



Saturday, 4/18 LMA Spring General Meeting

10 a.m.-noon, Church of the Evangel (Bedford Ave. at Hawthorne)

Saturday & Sunday, 4/25-26 Sakura Matsuri

10 a.m.-6 p.m., The annual cherry blossom festival at Brooklyn Botanic Garden offers over 60 events and performances that celebrate Japanese culture. Information at bbg.org/visit/event/sakura_matsuri_2015

Saturday, 5/30 It's My Park! Day

10 a.m.-1 p.m., Join the Prospect Park Alliance to give back to your favorite park. Volunteers will gear up with brooms, shovels, rakes, paint brushes, and trash grabbers to tackle a major cleanup effort in Prospect Park. Information and registration at prospectpark.org

Sunday, 5/31 PLG House & Garden Tour

Noon-5 p.m., To volunteer or donate food, contact the House Tour committee at prospectleffertsgardens2015@gmail.com. A complete preview of the 45th annual tour will appear in the next issue of the Echo.

ANGRY NEIGHBORS, CB9 MISTAKES STALL DCP'S REZONING STUDY

by Milford Prewitt

In a raucous and confusing Community Board 9 meeting in late March—where police had to escort some protestors out—a long-awaited vote to permit the Department of City Planning (DCP) to finally begin a rezoning study in Prospect Lefferts Gardens went down.

It didn't go down in defeat; it went down in confusion. According to news accounts, the land-use committee of CB9 had just voted to send a letter to DCP authorizing the agency to start its work. But they soon rescinded it when protestors pointed out that board members who are not part of the committee, voted. But even more embarrassing, the vote had taken place after the meeting had adjourned.

There were no real winners or losers because the board intends to meet April 16 to vote again.

The board's technical mistakes conducting a formal vote do little to mask what is really causing CB9's dysfunction and PLG's unease: the divisiveness accompanying the neighborhood's gentrification and the suspicions among some community leaders that the rezoning study is the first step to wholesale hi-rise development that will displace low-income, longtime residents.

Winston Von Engel, head of the DCP's Brooklyn office, says the agency's only agenda is to help communities in their land-use goals and it is ready to begin the study in PLG.

With 25 years at the agency, Von Engel says he has seen community divisiveness before.

"Every community board and every neighborhood in New York City is unique," he says. "There is no overall norm in terms of community reaction to rezoning studies or efforts to change land uses."

Long before 626 Flatbush topped-out at 23 stories (in seemingly world record construction time), Prospect Lefferts Gardens' neighborhood groups, community leaders and lay citizens were united in their outrage about the size of the building and possible future developments.

With no building height limits in local zoning codes, a new group called Prospect Park East Network mobilized to seek an injunction to stop the project while CB9 asked the DCP to conduct a neighborhood land-use study.

But after more than a year of meetings with city officials, zoning workshops and demonstrations, the benignly-named "Zoning for Quality and Affordability Proposal" has become pock-marked with allegations of racism and classism, fears of low-income displacement, the expulsion of fixed-income retired homeowners and

divisive personal and public attacks among community members.

The most antagonistic group against the DCP study is also the most anti-gentrification group, the Movement to Protect the People. MTOPP's activist leader Alicia Boyd has charged that the rezoning study is actually a smoke-screen to "upzone" (increase density and raise building heights) in the neighborhood, especially on Empire Boulevard. A Sterling Street homeowner, Boyd's backyard abuts Empire Boulevard.

Von Engel insists that the DCP has no ulterior motive other than to serve the community and the city. He refused to speculate why groups like MTOPP and like-minded activists harbor suspicions about the agency's work.

"You need to ask them that," he says.

"What I can tell you is that our mission is to work with communities. And the mayor has been very clear that for the city and communities to meet their goals, there has to be community participation from the ground up and it's going to involve every neighborhood group, and every elected official.

"We don't come in with a prepared zoning plan. What's important is for the community to agree, to come to a consensus. It's important that a majority of the community agree on the goals and priorities."

Although it was too late for PLG to do anything about zoning changes to reduce the size of 626 Flatbush, given that the developers were within their rights to build tall under existing zoning codes, Von Engel encouraged the neighborhood's efforts to update the zoning codes.

"What the neighborhood can do, it is starting to do in response to that building and that is to ask for a land-use study of the area, to see whether zoning could be changed for future buildings," he says.



