

## On the brief side...

### Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Fleet Grows

A recent auction of 54 medallions will place that many wheelchair accessible yellow taxicabs into service throughout New York City and add almost \$26 million to the city treasury.

The landmark auction, won by taxi fleet owner Gene Friedman and his associates, was hailed as a major victory for the disabled by City Councilmembers John Liu and James Gennaro and disability advocates.

Gennaro (D-Fresh Meadows), Environmental Committee chair, commented, "Gene Friedman understands that the future of New York's taxi fleet is accessible to everyone."

Liu (D-Flushing), who heads the Transportation Committee, stated: "We have long known there is a need for accessible taxicabs in our city. The only question was whether the industry was up to the challenge. The apparent success of this most recent auction is as clear a demonstration there could be that the industry is now up to the challenge."

### Groundbreaking For Korean War Memorial

City Councilmember John Liu on Sunday led a special groundbreaking ceremony for the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Kissena Park, at Rose Avenue and Parsons Boulevard in Flushing. The event took place on the anniversary of the start of the Korean War on June 25, 1950.

Liu said the memorial "honors and recognizes the brave Americans who fought for and sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom and democracy." He hailed the many veterans who have worked tirelessly on this monument for a decade, "This joyous occasion bears the fruits of their labors and passion," he said.

Among the dignitaries present for the ceremony were Borough President Helen Marshall, Congressman Gary Ackerman, state Senator Frank Padavan and Assemblymember Brian McLaughlin.

Also attending the memorial were Andrew Musumeci, president of the Korean War Veterans Memorial Association of Greater New York; officials of the city Department of Parks and Recreation and Art Commission; Friends of Kissena Park; members of the Kissena Park Civic Association, Community Board 7 and the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs; the Consul General of the Republic of Korea and leaders of the Korean-American community.

### Maltese Bill Extends Vets' Tuition Awards

The Vietnam, Persian Gulf and Afghanistan Veterans Tuition Assistance Program, set to expire later this year would be extended to Sept. 1, 2008 under legislation sponsored by state Senator Serphin Maltese (R-C, Middle Village).

Maltese, an infantry veteran of the Korean War and former chairman of the senate Veterans committee, said that although the program has traditionally been underutilized, it has enriched the lives of veterans who have taken advantage of it. "I am hopeful that with this extension, many more veterans will be assisted with their education and employment needs. We must continue to ensure that those who served on behalf of our country are given the respect that they have earned," he said.

The bill has already passed the Assembly and now will go to Governor George Pataki for his signature.

### Spitzer Pursues Exxon Oil Spill

The state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced last week that the state Attorney General Eliot Spitzer's office has agreed to pursue the 20-year-old ExxonMobil 17-million-gallon oil spill in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

The case has been handled internally by DEC for about two decades, but the negotiations with ExxonMobil have failed to come to any satisfactory conclusion. Last month, state Comptroller Alan Hevesi and a coalition of elected officials, including City Councilmember Eric Gioia (D-Long Island City) called upon DEC to terminate its closed-door negotiations and take a more aggressive approach.

The spill is one of the world's largest. It has spread under 55 acres of commercial and residential properties in Greenpoint and seeped into Newtown Creek, which runs between Greenpoint and Long Island City.

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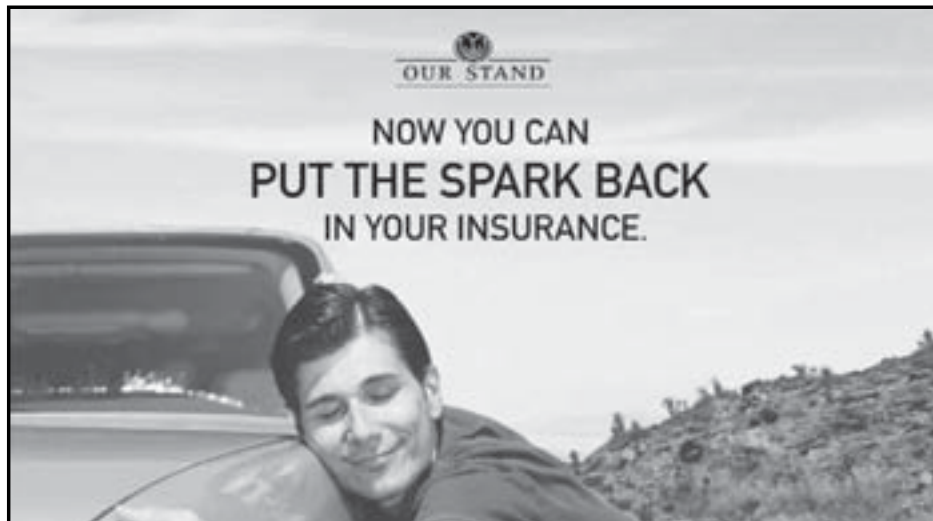
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