LIFE WITH LITTLE ONES

CHALK TALK

Students salute school's namesake

Christian Perez: "I felt strongly about my country, standing in Hero Park"

TOMPKINSVILLE — Students at Dreyfus Intermediate School (IS 49) in Stapleton are living proof of the benevolent spirit of their school's namesake, Berta A. Dreyfus.

As part of the 350th Anniversary of Staten Island (SI350), Dreyfus students collaborated with Wagner College, the College of Staten Island, the Borough President's office and the City Parks Department to celebrate the rich history of Staten Island

As part of this effort, volunteers from Wagner College, under the direction of Professors Lori Weintraub and Steven Preskill, educated the Dreyfus students on the significance of Hero Park in Tompkinsville. The land for the park was donated to the city by Berta and Louis Dreyfus in 1920.

Hero Park, located at the intersection of Victory Boulevard and Louis Street in Tompkinsville, honors the 144 Staten Island soldiers who died in World War I. Large evergreen trees, dedicated to each veteran, as well as memorial tablets decorate the park, in tribute to those who gave their lives during the war.

During the war.

During her lifetime,
Berta Dreyfus donated
hundreds of thousands of
dollars to various hospitals, colleges, civic groups
and charities. Berta purchased the first ambulance for Richmond Memorial Hospital. She
made countless donations
to the-then Staten Island
Hospital in New Brighton
as well as what was then
known as the Wagner Lutheran Memorial College
on Grymes Hill.

Trinity Lutheran
Church in Stapleton, Zion
Methodist Church in
Tompkinsville, the Staten
Island Council of Boy
Scouts of America, the
Visiting Nurse Association of Staten Island, the
Conference House Association, the Staten Island
Civic Committee and the
Girl Scouts of America,
were also recipients of
her generosity.

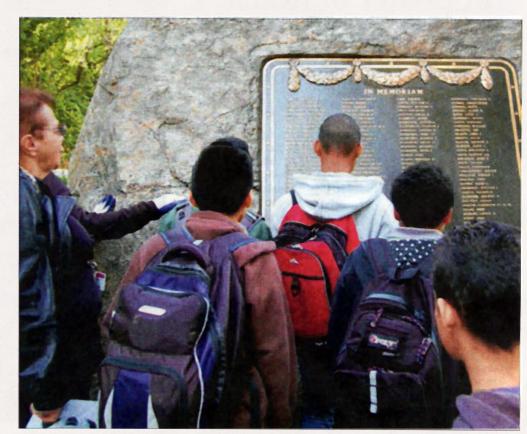
Berta's husband Louis, discovered a process for making chewing gum base in 1909 and formed the L.S. Dreyfus Company in Clifton. As demand increased for the chewing gum base, Dreyfus' business grew steadily and prospered. By 1913, it had more than 40 customers, including the William Wrigley Jr. Company, which still manufactures

Wrigley Chewing Gum. Over the past several weeks, sixth-, seventhand eighth-graders at Dreyfus participated in interdisciplinary lessons commemorating the history of Staten Island and Berta Dreyfus. Some of their assignments included creating scaled drawings of Hero Park and writing reflective essays about the importance of celebrating Hero Park. Students also made their own chewing gum using some of the same ingredients used by Louis Drey-

fus.

Ten days ago, Dreyfus
Principal Linda Hill coordinated the celebration
of Hero Park. A group of
about 60 students, accompanied by their teachers,
Steven Warcholak and
Dr. Richard Candia,
participated in the day's
events. The festive occasion included a musical
prelude by the school orchestra conducted by Sa-

mantha Incarbon.
Students were welcomed by Lee Covino,
Veterans Affairs advisor to Borough President
James Molinaro, and
Borough Historian
Thomas Matteo. Both were impressed with the students' knowledge of Berta and Louis Dreyfus.



Students from Dreyfus Intermediate School look at the names of veterans on a memorial plaque in Hero Park, Tompkinsville,



Dreyfus teacher Richard Candia; Lee Covino, from the Borough President's Office of Veterans Affairs; Thomas Matteo, Staten Island Historian; Linda Hill, principal of Dreyfus; and Steven Warcholak, another teacher, stand in front of the memorial plaque at Hero Park along with band leader Samantha Incarbone.



DIANE LORE

"Every school should do a little research about their namesake," Covino said.

Seventh-grader **Detra Johnson** read an excerpt about the generosity of Berta Dreyfus. "I felt honored to recite the information we learned about Berta Dreyfus," she

said. City Parks Department representatives Meredith Leslie and Frank Filatro helped students plant 1,000 daffodil bulbs throughout the park. "To me, each flower represents a fallen hero," said student Soledad Acevedo, who is looking forward to the spring, when the park will turn into a sea of yellow daffodils. The day ended with a moving roll call of 144 names by the students, in remembrance of the heroic deeds of the Staten Island soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country during World War I.

"I memorized the names of the World War I veterans that I recited in the roll call, so I won't forget them," said Yasmen Adams.

Classmate Christian
Perez said he found the
day a moving experience.
"I felt strongly about my
country, standing in Hero

Diane Lore writes about schools and education for the Advance. Contact her at lore@siadvance.com. Look for her Chalk Talk column Thursdays during the school year in the Shore editions and online at SILive.com.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DREYFUS INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Students plant flower bulbs in Hero Park in Tompkinsville.