

AT A GLANCE

BOROWIDE — The New York City Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association received \$25,000 in state funding yesterday to expand a nationwide program that assists in the return of Alzheimer's and dementia patients who wander and become lost.

State Sen. Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) presented the check for the MedicAlert+Safe Return program at Providence Rest, a nursing facility in the Bronx.

MedicAlert+Safe Return provides patients with an ID bracelet and wallet cards, as well as access to important medical information.

NORWOOD — The Museum of Bronx History held an opening reception yesterday for its new exhibit: "Parkchester: City Within a City," which runs through Oct. 3. The large housing complex is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year.

The museum is at 3266 Bainbridge Ave. at 208th St.

For more information, call the Bronx County Historical Society at (718) 881-8900.

CITYWIDE — The city Parks Department is looking for people to serve as volunteer "greeters" to welcome patrons at entrances to parks, beaches and playgrounds across the five boroughs.

Greeters inform patrons of available amenities and programs at parks facilities, assist with horticulture and maintenance where possible, as well as monitor recycling bins.

Greeters are requested to commit at least 50 hours from May to September, with weekly shifts of four hours each. All volunteers must complete an orientation prior to the start of their shifts. Anyone interested can register at <http://nyc.gov/parks/greeter-corps>.

CORRECTION

The News incorrectly listed the date of Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz's first Food Summit at Hostos College. The all-day event will be tomorrow. The News regrets the error.

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Poetry blooms in city



"Avatar" star Sigourney Weaver joins kickoff for Poem in Your Pocket day at N.Y. Botanical Garden, which features collection of Emily Dickinson's poetry about flora. Photo by Viorel Florescu

BY KATHLEEN LUCADAMO
DAILY NEWS CITY HALL BUREAU

MAYOR BLOOMBERG went up against 19th-century poet Emily Dickinson yesterday.

She won.

Hizzoner made a noble stab at being a word-smith, but her works definitely overshadowed the mayor's literary effort.

It was all part of the kickoff of the city's annual Poem in Your Pocket day, which coincided with the opening of the New York Botanical Garden's exhibit, "Emily Dickinson's Garden: The Poetry of Flowers."

Several of her poems — many about flowers — are sprinkled among some of her favorite flora in the garden.

"Even though poetry sometimes gets a bum rap, it is something we can all relate to no matter where we are from," said Bloomberg. "We all have a favorite verse or limerick or lyric from a song."

His own poetic effort borrowed the Dickinson line, "Hope is the thing with feathers," followed by his own, "That makes our city soar, it will take us to the future, as it's carried us before."

Bloomberg joked his poem wasn't good enough to earn him a Garden exhibit called "Bloomberg in Bloom."

Actress Sigourney Weaver, who accompanied Bloomberg, jokingly called him a "Renaissance mayor" after listening to his poetry.

Weaver called the exhibit "one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen."

The Garden's Emily Dickinson theme jibes quite well with the poet's love of nature, said Garden president Gregory Long.

"During her lifetime, Emily was known as an accomplished gardener and she was particularly interested in the study of botany," said Long.

Over one-third of her nearly 1,800 poems and half of her letters are about plants, according to Long.

The city began the day of poetry in 2003 to promote poetry and literacy in schools and libraries.

This year's festivities included a poetry competition on Twitter, handouts of free pocket-size poems in Battery Park City and other parts neighborhoods, and an open mic session at Bryant Park Reading Room in midtown.

The three-part exhibit on Dickinson — a flower show, a poetry walk throughout the garden and a viewing of her manuscripts in the Garden library — runs through June 13.

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W'chester bike-a-thon to raise awareness of housing flap

BY ABBY LUBY
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

AS WESTCHESTER officials nervously await word from the federal government on their plan to build affordable housing for minorities, two concerned groups will hold a bike-a-thon tomorrow to call attention to the thorny issue.

The 24-mile "Bike for Homes Build-a-Thon," sponsored by all the Junior Leagues of Westchester and Habitat for Humanity of Westchester County, will start at 7:30 a.m. in White Plains. It will wend its way through Pleasantville, Mount Pleasant, Eastview, Elmsford, Greenburgh, Irvington, Dobbs Ferry, Ardsley and Hastings-on-Hudson, communities that generally lack affordable housing for minorities.

For information about the bike-a-thon, go to www.jlnw.org.

The county was sued last year for failing to use \$50 million in federal funds to build low-income family homes.

It settled the landmark anti-discrimination lawsuit by the Anti-Discrimination Center of Metro New York by agreeing to build 750 affordable units in seven years in areas with few or no minorities.

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development last month rejected Westchester's first housing plan because it failed to name specific communities for the housing. The feds said they wanted a revised plan that includes a clear strategy for encouraging compliance by municipal governments.

The county is now waiting to see if HUD will accept a modified plan they submitted March 12.

Wealthy towns and villages like Scarsdale and Chappaqua, where blacks and Hispanics make up only 4.1% of the population, may be among those targeted for new, affordable homes.

But many residents are resisting the prospect of increased numbers of minorities living in their neighborhoods.

Jim Russell, a Pleasantville resident, started "Save Our Neighborhoods U.S.," a group actively fighting against the plan.

Russell charged that the federal housing agency was "being partial to the demands of the radical organization which initiated the lawsuit against the county."

The major issues surrounding the controversy include:

■ Towns that resist the county's mandate may be taken to court.

■ Developers say land prices are too high in Westchester to build affordable housing and make a profit.

■ Residents claim affordable housing in their neighborhoods will lower the value of their property.

■ Many Westchester residents want to build affordable housing for either their grown children or local teachers and firefighters.

■ Towns want the 750 units to be built in only a few of the 31 communities that now have little or no minorities.

■ A ruling is sought on whether the county can legally override a town's exclusionary zoning laws.