

THE *TIMES* ARE A-CHANGING

NYU PARTNERS WITH *THE NEW YORK TIMES* ON AN EXPERIMENTAL NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS SITE

by Kevin Fallon / CAS '09

When graduate journalism student Suzanne Rozdeba (CAS '01, GSAS '12) met up with artist James De La Vega on St. Mark's Place, he was leaning against the shuttered building that used to showcase his quirky street art: graffiti-style paintings often branded with the catchphrase *Realiza Tu Sueño* (Become Your Dream). As the two chatted, several neighbors interrupted to lament the closing and shake the hand of the area celebrity who could no longer afford to rent the space. It was an intimate neighborhood moment, easily lost to history without someone there to document it. And although only a student, Rozdeba reported this very local piece—alongside news about an East Village building fire, a fatal stabbing, and community reactions to service failures in the 2010 holiday blizzard—using an unusual introduction for someone in grad school: “I’m a reporter for a blog on *The New York Times*.”

Thanks to a new joint venture between the *Times* and NYU’s Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, a team of student reporters contributed to a news blog this year devoted entirely to Manhattan’s East Village. The site, called The Local East Village (LEV), is staffed by the Carter Institute’s



STUDENTS FROM THE HYPERLOCAL NEWSROOM CLASS STAFF THE LOCAL EAST VILLAGE AND PRODUCE CONTENT ALONGSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD CONTRIBUTORS.

Hyperlocal Newsroom class, which has students working alongside neighborhood contributors—local residents with no journalism background—to produce content. *Times* editors and developers troubleshoot, offer advice, and provide access to their wealth of databases and technological expertise. “It’s a teaching tool, a way to promote conversation, and it brings our neighbors in the community to the table,” says LEV editor Richard G. Jones, an award-winning former

Times reporter and now NYU professor.

The site (www.eastvillage.thelocal.nytimes.com), which launched last September, draws upon additional student contributions from across NYU, including marketing consultants from the Leonard N. Stern School of Business, information technology consultants from the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, and students in Tisch’s Interactive Telecommunications Program who are working with



sensor technology to possibly monitor noise levels in the East Village—a major complaint in the neighborhood. The venture represents a necessary foray into community engagement using one of the industry’s most respected brands. For students now reporting with the promise of a *Times* byline, the effort brings a new dimension to the way journalism is taught. “They’re learning out loud,” explains Mary Ann Giordano, deputy Metro

come explosively popular and notable for their focus on very local news. The *Times* recognized this hunger and last year began covering the Fort Greene and Clinton Hill areas of Brooklyn in collaboration with the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism. Stopping short of acknowledging a “hyperlocal revolution,” Giordano admits that the *Times* had an urgent need to be part of the conversation: “We live in a Wiki world

Young reporters cover the East Village with a degree of footwork even the *Times* doesn’t possess, a change that follows an industrywide trend.

editor at the *Times* who also advises on the site.

In return, NYU students cover the East Village with a degree of footwork even the *Times* doesn’t possess, a change that follows an industrywide trend. Sites such as Examiner.com and Patch.com have be-

and reader engagement is becoming huge.” Still, like most other aspects of the changing media industry, there remains no solid business model for making hyperlocal news sites profitable and Giordano believes the assumption that millions of advertising dollars can be had in these ventures is misleading.

One way to keep costs down is to employ a “virtual assignment desk,” which provides an editorial work-flow system for assigning stories and for receiving and managing ideas, tips, and finished work from com-



PHOTO © ADRIAN RUSSELL

LIVE COVERAGE OF A FOURTH-FLOOR FIRE IN NOLITA.

