

West 104th Street

SEPTEMBER 2023

BLOCK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

On the Hoof

For the Riverside Park goatherders, petting is paramount.

By Josh Raff



Tom Groll and friends

To be fair, my only real experience with goats was my elementary school classmate's 7th birthday party. Billy (unironically) lived in a mansion outside of Philadelphia and his parents hired a whole petting zoo to graze his gigantic back yard. Until I got into an argument with Billy and he told me the only reason I was at the party was because his parents made him invite the whole class. From that point on, I hated Billy, and I hated goats.

Then one afternoon recently, I took a run up north in Riverside Park, to the 120th St. Tennis Center, and ascended a flight of steps that are steep, windy, and adjacent to a vast area of lawless greenery occupied exclusively by disheveled-looking plant life, and, surprisingly, goats. With a little digging, I found out about Gotham NY and learned that it is a relatively new endeavor, only in its 4th year (2019, '21-'23), but the Riverside Park Conservancy website left a lot of questions unanswered. So I went right to the source: The goat herders.

I sat down with Ashley Fedor and Tom Groll, two of the Riverside Park Conservancy's volunteer seasonal goat herders, to get some answers.

Josh: Who are these goats and what gives them the right?

A&T: There are 4 goats this season. There were 4 last season, 9 in 2021, and a whopping 24 in 2019! This year's mob are named Charlie, Chico, Cowgirl, and Mallomar.

Josh: Where do these goats originate and why have they come here, of all places?

A&T: A farmer from Rhinebeck brings the goats. They visit between July and September and they come with intent. The area

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The Secret of a Great Yard Sale Is...You

Donate, lend a hand, bake and more



Ours is a special block and so is our block party. On September 30, we will host the 33rd Annual West 104th Street Yard Sale, a warm, welcoming and distinctly West Side event. Browse more than 60 stalls, visit the book and bake tables, bid in the Silent Auction, enjoy live music from New Orleans jazz to Motown, take a chance on the 50-50 raffle (last year's winner went home with more than \$2500) and celebrate our block. The Yard Sale also generates nearly one-third of the Block Association's annual budget. And we need you to help make it a success.

DONATE TO THE BOOK SALE

We need cookbooks, mysteries, novels, plays, poetry, history, biographies, memoirs, and children's books. Please pack your donation in bags marked "Yard Sale," and leave them with the 320 RSD doorman between September 17 and 28. (Please, no textbooks, journals, magazines, theses, LPs, or titles on baby care, computers, or self-help.)

DONATE TO 'WHAT-A-BARGAIN'

Not sure how you ended up with three cheese graters? We can help. We need second-hand bargains, including jewelry, knick-knacks, kitchenware, toys, unopened personal care products, embroidery kits, and more! (Please, no clothing and no exercise/computer equipment.) To find out if your items are donate-able and arrange a delivery time between September 15 and 28, please contact Joyce Mann at joycemann2@gmail.com or 212-721-6341 or 516-238-4609.

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Go Green Now: 6 Tips, see page 7.

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Contributors to the September Issue:

Karen Gershenhorn, Dru Heidle, Stephen Helman, Mary Koval, Joyce Mann, Josh Raff, Hanna Rubin (editor). Newsletter designer: Brian Hajjar.

WEST 104 BLOCK ASSN FINANCIAL REPORT

JULY 2023

OPENING BALANCE	\$22,602.61
Income	8,960.19
Dues	189.93
Merchandise	20.00
YS Vendors	566.20
Contribution	8,184.06
EXPENSES	4,828.79
Guard Service	2,964.87
Rodent Control	1,776.68
Accounting	87.24
CLOSING BALANCE	\$26,734.01



Help the 104th Street Gardeners with Rat Control

The gardeners who tend the panel garden at the foot of West 104th Street (see p. 5) ask that neighbors stop putting out bird seed around the garden. It feeds the rats, not the birds. Everyone can help reduce the rat problem by being careful with their garbage and not providing free meals to the rat population.

