

# Blowing out the candles on Island's 350th birthday

Organizers hope momentum of year-long celebration builds tradition

By JILLIAN JORGENSEN  
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

While Staten Island's year-long 350th birthday party came to a close yesterday, its organizers hope the connections it forged between institutions across the borough will last for years to come.

"I hope that the tradition with this continues, and we become one Island, with one voice and many stories," said Robert Coghlan, chairman of the board of s1350.

The s1350 organization brought together cultural institutions, colleges, students, researchers, residents and more for the yearlong celebration of the borough's history. But even though the party wound down yesterday with a closing ceremony at St. John's University, Grymes Hill, Coghlan wants the different institutions to continue working together to cultivate activities on the Island.

"We kind of brought down the barriers and said, 'What can we all do together?'" he said.

Now that the celebration



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/DEREK ALVEZ

Robert Coghlan, S1350's chairman of the board, is flanked, left to right, by Joseph Sciamè, Martha K. Hirst, Dr. Lori Weintrob, FDNY Commissioner Sal Cassano, Gerard A. McEnerney, Dr. James O'Keefe, Dr. Tomas Morales and Carin Guarasci.

is done, he said, he is eager to see what comes out of it. He hopes to meet with other community leaders in the coming weeks to work on further collaborations, with ideas ranging from shuttle buses between cultural institutions to a day pass that would allow access to more than one Island museum.

Joseph Sciamè, St. John's University vice president for community relations, said many people didn't realize how many activities there

were on Staten Island until the institutions started working together.

"I think it was a wonderful day, and I think the memory of it will linger," he said.

Looking back on the year, Coghlan said as much as he thought he knew about Staten Island, he kept learning new things — like the first ever game of tennis was played here.

"It's great that we were able to succeed in sharing the history," he said.

Yesterday's closing ceremonies included a video presentation featuring local notables, including former Mayor Ed Koch and Mayor Michael Bloomberg, waxing poetic on the city's greenest borough. Bloomberg said the Island is the best of both worlds — it has small-town charm while being part of the greatest city in the world. Where else could he take a ride on a world-famous ferry, hike the Greenbelt, catch a live show and eat a great Italian meal, he asked.

"This is America, right here on Staten Island," Congressman Michael Grimm added in the video.

The video took a lighter turn when everyday Islanders on the street were asked to guess the borough's age — with responses ranging from 150 to a not-so-great guess of 30.

Coghlan recalled some of the year's highlights, including the borough's actual birthday party in August, and the "living flag" display the group organized this summer. "Together, we were able to show what Staten Island and this country is all about," he said.

The ceremony included performances by the Richmond County Orchestra Quartet and the Curtis High School Jazz Band. A photo slideshow was narrated by students from St. John's, Wagner College and the College of Staten Island.

Several people and organizations were honored for their work with s1350, including Patricia Salmon, curator of history at the Staten Island Museum; Leticia Remauro, chair of Community Board One; Dorothy Myhre-Donahue, organizer of the SI Memories programs; Ann Merlino, CSI professor emerita; Gerard McEnerney, assistant vice president and executive director, St. John's University; the Advance and the Richmond County Savings Foundation.