

South Beach Civic Association



June 2007



"It begins with discussion - which leads to action."

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SBCA

The South Beach Civic Association is a group of neighboring, non-partisan citizens acting together to solve community problems.

We strive to spark discussion and inspire civic achievement in order that everyone may enjoy their homes, families, neighborhood and quality of life. Every member of the Association and the community play a crucial role in this process by bringing new ideas and diverse perspectives to the table.

SBCA CERT

South Beach Civic Association was the first in Staten Island to be selected by the New York City Office of Emergency Management to train citizens to prepare for and respond to emergencies in their communities.

Established in 2003, the South Beach Civic Association Community Emergency Response Team (SBCCERT) are a group of community-based volunteers who undergo an intensive,

Through the work of the Civic our members have taken an active role in bringing about improved safety to our roads; have kept building and over-development issues in the area in-check and have increased environmental awareness through recycling and efficient use of energy.

South Beach Civic is proud of its membership, their service to other community organizations and their efforts to support local business and care for public spaces.

25-hour training program in basic disaster response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, and medical operations. Chief Leader, Joseph McAllister developed the curriculum, is certified through New York State Office of Emergency Management as a trainer and coordinates classes taught by professionals in CERT preparedness protocols.

The South Beach Civic Association's Picnic and Educational Event concludes our 2006-2007 season and marks the beginning of our summer hiatus.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all for your time and talents and look forward to a future of continued success.



Graduation of the third SBCA CERT Team took place on November 19, 2007. SB Civic would like to thank everyone for your time and service.

For further information regarding SBC CERT, call 718.930.6603.



Then ...

South Beach is one part of New York City's four beachfront areas. It is bounded by Hylan Boulevard to the north, Midland Beach to the south, Fort Wadsworth to the east and Quintard Street to the west.

Originally part of a small Dutch community in the mid-1600s, it was one of two coastal neighborhoods - Middle and South Beach. During the 1920's the area

was a well-known summer resort with hotels, bathing pavilions, theaters, beer gardens, carousels and Ferris wheels and Happyland Amusement Park - complete with Broadway stage productions, vaudeville shows, Japanese Tea Gardens, the Carnival of Venice, and the shooting gallery. The boardwalk resort thrived throughout the 1910s and 20s, but fires, water pollution, and the

Depression (1929-1939) took their toll and the crowds eventually disappeared. In 1935 the property was vested to the City and underwent renovations as part of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (1882-1945) Works Progress Administration (WPA).

