

THE SECOND SEX AND THE CITY

The five individuals profiled in this article are among the 1,155,811 women who make up 52% of the population in Queens. As a reflection of the borough's diversity, they come from differing ethnic, racial, professional, economic, religious, educational and generational backgrounds throughout the borough of Queens.



AROUND TOWN

For two Rego Park women, a singular act of kindness to a neighbor served as the starting point for a decade of service to the elderly. Gloria Wanner, a retired nurse, and her friend, Stella Amodio, a community activist, shared a commitment of concern for their 93-year old neighbor, John Haeni. A lifetime resident of Queens, John was a beloved father figure to all who knew him. When he was placed in the Ozanam Hall of Queens Nursing Home, a 432-bed residential facility in Bayside, Gloria and Stella began weekly visits to bolster his spirits. In addition to providing support and company to their aging neighbor and friend, the two women discovered a new venue of need among older Queens residents.



Stella Amodio

"Something as small as holding open a door for an elderly person and giving them a smile means so much," noted Amodio. "Gloria and I try to get over to Ozanam Hall at least twice a week. People get to know you and trust you," she states. "Even though I rely on a cane to get around, I like to lead some of the older men and women in dancing routines to help them get some exercise. I've found that in addition to singing and dancing to the song, Do the Hokey Pokey, a lot of the residents like to remember and sing along with popular songs from the thirties and forties. The fact that I also speak Italian helps me build a relationship with older residents who are most comfortable with that language."



Gloria Wanner

Gloria Wanner, who spent her professional career as an OB/GYN health provider, now has a greater appreciation for life as it is experienced by those in their later years. "When we first came here to comfort John Haeni, it was only natural that we began to meet other residents here who had special needs," Gloria states. "My husband, Freddy, often comes with us and we found he has a knack for engaging the older men in conversations about sports. Just the act of reaching out to people helps keep them grounded and, I believe, aware of their own dignity." While kindness has no bounds, in the borough of Queens Gloria Wanner and Stella Amodio serve as its initial point of reference.

In the arena of Queens Politics, the office of Borough President is often characterized as little more than window dressing, yet it is a power base encompassing a considerable amount of clout and control over large amounts of discretionary funding. Among the five boroughs of New York City, Democrat Helen Marshall is the only woman who occupies the office of a Borough President. As a former teacher, member of the New York State Assembly and one time City Council member, her skills as a politician and advocate for education make her a potent force in the rough and tumble world of New York office holders. Among her achievements, Marshall was instrumental in securing \$75 million for area parks, \$44 million for libraries and worked to create 30 new schools, thereby providing additional seating for over 17,000 students.



Borough President, Helen Marshall

The geographical size of Queens, combined with a population of over two million people, makes the borough a potent force, politically and socially. "If we weren't part of New York City, Queens would be the fourth largest metropolitan area in the United States," Marshall observes. "In addition, 46% of our residents are foreign born, this mix of ethnic groups and cultures makes Queens the most diverse urban area in the nation," she notes. "So many of my constituents are Asian, and in order to appreciate their cultural roots I travel extensively, as a matter of fact, I traveled to China to gain a greater understanding of the people I serve here. Trust me, the position of Queens Borough President is not a part time position, nor is it for the faint of heart."

Elected for a second term in 2009, she is committed to creating new and improved living space for Queens residents. "We have to clean up the Willets Point area in western Queens. When people come across the 59th Street Bridge they need to see an area of beautiful housing and thriving businesses."

Along with having ready access to Mayor Bloomberg, Marshall is equally adept at listening to and addressing the concerns of ordinary citizens. As residents in the Rego Park section of Queens know only

too well, the glass walls of city bus shelters are routinely shattered by thugs. In response, Marshall expressed support for the installation of surveillance cameras to capture the perpetrators in action. As a former teacher, Helen Marshall has a strong commitment to the welfare of children. In recalling the tragic case of seven year-old Brooklyn resident Nixzmary Brown, who was tortured and murdered by her stepfather, Marshall believes teachers should be in the forefront of spotting child abuse. "Children often can't and don't express themselves verbally," she says. "Because of this, teachers must be the first line of defense by questioning youngsters and observing their overall physical condition." In a city government obsessed with collecting traffic fines while literally ignoring children to death, Helen Marshall's voice as a child advocate is a welcome change from City Hall's 'show me the money' mindset.

