

WOODSIDE HERALD

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25 CENTS

Middle College Early College Proves to be a Cost-saving Option for College-bound Students

When Isamar Padilla entered Middle College Early College four years ago she knew that her mother, who was raising her on her own, could not afford to pay for her college tuition. But Isamar knew she would not only be able to go to college, she would go for free.

This fall, she will begin her fifth year at Middle College Early College. There she will continue taking tuition-free college courses at LaGuardia Community College, where she has already earned 46 credits toward her associate degree.

"I knew that I would not have to end up like my cousins who had to find work after graduating high school because they could not pay for college," said Isamar. "Middle College Early College offers me a great opportunity to take college courses for free and graduate with a degree in travel and tourism."

Isamar will be joined by 61 of her fellow Middle College Early College 2009 classmates (out of a class of 98) who have decided to stay a fifth year. According to Linda Siegmund, principal of Middle College Early College, this number represents a dramatic increase over previous years, where on average, between 25 to 30 students out of a graduating class of 100 decided to stay on.

"They are staying for a lot of different reasons, but the prevailing reason is the economy," she added. "By staying one more year, some students can get enough credits to enter college as an advanced sophomore, while others can obtain enough credits to graduate LaGuardia with an associate degree."

With college tuition skyrocketing and the economy slowly recovering from a crippling recession, for many of its students, Middle College Early College is proving to be an attractive option. Middle College, which was established in 1974 as an alternative high school by the New York City Board of

Education and LaGuardia, was redesigned in 2002 as an Early College when the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded LaGuardia \$7.6 million to create similar small schools throughout the country. These special institutions would allow minority and disadvantaged youngsters who were struggling academically to follow an accelerated path that would lead to a combined high school diploma and associate degree in five years.

"Programs like Early College provide a much more efficient way for kids and their families to experience moving through the educational system," said Dr. Cecilia Cunningham, director of Middle College National Consortium, a nationwide network to which Middle College belongs. "The intent is to get them started in college right away so that they can get the experience."

Christian Garcia, another graduate who because of economic reasons decided to stay a fifth year, said the program is a "win-win" for the student. "For someone like me who knows he wants to go to college, but is not quite ready, MCEC allows me to explore options while taking college courses."

Over time the Early College paradigm has been redesigned. Instead of having students work toward an associate degree, the revised mission is to encourage them to earn up to two years of college credits. Under this new direction, Ms. Siegmund said that the new goal is to have 70 percent of their students graduate with at least 24 credits by the fourth year. It now stands at 25 percent.

"Research shows that if students have 24 credits they are more likely to continue their education," she said. "Those who have less credits have not built the academic momentum that is needed to succeed."

While the goal has shifted, Dr. Cunningham noted that

those Middle College Early College students who decide to stay the fifth year successfully achieve their academic goals. "Many get their associate degree while those who do not complete their studies after the year will go on their own and finish in the sixth year," she said.

Isamar hopes to be an associate degree holder. After she receives her degree from LaGuardia, she plans on applying to Adelphi University to pursue a degree in psychology. "If I get a scholarship I will enroll right after LaGuardia," she said. "If not, I will get a good job in the travel and tourism field and help my mom save up for my college tuition."

Researchers applaud the program's success in encouraging these students to not only receive their high school diploma but also earn college credit. And the program received an extra boost when President Obama, in a recent speech on education, called on Americans to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. When Middle College Early College opened in 2002 it was the first early college in the nation, and remains the model for the 201 Early-College schools throughout the nation. Following Middle College Early College's paradigm, these schools have their students enroll in high school courses in the ninth and tenth grades, and by the second half of the tenth, encourage them to begin taking college courses.

Those ready for college courses have three options available to them. There are courses, taught by a high school teacher, which are attended by the entire class. Other classes have a small group of high school students joining LaGuardia students. And when students are ready to be on their own they can take classes independently.

Throughout their college ex-

(Continued on Page 6)

SUMMER STREETS'S SUMMER FUN



Photo & Story by Alyssa Bonilla

The Sunnyside Summer Streets program is underway to rave reviews. Sponsored locally by Sunnyside Shines, 46th Street between Queens Blvd. & Greenpoint Ave. will be closed from 12 noon - 7pm every Saturday in August for the benefit of the community. The program is part of Mayor Bloomberg's initiative to create more open space for the public to enjoy during the summer months. Sunnyside and Astoria are the only two neighborhoods in Queens to be participating in the program this year.