A sun-blocking tall building is no abstraction on historic Chester Court. Many in PLG hope new zoning codes will stop future hi-rises like the 626 Flatbush development.

ASPCA to Help Local Cat Lovers Trap and Neuter PLG's Ferals

by MARION MORAN



At loving neighbors throughout Prospect Lefferts Gardens who have long lamented the hardscrabble and short lives feral cats live have formed a group to control the wild feline population here.

The group—Flatbush Area Team for Cats (FAT Cats)—are advocates for trapping, neutering and returning wild cats back to the neighborhoods where they roam. TNR, as the practice is called, is widely considered the most humane and sensible way to control cat populations.

Naomi Singer, a founder of FAT Cats, says that on Saturday, April 28, the ASPCA will provide one of their trucks in a day-long campaign to TNR as many as 35 cats from Prospect Park to Rogers Avenue, from Lincoln Road to Church Avenue. To learn more about TNR and ways you can help, visit gofundme.com/oijm3g or contact her directly at nsinger@email.com.

"It takes money, as well as many volunteers to successfully conduct a mass trapping," Singer says.

Feral cats have been part of the landscape of PLG for decades.

We have all heard cats fighting outside our bedroom windows in the summertime, smelled the odor of cat urine in the street or seen hungry ferals looking for food in the garbage. Some neighbors have been overwhelmed by litters of kittens in their backyards. The question arises: What do you do now?

The majority of wild cats are not living in the streets because they chose to: Some were abandoned, some are un-neutered/unaltered store cats that ran away to mate and too many are born in our backyards by other feral cats. They are just trying to survive and follow their instincts. The longer a cat survives outside, the more feral it gets and the harder it is to socialize and to reintroduce it as a pet in someone's home. Four months is about the threshold to domesticate a kitten successfully. After that, socialization is a challenge if not impossible. However, a four-month-old kitten can get pregnant. *(continued on page 4)*

Rutland II's Spirited and Beloved "Miss Ida" Mae Henderson Dies at 100

Ida Mae Henderson, a retired NYC Board of Education principal administrative associate and who was affectionately called "Miss Ida" among her Rutland II neighbors, died at 100 years old on March 3.

She fell and fractured her hip in mid-January and was strong enough to undergo hip surgery at Methodist Hospital. From there she was transferred for rehab at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation, where she died peacefully in her sleep.

"I knew things were not going right when she didn't want to watch *Jeopardy*," her son, Lenny Henderson, said. "She loved that show."

Ida lived on Rutland II with Lenny and his family for the past 17 years.

Sitting out front with other elders from the block, "Miss Ida" and company were for many years Rutland II's unof-

ficial greeters and welcoming faces when neighborhood kids and adults returned home from school or work.

Although she had a hard time walking and negotiating steps, Lenny said his mother was in good health and exhibited little of the illnesses associated with advanced age.

Mrs. Henderson was born in Walterboro, S.C. in 1914. At the age of five, she moved with her mother to Elmsford, N.Y., a tiny Westchester County community where she met and married Leonard Weaver Henderson Sr. in 1935.

During World War II, Mrs. Henderson was a black version of "Rosie The Riveter," the women who kept America's industrial production moving while the men were overseas. In Mrs. Henderson's case, she worked as a welder at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Her husband served in the Pacific theater during World War II and later he would be with the first segregated black Army units to



enter Japan after the U.S. dropped atomic bombs to end the war.

"My mother was convinced that he died early because of what he was exposed to in Japan," Lenny said.

Henderson Sr. died in 1951, just six years after the war ended.

After the death of her husband, she went to night school, took accounting classes and eventually worked for the New York City Board of Education.

Mrs. Henderson was possessed of a sharp mind, danced at parties as recently as three years ago, loved playing cards and putting together jigsaw puzzles.

In September of 2014, neighbors used the annual Rutland II block party to celebrate Ida's one hundredth birthday.

In addition to Lenny, she is survived by daughter-in-law Lauren Dong and their daughter, Catlin Alice Henderson.

A fond remembrance of Ida Henderson, written by one of her Rutland II neighbors, appears on page 4.

Emerging Vocalist Alexis Hightower Sings the Praises of PLG

by RINA KLEEGER
Alexis Hightower, a rising singer, songwriter, and most recently, pianist, is a relative newcomer to Prospect Lefferts Gardens. But she's already in tune with the lyric most neighbors have been singing a long time: "I love this neighborhood."