Media coverage of events in Queens is a growing area of interest for journalists who report on local developments in electronic and print venues.

Following divergent paths to the same profession, Michelle Park and Ruschell Boone animate the diversity of the borough they report on for the cable TV news program New York 1 News. Michelle initially considered a career in law during her college years as a Political Science major at Stanford University in California, but the glamour of 14-hour plus work days finally attracted her to the field of television news. Her resume includes participating in the start up of a Korean language newscast in Los Angeles, work as an editorial assistant at KNBC in California and a stint at WZBN-TV in Trenton, New Jersey. Her tenacity as a reporter serves her well. "I applied to New York 1 News once a month for seven months," she says, "I guess they got tired of my calls so they hired me as a freelancer." A woman of uncommon determination, she foresees a day when she will have an opportunity to host the popular daytime TV show, The View. Currently the anchor for the station's segment, Your Queens News Now, Park is convinced that internships are the best way for those fresh out of college to break into broadcasting. "It gives you a look and feel for the business like nothing else can," she notes.



Michelle Park

A native of Kingston, Jamaica, Ruschell Boone immigrated to the United States with her parents when she was a child. A graduate of Truman High School in the Bronx, she earned a Bachelor's degree in Business at Baruch University in Manhattan. Her years of study to become an accountant eventually led her to a professional epiphany: "I finally realized that accounting bored me stiff," she said. Once that realization was made, she decided to pursue other goals. "I contacted CNBC and asked them if I could be considered for an internship even though my education was in business," she recalls. "Fortunately, my academic background was not a problem." She began her television career at CNBC Business News. Ruschell was eventually hired for a staff position and honed her journalism skills of writing and producing for several of the station's shows. Her credentials include working as an associate producer for CNNfn, where she was promoted to the rank of assignment editor after only eight months. An American citizen since 1997, the contributions of Ruschell Boone represent a unique legacy of an individual who gives a voice and a presence to the borough's growing number of highly involved women and immigrants alike.

The five women profiled in this article represent a broad spectrum of experience, dedication, professionalism and commitment. While their experiences and contributions differ, the common thread of a commitment to excellence, combined with a realization of potential, defines their achievements.

Enjoy the Flavors of
THE NEW LATIN CRIOLLO CUISINE
 en el Corazon de Queens!

MARDI GRAS

RESTAURANT

LATIN CREOLE CUISINE

718.261.8555
 70-20 Austin Street, Forest Hills, NY 11375

Open Sun - Thurs 12PM - 12AM • Fri & Sat 12PM - 1AM

Amex, Visa, Master Card & Diners Accepted.

www.mardigrasnyc.com

The ONLY Sports Bar in Forest Hills
FEATURING A FULL MENU & INTIMATE DINING ROOM

Including "The Best Ribs in Queens", Thick Juicy Burgers, Steaks, Chicken, Pasta, Appetizers, and Much Much More.

MARCH IS HOT AT COBBLESTONES!

Don't Miss NCAA March Madness, Mets and Yankees Spring Training Action from Florida, and Pacquiao-Clotney on Pay Per View!

Don't Miss Our St. Patty's Day Celebration on March 17, 2010!

ST. PATRICK DAY

MLB EXTRA INNINGS

For The Real Sports Nut...

We Have 21 High Definition LCD Screens with Surround Sound, Walls of Memorabilia, and Special Sporting Event Ticket Offers.

117-18 Queens Blvd., Forest Hills NY 11375 • (718) 263-9754