2012 is on pages 3 and 4.

SECOND IN A 3-PART SERIES ON OUR NEIGHBORHOOD'S 2010 CENSUS PROFILE

With Rising Affluence and Retail Growth, Income Inequality Widens in PLG

by MILFORD PREWITT

Prospect Lefferts Gardens's boosters who have long wished that the shopping and service amenities here were as diverse and middle class as those in other Brooklyn neighborhoods are beginning to get their prayers answered.

Thanks to a rise in the number of affluent families and individuals who are moving into PLG, the endless carousel of openings and closings of beauty salons and barbershops along Flatbush Avenue is being interrupted with new eating places and a mix of retail options.

One of them, Play Kids, located on Flatbush Avenue at Westbury Court, even generated mainstream media attention when in February *New York* magazine named it "The Best Toy Store" in the city (see adjoining story).

Meanwhile, three of the largest supermarkets in the neighborhood and the Korean farmers market between Maple and Midwood Streets have all remodeled to stock healthier, fresher and eco-friendly food items. A broker seeks a gym to pay \$26 a square foot for the 3,000 square feet next to the car wash in the Phat Albert Building. Right around the corner, the beer wholesaler has installed a near building-length refrigeration case filled with craft, specialty and foreign beer brands.

But in extracting neighborhood data from three new U.S. Census Bureau studies derived from the 2010 Population Survey, many residents will not be able to afford those amenities, let alone live here as PLG joins countless other neighborhoods nationwide where stark income inequality follows gentrification, unemployment and rising housing costs.

While PLG has long prided itself for its neighborli-

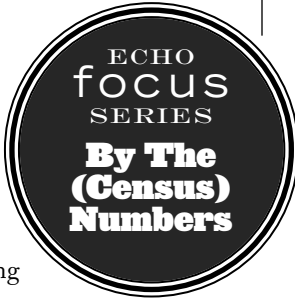
ness, cultural diversity and minimal class pretense, there's little doubt that like Harlem, Bed-Sty or Fort Greene—once all working-class to middle-class neighborhoods with great locations and undervalued housing stock now commanding big dollars—PLG is in the midst of socio-economic change.

The Census Bureau's Population and Housing Profile and the related American Community Survey profiled the entire nation by median household income, race, age, sex, family type, neighborhood tenure, insurance coverage, unemployment, and even the time it takes to get to work.

But the surveys show a yawning gap in median household incomes in PLG as many blocks become peppered with homes boasting \$200,000-plus household incomes while a far larger number of neighboring families are barely earning a living wage.

In analyzing PLG's portrait in the new Census studies, the government uses eight adjoining census tracts that roughly conform to the traditional borders of the neighborhood: Empire Boulevard to Clarkson Avenue north to south, Ocean Avenue to New York Avenue east to west.

But the government researchers say their computational methods cannot be manipulated to make specific profiles of communities; only census tracks covering the nation, states, cities and counties are aggregated (continued on page 4)



To read more about PLG's population trends in the Census, visit the LMA's website at www.leffertsmanor.org, click on Echo Online in the banner menu, and after the next page builds, click on Lefferts Manor Echo May 2011.

Play Kids, PLG Toy Store With a Conscience, Gets Citywide Recognition

by Susan Fox

Tiny tots and taller tykes in Prospect Lefferts Gardens have a new destination where they can expand both their toy collection and their social circle. Play Kids, our neighborhood toy and baby goods store with a conscious, cheerfully claims the corner of Flatbush Avenue and Westbury Court with an open, airy storefront of expansive windows. Decorated with mobiles, t-shirts, toys and tutus—quite a few of them made by local parents—the whimsical displays set against the soothing interior palette beckon passersby to come on in and play.

Marked by a shingle depicting a happy alligator playfully shaking his tail at a yellow bird perched on its back, Play Kids, which opened in November 2011, is a toy store and more. It not only offers playful, practical and educational products for sale, but it is also host to a variety of classes and workshops for every age taught by invited artists, musicians and experts. Here you'll find the squishy, messy, manipulative fun of "Baby Clay" for the very youngest, or a "Steel Pan & Keyboard" music class for ages four through adult or a birth options workshop for expectant families. Play Kids owners Shelley and Carl Kramer, Parkside Avenue parents of



Carl and Shelley Kramer, the husband-and-wife owners of Play Kids.