Sunnyside Summer Streets is creating a play space for kids of all ages. Sunnyside Shines provides games and toys for children to enjoy. Activities include good old-fashioned, non-electronic fun like jump ropes, hula hoops and arts and crafts. It is a delight to see a shy child quickly warm up to the fun and enjoy themselves in the sun. In the words of one child, Jessica, "So I can just play with this stuff?" "Yes." "That is SO cool!"

Sunnyside Shines is dedicated to creating a vibrant neighborhood and to supporting local merchants. To learn more, or to volunteer at the Summer Streets event, please contact: info@sunnysideshines.org or call 718-606-1800.

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BOROUGH PRESIDENT HELEN MARSHALL OPENS NEW RCN CABLE OFFICE



Queens Borough President Helen Marshall helps cut the ribbon to officially open new office space on 43rd Avenue in Long Island City for RCN Residential and Business Services, Tuesday, August 4th. At left is PK Ramani, RCN senior vice president, and at right is Vice President Anthony Ontiveros. RCN is a leading provider of all-digital and high definition video, high speed internet and voice services.

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan Says New Tax Credit Encourages Investment in Queens

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan (D-Queens) announced the governor signed into law the enhanced Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, economic development legislation she supported that provides tax credits to individuals, organizations and businesses for rehabilitating structures on the National Register of Historic Places (A.9023).

In order to qualify for the tax credit, the structure must be in a geographic location where the residents' median income is below the state average. The tax credit will help entice individuals and businesses right in Queens – and throughout the state – to take another look at neighborhoods they might not have otherwise invested in – and provide an important public service.

"This law will help breathe new life into our distressed neighborhoods by providing an incentive to invest in areas with historic buildings that are deteriorating, communities that are languishing, and families that are

struggling," Assemblywoman Nolan said.

Assemblywoman Nolan added that these preservation efforts will play a vital role in revitalizing the Queens economy. A recent economic impact study conducted by HR&A Advisors of New York projects that the rehabilitation tax credit will stimulate over \$500 million of economic activity in New York State and create nearly 2,000 jobs over the next five years.

"Queens has a wealth of historic properties that have been overlooked and are awaiting their time to shine again," Assemblywoman Nolan said. "Returning these structures to their former splendor will create new jobs as well as unite our past with our present and future and help cultivate appreciation for our history and culture."

Building on New York's existing rehabilitation tax credit (Ch. 547 of 2006) the new law will:

*Increase over five years the

cap on the commercial credit value from \$100,000 to \$5 million and the residential credit value from \$25,000 to \$50,000 beginning in 2010;

*Target the credit to "distressed" areas – identified as a specific area whose income is equal to or less than 100 percent of the statewide median family income;

*Increase the share of qualified rehabilitation costs that commercial property owners can claim for the credit from 6 percent to 20 percent; and

*Enhance the financial incentive for homeowners by making the credit refundable for taxpayers with incomes below \$60,000.

"Rehabilitating Queens unique historic buildings is an important step toward making our community a better place to live. This thoughtful, innovative legislation will help revitalize not only our community, but communities throughout New York," Assemblywoman Nolan said.

Gioia Study Finds Wide Disparities in Prescription Drug Pricing Up to 500% Difference in Prices Across City

Councilman Eric Gioia (D-Queens), Chairman of the Council Committee on Oversight and Investigations, released the findings of an investigation today which found wide disparities in the cost of prescription drugs across New York City – up to 500%. The study is a follow-up to Gioia's 2004 and 2006 reports which found enormous variation in prescription drug prices, and eventually helped lead to the launch of a state website last year that tracks prescription drug prices. However, a survey of city pharmacies found that the State website does not accurately reflect retail prices across the five boroughs, and that wide disparities between pharmacies persist. Gioia released a three point plan to help consumers, including regular audits of prescription drug prices by the New York State Department of Health to make sure they accurately reflect the consumer market.

"New Yorkers expect and deserve to know that when they go to the drug store they are getting the best deal possible," said Councilman Gioia. "Millions of New Yorkers rely on prescription drugs to live fuller, healthier lives – and they should not have to think twice about getting them because they're being overcharged. The State needs to do a better job making sure consumers have the most up to date information possible so they can make good choices about where

to get their prescription drugs."