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Nancy Lian (ex officio)	320 RSD	212.316.6112



On the Hoof *continued from page 1*

they inhabit is two steep acres of invasive plant life, such as poison ivy, porcelain berry, mugwort, and English ivy. The goats easily traverse this landscape and eat up all the bad greenery. Then they naturally fertilize the area, so it grows back, but significantly lessened. Eventually, the park will cultivate this land in a new way with noninvasive vegetation.

Josh: When will that occur?

A&T: The park aims for next year.

Josh: So that means...

A&T: Yes. Potentially, no more goats in this area.

Josh: So no more Gotham at all!?

A&T: Well, there are plans to continue Gotham, just in a different part of Riverside Park. TBD.

Josh: Okay. If there's an encounter, how do I tell them apart?

A&T: The 4 goats comprise 3 breeds. Charlie and Cowgirl are Nigerian Dwarf and they are the smallest. Chico is La Mancha. He's got tiny ears and he's the only one with horns. And Mallomar is a Swiss Alpine. He's the largest.

Josh: Any other distinguishing characteristics?

A&T: Cowgirl is obsessed with tennis. You can usually find her at the bottom of the hill watching the players...word on the street is she's not a fan of Pickleball.

Josh: I won't tell anyone. I know that gets touchy.

A&T: Charlie is the favorite among the volunteers. She's super sweet and snuggly. Chico is the attention-seeker of the bunch and Mallomar likes to climb up on tree stands and head butt. He and Chico have a kinship. All of them get along well on the whole.

Josh: Can I arrange a visit?



Ashley Fedor and Mallomar

A&T: They're out and about grazing and eating daily between 6am-7pm. They wear bells so you can hear them even if you can't see them. If there is a crowd at the top of the hill we usually herd them up between 6:15pm-6:45pm to say hello. That may be your best bet on a given night.

Josh: Why are us non-goat herders instructed not to pet them?

A&T: It's for your protection, but not for the reason you'd think. They're lovely and adore being petted—that's actually our motto: Petting is Paramount—BUT we have to wear gloves because they're rummaging around in poison ivy all day so it lives on their fur. If you pet them with bare hands you could be in for a rude awakening. It doesn't bother them at all, but the humans might not be so lucky.

Josh: I want to become a goat herder.

A&T: No you don't.

Josh: True. I can't back that up. But if I did...

A&T: Well, right now the conservancy is only taking return volunteers and herders, but you can always sign up for the Riverside Park Conservancy Newsletter and mailing list as there are tons of ongoing volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

Josh: I have more questions, but no more time.

A&T: Go to the website riversideparknyc.org/goatham

Josh: I've faced my childhood trauma head-on and I've overcome it. I forgive you, Billy.

The Conservancy has added three goats to the herd for September. The goats will be at work in the park until the end of the month. Author Josh Raff is a writer, performer and director who has a new movie debuting this month. See below.

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Meet Josh Raff, Writer, Performer, Filmmaker

A New Yorker since 2008, Josh Raff has had several chapters already as a performing artist. He led a hip hop band, created solo theater pieces, and most recently has turned to movie-making. His newest short film, *Man Down II*, will be screened at the Angelika Film Center on September 14. He calls the 30-minute comedy, which he co-wrote and directed, "close-to-life narrative fiction." It's based on his own experience as a junior tennis player who won the local club championship at 14, and then returned 22 years later to compete with his childhood nemesis—and won. "I like to describe the film as an epic revenge tale where the stakes couldn't be lower," he says.



He has a new music project in the works, and a short film script that is in development. And he is enjoying life on 104th Street with his fiancé. "I am a big fan of when the block association sets up tables on the corner and sells t-shirts and raffle tickets," he says. "It's a communal vibe that I hadn't experienced in New York before."

(The film's premiere is open to the public; tickets are available for purchase at mdiproductions.com/mandown.)