4-year-old Gabrielle and 3-year-old William, set out to establish a fun, informative, community-centered enterprise, and they are succeeding.

The new "Kids" on the block shot to the top of the New York City toy store heap when just four months old. In March they landed a coveted distinction as "New York's Best Toy Store" in this year's *New York* magazine's "Best of New York" issue. Of the recognition Shelley says, "I'm shocked. I'm honored. The one uniqueness that we have is that half of our store is either locally sourced or BPA-free, PVC-free, or phthalate-free. I don't know of another toy store that has that in its business plan."

Constantly trekking across the park on baby business inspired the Kramers to open Play Kids. Shelley, a native of Dyersville, Iowa—famed location of cinema's *Field of Dreams*—and Carl, a native of Jamaica, gave

birth to the idea of Play Kids not long after the birth of their first child four years ago. "We constantly had to travel to Park Slope or Brooklyn Heights or even farther away to Buy Buy Baby," to purchase products for their daughter, says Carl.

Greg Winter, a new father visiting Play Kids for the first time with his 11-month-old daughter Josephine, was thankful for something to do with her on his third day of paternity leave from the *New York Times*. Daunted by the inclement weather on his first day home with his daughter, he travelled from Ditmas Park for the diversion. "Classes are at least as much for the kids as for the parents," he declares. Content with their experience, he vowed to bring Josephine back the following week.

Play Kids is "a nice place for the community" says Lefferts Avenue resident Marilyn (continued on page 2)

Help Your Tree "Neighbors" Flourish This Summer

by Colleen O'Connor-Grant

Whoever coined the term "tree-lined streets" must have been thinking of Prospect Lefferts Gardens, whose blocks have been shaded for more than a century by a luscious canopy of trees. The diversity of elm, cottonwood, maple, beech, and oak trees that line our blocks when in full summer bloom casts the kinds of hues, lights and shadows that even a Matisse can't match. But our "neighbors" are facing a precarious situation and will need your care this summer.

Following one of the driest winters on record — which has prompted the state's climatologists to declare a Level 1 drought alert (the least severe drought warning) — the soil in the beds of street trees did not receive adequate moisture. The very real potential for a hot, drought-like summer would create dry, hardened tree beds and would put our friends in peril.

The roots of street trees make a home in the soil underneath the tree bed. If the roots can't locate adequate water in that soil, they'll grow (continued on page 2)



PLG's trees—like these sycamores on Sterling 1—will need residents' help this summer if this past winter's drought-like conditions persist.

City Commissioner Edna Wells Handy Loves the Life on Rutland 2

by EVA KAPLAN

Edna Wells Handy, Commissioner of New York City's Department of Citywide Administrative Services, has had a rich career working at the federal, national, and now city level. She has spent 26 of those years in Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

Edna moved to the neighborhood with her husband in April 1986, shortly after the birth of her first child. The move was motivated solely by the fact that the neighborhood was affordable for a young family wanting space. These days, she is fond of calling "Rutland 2 the best block in all of Brooklyn."

Edna says Rutland 2 is practically a self-contained community. The block has an all-female book club. Their block party includes a white linen dinner under the stars and a dance competition between generations. The Handys themselves host an annual Christmas-Hannukah-Kwanza celebration, which is one of many examples of the positive interaction with neighbors. "I'm a big proponent of diversity, and I think it's that diversity that gives us the energy," she says. "I think the fact that we are so embracing of diversity makes it that much more dynamic."

For the rest of her PLG neighbors, Edna says she is working "to get us more trees."

She started her career as a federal litigator, which she loved. After she got married and became pregnant with her first child, she realized that her career was progressing in a way that was too demanding for her family life.

When she was six months pregnant, a friend recommended a position prosecuting police abuses. This began her career as a prosecutor, first as an Assistant U.S. Attorney, then as the Bureau Chief and Assistant District Attorney in the Kings County DA's Office. This position also became the Commissioner's bridge between legal and government roles.

Following her time as a prosecutor, Edna moved more towards administration, becoming General Counsel and Vice President for Legal Affairs at the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, moving her fully into the government sector. She found deeper meaning in the position. "If you go into something for money, all you'll have is money. I want to do as much as I can for as many people as I can."

When Mayor Bloomberg appointed her commissioner of the DCAS in November 2010—a role Edna has since come to define as the "backbone" of the city's functions—he said: "The Department of Citywide Administrative Services is an agency often unseen by the general public that plays a major role in the operations of City government. It oversees hundreds of millions of dollars of back-office and shared operations and is a key part of our effort to consolidate City operations, make them more efficient and less costly."