munity and student contributors. Any registered user of nytimes.com can go to a special page to see what assignments are available. In fact, community members are encouraged not only to pitch ideas for stories, but also to write them. Jones, who edits these posts as stringently as he does his students’, says that the eventual goal is for community collaborators to produce 50 percent of the site’s content. Thus, LEV offers valuable lessons to students who are learning this new business from the ground up, and it helps the *Times*, which may apply aspects of the LEV model across the country—and even around the world. “If the open-source assignment desk works in the East Village,” explains Jay Rosen, associate professor at the Carter Institute, “it can work in Grand Rapids, Michigan, too.” ■

LEFT: EAST VILLAGE RESIDENTS RALLY AT 35 COOPER SQUARE, A 185-YEAR-OLD TOWN HOUSE, TO SUPPORT ITS DESIGNATION AS AN HISTORIC LANDMARK. **RIGHT:** MEMBERS PLAY CARDS AT THE UKRAINIAN SPORTS CLUB, SOON TO CLOSE DUE TO RENT HIKES AND DWINDLING MEMBERSHIP.



PHOTOS: LEFT © SUZANNE ROZDERA; RIGHT © MEREDITH HOFFMAN

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The Birds and the Bees, For Goodness Sake

WHY "THE TALK" IS THE BEST WAY TO KEEP TEENS HEALTHY

by Courtney E. Martin / GAL '04

One in two Latino girls in the U.S. will become pregnant by the age of 20," professor Vincent Guilamo-Ramos says. Suddenly the framed print of Salvador Dali's infamous melting clock, positioned just above the file cabinets that fill his office in the Silver School of Social Work, seems a foreboding symbol.

Guilamo-Ramos knows firsthand that we are failing another generation of teenagers when it comes to sexual education. To address this, Guilamo-Ramos is examining how parents can help prevent unintended pregnancies as

well as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among adolescents through a five-year, \$3.2 million study involving 900 Latino and African-American families in the South Bronx. He reaches out to parents in physicians' offices when they bring their teens for checkups and offers them the latest sobering statistics: Nearly half of 15- to 19-year-olds have had sex, accounting for a disproportionate number of STIs among them. With these and other facts at hand, Guilamo-Ramos and his researchers coach parents on how to have "the talk."

It sounds simple enough, but the method is surprisingly innova-

tive. Until now, most sex-ed interventions have tended to neglect parental involvement altogether, or required already busy parents to attend ongoing meetings. Guilamo-Ramos saw an opportunity, however, to reach them at a time when they're focused on their child's well-being. Rather than flipping through a magazine in the doctor's waiting room, parents meet a social worker who provides them with information and concrete skills on how to navigate awkward discussions. "We've been approaching sex education in a way that's been inconsistent with the reality," Guilamo-Ramos explains. "Not

only do kids say that they go to their parents to discuss their biggest decisions, but boys, as much as girls, *want* to have these conversations."

While parents tend to worry about the ways risky sexual activity might prevent their kids from reaching full potential, teenagers are primarily concerned with their relationships and image. Social factors—wanting to be closer to a boyfriend or girlfriend, worrying about their reputations—provide the most pressure to become sexually active. Guilamo-Ramos has spent 10 years and received more than \$12 million in federal monies to support this research, with the ultimate goal of convincing policy makers and those in the nonprofit sector that bringing tools to parents right in their community buildings, schools, and medical clinics is key to changing youth habits. "We have to get over the barriers of communication if we want to reduce the negative health consequences associated with too-early adolescent sexual behavior," he adds.

As one of four siblings raised by a single mom in the Bronx, Guilamo-Ramos says that his mother, a native Puerto Rican, was passionate about her children's futures but unprepared to talk to them about sex. His goal is to meet parents, just like his mom, where they are. And what does his mother think of the work he's doing now? He chuckles when relaying the question she keeps asking him: "Where was all this when I was raising you kids?" ■



NYU SKIRBALL CENTER

PHOTOS: L-R: Compañía Nacional de Danza 2 (CND2) (Mar 31-Apr 2), photo by Fernando Marcos from GNAWA by Nacho Duato, Courtesy of CND2, Aquila Theatre Company (Apr 20-23), Vijay Iyer Trio and Robert Glasper Trio (Apr 28), Photos by Jimmy Katz and Jessica Chornesky.