Since moving to Sterling II three years ago, she says she has been impressed by her neighbors' community involvement and the friendliness of residents. She even used her neighbors' children on one of the songs on her newest album, *Girl Next Door*, already being hailed as a breakthrough work.

Alexis says she loves that "the quality of life in PLG lends itself to the creative process. It is peaceful, with points of inspiration like Prospect Park and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden—



MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

which has the best gift shop."

Her parents love to visit the neighborhood, too.

Before buying their home on Sterling II, Alexis and her boyfriend, a fellow musician, had some disappointments, including signing a contract on one property that was eventually lost to a cash buyer. "Sometimes negatives make you more determined," Alexis said of the house-hunting process that eventually led them to PLG.

She created spreadsheets listing the qualities of each house they saw, from zip codes to number of bedrooms, to help them focus on what they wanted and could afford.

She knew PLG through a visual-artist friend who grew up here, and after looking in other neighborhoods, they saw and fell in love with the house they would ultimately purchase on Sterling II. Renovations are ongoing, and they are taking their time to finish it right. In the meanwhile, she and her boyfriend are comfortable with rooms they have designated as separate music studios, filled with their instruments and electronic gear. Each studio is on a different floor, so they can practice and record at the same time without disturbing each other.

Alexis knew she loved singing even as young girl. She wrote her first song when she was 12, as a Mother's Day gift for her mom.

She says, "The simplest songs are the hardest ones to write."

Of her style, *Ebony.com* wrote: "Alexis Hightower delivers passionate acoustic soul...mesmerizing audiences with a dancer's grace."

Dancing, in fact, was shaping up to be her chosen career path. Alexis studied the dance technique developed by Katherine Dunham, an innovator in African-American modern dance. Alexis paid her dues touring the country with the musicals *Whistle Down the Wind* and *Rent*, for which she had to learn all five female roles.

Born in Nashville and reared in Los Angeles, she moved to New York to absorb its cultural influences and to develop her own sound, which the blog *Glitter & Stilettos* recently described as a "convergence of jazz, soul, and hip-hop."

With encouragement from the musicians in her ensemble, Alexis recently began playing the piano as a regular part of her performances. She feels that her sound, which she refers to as alternative R&B, jelled when she began tinkling the keyboard. "Having control over yourself and the process," she says, "enables me to create what I envision."

"I went through a Duke Ellington period, a Nina Simone period, and Stevie Wonder," she swoons. She admires Alanis Morissette's freedom in her writing. "Marvin Gaye," she adds, "is a deity."

She released her previous recording, an EP entitled *Lucy's Blues*, on iTunes in 2012.

Alexis will be touring the East Coast this spring in support of *Girl Next Door*. She explains that the title "implies someone you might think you know, but in fact, she's changed from who you thought she was."

Alexis will be performing two shows on Saturday evening, May 2, at Ginny's Supper Club, the performance space at Harlem's Red Rooster restaurant, 310 Malcolm X Blvd. Tickets are \$15 and sets are at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m.

Rina Kleege is president of PLGArts. She and her husband, Steve, are longtime residents of Maple I.



Gerard H. Gashin

Lefferts Food Co-op Expanding Its Membership and Inventory



LCFC member-volunteers Karen Wong (left) and Gillian Arthur staffed the table at a local health fair getting the word out and signing up new members.

After several years in the making, the Lefferts Community Food Cooperative (LCFC) opened its doors last fall at 324 Empire Boulevard (near New York Avenue). The small shop owned and operated by neighbors offers bulk foods, organic produce, and locally sourced items at the lowest possible cost.

What makes a food co-op a co-op? Unlike most small businesses, LCFC is staffed by member-volunteers. Rather than trying to generate a profit, the store focuses on serving the local community. The payoff for shoppers: lower prices. But shopping there isn't your typical consumer experience. In order to make purchases, members must work a two and three-quarter hour shift once every four weeks. This keeps the overhead down and lends the space an inescapably small-town feel: with its small size, member-workers quickly get to know one another and their regular shoppers.

"I bring my 6-year-old to my Thursday afternoon shift," said member Carrie McLaren. "Often it's like a series of impromptu playdates for him. We know a lot of the kids who come in the door. And those we don't, we soon get to know!"

Initially organized by a handful of PLG and Crown Heights residents in 2009, the cooperative now includes about 200 working members and continues to grow steadily in inventory and membership.