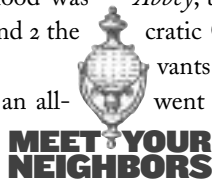
"My charge to Commissioner Handy is very straightforward: search for new ways to do more with less. Don't be afraid to take risks and seize opportunities to take innovative new approaches."

Edna's children have all moved away from New York, but they won't hear of her selling the house and every month at least one of them is visiting her and her dog Kuumba. (Kuumba is accomplished in his own right: He may become the oldest living dog in Brooklyn.)

A relatively new resident of PLG, Eva Kaplan is an international development professional who lives on Sterling 1.



Photo courtesy of the City of New York



Local Actress Lands Part in *Downton Abbey*, Only to Have Role Written Out

by MILFORD PREWITT

Like many people of her generation, actress Molly Miller might be overly fond of using the word "amazing."

It's *amazing* that she landed a role as a chamber maid in the coming third season of PBS's breakout drama, *Downton Abbey*, the addictive fictional saga about the fall of the aristocratic Crawley family and their relationship with their servants during and after World War I. It's *amazing* that she went through a grueling series of auditions to beat out 300 other actresses in New York, London and Los Angeles for the role. It's *amazing* that she would play a maid to the venerable Oscar-winning actress Shirley MacLaine, who will play an American cousin of the Crawleys.

And it's amazing that she knew nothing about the show up until 12 hours before her first audition. The night before, after a good friend raved about the show at a bar, Molly downloaded the first episode of the first season and promptly fell asleep during the opening credits. Then, an ex-professor-turned-casting agent called her to come immediately for an audition. When she arrived, she admitted she knew nothing about PBS's hottest show since 1981 and so he gave her a quick synopsis.

And it's amazing still that after five auditions, a challenging Hollywood-style screen test, a reading with MacLaine and a nine-week shooting schedule already set to begin in June in Yorkshire, England, her role has been written out.

Maybe it's the amazing power of youth, being 23 years old, that leaves the lifelong Prospect Lefferts Gardens resident (home has always been at Parkside and Flatbush Avenues where she lives with her parents) remarkably blasé about the loss of her shot at stardom. But the veteran actress, who has played in minor roles on Broadway, Off-Broadway and elsewhere, sees nothing but good things coming her way:

You've got to be bummed...

This just means that there must be something better coming up in my future.

How did they tell you?

After landing the role, I received an email from the PBS casting office saying that the role that I was cast for was actually cut from the final script. So even though I got this part (which is still an amazing thing) I won't be going to England.

Let's talk about the happy times. How did you find out you landed the role?

The email came in on my phone. I had a feeling that it was *The Email!* I couldn't read it and when I asked a friend to, she couldn't do it either, so we ran upstairs to get my dad to read it. But he didn't know how to open a Smart Phone and when he finally got it open, all he got out was "congrat—" and we all started screaming and crying and laughing. After we went to Lincoln Park Tavern and I told Nicole [the bartender] and she made this big announcement. It was amazing.

How were you feeling?

It felt so amazing to know that I had landed the part, but it felt even better to know that everyone in this beautiful community of "home" was rooting for me and would have been there for me either way.

What was it like meeting and working with Shirley MacLaine?

My last callback was a screen test with her, and she is amazing. It was a wonderful experience to be able to watch someone of her status in this business work. She's a bit crazy but what actress isn't? Watching and learning from her really made me think that I could really enjoy and be good at this career. We hit it off right away. It was amazing!



Play Kids Toy Store Gets Recognition

(continued on page 1) Moore, the mother of 2-year-old Madison and 8-month-old Randi who have all become regulars. After wandering into Play Kids not long ago, Marilyn bought a developmental toy for her youngest, subsequently joined a parent's group that meets at the store and also brings both her daughters to weekly "Baby Clay" classes. "It's in walking distance," she notes. "I'm always late when I have to go across the park."

"For the years that I was a stay-at-home-mom I was so tired of leaving the neighborhood," Shelly says. But it turns out that the store they conceived to fill our neighborhood's need has quickly become a destination for patrons beyond its borders. One afternoon kids and their parental units hailed from Avenue J, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Kensington.