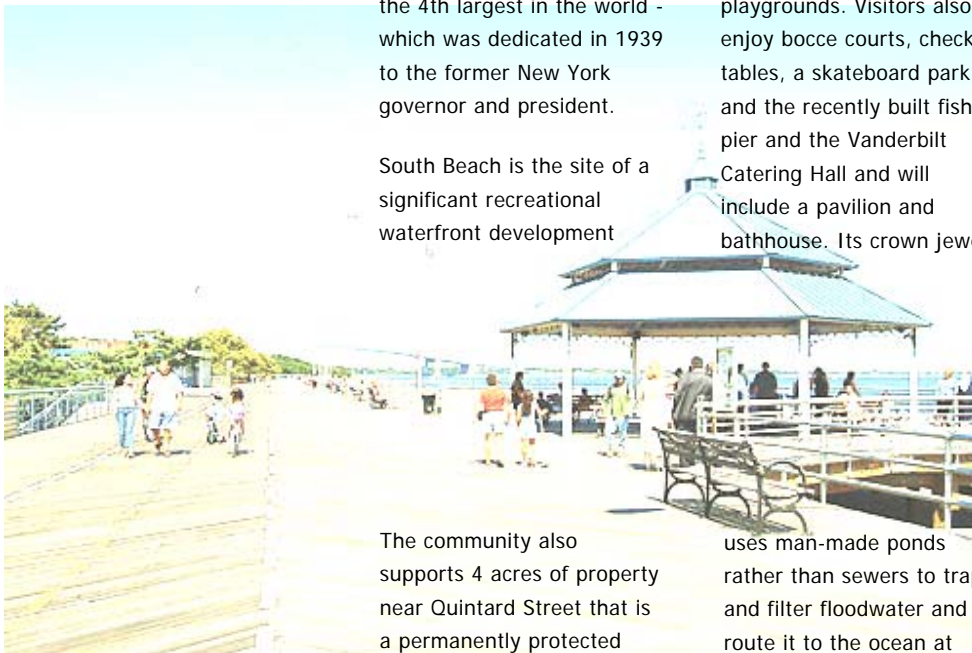
...and now

The WPA project removed the deteriorating music halls, carousels, and shooting galleries bringing the present-day two and a half-mile long boardwalk - the 4th largest in the world - which was dedicated in 1939 to the former New York governor and president.

South Beach is the site of a significant recreational waterfront development

program. The FDR Boardwalk and Beach is a 638-acre park offering baseball fields, handball and shuffleboard courts, and colorfully adorned playgrounds. Visitors also enjoy bocce courts, checker tables, a skateboard park, and the recently built fishing pier and the Vanderbilt Catering Hall and will include a pavilion and bathhouse. Its crown jewel

is the *Fountain of the Dolphins* sculpture - sculpted by Steven Dickey and donated by the Staten Island Borough President's Office in 1998. The Boardwalk is bordered by Fort Wadsworth, one of the oldest military installations in the US and national park, and Miller Field, a 187-acre open space with athletic fields, a picnic area, children's playground, a community garden, and walking trails.



The community also supports 4 acres of property near Quintard Street that is a permanently protected portion of the Staten Island Bluebelt - an award winning, ecologically sound and cost-effective storm water management system that

uses man-made ponds rather than sewers to trap and filter floodwater and route it to the ocean at about half the cost of traditional sewers. Known as the South Beach Wetlands, this area of undeveloped wilderness and

marshes provides an important wildlife habitat for a wide variety of species, including migratory birds, and a diversity of plant life. The preservation of the South Beach Wetlands is part of a growing trend of green space preservation on the South Shore.

Community

"Our democracy is growing weaker because we are using up, but not replenishing, the civic and moral resources that make our democracy possible."

In its report, The Council on Civil Society associated this decline, in part, to the weakening of civic associations.

"Association contributes to ... respect for others, self-restraint, public spiritedness, and the willingness and ability to participate in the give and take of self-government." It allows citizens to participate in, and contribute to, public life and the political process.

In his book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert Putnam "shows us how we have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbors and our democratic structures – and how we may reconnect."

"Social capital... [connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness] - turn out to have forceful... effects on many different aspects of our lives...[there is] hard evidence that our schools and neighborhoods don't work so well when

community bonds slacken, that our economy, our democracy, and even our health and happiness depend on adequate stocks of social capital."

Americans need to reconnect with one another.

"Having this network of support – people who not only care about one another, but cheer one another on - makes all the difference"



SBCA Community Service Awards

South Beach Civic seeks to build upon the tradition of "social capital". Creating a network of support – people who not only care about one another, but also cheer one another on - makes all the difference.

To that end, the Civic presents this years' recipients of the South Beach Civic Association Community Service Awards – in recognition of those members who we feel exemplify the standards and goals of community service.

We extend our genuine appreciation to them for their extraordinary contributions...



Informing the Community 2006-2007 Guest Speakers

This year's roster of guest speakers included **Anthony Xanthakis** and **Stephen Harrison** and newly elected **Assemblywoman Janele Hyer-Spencer**. The candidates presented their positions and outlined proposals for tackling some of Staten Island's problems. Each speaker's presentation was followed by a question and answer period.

Victoria Larsen, Borough Director with the Office of the Mayor, addressed the January 2007 meeting regarding the impact of Mayor Bloomberg's State of the City address. Ms. Larsen answered questions from members about the \$400 tax rebate, and the 5% property tax decrease for homeowners.

The February 2007 meeting hosted Buildings Department Deputy Director, **Robert Hudak**. Mr. Hudak explained some of the new building codes and related amendments to zoning laws. He then fielded questions from members and distributed informational brochures and copies of the General Provisions section of the Code.