What kinds of things will you find at the co-op? LCFC focuses on whole food items that members can use every day to cook their meals. This means a lot of bulk, natural products and fresh regional items. The bulk selection contains many varieties of rice, oatmeal, quinoa, couscous and other grains, beans, dried nuts, dried fruits, and baking supplies such as flour, sugar, and salt. The store offers a range of cooking oils, nut butters, cleaning and personal care supplies. It also carries milk, eggs, yogurt, cheese and meats. Inventory items are selected based on a variety of criteria: popularity, regionality, organic or conventional, nutritional value—all weighed against the price for that item.

All members are investors in the cooperative business. To join, new members invest \$125 (or \$25 for those with a low income), of which \$100 is a refundable should a member decide to quit. Members serve on a range of committees that are required to run a business, such as membership and scheduling, finance/bookkeeping, sourcing and buying, inventory, cashiering, maintenance, building, communications, and administration.

The store is currently open on Thursdays from 4 to 8:30 and Sundays from 11 to 6. As it grows, the co-op members expect to be able to expand their hours. Anyone is welcome to visit the store and membership is open to all. Please visit leffertsfoodcoop.org or call 718-771-0500 for more information.



An aisle of artisanal foods, including vinegars and olive oils, in PLG's first food co-op.

• COMING IN MID-MAY •

A SPECIAL ISSUE of the LEFFERTS MANOR ECHO

The 45th Annual PLG House & Garden Tour PREVIEW

Including a TRIBUTE to  CAROLE SCHAFFER

who until her death in October 2014 was the longtime organizer and driving force behind this wonderful community event.

Fulani Boutique's Master Tailor Brings Menswear Expertise to Our Neighborhood

by Milford Prewitt

Fulani Boutique, a long-running personal tailoring house whose male clientele comes from every walk of life, has moved from Park Slope to Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

For 24 years, tailor and proprietor AB (who requested to be identified only by his first and last initials in this article) operated Fulani Boutique at 26 Fifth Avenue at Flatbush, virtually across the street from the Barclays Center. Informed that the building is to be razed in two years, AB immediately began looking for a new location and found just what he was looking for in PLG at 496 Flatbush in January, right across the street from Planet Fitness.

He says he couldn't be happier with the move.

"I love this neighborhood," AB says, who lives in Canarsie. "You can't beat the convenience and the Q and the B are only two stops from where I used to operate.

"Plus, being on the first floor street level where people can see our storefront and not have to climb a staircase is a big advantage in this business. Everybody who does this in Manhattan—and there are few of us left these days—their customers have to climb to the fourth or fifth floor to get to them."

Wearing his signature bow tie with a well-cut blazer, AB at first cuts the profile of a preacher or an English Lit professor. The store is named after the people who live in Guinea, West Africa, AB's birthplace.

He says he knew as a child that he was instinctively gifted to become a tailor. He is largely self-taught but admits there were some apprenticeships and more training working in fabric houses along the way.



Menswear tailor AB, owner of Fulani Boutique, loves his new ground floor location in PLG.

He has spent 35 years in the business, earning a nationwide reputation as a master tailor of menswear, be it formal, business or casual. He wouldn't name names, but claims his clientele range from box-office celebrities, sports superstars, Wall Street fat cats, elected officials and common working men who are all drawn to his singular expertise, customized suits.

AB believes that no matter one's station in life, every man should have two custom suits in the closet—one blue, one grey. Suit prices at Fulani Boutique start at \$750.

But he laments that personal, customized tailoring is an endangered business if current retail, industrial and customer trends continue. The "casualization" of office attire, off-the-rack retailing, and the ubiquity of pop-culture fashion designers who know nothing about tailoring, fabric or stitching are squeezing out old-school tailors, he says.

"Anybody can be a designer, draw something on a page and come up with an idea," he fumes. "But master tailoring is a craft. It's an art. And you need experience to excel. Unfortunately, it's a dying art.

"If you called me a designer, you insult me! I'm a master tailor."

Erv's is smaller than a studio apartment. But what it lacks in size, it more than makes up for in conviviality and cocktail temptation.

Located in the middle of the block on Beekman Place, Erv's fills a unique market in Prospect Lefferts Gardens: It serves quality coffee, espresso drinks and pastries mornings and afternoons, then it converts into a specialty cocktail lounge that also serves tamales until closing time in the wee hours.