Shelley, who previously worked in fashion and has an extensive background in retail, and Carl, who currently works weekdays as a respiratory therapist and manager of the pulmonary department at Staten Island University Hospital, did their research when developing their idea for Play Kids. They knew they had a potential customer base, "but I don't think I realized the full scope of it until we actually opened the store," smiled Shelley. "Everyone would come in and say 'we've been shopping in Park Slope for years and we can finally shop in our neighborhood.'"

"If we build it, they will come," a reporter offered, referring to the famed line from *Field of Dreams*.

"Exactly," Shelley said with a chuckle, "I do have that floating around me."

Play Kids is at 676 Flatbush Avenue and their telephone number is 347-715-9347. To learn more, see their website at www.playkidsstore.com

N.Y. Congressional Primary Elections Set for June 26; Representative Clarke Faces Challenger for Seat

One of the results of redistricting and the state's loss of population is that New York State's Congressional Primary Elections will be held early this election season, set for June 26th.

One of the big changes is that what used to be the 11th Congressional District represented by U.S. Representative Yvette Clarke will be re-designated as the 9th Congressional District and enlarged considerably.

The new 9th District will include Sheepshead Bay, Mill Basin, all of East Flatbush, Gerristen Beach, Midwood, and parts of Prospect Heights — neighborhoods Clarke previously did not represent.

Representative Clarke will face a challenger in the primaries.

New voters must be registered 25 days before the June 26th election.

Safety Embedded in Prospect Park's New Roadway Designs

At the recommendation of a taskforce of Prospect Park runners, cyclists, pedestrians and others, the Department of Transportation has begun the repaving and restriping of the Prospect Park drive. The purpose of the redesign project is to clearly designate portions of the road for different activities. It is expected that as a result safety will be enhanced for all park visitors. Whether you are a heavy or casual user of the park's roadways, visit www.prospectpark.org and click on "Update on the Road Sharing Taskforce" icon on the homepage to see how the new lane redesign will effect your activities.

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MAY 24 NICK MORAN ELECTRIC TRIO
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JUNE 14 MATTHEW SILBERMAN
Saxophonist whose debut album as a leader will be out later this year.

JUNE 28 ADELANTE
A unique mix of jazz, world, ambient and trance.

JULY 12 JACKIE HOPKINS
The composer/lyricist playing standards and originals with her outstanding ensemble.

Help Your Tree "Neighbors"

(continued from page 1) in other directions in search of it. Over time, this can lead to upended sidewalks or tangles with underground pipes. Far worse outcomes can also happen. If the soil in the bed becomes too caked and compacted, it will have difficulty absorbing water. Street trees not receiving enough water will experience stunted growth, wilting, leaf loss, or will perish—an especially high threat for younger street trees.

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation recommends 15-20 gallons of water once a week between May and October, especially for young trees. That's about 3-4 buckets. Prior to watering, loosen the top 2-3 inches of soil in the tree bed by scratching the surface of the soil with a hand cultivator, and remove any litter. (Do not dig deep into the bed or you might damage the roots.) Also, consider adding mulch and compost to tree beds. This year Green-Wood Cemetery has been offering free mulch to residents who can come to pick it up.

Neighbors without access to buckets of water can still play a vital role in caring for PLG trees this summer. Ask building maintenance staff to water a street tree while hosing off sidewalks or ask merchants to dump water from, say, coolers with melted ice, into the street tree bed instead of the gutter. (Remind them that any water with bleach or cleaning chemicals should never be used to water a tree!)

Our trees are our neighbors, too. Let's help them.

For more information about care for street trees and tree adoption, visit www.milliontreesnyc.org

Colleen O'Connor-Grant is a freelance journalist, a master composter and a "tree steward." She lives with her family on Beekman Place.

SETTING IT STRAIGHT: In the winter issue of the *Echo*, a photo caption on the front page in the article about renaming a block "Lawrence P. Dorsey Way" misidentified Pearl Miles. She is the district manager of Community Board No. 9. We regret the error.

PLG HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR 2012

PLG's Architectural Richness Will Shine at 42nd House Tour

by tour organizer CAROLE SCHAFFER

Dreamers, aspiring home renovators and restorers, do-it-yourself enthusiasts, old-house buffs, and the just plain curious will have a field day exploring the ten impressive stops on this year's expansive 42nd Annual House & Garden Tour.

