



# News...

FROM COUNCIL MEMBER

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## FEBRUARY COMMUNITY BULLETIN

### **New Home for PS 151**

After years of uncertainty and hard work, PS 151 is going to be moving into a new, permanent home this fall.

Last month the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP) officially approved the plan to relocate Richard Green High School to a campus downtown and then use the building on 88<sup>th</sup> Street as a permanent home for PS 151. That approval is a big win for all of the schools involved. Richard Green gets to move to a building that was designed with older students in mind. In doing so, they free up desperately needed elementary school space in a neighborhood that is sorely starved for elementary school seats.

Finally, after years of uncertainty the families at PS 151 finally have a permanent school building they can call home. We've come a long way to get to this point and it is because of the tireless efforts of parents throughout the community that we are able to celebrate this success.

### **Free Flu Shot Vouchers**

Do you need a flu shot this season? Are you uninsured? My office has vouchers for free flu shots at Duane Reade or Walgreen's. If you're uninsured and haven't had a flu shot yet, please call my office at 212-980-1808 to request a voucher. Supplies are limited.

### **Free Tax Preparation Help**

It's tax season and the Webster branch of the New York Public Library and AARP are offering free tax preparation help. AARP representatives will be on hand every Monday through April 11 from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. Help is offered on a first come, first serve basis. Please call 212-288-5049 for more details.

## **Restoring the East River Esplanade**

The Esplanade should be a treasured public space for our community. Instead, it is a deteriorating stretch of pavement from East 63<sup>rd</sup> to 125<sup>th</sup> Street that is marred by potholes and sinkholes. In order to make the Esplanade a true asset for our community, I teamed up with Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney to form the East River Esplanade Task Force. The task force brings together representatives from all levels of government and the community with the shared goal of reclaiming, restoring, and rejuvenating the Esplanade.

At our most recent meeting on February 2, the Parks Department laid out a plan to us and Assemblymember Kellner, in conjunction with the DEP, to repair conditions on the esplanade at 12 locations between 66th Street to 124th Street. They hope to begin this work in March.

At the task force meeting we were also thrilled to learn from Con Ed that the unsightly pink structure on the esplanade between 74th and 75th Streets will eventually come down. This marks a change of course from Con Ed who in the past indicated that the structure was needed and could not be torn down. In the meantime, Con Ed will be taking steps to free up some of the area around the structure that is currently fenced in, making more space on the Esplanade available to the public.

The Parks Department also plans a "greening" of the Esplanade this spring. Help us make it look greener and more beautiful on "It's My Park Day" - May 21<sup>st</sup>. Stay tuned for more details on how you can assist with plantings and other maintenance work.

In the long term, the Parks Department will for look to ways to involve the community in forming a master plan for the Esplanade, such as organizing a collaborative design process known as a Charette - or some other type of open forum where ideas can be explored with the goal of expanding and improving the esplanade to make it a destination park for both passive and active recreational activities.

## **Protecting the Rights of LGBT Seniors**

While all seniors face considerable challenges as they grow older, LGBT seniors confront significant additional difficulties. Last month, in my role as chair of the City Council's Committee on Aging, I conducted an oversight hearing to investigate whether there exists an adequate and appropriate level of culturally-competent services and care to meet the needs of the LGBT senior population in New York City.

Some of the additional obstacles LGBT seniors face include the effects of past and present social stigma and discrimination, the reliance on informal families-of-choice for social connections and support, inequitable laws and social programs, the high rates of financial insecurity and poverty, and problems associated with health and health care. For instance, LGBT seniors are not eligible for benefits in the same way as their heterosexual counterparts. Specifically, committed same-sex couples are not entitled to the Social Security "spousal benefit" that their straight peers enjoy.