

## Recognizing Susan Cohen:

### *29th State Senate District's 2010 Woman of Distinction*

Each year, the New York State Senate honors a select group of women from across New York who have dedicated themselves to improving the lives of others, enriching their communities and strengthening our state. This year, I had the privilege of naming CRDC's own Susan Cohen as the 2010 Woman of Distinction from the 29th State Senate District, and I am pleased that Susan was able to travel to Albany on May 25 to join me at the Senate's official Women of Distinction celebration.

Longtime CRDC members know that Susan has been an active member of the club, the affordable housing movement, and the Chelsea community for more than four decades. But many in the club may not know the breadth of Susan's contributions as a tenant and

*By New York State Senator Tom Duane*

breast cancer activist, legal services lawyer and advocate for the poor and disadvantaged.

The following is the brief essay about Susan that I submitted along with her nomination:

"Susan Cohen has been, for many decades, above all else, a teacher. In her roles as tenant attorney and organizer, active member of the local political community, and co-founder of a statewide breast cancer organization, she has dedicated her life to helping those who need support, guidance and self-empowerment.

"More than four decades ago, Susan, along with legendary tenant activist Jane Wood and others, helped to co-found the Chelsea Coalition on Housing. To this day, she continues to volunteer her time and expertise to the Coalition and the tenants it helps to empower. It wasn't until the early 1980s, after years of grassroots tenant and community activism, that she became a lawyer. For more than 25 years she has represented low-income tenants, first at MFY Legal Services and now as a senior staff attorney /Community Justice Project Coordinator for Manhattan Legal Services (MLS).

"Her work with poor and disadvantaged communities has extended from housing justice into healthcare inequalities. She is currently on leave from MLS in



*CRDC's Susan Cohen, 2010 Woman of Distinction*

## GENERAL MEETING

**Thursday, July 15, 2010  
7:00PM**

Hudson Guild,  
441 West 26th St.  
(btwn. 9th and 10th Avenues)

## SUMMER AGENDA

**AUGUST:  
No Newsletter  
And No Meeting**

order to research and write a report about health inequities for poor and other underserved populations in New York City, which she hopes will be used as an organizing tool in those affected communities.

"In addition, Susan, a 16-year breast cancer survivor, is chair of the New York State Breast Cancer Network. The organization, which she co-founded in 1998, is comprised of 25 groups throughout New York State with a focus on grass-roots, survivor-driven support and education services for breast cancer survivors.

"From health care to legal services to community activism, Susan Cohen is truly a contemporary woman of distinction.

"I am honored to count Susan among my constituents, and I believe I speak on behalf of all CRDC members when I say that we are proud to count Susan as one of our own."

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## Summer In The City?

*By Gloria Sukenick, Housing Chair*

Summer ... it should be a time to be laid back ... relaxed ... a restorative—you get the idea. But this is New York City in New York State ... part of the USA ... but look, let's keep this piece in small enough pieces to handle.

First, the not-in-my-backyard event. Copies of an article making the rounds—passed around at meetings ... taped around lampposts ... warning that a homeless shelter was to be constructed on West 25th Street. One can only assume that this was not just informational but a call for protest ... am I being too cynical? Of course, there is one such shelter on West 24th Street right now that I'm certain no-one has the slightest notion that it exists. Back of the old McBurney building (now a luxury condo) facing 24th Street, a charming entrance, no unsightly folk hanging out in front. You got it, a well run, compassionate, caring organization in charge and running a near perfect, effective shelter.

Next, a bit of mud-slinging and fear mongering at a Penn South meeting featuring City Council Speaker Christine Quinn (an Assembly of Concerned Cooperators event, an organization dedicated to maintaining the not-for-profit status of Penn South now and into the future) someone spread a copy of a Daily News article on each seat. "A plan sailing through the legislature to expand city tax credits has a single beneficiary: the Chelsea co-op complex state Sen. Thomas Duane calls home." Huuh??

Have you heard of anything sailing through our State legislature lately???? But this piece of legislation should ... Penn South is one of the few affordable moderate income co-ops (a precious and increasingly rare resource ) in this city, home to many that couldn't afford huge increases that would result if the much needed maintenance of this increasingly catastrophic, failure-prone heating & cooling system were to receive no tax benefits in a city that does little enough to create and/or preserve affordable housing! We know the impulse to create a bit of summer sizzle is irresistible but let's get some perspective, here.