Doors will open at noon allowing you to peer into private rooms that display a wealth of interior design ingenuity. Some have been painstakingly restored to their original glory and some have been made light and airy with contemporary flair. All are outfitted with stylish modern amenities and adventurously decorated to exhibit the eclectic tastes of their owners.

Owners' collections of unusual artwork, antiques, period furnishings, family heirlooms, pottery, and globally acquired objects will add to your enjoyment. A variety of private rear gardens will be in bloom and also open for visiting.

Tour homes are located on Midwood Street, Rutland Road, Chester Court and Bedford, Parkside and Clarkson Avenues. Pick up ingenious "how-to" advice and resources from some of the designers, architects, contractors and homeowners who will be available to answer your questions. Here are brief descriptions of each stop on this year's tour:

❖ An early-20th-century semi-detached three-story wood frame house, with a slate mansard roof and a charming front porch, boasting a serpentine center staircase, a fabulous stained-glass window and ornate tin ceilings. Unusual artwork and pottery populate its interior, while a cleverly installed tree house resides in the deep rear garden.

❖ A neo-Tudor row house, with Craftsman-influenced interior, features a fun mix of collectibles, including a slot machine from the Steinway mansion and a prohibition-era Radio Bar. For a modern take on a period kitchen this gut-renovated room employs Mission-style cabinetry, a vintage Chambers range and matching Northstar reproduction appliances.

❖ A 1909 neo-Renaissance limestone townhouse with finished English basement showcases original classical ornamentation including exquisitely restored cherry and tiger oak woodwork, intricate plaster ceiling moldings, ornate fireplace mantels and detailed fretwork. Sculpture, artwork and collectibles from world travels complement the home.

❖ The upper duplex of a neo-classical two-family 1911 townhouse where every square inch of space is

effectively utilized and natural light from a roof shaft is maximized. It sports a chef's kitchen, marble bathroom and custom oak bookshelves in keeping with the home's vintage Arts and Crafts woodwork and stained glass.

❖ A remarkable top-to-bottom renovation—designed and largely accomplished by its two "hands-on" architect/owners—in a formerly neglected neo-Tudor townhouse devoid of original detail due to a fire in the 1970s. The exciting results are contemporary, yet respectful of the original 1914 design. Lots of surprises await.

❖ An 1899 Romanesque Revival brick-and-limestone home reveals a breathtaking new open kitchen overlooking the tranquil rear garden. Custom-crafted warm cherry wood cabinets with egg-and-dart moldings pay tribute to the home's past while 21st century amenities and organized storage abound.

❖ A circa-1910 limestone townhouse features shoulder-height wainscoting graced with a dramatic bronze-hued plaster relief depicting cherubs at work. Replete with photographs and impressive artwork, the house also evokes nostalgia for bygone days with its elegant original light fixtures, fretwork, an antique game table and an Art Deco oak desk.

❖ The wildly engaging, stunning, and fun 1915 neo-Tudor townhouse of much-published interior designers John Loecke and Jason Oliver Nixon unfolds adventurously painted and upholstered antiques, an eclectic assortment of light fixtures, generous use of wallpaper, and globally acquired objects that come together to tell an uplifting life and design story. "Your home is your temple," the designers like to say. "Collect what you love and it will work together."

❖ A stately 1898 limestone reveals the floor-through office and home kitchen of a professional chef. Vintage furnishings and original artwork passed down from family or combed from flea markets, auctions and antique stores complement the home. A magnificent needlepoint full of family symbolism, made by the bride's mother to commemorate the owners' wedding, hangs above the piano. The rear garden, once only an abandoned mass of weeds, now blooms with flowers, shrubs and trees.

❖ A well-celebrated 1920s neo-Georgian townhouse showcases floral designer Bette Cunningham's private rear garden. Set in custom-laid blue stones, the space features Japanese wisteria, a raised flowerbed and a slate waterfall. The garden is further enhanced by a medley of cloud white Annabelles along with a unique variety of vines, perennials and shrubs. Don't miss this oasis of calm and examples of stylish floral arrangements by Bette of Yellow Jessamine.



These neighborhood restaurants and merchants are extending special Tour Day-only offers to tour goers who show their PLG House & Garden Tour Ticket/Guidebook:

65 Fen Wines, 65 Fenimore Street
Come in for a special wine tasting, 4-6PM. A 5-10% discount on any purchase.

Blue Roost Café, 43 Lincoln Road
10% discount on all Blue Roost menu items, 8:30AM-8PM.

