

PARENTS PROTEST OVERCROWDED SCHOOLS

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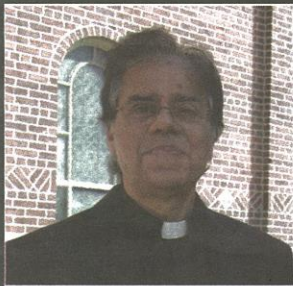


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TALKING ARAMAIC



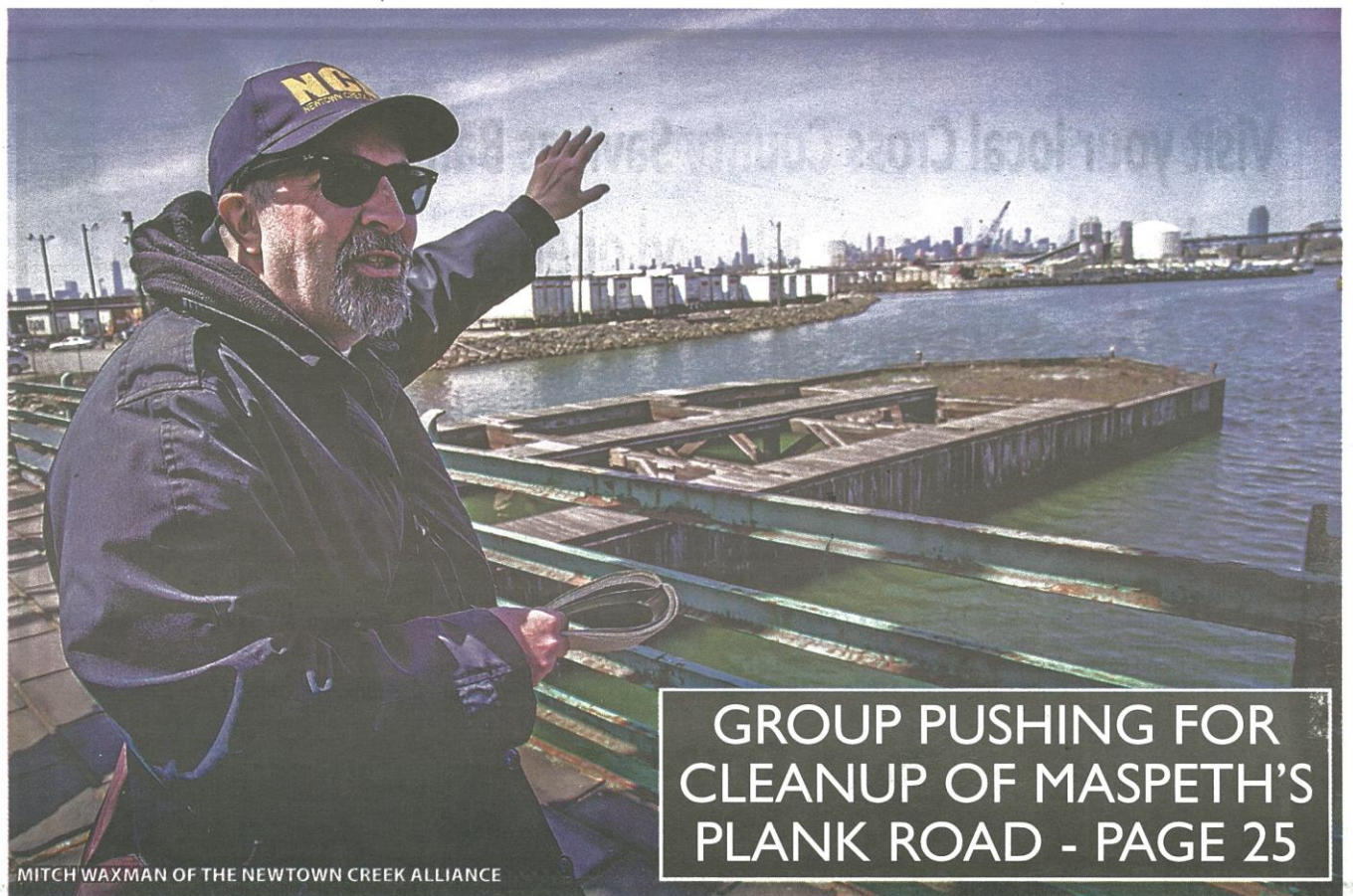
MASPETH PRIEST
TO SCREEN FILM,
DISCUSS ANCIENT
LANGUAGE

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TASTING QUEENS

POPULAR TASTE OF
QUEENS EVENT TO
TAKE PLACE NEXT
TUESDAY NIGHT

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GROUP PUSHING FOR
CLEANUP OF MASPETH'S
PLANK ROAD - PAGE 25

MITCH WAXMAN OF THE NEWTOWN CREEK ALLIANCE

Creek Alliance pushes for cleanup of Plank Road

BY CHASE COLLUM
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An environmental activist could barely ask for a tougher beat than an industrial waterway, but that hasn't stopped the Newtown Creek Alliance from working for the past 12 years to raise awareness and funding in support of a cleaner, more usable creek.

