

AT A GLANCE

VAN NEST— It's deja vu all over again.

The Deja Vu Bar and Grill on Morris Park Ave. won a temporary restraining order Friday to prevent the state from yanking its liquor license.

The license revocation was to take effect last Friday, but bar owners scored a reprieve that morning in Bronx Supreme Court.

"The bar will reopen for the foreseeable future," said spokesman Elliot Pollock, calling the claims against it baseless.

The state threatened to yank the license after an investigation and several violations resulted in fines. Also, neighbors complained of loud music and drunken disturbances.

State Sen. Jeff Klein charged that though the business was licensed as a restaurant, it was operated as a bar.

Tanyanika Samuels

MANHATTAN — The city Department of Education is rolling out its middle school fairs starting Tuesday.

Middle school directories will be available at borough enrollment offices, the middle school fairs, and on the department's Web site at www.nyc.gov/schools/enrollment, which will also list the fair locations.

Students will receive middle school applications at their elementary schools next month.

All applications must be returned to their school by Dec. 15.

Tanyanika Samuels

BOTANICAL GARDEN —

The New York Botanical Garden will be celebrating Columbus Day weekend with a Scarecrow and Harvest Festival, with events for children in the Everett Children's Adventure Garden and the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden. Visit www.nybg.org or call (718) 817-8700.

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Crews of students from Rocking the Boat took their hand-built creations out last Sunday and rowed 28 miles around Manhattan. Photo by Joaquin Cotten

BUILDING BOATS — & KIDS' CONFIDENCE

BY **ABBY LUBY**
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

SOMETHING SPECIAL happens when kids in the South Bronx learn how to build wooden rowboats.

Things begin to connect, math and science starts to make sense and learning becomes a positive experience.

Elsie Gonzalez, 20, learned boat building from Rocking the Boat, an after-school program. Four years ago she signed up when she was struggling in high school.

"All the measuring you need to build a boat, the technical know-how — it put everything in perspective. After that, my math and science grades shot up really high," said Gonzalez, who will be attending John Jay College in the spring.

Last Sunday, she was on hand when the young crews on a flotilla of hand-built boats rowed 28 miles around Manhattan, a fund-raising event for Rocking the Boat that pulled in more than \$60,000.

Eight boats, each sponsored by individuals and businesses, launched from Pier 40 on W. Houston St., stopped for breakfast at Hallet's Cove in Long Island City, for lunch at Swindler's Cove in Washington Heights and then returned to Pier 40 in the afternoon to celebrate.

The event also celebrated the achievements of thousands of youngsters who participate in various programs during the year.

"Most of our students are raised in the South Bronx," said Adam Green, executive director and founder of Rocking the Boat, now in its 10th year.

The youth development program serves more than 2,000 students and community residents. Young people with problems in school or at home find boat building engaging and can learn new skills, especially when the classroom is outside on the banks of the Bronx River.

"You don't expect to find boat building here in the South Bronx, where it's so industrialized," said Jhairo Colon, 18, a freshman at Lehman College. Three years ago, Colon learned to build a full-size, traditional wooden boat from scratch. "Learning these skills kept us off the street," he said.

By the time Colon was 16, he knew how to monitor the Bronx River habitat and became adept in boat restoration. "It was the first time I ever used a band saw and other power tools — good skills to have."

Colon and Gonzalez quickly worked up through five program levels. As "job skills apprentices," they learned to prepare for college

and enter the workforce. Now as top level program assistants, they teach boat building and are role models for younger students.

"We teach the kids how to build boats and then we take week-long trips out on the Hudson River, rowing from place to place," said Gonzalez of her classes. "You learn some cool rowing techniques and how to row like a speed demon."

Green has a rule of not hiring former students unless they have gone through all the programs and are in college or working. "We don't want our programs to be the only thing in their lives," said Green.

About 14 former students readied the fleet of large wooden boats for Sunday's river trip. Afterward, they took folks out on river as part of the Community Rowing Program, a regular free event in which residents can row a boat and fish on the Bronx River.

"The students were personally affected by this," said Green of the fund-raiser. "It was an experience they never had before."

Gonzalez had some complimentary words of her own for Rocking the Boat.

"Kids can accomplish something that's outside the box," she said. "Here you have kids building boats. But in all reality, the boats are building the kids."

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