Café Exhale Bar & Grill, 591 Flatbush Avenue
Free jerk chicken with a minimum \$10 beverage purchase, 5-9PM.

Delroy's, 65A Fenimore Street
A 10% discount on all menu items: paninis, soups, salads and desserts, noon-7PM. BYOB.

Gino's Trattoria & Brick Oven Pizza, 548 Flatbush Avenue
Until 9PM, a 25% discount (minimum purchase \$10).

Inkwell Jazz Comedy Café, 408 Rogers Avenue
Soul food kitchen offers 30% discount on lunch, dinner and drinks, noon-7PM.

King of Tandoor, 600 Flatbush Avenue
A 10% discount on table service, take-out or delivery. Offer good until 10:30PM.

Kings County Nurseries, 625 New York Avenue
Download a 10% discount coupon at www.kingscountynursery.com for use on an in-store purchase of \$20 or more (excludes landscaping). Good anytime.

Lincoln Park Tavern Restaurant & Bar, 51 Lincoln Road
Until 9PM, a 25% discount (minimum purchase \$10).

MangoSeed, 757 Flatbush Avenue
Caribbean dine-in restaurant/bar offers 20% off food and drink, 11AM-9PM.

Monk's Trunk Children's Consignment, 23 Hawthorne Street
20% off any new or gently used children's book or toy, 11AM-6 PM.

Play Kids, 676 Flatbush Avenue
Awarded Best Toy Store 2012 by *New York* magazine. Large selection of locally sourced and eco-friendly items. 15% discount on total purchase, 11AM-5:30PM.

Smile For Every Sistah In You, 581 Flatbush Avenue
Afro-centric and contemporary clothier offers a 25% discount, noon-5:30 PM.

Tafari Tribe Globe Trade, 593 Flatbush Avenue
Purveyor of fine art wear is offering a 15% discount, noon-9PM.

Trixie's Pet Food, Supplies & Accessories, 575 Flatbush Avenue
A 10% discount on all products, 11AM-6 PM.

Couple's Thirty-Year Restoration Creates Stunning Showcase for Family's Art

by Marcia Lloyd

"You two are crazy," said Veronica Nassy's father, a master woodworker who knew craftsmanship—or the lack thereof—when he saw it. He was responding to his daughter's request to check out the home she and his son-in-law, Carlos, were about to buy on Midwood Street.

"You don't know how much you'll be spending," he fumed. "How can you buy a house like this? You have a perfect house in Park Slope."

That was 1983. Carlos and Veronica were a young married couple with small children. They first met at a branch of the Dime Savings Bank where Veronica worked as a paralegal in the closing department and where Carlos, a lawyer, occasionally visited to represent clients.

Although they lived in a three-story home with their 3-year-old daughter, Carla, and 12-year-old son, Sean—and owned two other rental properties in Prospect Heights—there was something about the Midwood Street fixer-upper that captivated them.

Their infatuation with the house and the neighborhood deepened when they went on the PLG House Tour and saw the differences between their three-family house, which lacked historic architectural details, and the one-family houses on the tour.

After the house tour, and in response to an ad in the *New York Times*, they looked at two houses on Midwood Street in perfect condition. "Then I saw this one," says Veronica. "It was the oldest, dirtiest house I had ever seen. It was dimly lit and all I could see was blackness, but all I could think was, 'This is wood! This is wood! This is wood!'"

Two days after they closed, the Nassys had just begun renovating the place when a phone call came in that could have been a dream killer. The contractor called to tell them that while his crew was using heavy equipment, a power surge ignited a damaging fire because someone had used a penny to replace a fuse.

Overcoming that brush with disaster, the Nassys continued on and restored all the floors and the wood detailing on the first floor and second-floor stairway.

Even Veronica's father got over his angst and subsequently revived the wood on the remaining floors to a furniture-quality finish. Since then, the floors have been refinished three times and the house painted four times.

What makes this house really special, however, are the works of art created by Carlos's uncle, Josef Nassy, who, while imprisoned in German and Belgian concentration camps during World War II, drew and painted his fellow prisoners and the surrounding landscape. After he was liberated, he refused to leave his work behind and waited eight months until enough boxcars were assembled to transport his work to Brussels. Today, 277 of his paintings are in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

The Nassys are world travelers who have collected other types of art and artifacts including medieval fighting weapons. Their collection also has original paintings, including works by their talented son and daughter, and a towering sculpture by Mark Esper, who built their kitchen.