Overshadowed amid the highly anticipated debuts of Midwood Flats and Bluebird Café late last summer, Erv's deliberately had a quiet opening last October.

But Erv's has quickly won a flock of loyal regulars—fans in and out of PLG—whose word-of-mouth and digital kudos have led to a high honor: It was named one of the "50 Best Bars in Brooklyn" by *The L Magazine*, winning its "Best Secret Cocktails" category prize.

The honor stems from Erv's expansive, appetizing and creative menu of sophisticated signature house drinks, concoctions and mixes some of which even the most veteran barstool warmers may have never heard of.

Most drinks are \$10 and happy "hour" lasts from noon until 7 p.m.

The partners behind the joint are PLG resident Steve Fishman, a *New York* magazine political and culture writer, and Robert Giles, a Flatbush native who currently resides in Clinton Hill.

The place is named in honor of Fishman's father.

Giles, a self-taught bartender—and who prefers the word "bartender" to "mixologist"—says he sees the 18-seat Erv's as a "concept bar," inspired by such slick drinking places as Milk & Honey in Manhattan.

A couple of years ago, Giles was on his way to Taiwan to apply his cocktail expertise at a new venture there, but the job fell through. His brother, who worked with Fishman as a fact checker and who knew of his colleague's long pent-up desire to open a bar here, introduced the two and a partnership was born.

Despite the place's size, Giles says it's still large enough to feature entertainment. On Sunday nights, live music and spoken word performances are offered at Erv's.



Robert Giles mixes the magic behind the bar at Erv's.

SMALL QUARTERS ARE NOT A BIG ISSUE FOR ERV'S AND PILLOW TALK



New Businesses Thriving in Small Spaces

It seems fitting that Pillow Talk Lingerie, an intimate apparel and sleepwear boutique for women of all sizes, would be in one of the smallest storefronts to be found on PLG's Flatbush corridor.

Located at 696 Flatbush, opposite Winthrop Street, Pillow Talk's size is conducive for the semi-private customer service and assistance Michelle Davis offers men who might be exploring tempting bedroom wear for their mates or plus-sized women who like to find comfortable sleepwear.

Davis, a lifelong PLG resident and never-say-die entrepreneur who was the bubbly host and partner of the late Café Exhale, opened the boutique about two years ago.

She says both men and women share some misinterpretations—largely spawned by the media—about intimate apparel.

"Men and women have some misconceptions about lingerie," she says. "People think it is only about sex. Men are visual creatures who see it as a kind of gift-wrapping and most women think if they are not size six or eight, they can't wear it.

"You see Victoria's Secret and other media with skinny models and it sends a message to larger women that this kind of clothing is not for you. But I'm about empowering women of all sizes to embrace every inch and curve and channel their inner-sexy. We have something for all sizes and curves."

Davis says even from childhood, she loved women's intimate apparel and dreamed about being involved in the business one day.

"I always liked frilly, pretty panties even when I was a kid," Davis says. "My mother helped by always buying us new pajamas. On the holidays we would always get new robes and slippers.

"It just dawned on me, what if I went into a business that did that?"

Little Pillow Talk got a major boost of national exposure last summer when the hip-hop culture magazine, *XXL*, featured garments from the shop in its "Eye Candy Issue," featuring local models.

More recently, Davis has launched a website, pillowtalklingerie.com.

Refusing to look back on the closing of Café Exhale, Davis says Pillow Talk is a new horizon with unlimited possibility.

"I was broken when Café Exhale closed," she says. "But I'm a fighter. I don't give up! My drive and determination give me energy."



Michelle Davis channels what she calls women's "inner sexy."

DGP's REZONING STUDY STALLED

(continued from page 1)

Hoping that PLG community leaders and neighbors will take a page out of the Crown Heights community board's playbook, he described the collaboration and consensus that ensued in approving a new land-use study that recom-

mends all future buildings not exceed a height of 13 stories on residential blocks characterized by low-rise brownstones.

"Their priority was to prevent out-of-character buildings and avoid issues similar to the one associated with your 626 Flatbush," he says. "So we worked on a 13-story plan that addressed the height limitations, especially on the side streets that are

dominated by four-story brownstones.

"We decided together to allow a modest increase in density that would take advantage of affordable housing."

Von Engel says the DCP is far more engaged and much more energized to work from the "ground up" since Mayor de Blasio took office.