Gioia's investigation looked at 5 of the most commonly prescribed drugs: Celebrex (commonly prescribed for arthritis), Metoprolol (for chest pain, high blood pressure), Lipitor (for high cholesterol), Albuterol (asthma), and Metformin (diabetes). There were large price disparities for these drugs both within boroughs and across the city:

Metoprolol varied in price from \$8.95 in Staten Island to \$75 in Chinatown, a more than 700% difference.

Celebrex varied in price from \$110 in Brooklyn to \$168 on the Upper West Side, a 53% difference.

Metformin varied in price from \$8.75 in Queens to more than \$55 in Manhattan, an over 500% difference.

Lipitor varied in price from \$80 in Manhattan to \$150 in the Bronx, an 87% difference.

Albuterol varied in price from \$30 in Manhattan to \$55.91 in Queens, an 86% difference.

Additionally, Gioia's investigation found:

In Manhattan, one pharmacy reported a price for Albuterol that was 50% more expensive than a pharmacy less than a block away, and a 10 minute walk cut the prices of blood pressure medication (Metoprolol) by nearly a third.

Prices of Celebrex were similarly disparate – prices varied more than 30% in a single neigh-

borhood.

There was a 20% price disparity between Lipitor prices at two Bronx pharmacies on the same block.

In Brooklyn, a 15-minute walk can save you 20% on an asthma inhaler.

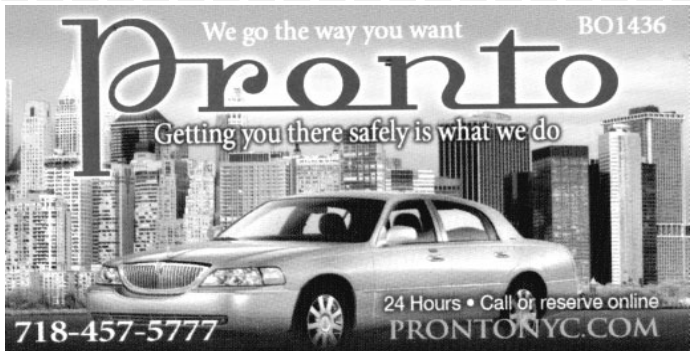
In 2004 and 2006, Gioia released reports which found similar wide differences in prescription drug prices. Following Gioia's studies, a State law was passed, creating a website where prescription drug prices are posted to aid consumers in comparison shopping. However, even though the law mandates that the website be updated weekly, some listings have not been updated since 2007.

In addition, even for pharmacies where a recent price was listed online, the price was often significantly different than prices given to Gioia's investigators on request from individual pharmacies, and for some drugs, prices were not listed at all for many pharmacies:

45% of the pharmacies surveyed for Metoprolol did not have prices for that drug listed online. Of those with prices listed only, only 1 pharmacy was within \$1 of what was given over the phone. Prices for Celebrex obtained over the phone were the most different from online prices, ranging from \$38.09 cheaper over the phone to \$37.11 more expensive.

On average, prices obtained

(Continued on Page 7)



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FOR AN APPOINTMENT

Marc Leavitt

the Only Queens Borough President Candidate Qualifying for Matching Funds, Outraising Incumbent



Marc Leavitt, Democratic candidate for Queens Borough President, is the only candidate for that office who has qualified for public campaign matching funds, according to today's Campaign Finance Board announcement. Notably, incumbent Helen Marshall, who is running for a third term since term limits were lifted, has raised less than half of the minimum required, as of her campaign's most recent filing.

None of Marc's three opponents who have filed nominating petitions has come close to raising the \$44,588 threshold of matchable donations. As of his last filing, Marc received over 500 separate contributions, nearly twice as many as any other candidate.

"Being the only candidate to qualify for matching funds shows who has real grassroots support in Queens," said Leavitt. "This is especially significant, since I am challenging an incumbent who has all the institutional support."

As Borough President, Marc plans to promote the communities of Queens as the multi-cultural heart of the greatest city in the world, bringing positive attention and new jobs and opportunities, while featuring and preserving the distinctive character of each neighborhood.

SUNNYSIDE

FILM FESTIVAL

SHORTS

3RD ANNUAL SUNNYSIDE SHORTS FILM FESTIVAL SHOWCASING NEW FILMMAKERS

First year with a 3-D film!