Now, what else ... oh yes, how to spend a nice May evening???? Well some people have strange tastes. After circling 8th Avenue and 24th around to 9th Avenue 28th Street and all stops between, to leaflet info about a community event (lampposts etc.) ... hot on our heels,

a leaflet stalker promptly removed each and every one ...and it was a hot evening!!!

OK, how did that Lovin' Spoonful song go? "Hot time. Summer in the City. Back of my neck gettin' dirty and gritty". That's not all that's gettin' dirty and gritty! Keep fighting!

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## It's All About Money, Not People

*By Donathan Salkaln, CRDC Executive Committee Member*

The closing of St Vincent's Hospital was a new low for our City and State. It happened at the same time that another bankrupted public service, OTB, was quietly kept open.

Every year I go to a local OTB and bet horses at the Derby and Preakness and then meet up with friends to watch the races. This year, I was surprised that OTB was still there and gave it more notice. I found the other customers all looked like their next stop would be St. Vincent's Hospital—except there's no hospital. It's closed.

While the Hospital was given it's death notice, the Shinnecock Indians, out in Long Island, were making a list for their upcoming gambling site. President Obama had given them the right to open a casino anywhere in New York State and it's been reported that among the front runners for a casino site is the Belmont Park and the Jacob Javits Convention Center.

Imagine our leaders, in the back rooms, thinking about old and new ways of soaking up our dollars in gambling, rather than our Hospital soaking up the blood of our friends and family.

What pains me is the big banks who hold St. Vincent's liens were recently on their very own IV. We gave them life. Yet, they turn their back pockets on us. Wouldn't it be great publicity for them to save a Hospital? And where's our Mayor? It must be all about the big land grab, land with many buildings that include plumbing and bedpans in every room.

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*Comment on Economics:*

## Don't Take Infrastructure For Granted

*By Maarten de Kadt, CRDC Vice President*

**A**mbleside, England, June 5: After twenty years of driving an automatic transmission car, I'm still reaching for the gear shift with my right hand. But it is

not there. It is on the left side of the driver in the middle of the car. I'm driving in England. I'm driving on the left side of the road. The hardest turn to make is a right hand turn because I must remember to make it wide and stay in the left lane at the conclusion of the turn.

That's not all that is different about driving. In some places the roads are so narrow that you have to stop to let oncoming cars maneuver around you. On high speed roads (the legal speed limit on British National Highways is 70 miles an hour and vehicles passing me were clearly going 80 mph) a driver must remember to stay on the left to let the faster cars pass. That's actually not so hard to remember as the steering column is on the right side of the car, but you have to remember that the rear view mirror is not on the right and looking on the right will get a nice view of the sky.

Then there is electricity. The wall outlets look entirely different. Fortunately we brought adaptors along and our computer, phone, and camera chargers all work on 220 current just as well as the 110 we are used to in the US. The hassle of remembering to charge your electronic devices is no different than it is at home. But you do have to remember to do that or you will not be able to record the progress of your trip. In London water from the River Thames upstream of the city is purified to provide the city's drinking needs. It is treated before being returned to the river downstream.

All this has caused me to think about how much we take our infrastructure for granted. We drive our cars and thus use the national highway system, consume petroleum and occupy multiple parking spaces all the while that national railway system has been largely dismantled. We get our electricity. We dispose of our garbage. We obtain our water (especially in New York City where we have possibly the best water in the world coming out of our water taps). And we flush our toilets all without concern as we know the waste is treated in New York City's 14 water treatment plants and emitted cleaned into our local waterways (except on days that it is not raining it must be noted).

The fact that we take our infrastructure for granted is a political problem of huge dimension. Public transportation system needs rejuvenating. Our bridges are in disrepair and need fixing. Our electricity grid is periodically

overwhelmed and its technology is outdated. Our combined sewer/storm water system is more than 100 years old and needs very expensive separation. Storm water should not be treated at overwhelmed sewer treatment plants. Untreated sewage should not go into our waterways even when it is storming. Electricity should not be produced by fossil fuels engendering the race to recklessly drill off shore for oil. Groundwater should not be threatened by any environmentally threatening process including the recent bent toward hydrofracking to obtain natural gas.