"I would say that what we are

doing in the community in terms of outreach and consensus is far more expansive under this administration than the past one," he says.

One reason for that, Von Engel states, is that DCP is one of the key agencies the mayor will depend on in reaching his goal to "create or preserve 200,000 affordable housing units; 120,000 being existing housing units" before he leaves office.

"We are an agency under the mayor and the mayor is elected by the people and so we support maximizing his policy objectives and housing plans," he notes. "But building communities is a comprehensive plan. It's not just geared to housing. There is an economic development and arts part to it, too and there is a capital budget to meet those goals."

A memory of "Miss Ida" by Edna Wells Handy

From One Generation to the Next

There is a scene from *How to Get Away with Murder*, the wildly popular television series, where the main character, wonderfully played by Viola Davis, and her mother, exquisitely acted by Cecily Tyson, are in a darkened, gloomy room, sitting on the edge of the bed. The mother is parting her child's hair, scratching the roots where a patch of dandruff might reside, combing out "the kinks," greasing the scalp and plating the hair into braids. Every black woman to whom I made mention of that scene and who had witnessed that bit of television history (our-story), delighted in sharing her own remembrance of a time past when she took part in that very same ritual. Those times of sitting on the floor resting our heads on an elder's left knee then the right one, hearing her yell "keep your head still!" were moments of pure joy, personal sharing, and great intimacy. Just as my mother scratched my scalp, and her mother did hers, and my great-grandmother did for my grandmother, I too would come to scratch the scalps of my four daughters.

One hot summer day last year in a hospital room in Brookdale, I did the same for Ms. Ida.

Ms. Ida was so much like my mother: both in their nineties, both widowed at an early age, both proud single parents of wonderful kids (if I say so myself) and both with stories to tell but also with great reluctance to share them. Perhaps it was the "Jim Crow" time of their lives and a collective anger long suppressed made them that way. My mother only recently told us of sharing a segregated train car with Roy Wilkins, head of the NAACP. And it was during our "hair time" that Ms. Ida told me the story of her husband's service in World War II; how he and a group of other black soldiers in the segregated Army



At Rutland II's annual block party three years ago, Edna Wells Handy, who wrote this remembrance, presented a cake to Miss Ida (who turned 97) and other elders on the block.

were ordered to escort the plane that carried the atomic bomb; how commanding officers predicted that they would all be dead within a year of doing so; and how it came to pass.

That story angered me; it had me calling the VA to track down the facts. But it also made me fiercely proud—proud that a whole generation suffered "the slings and arrows of the outrageous fortune" and lived to tell, however begrudgingly, the stories that would fuel the passion of their next generation to right the wrongs of the past and ensure justice for the future. My mother and father were of that "Greatest Generation." Mr. Leonard and Mrs. Ida Henderson were most certainly in that number, too!

Local Cat Lovers to Trap and Neuter PLG's Ferals

(continued from page 1)

Since it is impossible to find homes for all of these cats and the city shelters are overcrowded, trap-neuter-return—or TNR—is the only humane way to address this problem.

The idea is to trap as many neighborhood cats as you can, have them spayed or neutered, then return them to their territory, which is the only home they know. Ideally, a neighbor offers to be a caretaker and provides them with food and shelter during the winter months. Friendly and adoptable cats can be placed in new homes.

The benefits of TNR are clear: There will be a gradual reduction in the local cat population, less noise because neutered males fight less and fewer odors because their urine loses the foul smell of testosterone. The other benefit is that the cats will keep up with rat control and prevent other unaltered cats from entering the neighborhood.

TNR cats don't take up shelter space that could be used for truly adoptable cats and the shelters' euthanasia rate is reduced. Moreover, there will be better control of rabies because all TNR cats receive mandatory rabies shots.

In short, both cats and neighbors will be happier if the local cat population is managed properly through TNR.

Neighbors who want to get involved should contact Neighborhood Cats at neighborhoodcats.org or the NYC Feral Cat Initiative at nycferalcat.org. Both organizations offer free workshops and training in TNR. Certification in TNR also provides access to lower cost veterinary care for rescue animals.

Neighbors should help each other in monitoring our cat population and share resources and knowledge. If there were at least one person per block who would get TNR-certified and started to spay and neuter the cats on that block, the situation would get under control much more quickly and the entire neighborhood would benefit.

To learn more about TNR, please contact me at marionmoran@optonline.net.

