

West 104th Street

NOVEMBER 2020

BLOCK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

A Helping Hand on the Block

Mark Smith Is a One-Man Pick-Up Crew

By Joyce Mann

In the 1970s, Mark Smith moved to New York from North Carolina to pursue an acting career. In those days, urban living had a gritty edge. The years went by, Smith met his wife Miriam Cukier, and in 1994, they moved to what he describes as “the paradise of 315 Riverside Drive.” Today Smith is an agent representing and managing performing artists, and Cukier, retired from the Metropolitan Transit Authority, is co-editor of Bloomingdale Aging in Place’s popular Buzz newsletter.



Mark Smith in cleanup gear

Some months ago, as the pandemic crimped neighborhood services like trash removal, Smith wanted to find a way to help. Through a new organization, One Block UWS, Smith adopted West 104th Street as his special charge, setting out several days a week to pick up stray trash and keep the block tidy. He spoke with Block Association Board Member Joyce Mann about what got him started and how One Block works.

What made you get involved in OneBlock? I got tired of railing about the garbage in the streets like Jack Lemmon in Prisoner of Second Avenue. I saw an article about the group in the West Side Rag and I thought it was a great idea, so I contacted them. They have both Facebook and Instagram pages and now a website, www.oneblockuws.org, and a gmail account, oneblockuws@gmail.com.

The organization was started only a few months ago by Jake Russell, a Texas native involved here in real estate. I was invited to join a group cleanup of Broadway between 96th Street and 106th Street, avenues usually being dirtier than sidestreets, to learn the ropes. I was given the organization’s tee shirt to identify myself, special gloves with rubber

continued on page 3

A Golden Afternoon

The Block Association celebrated its 50th anniversary with a 50/50 raffle drawing

Block residents gathered on September 26 to learn the winner of the Block Association’s latest 50/50 raffle (the winner and the organization split the pot) and celebrate the group’s fifty years of contributions to block life. The mood was festive, with most sporting the Block Association’s signature masks and other gear. Everyone kept an eye to social distance, while watching closely as the winner was announced.



And the winner is...

The drawing took place on the steps of Raj Maheshwari’s brownstone, which he generously permitted the Block Association to use as a staging area, including running electrical cords for the sound system through his living room window. In keeping with raffle tradition, Eli Rogers was the young neighbor who picked the winning ticket from hundreds sold. The first prize of \$1459.50 went to David Carroll, a neighborhood resident who had taken a chance many times before. He donated a portion of his winnings to the block. Beth Handler won the second prize (\$100), which she kindly donated as well, and Robert Weinberg won the third prize



Six feet apart: Beth Handler, Steve Zirinsky, David Carrol

(\$50). The raffle and accompanying merchandise sales helped offset the cancellation of this year’s Yard Sale.

See photo essay on Page 4 for more on the Block Association celebration.

IN THIS ISSUE

Raffle Results p. 1
 One Block Volunteer p. 1
 Block Financials p. 2
 \$50 for 50 Donors p. 3
 Raccoons p. 3
 Raffle Photo Essay p. 4
 Green Gifts p. 7
 Helping Riverside Park p. 7
 Rat Abatement p. 7
 Food Drive p. 7

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WEST 104 BLOCK ASSN FINANCIAL REPORT

OCTOBER 2020

OPENING BALANCE	\$16,842.89
Income	4818.00
Dues	25.00
Other Contrib.	75.00
Merchandise	1549.00
Raffle	2919.00
Other	150.00
EXPENSES	\$2928.11
Guard service.....	2827.32
Raffle.....	90.29
PayPal Fee	10.50

CLOSING BALANCE \$18,586.21

\$50 for Fifty Donors

The Block Association extends warmest thanks the most recent to contribute to the \$50 for 50 campaign. Their generosity will help us continue to provide the services that make our block a special and welcoming place.