I thought the Obama administration was going to get us out of the current economic disaster by spending large sums of money on shovel ready projects and on the planning and implementation of additional projects to reconstruct our infrastructure so desperately in need of repair. The money it has spent has not nearly begun to provide work to those individuals who need it as the May unemployment figure of 9.7 percent so clearly shows. Our trip to the UK reminds me that our infrastructure must not be taken for granted. It is a shame this is just what is happening.

## Our Three Honorees At Our May 8th Brunch Receiving Their Awards



*Speaker Chris Quinn presenting to Nancy Spannbauer, Penn South Program Director for Seniors*



*Borough Pres. Scott Stringer presenting to Cheryl Kamen, Director Adult Services, Hudson Guild*



*Congressman Jerrold Nadler presenting to Manhattan Young Democrats.*

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## Your Elected Officials Can Be A Community Resource

By Assembly Member  
Richard N. Gottfried

As Manhattan grows, more and more residents and businesses must compete for space and resources. It can make long-standing quality of life problems — such as affordable housing, loss of cherished historic buildings, traffic, and problem bars and clubs — even more serious. It is important that residents reach out to public officials and neighborhood advocates, so we can develop new and creative ways to identify and address these issues.

One place where people can do this is my Community Office, which is open year-round, helping thousands of our neighbors.

I have found that many people are not aware of how their State Assembly Member, State Senator, City Councilmember and U.S. Representative can be of assistance.

My staff and I work with block associations and other community groups that need help with Federal, State or City government, including issues such as zoning, preservation, parks, development, traffic, police protection, rowdy bars, sanitation, and schools.

- We work to stop developers and city or state agencies who want to build excessive

development, destroy landmark buildings, or undermine “historic district” protections.

- We won precedent-setting requirements for affordable housing in recent re-zoning.
- We work to protect our parks from “privatizing” or nonpark encroachment.
- Some late-night bars or clubs make life a nightmare for area residents. We can help make the place clean up its act or get it shut down.
- We work to crack down on landlords who illegally rent out apartments as transient “hotel” units, or try to empty a building by falsely claiming they are demolishing it.
- We also work with individual constituents who have problems with a landlord, government agencies, the phone or electric company, etc.

Of course, we don’t always win. But when neighborhood groups work closely with their local elected representatives, the community is much more likely to get the results it wants!

My Community Office is at 242 West 27th Street, between Seventh and Eighth Avenues; phone: 212-807-7900; e-mail: [GottfrR@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:GottfrR@assembly.state.ny.us).

## Film And Politics At CRDC

By Mary Dorman, CRDC District Leader 75 AD

The general CRDC membership meeting of Thursday, June 17, 2010 was a lively one. Organized by Vice Presidents Lydia Hummel and David Carraway, with the support of Paul Gronki, it was movie night! Homemade popcorn was available in individual, custom packed brown paper bags and soda with which to wash it down. As we waited for the film to begin, the silence was broken only by munching of the members.

The movie, *Why Are We In Afghanistan*, produced by Michael Zweig, Professor of Economics at Stony Brook (and a former speaker at CRDC), was a provocative look at the US presence there. Underlined by the recent “discovery” of new mineral deposits there by the US, the premise of the film is that the US, under the guise of the fight against terrorism, is involved in a war in both Iraq and Afghanistan to further its corporate oil interests. That premise, together with the ongoing BP oil leak environmental travesty, led to a lively post-film discussion among CRDC members.

The film also focused on the cost of the war, both in human kind and money. Eight hours of war in Iraq costs more money than all Federal aid to small business programs for one year. We agreed that the cost of these wars has contributed to the closing of our senior centers and local hospitals.

The consensus was that each of us feel powerless in the face of global corporate greed, much of which is supported by our government. What to do? Begin with ourselves and each other here in Chelsea ... show that we oppose that greed and the wars and deaths that invariably ensue.

Individuals will join Chelsea Neighbors United to End the War, which members have gathered Tuesdays at 8th Avenue and 24th Street from 6 to 7 for the past 265 weeks, since the inception of the war in Iraq! We will discover more facts about the cost of corporate greed to each of us and our neighborhood and we will begin to educate first, ourselves, next, passersby, and reach for change.