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BEST OF NEW YORK

NYU FACULTY, STAFF, AND ALUMNI
OFFER UP THEIR FAVORITES

by Renée Alfuso / CAS '06

BRACE YOURSELF FOR HEART-POUNDING THRILLS IN BROOKLYN, THEN WIND DOWN WITH SOME MEDITATIVE YOGA

SUMMER FLING

There are plenty of ways to cool off at Coney Island (frozen drinks, a dip in the ocean), but nothing lets beachgoers feel the wind in their hair like the new **LUNA PARK**. The seaside amusement park debuted last year—attracting over 400,000 visitors who took more than 1.7 million rides—and reopened in April with even more daring roller coasters in the appropriately named Scream Zone. *NYU Alumni Magazine* sent courageous office intern Sahaiya Abudu (TSOA '11) to test the wild rides, and threw in some cotton candy to sweeten the deal. “I expected it would just be like a small, local carnival with shaky rides,” she says, “but it wasn’t. They were stable, so I didn’t feel like I was going to fall off.” Of the 23 attractions, her top pick was the Tickler, a spinning coaster with curves and drops that had Abudu so tickled she took a second turn. She also recom-

mends the towering Brooklyn Flyer, which swings riders across the sky at 100 feet and offers breathtaking views over the water. But true thrill seekers, Abudu says, should try the one-of-a-kind Air Race—in which mock propeller planes barrel along at extreme speeds, swinging out sideways and upside down. Luna also offers attractions for kids across its relatively small six acres, which Abudu says makes it more accommodating. “When you go to Six Flags or Disneyland, it’s a huge all-day thing,” she explains. “But this you could easily tackle in a couple of hours.” Just be sure to hold off on lunch at Nathan’s Famous until after the rides.

1000 SURF AVENUE (AT WEST 10TH STREET) IN BROOKLYN,
718-373-5862;
WWW.LUNAPARKNYC.COM

MEALS ON THE MOVE

These days, the ubiquitous hot

dog and pretzel street carts have serious gourmet competition—food trucks outfitted with mobile kitchens now roam the city with surprisingly upscale menus. Take, for example, Dessert Truck, started by a former pastry chef at Le Cirque, and its vanilla crème brûlée or chocolate bread pudding with bacon custard sauce. There’s also the Mediterranean-inspired Bistro Truck, run by a Morocco native who doles out grass-fed beef burgers and roasted lamb over couscous. Instead of angling for reservations, hungry patrons simply track a truck’s location online. “It brings variety to areas that aren’t inundated with restaurants, like Washington Square Park,” says chef Jeramie Garlick, who oversees all of NYU’s dining halls. Before joining the university in 2007, Garlick studied at a prestigious culinary school in France, worked as a personal cook for former President Ronald Reagan, and earned the title of Certified Master Chef, which he shares with only 65 others in the world. The well-traveled

Brit says that for “a true European treat,” his hands-down favorite food truck is **WAFELS & DINGES**, run by Thomas DeGeest, who defeated celebrity chef Bobby Flay in a waffle challenge on Food Network’s *Throwdown!* DeGeest’s creations come in two varieties—the dense and chewy Liège or the light and crispy Brussels—and are topped with a variety of *dinges* (Flemish for toppings). But the key ingredient is Belgian-imported pearl sugar, which bursts and caramelizes in the iron. For lunch, try a savory BBQ pulled-pork waffle, or for dessert there’s a waffle-and-ice-cream sandwich. “It’s exactly as I remember tasting it in Belgium,” Garlick says. “I was very impressed because it’s made to a specific European recipe.”