South Beach Civic wishes to extend our gratitude to all of our speakers for sharing their time, knowledge and experience with us.

In March, **Leonard Garcia-Duran** and **James Maraglia** introduced civic members to the role of the Department of City Planning in matters of zoning, land use and policy as well as advising the Mayor, Borough President and City Council in all matters related to development and improvement. Members were updated on the progress of the Growth Management and Transportation task forces and the task force on Homeport Redevelopment.

Dean Zias, NYC Outreach Coordinator for Energy *Smart Communities*, a program of NYSEDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority) was present at the April meeting. As Associate Project Manager for the Small Homes Program, Mr. Zias works with not-for-profit community-based development organizations, to raise awareness and provide Energy Smart information. Mr. Zias spoke about specific ways to

conserve energy and save money on energy costs. Distributed literature included information on programs available for energy home audits and low and middle-income incentives and loan programs for homeowners. The May 2007 meeting welcomed Borough Parks Commissioner **Thomas Paulo**, and Department of Transportation Assistant Commissioner **Thomas Cocola**.

Commanding Officer Deputy Inspector **Thomas Delahanty** of the 122nd Precinct introduced himself at the February meeting, and the March meeting welcomed **Lt. Virginia** and **Captain Mancuso** of the Auxiliary Police Department who spoke about the 45-year history of the Auxiliary Unit and the work they perform.

Additional guest speakers have included representatives from various community organizations and non-profits, members of neighboring Civic Associations, including **Alise Arneo**, President of the Grasmere Civic and members of the 122nd Precinct Community Council.

Local business owners and representatives including **Joann Curora** of Absolute Best Care and tax accountant, **Wanda Gomes** of H&R Block gave presentations to discuss their services, incentives and benefit programs.

Meeting of May 23

The Civic continues to do whatever it can to help our community move into the future through education and participation in the process. By keeping members up-to-date on relevant information and events, engaging in letter-writing campaigns, attending public forums,

discussing issues with invited speakers and monitoring the actions of policy makers, we can help maintain a standard of accountability, and support our elected officials so they may serve the needs of our community more effectively.

Community Director, Dennis Brown reminded members that their concerns and issues are the basis of the Civics' letter writing campaigns. He encouraged members to write down their thoughts on the "issues sheet" in order that the Civic can advocate on

our behalf to community leaders and elected officials. "Most of the time, we get a response", Dennis says, "and even if we don't – no response is a response."

The Civic welcomed guest speakers Thomas Paulo, Borough Parks Commissioner and Department of Transportation Assistant Commissioner Thomas Cocola.

Members of the Ocean Breeze Civic and representatives of 122nd Precinct Community Affairs Office and the 122nd Community Council also joined us.

Transportation Assistant Commissioner Thomas Cocola updated members on progress being made to improve traffic flow on Staten Island.

The extension of left turn lanes and the Midland Beach one-way grid have all had a positive impact on congestion and traffic flow. The 122nd precinct reports a 27% reduction in accidents along Hylan Blvd. since the

implementation of the left turn ban. In addition, both the Staten Island Rapid Transit and SI Ferry have increased service. Evaluations are taking place to explore the development of the North Shore Rail and transportation connections to New Jersey.

Noting the increase in registered motor vehicles – from 50,000 in the late 1950's to 268,168 currently, Mr. Cocola stated

the department is "open to suggestions" and assured members that their concerns would be addressed.

In his presentation, Mr. Paulo offered an overview of Staten Island's park system. Staten Island enjoys over 7500 acres of parkland – and when Fresh Kills is added to the system, it will total more than 10,000 acres – vastly more green space than any other borough. Commissioner Paulo outlined the various projects and improvements being made to the boroughs parks and recreation areas.

Mr. Paulo then opened the floor for questions. In response to Vic Cenci's question regarding a windmill farm at Fresh Kills, Mr. Paulo explained that a pilot program was currently testing for windmill viability at Fresh Kills.

Monica Perrault discussed ongoing negotiations with Mr. Paulo's office regarding the South Beach S.P.O.T. dog run, to be located at the end

of the boardwalk. She is currently accepting bids on fencing, and organizing a fund-raising campaign.