Although the Nassys say they have witnessed many changes in their 29 years on Midwood Street, one constant has brought them the most joy.

"We have always had good neighbors," says Carlos.

Marcia Lloyd, who lives on Maple 2, is a photographer and literature professor at the Art Institute of New York.



Carlos and Veronica Nassy are studious art collectors.



PLG ARTS TOUR DAY '12
AT THE INKWELL
JUNE 3 • 12 NOON-8:30PM
408 ROGERS AVENUE
[BETWEEN STERLING AND LEFFERTS]

From noon until 7PM enjoy 30% off food and drinks from Inkwell's soul food kitchen with your PLG Tour ticket

FOR MORE INFO plgarts.org,
[facebook.com/plgarts](https://www.facebook.com/plgarts),
 or inkwellcafe.com

Schedule of FREE Events

Noon-8:30PM (running 5/27-6/10)
Group Art Show

Noon-4PM
Kids' Art Activities

2-5:45PM
Live Music

2PM **Joe Hertenstein Trio**
 Drummer/composer/bandleader Joe Hertenstein has resided in PLG since 2008.

3:45PM **Camila Meza Group**
 Singer/guitarist Camila Meza marries smooth bossa nova with Latin, Brazilian, folk and pop accents.

4:45PM **Rufus Cappadocia**
 PLG resident and jazz cellist—his performances are often jaw-dropping and awe inspiring.

6:30-8:30PM
Stand-up Comedy Open Mic

Family Grows While Restoring a Parkside Beauty

by Nicole Fabri

There's something about buying and restoring a neglected old house that grows on you. As your family grows it morphs and molds to the changing house and in turn the decreasingly decrepit house morphs and molds to you. Along the way it becomes a cherished home.

When my husband, Blaise, and I moved into our Parkside Avenue home in September of 2008, our little boy, Marius, was one and a half years old. We have since had a second child, Lucia, and have become very involved in the community. We have also done significant renovation work on our home.

My husband and I moved back to New York for his job. He works for a hedge fund, while I own an environmental commodities brokerage firm and work from home. When we were looking for a home, we toured several neighborhoods in Manhattan, New Jersey and Brooklyn.

Our priorities were space (at least three bedrooms), light, proximity to a park, and proximity to my husband's job. In the end, this four-story, two-family, 1909 limestone had everything we wanted: four bedrooms, a backyard, a large basement with storage, a rental unit, a flat roof for a future deck, all a block from Prospect Park, close to four subway lines and a forty-minute commute for my husband.

Wonderfully, the house had much of its original wood detail but much of the work previous owners had done, including newly renovated kitchen and baths, was done so poorly as to be both financial and safety liabilities. Toilets weren't properly connected to pipes, electrical work was downright dangerous, bath tiles were laid with non-waterproof grout and appliances were improperly installed. The list went on and on.

Our first projects were an overhaul of the roof that included rebuilding the skylight that had open venting to the outside (cold!), and building a proper pantry inside a tiny room off the dining room, a shoe closet near the front door, and a wrap-around built-in bookshelf in the living room.

Then we started upstairs. We replaced all doorframes, baseboard and window frames with clear pine, and replaced the awful hol-

low-core doors with solid pine doors including old-fashioned leaded glass knobs. We erected a built-in maple day bed in the front bedroom and replaced the beat-up slant-fin radiators with modern high-efficiency units. We also insulated every wall and the attic.

In 2011, we tackled the dark, dismal and narrow kitchen with a thorough renovation to create a truly useful, efficient and well-designed chef's haven. We removed the wall between the kitchen and the dining room, enlarged the kitchen window, and rebuilt the room using a white palette that brightened the entire back half of the house. We installed a five-burner stove serviced by a wall-mounted "pot-filler" faucet and flanked by two thick maple cutting boards. We tripled the amount of storage, installed chandeliers, fixed the heating by moving the poorly routed pipes, eliminated leaky gas lines in the walls, and installed recessed lighting in both the kitchen and dining rooms.

At the same time, we installed a truly beautiful marble bathroom with all nickel furnishings, a dual-flush European toilet, and glassed-in shower with black river-stone flooring. We also built into one of the airshafts and installed a stacked washer and dryer. No more descending to the basement for laundry!