A bedroom community of Manhattan, conceptualized with the help of Eleanor Roosevelt and former home for Woody Guthrie, Judy Holiday, and John Guare, Sunnyside is now hosting a fun, outdoor film festival!

More than 15 filmmakers will have their work showcased at the Sunnyside Shorts Film Festival on Saturday, September 12, 2009 at 8:00 PM in the Sunnyside Gardens Park at 49th Street and 39th Avenue in Queens. There is a \$10-suggested donation at the door.

Featured films run from one minute to 25 minutes in length and include animation, documentary, and narration. All films abide by PG-rating guidelines. Filmmakers hail from all over the United States, as well as international locations.

Early arrivals will be treated to music by Kristen Cerelli, beginning at 7:30 PM. This year will be the first time we have shown a 3-D film, and we are excited. There will be glasses provided, but if people have a favorite pair of their own, please bring! The Sunnyside Gardens Park is an outdoor venue. In the event of rain, the festival will be held at the Sunnyside Community Center, 41-31 39th Street between Queens Boulevard and 43rd Avenue.

The Sunnyside Film Festival, in conjunction with The One Eleven Four Screenwriters Lab, is presenting the Short Script Challenge and will conduct readings of winning scripts the week prior to the film festival.

For directions, visit www.sunnysideshorts.net.



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PLEASE e-mail copy for the WOODSIDE HERALD to:

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SUMMER STREETS

Every Saturday in August, 46th Street at the Sunnyside Arch, will become a public plaza as part of NYC's exciting new *Summer Streets* program.

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THE 8TH ANNUAL BIX BEIDERBECKE

By Sandy Jimenez

It seemed as though almost all of the Sunnyside community turned out for the 8th annual concert in memory of Bix Beiderbecke, a cornet player who lived in Sunnyside before his death in 1931. This jazz great played and recorded classics during the Jazz Age in the 1920s. There were many more people than the 50ish seats that were set up on 46th street between Greenpoint Avenue and Queens Boulevard. The concert took place under the Sunnyside Arch for the first time, as part of the Sunnyside Summer Streets program hosted by Sunnyside Shines.

On August 8, 2009, all of Sunnyside celebrated the 78th anniversary of Beiderbecke's death in his apartment on Bliss Street. Residents sat, stood and danced while the Sunnyside Drum Corps played their repertoire of patriotic music and other musical classics under the direction of Tony Lana.

Afterwards, the Sunnyside Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Orchestra treated the community to two packed hours of jazz classics. The group of 14 gets together once a year especially for this concert. They played two big band sets and one Dixie Land set under the direction of Frank Pedulla. Jimmy Van Bramer, city council candidate, introduced the songs and residents danced in their seats and some standing up, as the band played classics such as "Georgia on my Mind," "Babyface," and "The Saints Go Marching in."

The concert took us back to an older Sunnyside, when 46 street was still Bliss Street.



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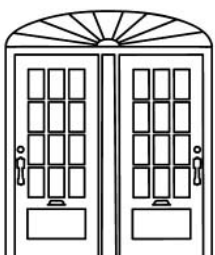
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SUNNYSIDE MEMORIAL CONCERT



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John "Doc" Millus, Mary Giancoli, Alyssa Bonilla, Sandy Jimenez and Artie Wiener.**



"The concert took us back to an older Sunnyside, when 46 street was still Bliss Street"

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Get Familiar With Basics of Estate Planning

If you still have many years to go until retirement, you may not consider drawing up an estate plan to be a high priority. And yet, as long as you have a family and financial assets, you do need to think about estate planning - no matter what age you are. Of course, you may be aware that the Tax Relief Act of 2001 repealed estate taxes for the year 2010, while reducing them gradually before then. Doesn't that mean you don't have to worry about burdening your heirs with estate taxes? It's not quite that clear. Current law repeals the estate tax only in the year 2010 and there is uncertainty over what will happen in the following years. Laws affecting estate taxes could easily change many times over the next several years. Also, comprehensive estate planning covers more than just taxes. You still need to determine who gets what. You still want to reduce costly and expensive delays in distributing your estate. And you still need to make arrangements to have someone act in your best interests if you become incapacitated. To address these and other issues, start familiarizing yourself with these basic elements of estate planning:

Proper titling of assets - It's important that all your assets - your house, property, bank accounts, retirement plans, stocks, bonds, etc. - be properly titled, in terms of legal ownership. You may want these assets listed in your individual name, in joint tenancy, or in the name of your living trust.