Gary & Sharon Waskow; Andrew Manshel; Stephen Helman; David Fisher and Pearl Beck; Philip Galdston and Nancy Tarshis; Victoria Kimbrough; Calvin Marshall Mew; Ann & Peter Rattray; Lynn Sadofsky; Theodore and Mary Sobel; Melissa Cohen; Emily Grishman & Susan Sampliner; Mel & Angela Marvin; David Phillips & Ellen Zweig; Roger & Lani Sanjek; Kenneth Brooks & Asia Ingalls; Robert & Eleanor Ledogar; Renee Siemann; David Smiley & Lauren Kogod; Ed Wallace & Pamela Falk; Yvonne Wong; Lisa Zeitz; Ursula Strauss; Adrienne Barbero; Dan & Barbara Barron; Miriam Duhan & Terry Jory.



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We fully support Fair Housing, both in the spirit and the letter of the law.

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continued from page 1

tips and a few bags with their logo on it. I ended up buying my own “grabber” for \$25 at World Hardware on 99th St.(great guys!).

How often do you clean up and how long does it take? I go out once or twice a week, weather depending, and it takes between 45 minutes and an hour. I usually fill up two “Duane Reade-size plastic bags. My adopted area is the two blocks on 104th Street from Riverside Drive to the west side of Broadway. I clean garbage left on the sidewalk, out of the flower beds and also around the parked cars. You can get pretty fanatical about it after a while!

What is the most common trash you find? Fortunately, we live on a very clean block. I find a lot of cigarette packs/butts, but the closer you get to Broadway, the more fast food garbage you find, especially plastic knives and forks, coffee cups, bottles and fast food containers. If owners leave dog poop in the bags, I pick that up, too.



Do you need to recycle what you find? No. The most frustrating part of the job is finding the garbage cans to put the trash in. There is only the one can on the corner of WEA and 104th, near the mail box, for the whole block, and it is usually overflowing. I often end up just taking everything back home with me.

Any thoughts for folks interested in volunteering? It feels good to do this. I feel effective and you can see immediate results. The organization started with 70 volunteers in August and now has 1600 volunteers as of October 24th. And they hired three men from a local shelter to help out. They earn a salary and health benefits, so it’s a win-win for everyone.

One Block is always looking for more volunteers, as well as donors. Just don’t sign up to adopt West 104th Street—it’s mine!

Local Celebrities, Internet Stars

Riverside Park’s raccoon families are a hit. By Peter Littlewood

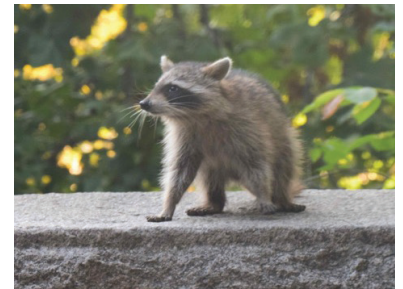
Although 2019 was the year of the Mandarin Duck, 2020 appears to be the year of the raccoon, at least in Riverside Park. Love them or fear them, it seems that they are having a banner a year both in the Park and on the Internet.


There appear to be up to three mothers with kits that have dens in the retaining wall just north of the stairs down to the park at 108th Street and another two with dens south of the stairs at 115th Street. In addition to kits, it appears several of these groups also include either sisters or yearlings that may not have left the area due to the abundance of food (adult male raccoons hang out in their own groups). Several neighborhood residents have blogged about the raccoons, and they have been featured in the West Side Rag.

Mostly these critters can be seen poking their heads out of holes in the wall or from tree cavities, scampering up the wall looking for food, or grabbing a little take-out from trash cans. While mostly active at night, they can be spotted in the late morning or early evening.

As a PSA, please do not leave food out for the raccoons. In the long run this is bad for all involved and has also caused a large rat population to spring up around 108th Street. Piling up trash above the rim of trash cans should also be avoided. While raccoons can’t really be stopped from getting into open trash cans, the author has observed raccoons several times knocking bags onto the ground in order to spill the contents on the sidewalk.

If you want to read more about the park’s local wildlife, one good resource is Melissa Cooper’s blog Out Walking the Dog, at <https://outwalkingthedog.wordpress.com/>.





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Going for the Gold

Residents, neighbors and Block Association board members celebrated the organization's 50 years of serving West 104th Street. And there was a raffle drawing too!

Photos by Marlene Schonbrun

50th ANNIVERSARY



The Block Association board and residents gathered for a group photo on the steps of 312 West 104th Street.



Resident and long-time volunteer Judy Williams sported a classic block T-shirt.



Ira and Karen Gershenthorn looked on—Ira loaned the Block Association his sound system and technical talent.