In the first week of April, the alliance began work on their latest initiative: The cleanup of Plank Road, a small stretch of rocky, overgrown beachhead near the Department of Sanitation's District 5 Garage at the end of 58th Road just south of its intersection with 47th Street.

"The Maspeth Plank Road was originally part of a toll bridge that crossed Newtown Creek," said Mitch Waxman as he led a walking tour of Newtown Creek. He explained that the road is named for the pylons that pierce the surface of the water which have been in place since the mid-1800s, when the toll road was still in operation.

Newtown Creek, which serves as the dividing line between the westernmost 3.5 miles of Queens and Brooklyn, is often cited for its high pollution levels contributed to by years of industrial dumping and metropolitan neglect. In 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency declared the creek a Superfund site, clearing the way for environmental remediation.

Willis Elkins, who led a canoe and kayak tour around Newtown Creek to Plank Road, said that plans for the site include general trash cleanup, taming the wild vegetation that have taken over much of the waterfront, and possible installation of landscape features to help make the area more hospitable to visitors and local workers.

"As you can see, the rushes have really taken over here, and technically it's an invasive species, but at Newtown Creek we're really happy about anything can grow here," Elkins said.

The Newtown Creek Alliance will be undertaking several small restoration and cleanup projects around the erstwhile creek throughout the summer. While the nature of the Superfund status makes the specific future of the waterway a bit murky, Waxman said the group would continue with current projects until they know more.

Waxman felt the improvements can be beneficial not just to nature lovers and preservationists, but for local workers, too.

"Who says the guys working at the Department of Sanitation wouldn't want to come out here and have a nice place to smoke a cigar at the end of their shift?" he asked.



Participants in the canoe tour arrive at Plank Road (inset) in Maspeth.

Pastor to screen film on ancient language

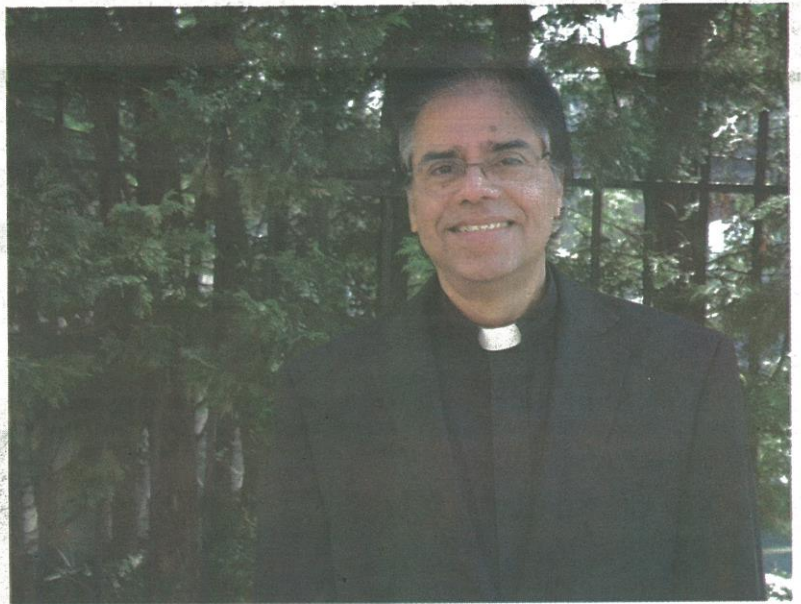
BY ANDREW SHILLING
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Rev. Joseph Palackal has spent the last 20 years researching the complexities and mysteries associated with the forgotten Aramaic language.

"I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the subject of Aramaic chants," explained Palackal, the parochial vicar at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Maspeth.

In continuing his decades-long pilgrimage studying the now endangered 3,000-year-old language believed to have been spoken by Jesus Christ, Palackal explored different parts throughout the state of India for answers.

In a yearlong journey through the country, a trip sponsored by Maspeth Federal Savings Bank, the reverend returned with 65 hours of video footage that he has since whittled down to an all-inclusive film on the topic to air at St. Stan's, located at 57-16 61st St., on Friday, April



Reverend Joseph Palackal at St. Stanislaus Church in Maspeth.

25, at 7:30 p.m.

"The people still remember the song and text that they haven't used in 50 years," Palackal recalled from his journey. "These singers were so grateful to me, that someone found them interesting. They thought people had forgotten about these melodies."

After returning home, Palackal said he was surprised most by the lack of understanding that society still has about such a significant piece of history.

"It would have been lost to humanity," he said. "We are doing a service to this cultural treasure."

Palackal added that

he recently received a call from Al Jazeera producers, inquiring about his film and findings.

"My plan is to give the recordings to the Library of Congress," Palackal said. "That way it will stay in the world and future scholars will have access to that."