Beneficiary designations - You need to make sure that your beneficiary designations are always updated and consistent with your overall estate plan. For example, if you name a spouse as a beneficiary on your life insurance, and you later divorce and remarry, you'll need to change the beneficiary on your policy.

Will - A will spells out how you want your assets distributed. If you don't have a will, your assets may be distributed according to state law. If that happens, your heirs may not get what you had intended for them to receive. A will is also the document in which you can name a guardian for small children.

Living trust - For many people, a simple will, by itself, may not be sufficient. For one thing, if you only have a will, your assets may still have to go

through the time-consuming and potentially expensive process of probate. A well-designed living trust, though, can bypass probate and give you more control over how and when your assets will be distributed.

Durable power of attorney - When you set up a durable power of attorney, you name someone to act for you if you become mentally or physically unable to make financial and legal decisions on your behalf.

Health care directive - By drawing up a health care directive, you authorize, in advance, the kinds of health care you would or would not want if, for whatever reason, you cannot communicate for yourself. In your health care directive, you can name someone to make health care decisions for you, leave written instructions to help others in making those decisions or even do both. We've just looked at the "bare bones" of all these estate-planning elements. To get a fuller understanding of these issues, and to draw up a comprehensive estate plan, consult a legal advisor who is experienced in these matters. And once you've got an estate plan, revisit it periodically to make sure your arrangements reflect the changes in your life that will invariably come your way.

This article comes as a courtesy of your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor Vincent Renda located at 47-01 Queens Blvd. Suite 203 Sunnyside NY 11104. Phone him at 718-361-1306.

Beat the Heat A Free Film Series @ Gantry Plaza State Park

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Middle College Early College

(Continue from Page 1)

perience, students still are closely connected to the high school via strong support services. At any time they can turn to their high school teachers, tutors, counselors as well as a college counselor. "Traditionally, college students are on their own when it comes to seeking help," said Dr. Cunningham. "At Early College they are required to take advantage of those services. There is always someone there to help and support them and there are college resources they can tap into."

Dr. Cunningham noted that the support system is one of the reasons for the students' 80 percent college course pass rate. "It just points to the fact that kids need a lot more mandated support during that transition to a new institution," she said.

She went on to say that another reason for student success is LaGuardia's long-term

commitment to the school. Citing the latest report by the American Research Institute indicating that Early Colleges located on college campuses are more successful than those that are not, Dr. Cunningham said. "It is critical to maintain the relationship, the alignment and accessibility of support services," she said. "And despite diminished resources from the state and city, LaGuardia still remains committed."

"For the past 35 years, LaGuardia and Middle College Early College have forged a strong partnership that has allowed high school students who had been struggling academically to achieve academic success," said Dr. Gail O. Mellow, president of LaGuardia. "Through the Early College initiative, the partners are building upon that foundation and are sharing expertise and resources in order to expose these students to a college experience that will encourage them to continue their education."

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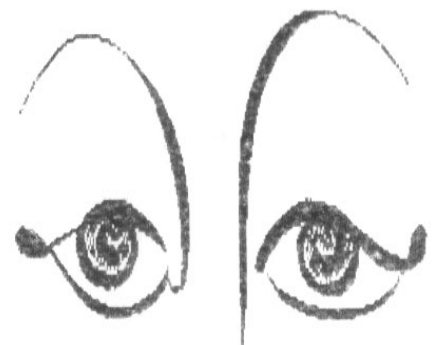


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"Celebrating 21 Years...."

Letters To The Editor



The following letters are the opinions of its author and not necessarily those of the Woodside Herald.

APPALLED

Dear Editor,

Last week I was appalled to read "Eric Gioia Chooses Deirdre Feerick to Succeed Him as Council Member" in the Woodside Herald. Yes you read correctly they chose the word chooses. I was appalled not because they share membership in one political party or another, but because they belong to a political Machine that can so blatantly tell the electorate who will succeed who. I thought that this was still a country where the PEOPLE got to chose- not the predecessor. This process doesn't resemble anything near what I learned in eighth grade social studies in 1977.

If this doesn't resemble the United States you grew up in either, please join me in telling the "Machine" who the Constitution says is supposed to decide who represents us by voting for the candidate who best demonstrates the desire to empower you the PEOPLE!

