

Working to preserve Long Island's melting pot

By KENNETH R. CERINI

Long Island has centuries of rich history. Dedicated to preserving our diverse ethnic cultures, including occupational craft, ethnic music and dance, local architecture and storytelling, Long Island Traditions advocates for and documents what makes us who we are.

"Long Island culture is filled with very famous people, whether they are celebrities, master artists, musicians or craftspeople," said Nancy Solomon, executive director of Long Island Traditions. "Through field interviews and oral histories, we seek to break down the barriers that divide us, so that we can share in the power and excellence of our family traditions."

What is Long Island Traditions' mission? Long Island Traditions documents local architecture, from beach bungalows and bay houses to garden apartments and farm buildings. As fishermen and farmers disappear, we fight for the preservation of Long Island's contemporary maritime and farming culture throughout the region. We also seek to recognize and pay tribute to an array of ethnic cultures. We support Irish step dance, African American quilting, gospel and blues music, Jewish klezmer music, Native American stories and crafts, and the traditions of recent immigrants from Central and South America, India and Asia.

What is the most important component of the organization? Our core program uses oral interviews, photography, participant observation, historical research and artifact analysis to document cultural traditions passed through generations. We spend a great deal of time speaking with "experts" within their community who teach and perform.

What type of individuals do you look to speak with? We're always looking for Irish fiddlers, dancers of all ethnic backgrounds, singers and people who have learned



NANCY SOLOMON: The organization honors the breadth of ethnic cultures here.

their art through families and communities, not from attending a university or school. We're also involved in looking at local occupational traditions, as a historic region we have a great deal of fisherman and farmers who are still in these fields and struggling to make a living.

Do you advocate to help preserve those historic occupations? We regularly attend and comment at public hearings on regulations that affect farmers and fisherman. Unfortunately, the laws and economy have resulted in hundreds of what used to be full-time fisherman who are now working outside their field. With a recent National Endowment for the Arts grant, we are creating a new exhibit in the new Port Jefferson Village Center on both boat builders and boatyards on Long Island to help carry on the tradition in different places throughout the community.

What other programs do you offer? Our Arts In Education program offers three in-school education programs: Mar-

itime Folk Arts, Ethnic Folk Arts and programs that examine community architecture. Our Historic Preservation program focuses on traditional and vernacular architecture – sites and structures throughout the region. Our Honoring Traditions program recognizes persons and organizations that are active in preserving their cultural traditions learned from their families and passing them down through the generations and to the public.

What is one thing that people misconstrue about Long Island culture? There is a misconception that folklorists are just individuals who collect and tell stories. In reality, folklorists have academic training backgrounds and are practicing a profession that's been around for well over 50 years.

What are you looking to accomplish in the future? To continue to raise awareness of local traditions. We're proud to present ethnic dance teachers in local libraries and schools, document local history and help preserve it. This is probably one of the few art fields that have not felt the incredible weight of the economy because our focus is to examine people who are rich in culture, proud and right in your neighborhood.

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Paid Staff 2
Annual Budget \$132,575
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Program Service 77 percent

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Tuition is hiked, rationally

SUNY and CUNY schools can now raise tuition by \$300 per year for the next five years, thanks to recent legislation signed by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo. Four SUNY schools, including Stony Brook University, will be entitled to an additional 3 percent annual increase, through a \$75 fee and up to a 10 percent tuition increase for out-of-state students, pending approval from the governor and SUNY chancellor. The law is effective with the 2011-12 academic year.

The so-called Rational Tuition Plan replaces an era of unpredictable tuition increases that made it challenging for colleges and families to plan ahead. Over the past two decades, there were periods without tuition increases and then sudden hikes of up to 40 percent, resulting in an average annual increase of 6.7 percent, which is higher than the \$300 annual increase allowable by the new law.

The Rational Tuition Plan was passed in conjunction with the NY-SUNY 2020 Challenge Grant Program, a joint program between the governor and SUNY that will incentivize long-term economic development plans on SUNY campuses and surrounding communities.

"In signing the Rational Tuition Plan, Gov. Cuomo has demonstrated his support for SUNY and the important role it plays in education, research and in the economic development of our state. Our students and their parents will now be able to better plan for their college costs," W. Hubert Keen, president of Farmingdale State College, said in a statement.

New home for the Hall

The Long Island Music Hall of Fame has found a home. The nonprofit recently signed a licensing agreement with the town of Brookhaven that will allow it to operate a museum and education center in the town-owned First National Bank Building in the village of Port Jefferson for the next 15 years, with an option to extend for an additional five years. The historic building, circa 1900, formerly housed the tax receiver's office.

The nonprofit, which celebrates the musical history of Long Island (including Queens and Brooklyn), previously operated as a website.

"We are thrilled to welcome the LIMHOF organization to Port Jefferson. We believe they will become a vital and integral destination, helping boost

Port Jefferson and the town's local economy and visibility," Margot Garant, mayor of the vil-

lage, said in a statement.

ACLD breaks new ground

Adults and Children with Learning and Developmental Disabilities Inc. broke ground on a new, state-of-the-art health care center in Bethpage. The 22,000-square-foot center, which is expected to open in July 2012, was christened the Charles Evans Health Services Center, in honor of the late philanthropist who co-founded the fashion house Evan-Picone.

At an estimated cost of \$10 million, the new building represents one of the largest capital expansions in the 54-year history of the Bethpage-based organization, which serves more than 3,000 children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

"ACLD is one step closer to completing its goal to expand ACLD services and improve the quality of life for thousands of Long Islanders with developmental disabilities," Aaron Liebowitz, executive director, said in a statement.

Funds for change

The Long Island Unitarian Universalist Fund, which is administered through the Long Island Community Foundation of Syosset, recently approved grants for six nonprofits. Established by the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, the fund promotes

progressive social change.

Five Towns Community Center in Inwood is the recipient of \$20,000, to strengthen the capacity of the local Latino community to address education and law enforcement policies that negatively impact parents and children. Immigration Legal Services of Long Island, based in Water Mill, was awarded \$15,000 to provide legal services to Hispanic victims of domestic violence. Sepa Mujer of Central Islip's award of \$20,000 will allow for the expansion of a leadership education and advocacy center for Latina immigrants in Suffolk.

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign was awarded \$25,000 to mobilize and empower Nassau County's diverse bus riders to lead a campaign to fight Long Island Bus service cuts. The Institute for Parenting at Adelphi University in Garden City received \$20,000 for advocacy to change judicial practice and improve outcomes for children in Nassau's child welfare system. Adelphi's Long Island Center for Nonprofit Leadership received \$40,000, which coincided with another \$40,000 grant from the LICF to support organizational capacity-building programs and services for area nonprofits.

— BERNADETTE STARZEJ

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