In closing, Dennis Brown thanked Mr. Paulo for his dedication to improving quality of life for Staten Islanders'. Mr. Cocola also applauded Mr. Paulo's commitment to public service.

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South Beach Civic Association
(Founded October 2001)

President:
Joseph McAllister
Vice President:
RoseAnn McAllister
Treasurer:
Dianne Romano
Recording Secretary:
Fran Brown
Community Director:
Dennis Brown
Sgt. at Arms:
Edward White

Board of Directors:
Louis Antonelli Sr.
Mildred Bilotto
Harold Bilotto
Pat Venezia
Dan Venezia
Anthony Gilberto
Nicholas Manzi

Standing Committees:

Website & General Information Coordinator:
Scott Schneider

News & Media Coordinator:
Linda Lyman

Charity Committee Project Coordinator:
Joanne Bennetti

Raffle Coordinator:
Mary Shalo

E-mail:

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Newsletter:
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The SBCA meets in the **Fr. Dominic Epifanio Parish Center** of Holy Rosary Church at **85 Jerome Avenue, S.I.**

As New York’s fastest growing borough, “Staten Island faces profound economic and infrastructure challenges... without a change in direction, the borough could experience an economic decline and a significant deterioration in its quality of life”

The report, *Staten Island 2020* by Jonathan Bowles and Jim O’Grady of The

Center for an Urban Future, outlines the problems and challenges Staten Island faces, and some of the strategies needed to meet those challenges. According to the report, experts predict that the Island’s population will grow by 16%, or 77,000 new residents by 2030 – with the Island’s elderly population doubling from 51,000 to 103,000, or

18% of the Island’s total population, more than any other borough.

The report concludes that better planning, better leadership and a stronger sense of identity are first steps to meeting the challenges we face.

Taking Steps

Assemblywoman Janele Hyer-Spencer has sponsored legislation that would establish a real property tax exemption for Staten Island homeowners of homes fifty or more years old. In an effort to combat over-development and protect communities from inappropriate development, this legislation would provide homeowners an added incentive to retain their property.

(source: assembly.state.ny.us.mem

Through the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority *Get Energy Smart* program, you may be eligible to earn up to \$100 by turning in your old, inefficient air conditioner to a participating retail location, and purchasing a new Energy Star Qualified Model. Find out more by visiting a participating retailer:

Appliances R Us
810 Forest Avenue
(718) 448-1515
or
P. C. Richard & Son
2399 Richmond Ave.
(718) 494-7600
or
visit the Get Energy Smart website at:
getenergysmart.org.

Dennis Brown, in collaboration with Vic Cenci addressed a letter to City Council President Christine Quinn, and Council members Jim Oddo and Mike McMahon regarding the issue of gun control, urging local officials to support the Mayor’s Against Illegal Guns coalition.

Each of us, in our own way, has an opportunity to not only influence better leadership, but also be leaders and build a better community... **On the Road:** Be patient, leave space, lower the volume, be attentive.

At Home: Donate, Recycle, turn off the TV and talk, get to know your neighbors
Out and About: Walk, return the shopping cart, don’t litter, hold the door.

*South Beach Civic Association
Community Service Award
Distinguished Service*

Andrew J. Lanza



Andrew Lanza was elected to the New York City Council in 2001, re-elected in 2003 and overwhelming re-elected in 2005, serving the 51st Council District, South Shore of Staten Island. In 2006, Lanza was elected to the New York State Senate, 24th Senate District.

Senator Lanza has championed improvements to Staten Island's schools, securing millions of dollars for new classrooms, computer and science labs, books, playgrounds and school safety improvements.

He was instrumental in opening the new firehouse in Rossville and secured an agreement from Mayor Bloomberg to open a new Police precinct on Staten Island.

He called for the establishment of, and serves on, the Mayoral Traffic and Transportation Task Force, to address Staten Island's long-standing traffic problems.