Marion Moran, a TNR-certified cat lover and Brooklyn College business major, has lived on Maple I with her husband and two children for 15 years.

Bikram Yoga Studio Evolves into a Mini Wellness Center

Hot, sweaty yoga is the signature, trademark service the new Lefferts Avenue Bikram Yoga studio specializes in 365 days a year.

As the studio settles into its newest location above the beverage distributor at Lefferts and Flatbush Avenues, it is extending its roots into Prospect Lefferts Gardens with some allied amenities for all residents—with or without memberships—to improve health, nutrition, foster peace of mind and encourage neighborliness.

What the studio has on tap is nothing less than a miniature community wellness center. Consider these activities:

- Community posing classes the first Friday of each month for members and nonmembers who pay a donation that goes to allied non-profit organizations.
- Monthly special posing clinics for newbies and veterans, usually the first Saturday of each month.
- The hosting of a weekly farm-to-neighborhood fresh food pick-up service through the online farming community, Farmingo (see related story below), and
- It is tapping the diversified talents and expertise of its yogi practitioners to teach all manner of self-improvement practices, including aromatherapy and massage. Music recitals by members may also be in the future.

Considered a standing, open-eye meditation that improves concentration and mindfulness, Bikram yoga consists of 26 beginners' poses (including two breathing exercises) for 90 minutes in a room that is heated to between 100 and 105 degrees. The method helps advance weight loss, boosts flexibility of the muscles and joints, and improves cardiovascular fitness and body strength.

The heat serves as a kind of metaphor or substitute for whatever daily challenges, problems or goals yogis face

outside the studio. As such, the heat becomes a test of wills and mental fortitude, best summed up by the yoga instructor's mantra: "If you can stay in this room for ninety minutes, deal with this heat, and concentrate only on the instructions, think about what you can do when you get outside."



A yogi demonstrates the "Triangle" posture during a community posing class.

For nearly 12 years the studio was located on the Prospect Heights side of Flatbush Avenue at Prospect Place. Owners Roody and Jessica Senecal moved the studio to PLG after their strenuous attempts to win a new and reasonable lease at their original location failed. The couple also operates a second Bikram studio on Fifth Avenue in Park Slope.

The setback at one location has meant a boom at the new location. The Lefferts Avenue studio is far more spacious, is rarely crowded during peak times or popular classes, and has an inviting lounge area.

For more information, visit bikramyogaparkslope.com.

Bikram Yoga to Host Farmigo's Weekly Farm-Fresh Food Pick-Up

The community-supported agriculture movement is expanding to a second location in Prospect Lefferts Gardens. Some three years after the Maple Street School partnered with a farm-fresh food delivery service, the new Lefferts Avenue Bikram Yoga studio is teaming up with a like-minded farmers network, Farmigo.

Now in its sixth year, Farmigo works with farms and food-makers within a 250-mile radius of New York City to deliver fresh foods — "still smelling of the earth"— and artisanal goods to customers via neighborhood pick-up spots, called Communities.

The Bikram studio's debut of Farmigo's offerings and services were unveiled at a food tasting in March, to show off the diversity of products available. Cheese and other dairy products, along with meat, poultry, fruits, vegetables, baked goods, and artisanal items are all available.

Chrissy Knopp, a Farmigo field organizer, says that all of the participating farmers practice sustainable and environmentally-sound agricultural practices including certified organic, natural pest management, and biodynamic farming. In fact, Knopp says most of the produce is grown organically, but not all of the farmers have the USDA's organic seal because it's too costly for small farms to acquire.

All the animals that provide dairy and meats are ethically raised and largely grass fed, she says. More details on each item and producer are available on the Farmigo marketplace online.

Participating farmers and food-makers are paid more money by Farmigo than by commercial distributors and supermarkets, and Farmigo's shoppers save a few bucks and time by not paying retail markups or waiting in checkout lines. Shoppers need not be members of Bikram Yoga Lefferts Avenue, and there are no membership or delivery fees to participate.

The way it works is that shoppers sign up on the website, place their orders by Thursday at midnight, and pick up their deliveries at the yoga studio the following Monday. In order to make the deliveries as efficient as possible, Farmigo requires at least 10 orders in order to start the community. Go to farmigo.com/bikramyogaparkslope for more information.



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 2015. 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.

Echo Seeks Home Distributors for Non-Manor Blocks

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