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How Does Their Garden Grow?

The West 104th Street gardeners create an urban oasis for neighbors to share

Photos by Stephen Helman

At the end of West 104th Street, on the park side of Riverside Drive is a “panel” garden that is a riot of blossoms and colors in late summer. It is tended by Karen and Ira Gershenhorn and Dru Heidle of 320 Riverside. Karen also tends the island garden on the north side of the intersection. (Neighborhood historians can read the history of how the panel garden started in the September 2017 newsletter posted on the Block Association’s website, www.bloomingdale.org. Please also see p. 2 for a request from the gardeners to help with rat control.)

The gardeners receive mulch, fencing, and other items from Riverside Park Conservancy to aid their efforts. “Plants are from the Conservancy, friends’ gardens, seeds saved from everywhere,” says Karen, who has worked on the garden since 1989. Dru joined her in 2000. “I call this a memory garden,” she says. “Many of the plants and bushes came from the gardens of people who are no longer with us.” Each loves different aspects of gardening. “I especially enjoy working alongside the butterflies, birds and bees,” says Karen. Dru loves people asking questions about the garden. “One of my favorite things is answering questions from kids and pointing things out,” she says. Here are some current garden highlights.



Phlox



Russian sage, Coleus, Brown-eyed Susan



Cowpen daisies.



Hollyhock



Echinacea

The Secret Garden on 97th Street

By Karen Gershenhorn

The Lotus Garden, located on W. 97th Street (above the parking garage, between Broadway and West End Avenue), is open to the general public every Sunday during the gardening season from 1 to 4pm. A secluded 7000 square-foot enclave of flowers, birds, a lotus pond and winding paths, the unusual community garden is tended by 28 volunteer gardeners from April to mid-November. For more information, visit The Lotus Garden Facebook or the garden's website: <https://thelotusgarden.org>

If you would like to become a keyholder and visit the garden at other times, information is available on the website. For general information, you can also ask Karen Gershenhorn at 320 Riverside Drive (kgershenhorn@mindspring.com).



All Photos by Stephen Helman.



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Go Green Now

What you can do to help our planet this minute

By Sharon Waskow

Have the bad air, record temperatures, forest fires, floods, and tornadoes caught your attention this summer? If so, perhaps you've been asking yourself how you can do more for our ailing planet. Even if you've managed to ignore this summer's news cycle, here are 6 suggestions for actions you can take starting now. Note: some are easier to do than others, some may push you out of your comfort zone, each will put you on the road to being a climate solutionist.

1. Avoid plastic when you grocery shop. Why? Plastic pollution is a global problem affecting the health of oceans, rivers and humans. Resist pre washed greens and cut up fruit in clamshell containers. Bring your own reusable bags for produce and ask purveyors to place your meat, fish, deli order in your own container. (Some may refuse). Shop where they offer items in bulk rather than prepackaged. Bring your own reusable container when getting coffee/tea to go. It may take a while but shopping with a mindset to avoid as much plastic as you can works.

2. Compost your food scraps. Why? Food waste creates methane gas in landfills. When we divert food waste to compost it ends up enriching the soil in city parks and gardens. Food waste is also turned into biogas to be burned as fuel. Participate in New York City's curbside pickup program. If your building is already signed up to receive the service, keep adding your food scraps to the brown bins or start participating if you haven't already. If your building is not participating, take advantage of the Smart Compost Bins now available in our neighborhood. Find Smart bins at:

SW Corner W 96th & West End Ave

NE Corner W 97th and Broadway

SE Corner Broadway and W 102

SE Corner Broadway & W 109

Or, drop off your food scraps at the farmer's market at Broadway btw. 114th & 116th Streets, Manhattan. Open Sundays and Thursdays year-round. Compost Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

3. Voice your concerns to elected officials. Why? It matters! When we stay silent our representatives think we don't care about issues. Stay current with city, state and federal environmental legislation. One way is to subscribe to the It's Easy Being Green newsletter (<http://www.itseasybeinggreen.org>).