Cordially,
Marvin R. Jeffcoat
SFC, USA (RET)

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

Dear Editor,

As you look around the western portion of Queens, better known as Sunnyside you see a lot of supermarkets, five and dime stores and fast food restaurants. You think to yourself 'there's something missing, something for the youth of the neighborhood to do.' How many times can you take a kid to the park or even to McDonalds to play in the play area? Not too many, right? Exactly!

The after school programs here are great, but unfortunately, the great politicians of New York City have decided that these programs do not factor into their budget plans. What does that mean? More kids running around with absolutely nothing to do after school or even on the weekends. Which in turn creates problems. When kids get bored, they less likely find something creative to do and more likely find something that seems fun to do at the

time but usually gets him or her into trouble.

There are a lot of low-income families in the neighborhood and there are a lot of families that are well off, but 9 times out of 10 they cant afford to send them to high priced centers (for example, The YMCA). The YMCA wants to charge people a membership fee close to \$90 a year depending on what programs you choose. The Boys and Girls Club is \$75 a year, which includes a summer camp program for approximately 6 weeks (there is also financial assistance if you qualify). The YMCA is about \$600 just for the summer camp and that's only for 3 weeks. What are parents supposed to do with the other 5 weeks left in the summer? The sprinklers in our park are great, but it starts to get repetitious after awhile.

An idea was brought up about a month ago to the build a Boys and Girls Club right here in Sunnyside It's a non-profit organization that has been around since 1860.

Some of the greatest actors and athletes have come out of this organization such as actor Denzel Washington and Yankee's third baseman Alex Rodriguez. They have both said without the Boys and Girls Club they would not be the people they are today.

There's one club in Astoria and it has been there for a long time, and has had great success. This center has programs for children and pre-adults ages 6 to 18 years old. This center is known to build character, along with social and educational and development. The programs range from an education center (homework help etc.) to life and health skills.

I know many of you are going to read this and maybe even agree with us, talk about for a day or two and then forget about it. But I want you to take a good hard look around this neighborhood and tell me that the idea is a bad one. I guarantee you'll change our minds.

Thank you very much,
Mark I. Wilensky &
Dana K. Huston

**Be
Heard!
Send In
Your
Letters to the Editor
Deadline:
Wed. 5 p.m.**

Drug Pricing

(Continued from Page 2)

over the phone for Albuterol differed by 13% from prices listed on the state website for the same pharmacies, with 65% of the pharmacies surveyed actually providing prices lower than those listed on the state website.

In order to protect consumers from high prices, Gioia is calling for:

Improved Reporting: While the state website was a good first step, without accurate and reliable information, it's of limited utility to consumers. The State is currently relying on Medicaid reporting to update the website, leading to incomplete information. The State should look into alternate reporting system such as requiring that pharmacies report prices directly to the State. Pharmacies are already required to keep an updated list of prices for the 150 most common prescription drugs to give to consumers when requested in person.

Regular Checks or Audits of Prices: The State must conduct regular audits and checks of pharmacy prices to ensure that the website more accurately reflects the retail prescription market.

Consumer Education: It pays to shop around – and many pharmacies will even match prices when asked. An educated consumer is the best guard against excessively high prescription drug prices.

To help find the cheapest price for medication, Gioia suggested that consumers call ahead to various pharmacies in their neighborhoods to find the best price, since prices tended to vary even within neighborhoods. Also, Gioia suggested that if consumers think they are being charged too much for medication, they should contact the New York State Department of Health at 1.866.881.2809.