Yvonne Wong



Deena Neuwirth and her daughter watch the raffle drawing.



Raj Maheshwari in a signature Block Association mask; he loaned his brownstone's steps for the event.

The Block Association earned \$1443 from the raffle.



Lynn Max, right, looks on with Jane Emery, last year's raffle winner.



Board vp Jeff Howitt reads the name of the second prize winner drawn by Eli Rogers.

COMMONLY REQUESTED COMPOUNDING IDEAS

- Boric Acid Suppositories
- Hydrocortisone Suppositories
- Ibuprofen Suppositories 100mg / 200mg
- Progesterone Suppositories
- Hyaluronic Suppositories for vaginal dryness
- Hormone Creams for men and women
- Pain Creams
- Nipple Ointment for breastfeeding
- Hydroquinone 6% Fading Cream
- T3 - T4 Thyroid Hormone Capsules
- Nitroglycerin .2% Ointment for Anal Fissure
- Nifedipine 2% Ointment
- Diltiazem 2% Ointment

***Topical Creams (in Lipoderm Base) for nausea, vomiting, pain, fever for adults and children
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A Zero Waste Gift Guide

Sustainable gift ideas for the holidays

By Sharon Waskow

What is zero waste? The simple answer: aim to send nothing to a landfill; reduce what we need; reuse as much as we can; send little to be recycled, and compost what we cannot. Here are gifts that will bring a smile to the receiver and won't hurt the planet.

Reduce single use plastic with stylish silicone bowl lids (visit www.everythingkitchens.com). Similar items are available at University Hardware between 113th & Broadway or give silicone food bags (available on Amazon) and pocket friendly Chico shopping bags (<https://chicobag.com/collections/shopping-bags>). Both are also sold at Health Nuts at 99th & Broadway. Buy local when possible.

For young children and grandkids consider plastic free toy brands like Plan Toys (usa.plantoy.com), Green Toys (greentoys.com) and Begin Again Toys (beginagaintoys.com).

For older kids and young adults, pair equipment with a nature activity,

such as binoculars and a birdwatching guide, or hiking boots and a trail map.

Contribute to community or environmental organizations. Consider organizations like our own West 104th Street Block Association (www.bloomingdale.org) or Riverside Park Conservancy (www.riverside-parknyc.org), or environmental or nature groups like Beyond Plastics (www.beyondplastics.org), the Audubon Society (www.Audubon.org) or the Nature Conservancy (www.Nature.org).

Consider giving handmade, edible gifts from the heart. Check out a list of easy-to-make delectables with recipes at www.buzzfeed.com/lindsayhunt/merry-foodmas-to-you. Or, gift a photograph or piece of art you have made.

Give no-cost IOU's to family and friends. Some ideas: stand in line at a favorite bakery, run errands, offer to carry food scraps to local drop off sites, teach a tech skill via zoom, curate and email a series of inspirational essays, poems, photographs, music.

The Rat Patrol Returns



The Block Association has begun a program to rid the block of the Norwegian rats that live under the road near the tree beds in front of 322 and 318 West 104th Street.

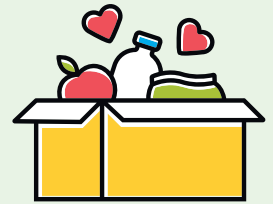
The rats have been unusually active this year, possibly due to changing food sources, such as the closure and reopening of the restaurants on Broadway. The reduction in garbage pick-up may also have led to increased foraging.

The Block Association has undertaken a coordinated response. Reaching out to owners and managers of the block's brownstones, the Block Association has engaged an exterminator to locate and bait the main access holes...of which there are more than we realized. The pest control effort will be a months-long project with repeated baiting. Financial support has been generated by most of the brownstones on the block. —*Steve Zirinsky*

Block Sponsors Holiday Food Drive

The Block Association has teamed up with City Harvest to run a food drive this December in block buildings. Many families are struggling in the pandemic, and have difficulty affording basic staples. City Harvest is seeking non-perishable items, which it will distribute to local food pantries. These include canned goods such as fruit and vegetables, proteins such as tuna and beans, juice packs, peanut butter and similar items.

