

Belmont Business Improvement District Fall 2016 Newsletter



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American Planning Association Names Arthur Avenue A Great Street of America

“Great places in America have exemplary character, quality and planning. Arthur Avenue was recognized for its rich streetscape with shops, grocery stores, and restaurants that promote Italian heritage. There is no better place to sample delicious specialties. The well maintained streets and sidewalks support a constant flux of residents and visitors, and finally it’s the community that makes this a great place – the people that live and work here” comments Courtenay Mercer, APA Board of Directors Region I.

The American Planning Association notes “New York City may seem to be fast losing its diverse flavor...but Arthur Avenue is standing up against the tide....if you ask real New York City insiders where to find Little Italy, they won’t point towards lower Manhattan. Instead they will direct you to the Bronx, where Arthur Avenue serves as the central artery for one of the city’s major ethnic enclaves...nearly every shop is an institution, passed down through generations of families that have lived in the neighborhood...”

For the “Great Streets” category, the APA weighs how a given area is laid out to encourage activity and interaction, reflect local culture and history, and create a memorable and lasting impression to visitors.

“Anyone who has walked, shopped or dined on Arthur Avenue appreciates its unique qualities as an al fresco shopping bazaar. We hope the gracious recognition we received today will inspire many more and future generations to come find out what makes Arthur Avenue such a special place,” said Peter Madonia, Chairman, Belmont Business Improvement District and Owner, Madonia Brothers Bakery.

On Tuesday, October 4, in the Belmont Library and Enrico Fermi Cultural Center, the American Planning Association gathered with Bronx public officials, the Belmont BID, and business owners from our neighborhood to officially name Arthur Avenue as a Great Street of America for 2016. Presentations were given by Iris Weinshall, Chief Operating Officer of New York Public Library, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., James Rausse, Director of Capital Programs for the Office of Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. and President of the APA’s New York Chapter, Courtenay Mercer, APA Board of Directors Region 1 (Northeast), Councilman Ritchie Torres, Gustavo Rivera, New York State Senate, and Peter Madonia, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Belmont BID. After the certificate was presented, everyone celebrated the occasion with a toast to Arthur Avenue and a reception catered by Full Moon Pizza, Mike’s Deli, and Gino’s Pastry Shop.



Ferragosto 2016

On Sunday, September 11, 2016, the Belmont BID hosted our annual Ferragosto festival. Visitors from the tri-state area and beyond traveled to the neighborhood to be part of the celebration including Italian culture, live entertainment and of course the greatest food anywhere! The 48th Precinct Community Affairs Department estimated over 20,000 people were in attendance this year! Festival-goers, merchants, street performers and others converged at world-famous Arthur Avenue and East 187th Street to kick-off this 2000 year old ancient Italian tradition that is rooted in the early days of the Roman Empire. The wonders of Ferragosto included Italian food and merchandise from local



merchants, as well as mesmerizing musical performances from Vincent Ricciardi, Nick Vero, The 70's Project, Uncle Floyd, Two Gents & the Lady, and Steve Maglio. Guests were invited to indulge in everything from pizza and pasta to pork and pastries. In between sampling Italian fare and shopping for local goods, attendees admired luxurious cars from New Rochelle Chevrolet and perused cultural booths from local institutions including the New York Botanical Garden, SBH Health Systems, the Bronx Zoo, and the non-profit organization Love Holds Life. Ferragosto was generously sponsored by Pepsi, New Rochelle Chevrolet, Divella S.p.A., and Con Edison. The festival was a delight for all, highlighting the old-world charm, fun family atmosphere, and classic Italian taste of our favorite Italian neighborhood. We are already looking forward to inviting everyone back for Ferragosto 2017!

Italian-American Heritage Celebration



The Belmont BID was proud to partner with Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. as he hosted his annual Official Bronx Celebration of Italian-American Heritage & Culture Month or "Mese della Cultura Italiana". The event took place on Thursday, October 6th from 6-9pm at the Schiff Family Great Hall on the grounds of the Bronx Zoo. Honorees recognized included Mario Cilento, President of New York State AFL-CIO; Frank C. Randazzo, Esq., Bronx County Public Administrator; and Steven Squitieri, Sanitation Salvage Corp. Attendees were treated to traditional Italian food and entertainment.

Bocce Ball Tournament

The Belmont BID was excited to host its first Bronx Little Italy Bocce Ball Tournament on Sunday, October 23rd. Teams from the United States Bocce Federation gathered to compete in the friendly tournament that also celebrated Italian heritage and culture. Attendees enjoyed rooting the players on as they joined in on this fun-filled Italian sport that descended from ancient games played in the Roman empire. Exquisite food is a must at every Italian cultural event, so guests were treated to delicacies from the neighborhood. Special thanks to our wonderful sponsors, Felix's Custom Tee's, Mike's Deli, Teitel Brothers, and Tino's Deli & Catering, for making the Bocce Ball Tournament a huge success!

Winter Activities

It's been an exciting fall and we're looking forward to a sensational winter and holiday season! The beloved Bronx Little Italy Official Merchant Calendar will be delivered prior to Thanksgiving and shortly afterwards our dazzling holiday lights will be switched on. On December 3rd we will host our annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony with Santa and live entertainment. Throughout the holiday season Santa and carolers will also be making their way through the neighborhood spreading holiday cheer!

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Dancing of the Giglio

For the fifth year in a row, the “Dancing of the Giglio” returned to Little Italy. This ancient tradition originated in Nola, Italy in 409 A.D. and is still celebrated today in Italy and around the world. This year several thousand people flocked to Belmont to see volunteers carry the giglio down East 187th Street. Our giglio is a custom, hand-made, wooden structure, measuring 65 feet high (they are over 100 ft. tall in Italy) and weighing several tons. It artfully depicts images of revered saints and is the centerpiece of a traditional procession in Italian communities throughout the world. It took over 100 lifters, or paranza in Italian, to hoist the enormous structure up on their shoulders and carry it through the streets while performing various ritual maneuvers. A band played traditional music associated with the celebration as they were carried upon the giglio. The dancing of the giglio is part of the Feast of St. Anthony which occurred from Wednesday, June 8th through Sunday, June 12th.

DOT Weekend Walks

The Belmont BID once again participated in DOT Weekend Walks. This program allowed us to put on several exciting street events.

Car Show: Our second annual Car Show was held on Crescent Avenue on Sunday, May 15th. Nearly 150 classic, muscle and imported cars were present. Several thousand visitors were welcomed to the neighborhood for the event. Judges selected the top 15 cars and a customized six-foot trophy was awarded to the Cadillac Club of Long Island for having the most registered cars at the event for the second year in a row!

Art Show: Our second annual Art Show was held on Saturday, June 11th on East 186th Street. Attendees browsed through a variety of artwork from nearly 40 local artists and savored the atmosphere of the neighborhood. Guests were even lucky enough to observe live drawing demonstrations from some of the local artists.

Health Fair: The BID once again partnered with SBH Health System for a community health fair. This innovative street fair took place on Crescent Avenue and included a host of fun and free activities focused on improving health including cooking demonstrations, and yoga and Zumba classes. Families had access to free health screenings and learned about tips for living healthy lifestyles, while kids got to participate in activities just for them.

Have you been receiving e-mails from the BID? Every week we send out information regarding upcoming events, advertising initiatives, security reports and other important information. If you are not receiving these e-mails, please e-mail atucker@bronxlittleitaly.com and request to be added to our distribution list.