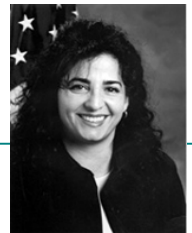
He has won victories for Staten Island's parks and open spaces by saving many acres of open space and delivering millions of dollars for new recreational parks. The Natural Resources Protective Association's Waterfront Discovery Program, an organization dedicated to protecting Staten Island's Waterfront Marine Environment and natural habitats, is sponsored by NYC Department Of Youth & Community Development and was funded with a grant by Lanza.

Senator Lanza has fought to reduce the high property taxes and has sponsored tax relief legislation for Staten Island residents. (Reprint: nyssenate24.com/biography/nrpa.org)

South Beach Civic Association wishes to thank Senator Lanza for his dedication to preserving and improving quality of life on Staten Island.

*South Beach Civic Association
Community Service Award
Innovation & Leadership*

Diane J. Savino



Diane Savino has worked to improve the lives of working people throughout her career.

She served as Vice President for Political Action & Legislative Affairs for local labor union-Social Service Employees Union and successfully campaigned for an increase in the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.15—the first for New Yorkers in over a decade.

In 2004, she was elected to represent the 24th Senatorial District, North Shore of Staten Island.

Senator Savino introduced the Consumer and Worker Protection Act, legislation requiring Big Box retailers, like Wal-Mart, to provide basic health insurance for their employees and the Renter's Tax Credit for middle and low-income tenants.

Senator Savino sponsors a wide array of programs in the 24th District, including the only Kosher soup kitchen in New York City, Staten Island's Downtown Drive In Movies, a variety of youth programs, and funding for senior centers within the district.

In the area of women's issues and health and safety initiatives, she has sponsored bills addressing pay inequity for women, passed legislation requiring unpaid leave for victims of domestic violence, successfully passed a law increasing funding for cervical cancer and has been active in educating women about the HPV vaccine. She also fought to eliminate New York's five-year statute of limitations on sexual assault crimes.

Local initiatives include a task force to fight Child Obesity, Small Business Town Halls, First Time Homeowner Workshops, a Women's Health Fair, free mammograms, and a series of district-wide workshops for seniors on the new federal prescription drug plan. (Reprint: nyssenate23.com/biography)

South Beach Civic Association wishes to thank Senator Savino for her charitable support and indispensable participation in the South Beach Civic Association and South Beach Civic CERT in our efforts to safeguard and enhance quality of life in our community.

*South Beach Civic Association
Community Service Award*

Thomas Paulo
Community Enhancement



Thomas Paulo and Adrian Benebe

Borough Parks Commissioner Thomas Paulo holds a Masters in Landscape Architecture from SUNY Forestry, and an AB and JD from NYU. He began his career with Parks & Recreation in 1984 as the administrator of the Greenbelt. He is the author of the Greenbelt Master Plan, which he implemented first as Greenbelt administrator and, since 1993, as Parks Commissioner for Staten Island.

As "The Borough of Parks" Staten Island has more than 8,000 acres of parkland, the Greenbelt being the second largest park in the five boroughs. Fresh Kills Park, once completed, will be the largest park in New York City. Commissioner Paulo has helped develop and implement a number of high profile and complex projects. Under his leadership, acreage and usage of Staten Island's parks system continues to flourish.

South Beach Civic Association pays tribute to Commissioner Paulo for his service and guidance in protecting Staten Island's green spaces while developing, promoting and enhancing our parks and recreational areas. We thank Commissioner Paulo for his kind support of the Civic and its activities.

(Reprint: nycgovparks.org)

*South Beach Civic Association
Community Service Award*



Jim Romano
Outstanding Achievement

As a news photographer, Jim serviced the Associated Press, United Press International, the Miami Herald, the New York Daily News and the Staten Island Advance, serving the interests of Staten Island for more than 60 years.

Jim bought his first camera in 1946 for \$1.00. Since then, he has photographed such notables as John D. Rockefeller, Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Ford, congressional candidates, John Murphy and Charles Reingel, celebrities Henry Fonda and Willie Nelson and boxers Jack Dempsey and Joe Lewis, to name only a few. He was the official photographer for Imelda Marcos, and covered the 1951 New York State Crime Commission. His work has earned him numerous accolades, among them, 7 police commendations, a Marine Corp commendation and the American Legion award. His integrity and benevolence have earned him the trust and friendship of many of those with whom he has worked.