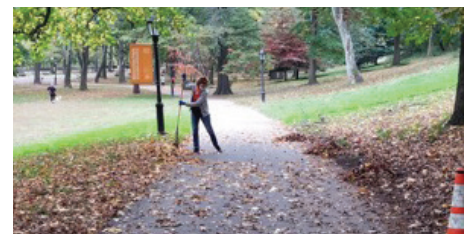
The food collection will take place the first two weeks of December. Please keep an eye out for signs in your building and more details in Block Bytes. Residents of non-participating buildings can drop off their donations in the lobby of 320 Riverside Drive (please wear a mask if you drop off).



Pitch In In the Park

This fall, the Block Association has coordinated with the Riverside Park Conservancy to assist in clean-up and maintenance in Riverside Park. On Saturdays, as many as eight residents have gathered in conjunction with the Conservancy to rake leaves on Riverside Drive, move wood chips at the Fireman Memorial, move mulch, and rake leaves and remove garbage from the planted areas. Additionally, people have worked individually on projects set up with the Conservancy. This project is similar to the Park-Tender program that some block residents have been doing for 30 years!

If you are interested in becoming involved, please email Nicholas Boos at boos.nick@gmail.com. He is coordinating the Block Association efforts with Riverside Park. Sometimes, it just takes a rake. —*Steve Zirinsky*



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 BAiP is an intergenerational volunteer network of neighbors working to help older residents to continue living at home safely and comfortably. BAiP sponsors social and cultural activities, provides educational tools, and a helping hand for those in need through its Neighbor-to-Neighbor (N2N) program. The latter takes the form of providing help going places, running errands, light shopping, accompaniment at home or outdoors, and information. If you want to contact N2N for this kind of assistance, or to talk about volunteering, e-mail: N2N@bloominplace.org, or call: 212.842.8831 to leave a message with your contact information. Either way, a BAiP member will respond promptly.

COMPUTER CONSULTANT/PC DOCTOR
 Computers repaired, maintained, viruses removed, junk mail controlled. Advice to repair or buy. I do Windows! Contact Greg Williams, block resident at 212.749.2398, 917.771.2929, or prosolutions@stny.rr.com,

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 Former Bronx HS of Science teacher SAT, SHSAT, GRE, LSAT logic games Henry 212-666-0396

MEDICARE & AARP/UNITED HEALTH CARE MEDICARE PLANS. I am a BAiP member and licensed independent agent with the AARP/United Health Care Medicare plans. I am happy to help you understand Medicare and Medicare plan options (no cost). Please feel free to contact me at (cell) 914-419-5499 or (email) susanmschorphd@gmail.com.

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YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE PUBLICIZED FREE!
 Publicize your neighborhood service (babysitting, dog walking, apartment cleaning, etc.) free in the newsletter and on our web site for one year, renewable. To submit an ad mail/deliver this information to Jon Smith, 320 RSD or send to 104thstreetba@gmail.com
 For our records:
 Your name and mailing address
 For publication: Your name, contact method (phone or email address), description of your service

The block association board meets once a month (now via Zoom). We enjoy having residents attend the meetings. Please let us know if you would like to attend one and we will send you an invitation. steve@zirinskyarch.com

Call for Safe Escort Home With Block Guard

If you're ever coming home at night and you'd like to have an escort, please don't hesitate to call Osbourne Thomas, our security guard. He has a special phone for these times, and he will come to meet you either on West End Avenue or Riverside Drive and walk with you to your home.

Security Guard Phone Number
347 723 1517

2020 4th Quarter Dues:

Please allocate my contribution to:
 Security Beautification Social Newsletter Board Decision (Suggested amt: \$40/quarter or \$160/year)

Name _____
 Address _____ Apt. No. _____
 E-mail Address _____ Phone _____
 (For internal use only. The Block Assn. will not sell, exchange, or lend your e-mail address to any outside parties.)

Suggestions for the block: _____
 Make checks payable to West 104th Street Block Association Inc.

Please send to our treasurer: Barbara Boynton: 905 WEA, #71, NY, NY 10025 or leave with one of the following:

M. Mann: 309 W. 104, Apt 3A	G. Waskow: 320 RSD, Apt. 8G
A. Grannis: 895 West End Ave.	J. Howitt: 315 RSD, Apt. 8C