



## Subway changes and overnight van parking

Special alert for E and F train straphangers! There will be service disruptions nights and weekends from now through 2012 as the MTA starts an array of projects including the connection of the future Second Avenue Subway to the Lexington-63rd Street station and replacing tracks in the 53rd Street tunnel.

For the next week or two, the E train will run on the F line from Roosevelt Avenue to W. 4th Street from approximately 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. weeknights and 12:01 a.m. Saturday through 5 a.m. Monday. Free shuttle buses will connect the Court Square/23rd Street-Ely Avenue, Queensboro Plaza and 21st Street-Queensbridge stations during this change. There will also be different service changes every couple of weeks so be sure to keep reading the Queens Traffic Guru or visit the "planned service changes" section of the MTA website at mta.info.

A portion of Woodside will be Irish for a day as the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Sunday, March 6 will close Skillman Avenue from 43rd to 56th streets, 56th St. between Woodside and Skillman avenues and Woodside Avenue between 56th and 61st streets from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

### FROM THE MAILBAG:

#### Dear Queens Traffic Guru,

I live on a residential street in Flushing, 148th Street between 33rd and 34th avenues. There are many vehicles that park on the street, some of which I believe are violating public parking rules. If a vehicle is a special transportation vehicle or bus, are they allowed to park overnight on New York City public streets? We are being overrun by oversized transportation

vans, making the neighborhood look like a commercial district. I appreciate your assistance. It's all about quality of life.

**Thomas, Flushing**

Dear Thomas,

Based on what you described, they can park overnight on city streets as long as they are parked in legal spots. A bus, according to the NYC Traffic Rules, is defined as every motor vehicle having a seating capacity of more than 15 adults that is used for the transportation of people (bus parking is prohibited at all times unless authorized by sign per Section 4-10 (i) of the Traffic Rules). The oversized vans you're referring to likely don't fall into that category. In addition, while overnight parking for commercial vehicles is prohibited between the hours of 9 p.m. and 5 a.m., these vans are used to transport people, not goods. Therefore, they aren't commercial vehicles.

I do, however, understand your frustration (I get complaints about cabbies taking up parking spots, but they're allowed to park overnight). It's possible some residents in your neighborhood operate these vans or that others require their service.

Either way, there's little to no enforcement that can be done since I can find no laws being broken here. The advice I can offer, if it's really bothering you, would be to scope out what others in your neighborhood think and consider raising the issue collectively with Community Board 7, which can be reached at 718-359-2800.

**Queens Traffic Guru**

Email your Queens Traffic Guru at TrafficGuruSS@qchron.net or write to Queens Traffic Guru, 611 Broadway, Suite 415, New York, NY 10012.

## ADVOCACY

# LGBT Center providing solace in a unique program

by D. Jeep Ries

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in May 2008. It was stunning information from left field, since breast cancer did not run in my family. Fifty-four-years-old and self-employed for many years, I maintained health insurance at a hefty \$1,200 per month. Many others are not as well situated.

Diagnosis begins a whirlwind of information, circumstances and decisions to consider. I needed support from other women who understood from their own experience what I was going through.

The burden of cancer and its treatment is hard enough to handle without having my life examined through a judgmental lens. There is a vital need to educate straight women and men about who I am. And while I

do want to bridge the gap between straight and LBT, it can be exhausting.

Luckily, I found The Lesbian Cancer Initiative, a program of New York City's Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual & Transgender Community Center. The support network I found provided a huge respite. The Lesbian Cancer Initiative support groups allowed me to explore my feelings, grieve the loss of my breasts and discuss my medical situation without any real or perceived judgment. It was hard enough to lose my hair, and mourn the life I had until diagnosis.

Once I was back on my feet, post chemotherapy and surgery, I wanted to be as supportive to others as the Lesbian Cancer Initiative had been to me. I applied and was accepted for a peer co-facilitator position with the program. In this role I continue to see the unique difficulties lesbians, bisexual women and transgender people with cancer face.

In addition to dealing with the medical, emotional and psychological fallout that often accompanies cancer diagnosis, LBT people have the added barrier of enduring a world that does not always accept who they are and has few safe and welcoming environments.

Invariably, I have heard the participants' relieved feelings and expressions of gratitude



for the Lesbian Cancer Initiative's presence. I know there are others who don't reach out for the help they need because of fear of rejection or sub-standard treatment related to their sexual orientation or gender

identity. These LBT people, many of color, are a virtually invisible population who may travel some distance to go to the Lesbian Cancer Initiative for the opportunity to find similar souls and help each other through a most challenging time.

Cancer is unfair. No one deserves to suffer through the ordeal. So any ability to experience equality during treatment is more than welcome. That is what the Lesbian Cancer Initiative does for those of us who do not fit the often "expected" social mold.

The center is hosting a free event, Health and Pleasure Fair on Thursday, March 10 from 6:30-9 p.m. promoting "Health & Well Being."

The LGBT Center is located at 208 West 13 St., in Manhattan. The center can be reached at (212) 620-7310 or gaycenter.org.

D. Jeep Ries lives in Ridgewood.

# Help available for boro 'special victims'

## NYPD sex crimes addresses residents

by Michael Cusenza

Editor

Thanks to the "Law and Order" television franchise, millions of viewers are familiar with the acronym "SVU." But members of the real Police Department Special Victims Unit have been reaching out to communities to inform residents about what they do, and the programs available for abused children and anyone who has been sexually assaulted.

"These are not pleasant things to talk about, or even think about," said Sgt. Grace O'Donnell, who has been with the highly trained division of the NYPD for eight

years. "These crimes have a stigma attached to them."

The 24-year department veteran told the 110th Precinct Community Council Monday night that while the investigation and prosecution of sexual assaults has dramatically improved over the years, many times victims still remain hesitant to come forward. But resources are in place to help, O'Donnell noted.

"We encourage anyone who thinks they have been sexually assaulted to get to a hospital — preferably a city hospital," she said.

City medical centers alert a Sexual Assault Response Team composed of a social

counselor and specially trained physician who determine if an attack has occurred and collect the necessary evidence.

"This program gives you a support system, to be there for you," O'Donnell said.

In the vast majority of child abuse cases, O'Donnell related, the victim knows the perpetrator.

"These are not crimes that are out in public — they are done behind closed doors," she said.

The Queens Child Advocacy Center in Forest Hills has been a vital tool for abuse victims, detectives and prosecutors for the last six years, O'Donnell said.

"It's much better to put together a case with a kid [today] than it used to," she asserted.



Sgt. Grace O'Donnell. PHOTO BY MICHAEL CUSENZA