Jim's accomplishments reach far beyond his work. "People aren't interested in who you used to be, they care about who you are now". Yet, through his work, we are reminded of who we used to be and are shown who we are now. His photographs illustrate for us how we have evolved as a community and, in turn, help us anticipate our future - sharing a common purpose.

For 10 years Jim has contributed his time and talent covering the events and activities of the South Beach Civic and South Beach Civic CERT for the Staten Island Advance and the Star Reporter. We are also delighted to call him a friend.

South Beach Civic is honored to have Jim's support. His efforts over the years to publicize and promote the work of the Civic have been an invaluable service and inestimable gift. We thank him and salute his remarkable body of work, begun with "just a dollar and a dream."

*South Beach Civic Association
Community Service Award
Mark of Distinction*

Harry & Mildred Bilotto



South Beach Civic Board members, Mildred and Harry Bilotto have witnessed many changes in the fifty years they have lived in the community. Open spaces, rustic bungalows, Tirelli Carousel and Happy Land amusement park have all been replaced with parking lots and big houses. "There's no neighborhood anymore", says Mildred. "I miss that."

Harry and Mildred thought that neighbors knowing and caring about one another was a thing of the past. Then, about three years ago, they saw a flyer for the South Beach Civic and decided to see what it was all about. What they found was an opportunity to re-capture the sense of community that had been lost to them over the years. "Most of our friends have moved away. The Civic has allowed us to make new connections with the community, and new friends".

"We don't really do anything special," Harry says "we just try to help out a little, because we can." For Harry and Mildred "helping out" has meant not only participating in the Civic's monthly meetings but distributing announcement flyers, donating items for fundraising and raffles, and contributing to special events such as *Night-Out Against Crime* and, of course, the *Educational Event and Picnic*. But Harry and Mildred have accomplished much more. As Board members, they represent the Civic at Community Board 2 meetings, fighting to protect the remaining open space areas of the community and advocating for neighborhood issues. They spoke for South Beach's interest at the Community Board meetings on flooding in the area and victoriously took part in the City Council hearings to halt the building of homes in the South Beach wetlands. On June 9th they participated in Councilman Oddo's *Civic Association Open House*, a roundtable discussion to explore ways to increase public participation in local civic organizations.

What Harry and Mildred hope for is a renewed commitment to "neighborhood" and more young people who understand its value, to become involved with civic and other volunteer organizations in order to bring new ideas and fresh energy to their communities.

The South Beach Civic Association is proud to honor Harry and Mildred Bilotto, the embodiment of kinship and cooperative spirit, and a model for those who wish to participate in, and serve their community.

*South Beach Civic Association
Community Service Award
Mark of Distinction*

Mary Shalo



Beyond being a volunteer, Mary is, in the truest sense, a community activist. You cannot help but be encouraged by her constant commitment, inherent spontaneity and inspired acts of kindness.

Mary's volunteer work knows no boundaries. She performs office work several days a week at the Swedish Home for the Aged, serves on the Auxiliary Board of St. Elizabeth's Nursing Home, volunteers with the NYC Police Department and is an active participant of the 122nd precinct's community affairs council. She has contributed time to the National Lighthouse Museum, the Salvation Army, Ladies of Charity, Meals on Wheels, Bayley Seton Hospital and the Staten Island Zoo. Mary serves on the board of many of the organizations to which she belongs. She participates in the annual activities of Fleet Week, manages clothing and food drives and takes part in cake and craft sales for the wide variety of community groups with whom she's involved. It is with this same intent that Mary joined the South Beach Civic Association. She wanted to "get to know the neighborhood" and participate in community activities and events.

"I try to look out for people's best interest." In her "spare" time, you are likely to find Mary simmering a pot of chicken soup for a friend or offering a helping hand to a family member. Wherever Mary sees a need, she unfailingly finds a creative way to fill it.

Her efforts as fundraiser and raffle coordinator for South Beach Civic are an extension of that principal, fulfilling a fundamental and vital need of the Civic. We wish to gratefully acknowledge and honor Mary, for all her efforts on behalf of our community.