Pet of the Week

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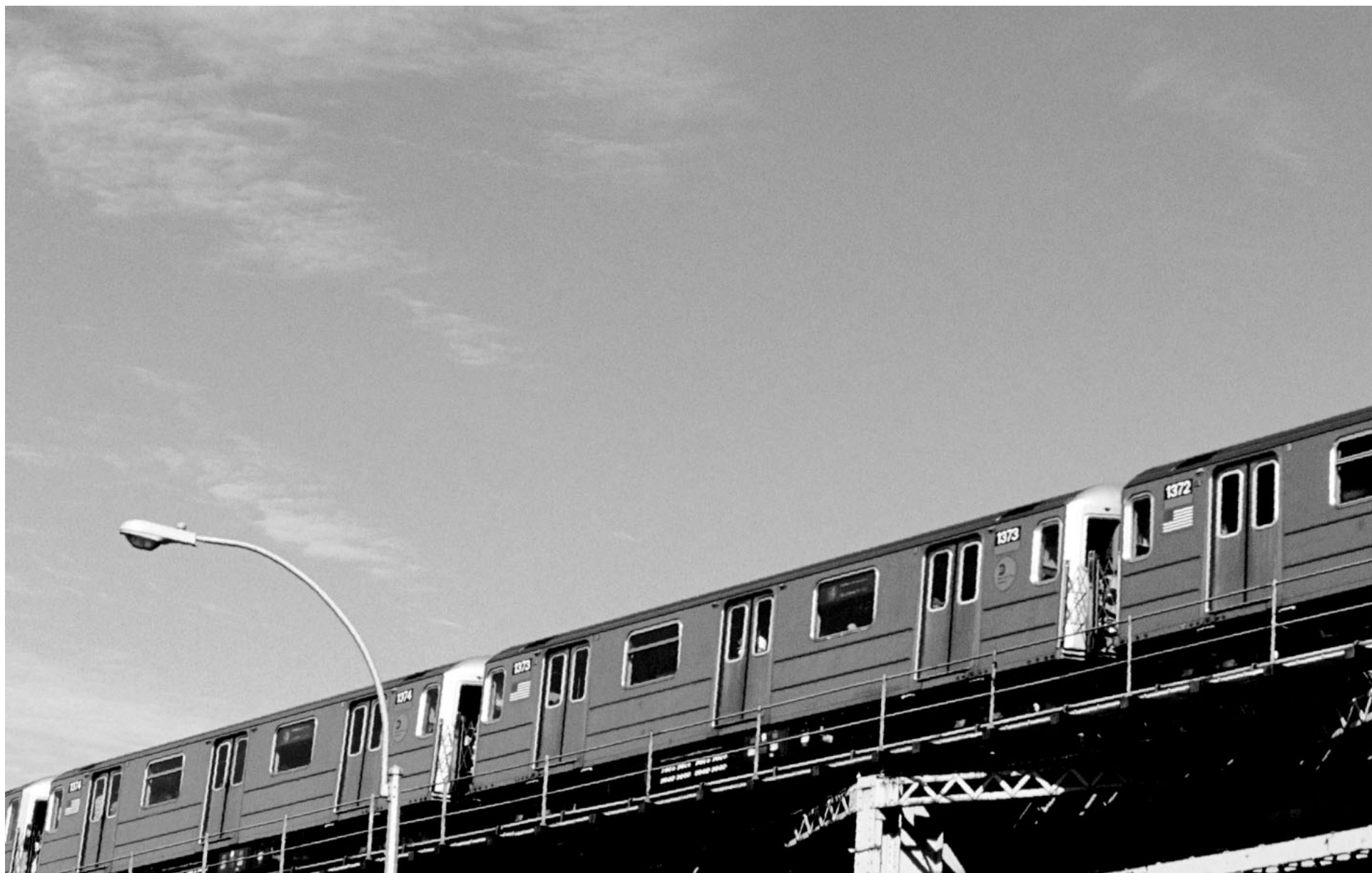
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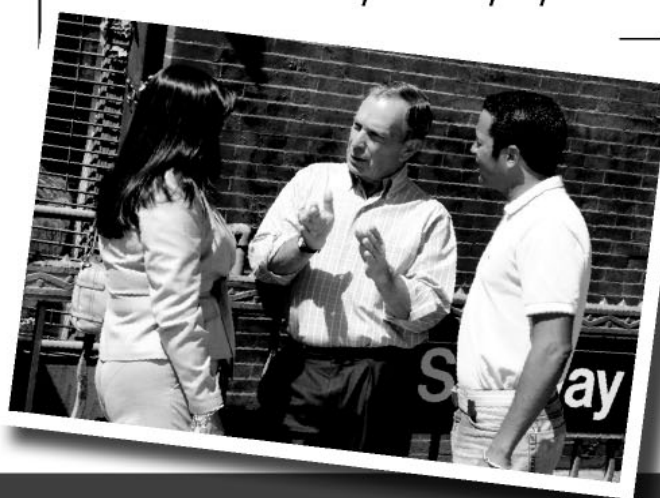
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