4. Save the date to participate in a huge NYC Climate March on September 17. Join It's Easy Being Green and Beyond Plastics. (www.beyondplastics.org/events/march-to-end-fossil-fuels-9-17-23)

5. Change your bank and credit accounts. Why? Bank of America, Chase, Citibank, and Wells Fargo are the biggest investors and funders of fossil fuel companies. Fossil fuels are the biggest contributor to climate destruction. Amalgamated Bank in New York is a fine alternative. While you are at it, consider talking to your investment advisor about divesting from funds that support fossil fuel companies. Keep bringing it up. My advisor after repeated nagging finally did the research and complied with my request.

6. Vote for and support the campaigns of pro climate candidates. Why? We need environmental laws and oversight to turn things around. Refer to the League of Conservation Voters Scorecard (<https://www.lcv.org/work/congressional-scorecard/>) At election time look up the environmental policies of your local, state and federal candidates.

7. Stay informed on pro environment lifestyle changes and climate actions by subscribing to notifications from and supporting Beyond Plastics (www.beyondplastics.org) Third Act (www.thirdact.org/act) The Nature Conservancy: www.nature.org

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The Secret of a Great Yard Sale Is...You

DONATE TO THE SILENT AUCTION

Find a happy home for your neglected antiques, vintage collectibles, posters, photographs, paintings, theater tickets, household items in their original boxes, and services. (Piano lessons? Baking?) Please contact Hanna Rubin at Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net or 212-961-6606.

DONATE TO THE BAKE SALE

Share your best treats with your neighbors: cookies, cakes, pies, snacks and finger food. Please call Lynn Max at 917-355-7771 or Alex Grannis at 212-316-1644 and let them know what you plan to bring.

DONATE YOUR TIME

Do you have an hour? Lend a hand the Book Table, Bake Sale, or set up and break down. Please contact Mary Jo Gennaro at mjgennaro@gmail.com.

Meet Block Guard Larnel "Big L" Peterson

By Joyce Mann

Larnel Peterson, the new block guard, is a Bronx native who lives near Yankee stadium. He is a proud lifelong New Yorker and Yankees fan. He has a son and two daughters, and a 3 year old grandson in New Jersey. He enjoys visiting friends and family in Georgia, South Carolina, where he is originally from, and Florida. But he visits only in winter time. "I hate the heat. Cold doesn't bother me," he says.

Peterson, who likes to be called "Big L" has been a security guard for close to 30 years. He has worked security at all kinds of venues including concerts, department stores, as well as city streets such as ours. He praised our neighborhood, noting one resident insisted on giving him a bottle of water, and although he didn't need it, he was so impressed with her kindness that he took it.

He sees his job's main responsibility as "to keep everybody safe. As people get to know you, they will even tell you if they see something suspicious, but it takes time for them to trust you. Usually people are in their buildings by 9 or 10 o'clock so I can relax a bit after that."

He says he is happy with his line of work because "I have a good heart to help people." He believes in treating everyone equally. "I show my respect and they give it back to me."



NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

BABYSITTING

Responsible, experienced 29-year-old block resident available for babysitting during the evenings and weekends. Please contact Hayley by text or call (440-231-1441).

BLOOMINGDALE AGING IN PLACE

(BAiP) Bloominplace.org

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.

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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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 Hanna Rubin, Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net.

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

Contribute to the Newsletter

Interested in writing or photographing for the West 104th Street Block Association newsletter? Have suggestions about what to cover in the neighborhood? Want to share block news, suggest a profile, send a photo? Please send an email to Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net. Your ideas are welcome.

Check Your Junk Folder

Did you sign up for Block Bytes but have not received it lately? Check your junk folder. It may end up there unless you add the email to your permissions list.

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M. Mann: 309 W. 104, Apt 3A

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