TO FIND THE WAFELS & DINGES TRUCK, CALL THE HOTLINE AT 866-429-7329 OR CHECK TWITTER.COM/WAFFLETRUCK

STRIKE A POSE

This city never slows down, but everyone needs a break from the

LUNA PARK

OM YOGA CENTER

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY CENTRAL AMUSEMENT INTERNATIONAL; COURTESY OM YOGA CENTER; © JOHN CHANCE COTTI; COURTESY WAFELS & DINGES



BROOKLYN FLEA



WAFELS & DINGES

frenzied pace. For a healthy way to refresh the mind and body, many enlightened New Yorkers turn to yoga. “It’s a great antidote to stress,” says Lauren Ginsberg (SSSW ’96), a counselor at NYU’s Student Health Center and a certified yoga instructor. “We have so many distractions and are so externally focused, but it helps us practice being present in the moment.” Still, choosing a studio to suit one’s personal needs can be overwhelming, so Ginsberg suggests the New York Yoga PassBook, which offers more than 425 free class visits through the American Health and Fitness Alliance. One of the many studios included is YogaWorks—a national chain that offers perks such as saunas and tea stations. Those looking for a more traditional studio can try the ashram and teaching center Integral Yoga Institute, which has been a West Village staple of spirituality since 1970. But Ginsberg’s favorite remains **OM YOGA CENTER**, where she trained as an instructor. OM was named the best yoga for beginners by *New York* magazine and

voted one of the top 25 studios in the world by *Travel & Leisure*. Budding yogis can stock up on clothing and equipment in the OM boutique, and ease in with workshops such as “brand-new beginners.” Specialized classes include “yoga express” for those on the go and weekly sessions for female cancer survivors. (There’s also a discount on classes for NYU students and faculty.) Still, Ginsberg says that the best way to select a studio is to go on instinct rather than recommendation: “Take some time to shop around and find a place that’s going to be a right fit. Even if you don’t know what you’re looking for, go to a few and see what resonates for you.”

826 BROADWAY (AT 12TH STREET), 212-254-9642; WWW.OMYOGA.COM

EDITORS’ PICK: FLEA SPREE

While doing research—and a bit of shopping—at the sprawling outdoor market just across the East River, this reporter stumbled upon a vintage ship in a bottle, a prize in

the **BROOKLYN FLEA**’s weekly “finders/keepers” scavenger hunt. The contest is one of many little touches that elevate “the Flea,” as it’s affectionately known, from typical market to weekend destination. Co-founded in 2008 by lifelong New Yorker Jonathan Butler (STERN ’98), the Flea has already become an attraction for locals despite its young age, averaging more than 10,000 visitors each weekend. Butler was a fan of the Chelsea markets before they were replaced by condos and thought it a “no-brainer” that Brooklyn should have one of its own. “I’m a bit of a cheapskate to start with, but I also enjoy the thrill of the hunt and the serendipity in that you never know what you’re going to find,” he explains. With around 150 vendors that change weekly, there are plenty of treasures to be discovered—from moss terrariums to antique furniture, vintage clothing to apartment-size beer-brewing kits. But one of the biggest draws—because this is Brooklyn, after all—is the food:

artisanal pickles, Asian hot dogs, homemade sodas and popsicles, Salvadoran *pupusas*, and brick-oven pizza all tempt shoppers away from the wares. The most popular vendor is the Red Hook Lobster Pound, which draws lines that sometimes require a two-hour wait for its live crustaceans and lobster rolls fresh from Maine.

The Flea moves indoors for winter, but this spring, shoppers can again enjoy the fresh air on Saturdays in Fort Greene and along the Williamsburg waterfront on Sundays. The market has created such a sense of community that the Municipal Art Society and the Citizens Union have bestowed awards for its use of public space. Says Butler: “It’s kind of evolved to serve as a modern-day town square.”

176 LAFAYETTE AVENUE NEAR CLERMONT AVENUE IN FORT GREENE (SATURDAYS) AND EAST RIVER BTW. NORTH SIXTH AND SEVENTH STREETS IN WILLIAMSBURG (SUNDAYS); WWW.BROOKLYNFLEA.COM