

STADIUM, ANYONE?

BY NICHOLAS HIRSHON
DAILY NEWS WRITER

TENNIS' MOST hallowed institution is balking at the price of a historic Queens stadium that long hosted the U.S. Open — a blow to preservationists who hoped it would spare the site from being gutted.

The International Tennis Hall of Fame — a nonprofit group — cannot afford the reported \$9 million price tag for the storied West Side Stadium in Forest Hills Gardens, CEO Mark Stenning told the Daily News.

"We certainly respect the history in West Side, but it would be highly unlikely we would consider buying the stadium," Stenning said.

Preservationists had hoped the

Developer may win historic tennis venue

hall of fame would propose an alternative to plans from developer Cord Meyer to gut the stadium — home to the U.S. Open from 1923 to 1977 — and erect townhouses.

Members of the tennis club will vote Sept. 23 on whether to sell the 2.5-acre plot to Cord Meyer and accept the townhouse pitch.

A two-thirds majority is needed to pass the plan. Board member Christine Schott said the members are now split 50-50.

Stenning hailed the history of the venue, labeling it a "living museum." He gushed that few sports sites are "as iconic as the center court in Forest Hills."

But he also said that he appre-

ciates that dreary finances can lead to difficult decisions. He cited the hall of fame's decades-old call to sell courts at the famed Newport Casino complex in Rhode Island.

"It would be a tremendous shame to see a piece of what I would consider a historic landmark go away," Stenning said of West Side Stadium. "But I also understand there are fiscal realities."

Meanwhile, Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-Queens, Brooklyn) is urging the USTA to host one U.S. Open match a year at the horse-shoe-shaped stadium.

A USTA spokesman said that he had not yet heard Weiner's

proposal, but added that the association did not want to get involved.

"We believe this is a matter that should be determined by the West Side Tennis Club," said the spokesman, Chris Widmaier.

Cord Meyer's plans call for incorporating the facade of the stadium — such as its arches and concrete eagles — as part of the design for the townhouses.

Cord Meyer President Sal Panico said the developer also plans a "wall of fame" dedicated to the great athletes who played there.

"In a perfect world, the stadium would be renovated and used again in tournaments," said Cord Meyer COO Anthony Colletti. "I don't think there's any chance that could happen. This is the next best thing."



Corona Children's Choir Director Alvaro Rodas (c.) and conductor Sanna Valvanne sing "What a Wonderful World" with kids. Photo by Christie M. Farriella

Taking kids on a musical journey around the world

BY IRVING DeJOHN
DAILY NEWS WRITER

AN ACCOMPLISHED percussionist who could have scored a seat with a premiere orchestra has instead decided to use his talents to give the gift of music to Queens kids.

Alvaro Rodas completed the prestigious Abreu Fellowship from the New England Conservatory, an intensive seminar that trains musicians to educate underserved communities throughout the country.

Instead of joining a music education program like many of his peers, Rodas is hoping the Corona Children's Choir Camp he created this year strikes a chord with an area he felt was "ripe" for such a program.

The free summer camp that started Aug. 9 is attended by about 100 local youngsters each day, and has them singing songs from 12 countries in 13 different languages in sweet harmony.

Rodas, 40, who taught impoverished chil-

dren in his native Guatemala, strongly believes music can be an instrument for social change.

"Kids realize in a very short time they're capable of accomplishing more," Rodas said of the project. "It's always pushing them to be better."

While fund-raising for his program, he met with Freddie Gershon, CEO of Music Theatre International, a music licensing company.

"I love everything about this project," said Gershon, who donated \$50,000 after meeting with Rodas — nearly the entire camp budget. "These kids are all better for what this experience will be."

With the necessary funds secured, Rodas reached out to local schools and enlisted world-renowned children's conductor Sanna Valvanne, whom he had met in Guatemala four years ago.

Valvanne's special technique is to use the entire body while singing — a departure from normally stiff choirs.

The children were initially reluctant to

jump, shake and wave their arms, but once they found their voices, they warmed up.

"It's been amazing to see them open up and get more excited about it," Valvanne said. "They had no idea they could sing."

The tiny tenors do renditions of Gene Kelly's "Singing in the Rain" and folk songs from countries such as Finland and Australia. They learn by mimicking Valvanne's instructions.

While the social change that Rodas is looking to create may take some time, the smiles on the children's faces as they stomp, clap and sing are immediate.

"I like it because it's fun and I love singing," said Thamara Ferreira, 9. "It makes me feel good being here."

Rodas hopes that the success of this camp will jump-start the Corona Youth Music Project — his next, larger venture, which will include a symphony orchestra.

The camp ends Saturday with a concert at the Queens Museum of Art at 3 p.m.

AT A GLANCE

BOROWIDE — Assemblywoman Audrey Pheffer and Queens District Attorney Richard Brown are teaming up to collect cell phones for domestic violence victims.

Pheffer and Brown are asking locals to donate their phones to the Verizon Wireless HopeLine Program, which provides victims with a phone, service and voice-mail to communicate with family, friends and prospective employers.

"A cell phone is a lifesaving tool for victims of domestic violence," Pheffer said. "Donating your phone is not only good for the environment, but can serve as a lifeline for those in need."

To donate a cell phone, drop it off at either of Pheffer's offices: 90-16 Rockaway Beach Blvd. in Rockaway Beach, or 108-14 Cross Bay Blvd. in Ozone Park. **Nicholas Hirshon**

WOODHAVEN — The Woodhaven Residents Block Association is hosting its monthly town hall meeting today at 8 p.m.

The meeting will focus on crime in the community, especially the recent murder of 27-year-old Dario Paiva, who was fatally stabbed at the 85th St.-Forest Parkway Station on the J line.

Other topics include graffiti and the upcoming election season. The meeting will be held at the Woodhaven-Richmond Hill Volunteer Ambulance Corps, 78-15 Jamaica Ave. **Lisa L. Colangelo**

ROCHDALE VILLAGE — A Queens book club will host author Faye Thompson on Friday night to discuss her new novel on race and relationships, "Cheesecake and Teardrops."

Thompson's book follows best friends who embark on "a spiritual odyssey, colliding with themes of redemption, forgiveness, self-acceptance and tolerance."

She will discuss the book Friday with the Not Just Books Book Club at 168-14 127th Ave. at 8 p.m.

Thompson also will appear Sept. 25 at the Queens Book Fair at York College in Jamaica.

For information, visit www.fayethompson.com.

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