Lastly, we re-landscaped the backyard, which had been a pile of dirt. We installed cedar fencing, a granite patio, antique lighting fixtures, electric and water access, and a lovely panoply of plants, including a cherry tree, berry bushes, ferns, and all manner of climbing flowering plants.

Now our home is much more aesthetically pleasing, has more space, is energy efficient, and far more comfortable. Our kids love our reformed house. We love it too. It's our pleasure to share our cherished home with you. We hope you enjoy visiting it on the tour.



PLG'S 2010 CENSUS PROFILE

Income Inequality Widens in PLG

(continued from page 1) to make a single economic geography.

Therefore, the *Echo* will use just two of the neighborhood's eight census tracts to show the prevailing trends. But those two tracts include 13 adjoining square-blocks that make up the heart of the Lefferts Manor Historic District. Both include a mixture of apartment buildings (both with Section 8 housing), condos, co-ops, and million-dollar single-family homes.

One tract, dubbed CT798.01, covers Flatbush to Bedford Avenues between Lefferts and Fenimore Streets. The other, CT800, covers Lefferts Avenue to Rutland Road between Bedford and Nostrand Avenues.

The following table shows the income trends.

	Total Number of Households	Median Household Income	+\$200,000 Households	Below \$50,000 Households	Below \$25,000 Households
CT798.01	1,141	\$41,671	76	815	458
CT800	1,425	\$48,911	83	726	406

The current NYC Poverty Guidelines consider \$30,419 poverty for a family of four and \$18,111 for an individual. According to the study, nearly one in five New Yorkers, or 19 percent of the city's 8.2 million persons, lived in poverty in 2010—a record not seen since the Depression.

Keenly aware of the income gap dividing not only PLG, but also the entire nation, Rep. Yvette D. Clarke in March introduced the Adjusting for Income Disparity Act of 2012. The bill addresses the danger of income inequality and makes as a key provision, among many other ideas, repealing the Bush tax cuts—long condemned by some economists for favoring the rich and deflecting trillions of dollars from government coffers.

never before has class differences become so marked, she says.

"PLG has always been a mixed income community, but with the economic downturn there is a widening of the gap between the haves and the have-nots, the 99 percenters and the 1 percenters," she says. "We have always been a unique blend of professional and middle class and upper class and working class families in the same geographic boundaries.

"What you really tend to find though is that in the district there is less income disparity in the single-family designated historic district and more in the blocks that are multiple or two-family homes."

Fried Fish and Chips Truck Makes Lincoln Road Home

STORY AND PHOTO BY Melba Winslow

Odeis lives in Ditmas Park, but he sells his delicious fried shrimp, fish and chips in Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

About seven months ago, he, his motley crew and his brightly lit "Fishing Shrimp" food truck showed up near the corner of Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue and has since become a fixture.

The truck appears about four times a week at 6PM and stays until it runs out of food around 10PM. Its Jamaican-style fried fish, shrimp and chips are a big hit. Odeis also offers private catering.

"The neighbors have been very supportive," Odeis says. "They love us. Some folks come here every night."

The food is cooked in soy oil, which renders a "cleaner" taste to the fish and shrimp, he explains, and leaves a crunchiness from the spicy batter mixture (the ingredients of which he refused to reveal).

"It's just simple, real food," Odeis says. "And it tastes good, too."

He picked our neighborhood and the location on the recommendation of a friend and briefly thought to open a storefront. But the combination of the recession and greedy landlords convinced him the truck was the right way to go.

"We have something you can't find anywhere in this neighborhood," he boasts.

But Odeis's exclusivity is about to be challenged. A fish and chips shop is set to open soon on Flatbush Avenue near Maple Street.

Melba Winslow is a college student who lives on Ocean Avenue.



For a stronger community, join the

Lefferts Manor Association

MANOR RESIDENTS:

I (we) subscribe to LMA's efforts to improve our neighborhood as a community of historic, landmarked, single-family homes.

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

NON-RESIDENT FRIENDS:

I (we) support the work of the LMA and would like to contribute to their efforts.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ + \$ _____ = \$ _____

DUES ADD'L CONTRIBUTION TOTAL

Dues cover January through December 2012. You may also pay 2013 dues at the same time.

Make checks payable to Lefferts Manor Association. Send payment and form to: P.O. Box 250-640 / Brooklyn, NY 11225 or drop in the mail slot at 214 Rutland Rd., 163 Rutland Rd. or 25 Maple St.

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