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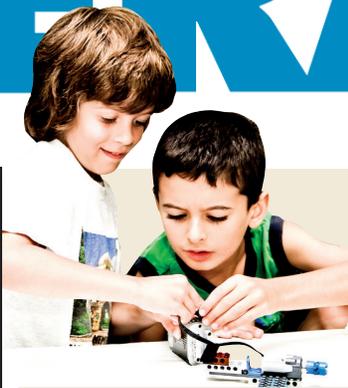
Citizen



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A crown jewel shines brighter

Millions of dollars in federal and state funding spur Jones Beach's post-Sandy revival

By JIMIN KIM

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Nearly two years after Hurricane Sandy, the Jones Beach State Park staff — with the help of the Federal Emergency Management Agency — has not only repaired, but revived the world-famous attraction.

One of the park's hardest-hit areas was the Central Mall, the hub of the Jones Beach boardwalk, where beachgoers are drawn to a variety of concessions and activities. FEMA provided over \$2.4 million to fix the 2-mile-long boardwalk after it sustained severe tidal damage.

"The whole boardwalk was compromised," said Hank Leggio, director of park operations. "Railings were bent and undulating."

The Central Mall's boardwalk handrails are now made of sturdier Brazilian ipe (pronounced e-pay) wood. "I can't even imagine they were able to put all this back together," said Bob Manning, 56, who was sipping a drink under the signal flags on the boardwalk. "If this is all new, it's amazing. They did a beautiful job."

After the storm, the staff renovated heavily damaged lifeguard shacks and the flooded administration building, and cleared massive amounts of debris and sand that washed up onto parking lots.

"We were in shock, so we were sizing up the situation," Leggio said. "... We took a little bit of time to think about where to start. I want to give a lot of credit to my staff, many of whom came to work immediately even though they had problems in their own



Photos by Andrew Hackmack/Herald

THE JONES BEACH BOARDWALK, now beautifully restored, was among many areas of the state park that were inundated by Hurricane Sandy.

homes."

The staff made it a priority to preserve the park's heritage amid major renovations. "It's a balance," Leggio said. "We were very concerned about keeping things as close to original as we could." Jones Beach's storm resiliency initiative has strengthened the park to make it more prepared for future storms.

Sandy had uprooted a lifeguard shack

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14 Jones Beach restored, more resilient

Continued from front page
that had sat on the West Bathhouse beach since the 1930s. Fortunately, it was salvaged.

East of Field Six, meanwhile, there are new fences, which capture sand to replace dunes that act as a tidal buffer but were washed away by Sandy. "Views that we didn't have before were there now because of the dunes that were flattened," Leggio said.

The damage wasn't limited to erosion. The storm knocked out the electricity in some areas of the park for months. "We were on generator power for quite some time," said Leggio. Electrical sources, such as the fuse box near the administration building, have been raised to avoid future flooding.

Although a dedicated staff and state funds facilitated the park's turnaround, serendipity played a role. Materials that had been reserved for projects scheduled before the storm were used for urgent reconstruction. "They ordered this Brazilian rainforest wood," Leggio said of the ipe. "It's not something you can get an abundant amount of, so they ordered it ahead of time for planned renovations." He added that the pre-arranged jobs hadn't been canceled, but rather delayed by the recovery effort.

In March, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced a \$65 million, five-year Jones Beach Revitalization Plan, which is still in the development stages. "It hasn't come down to actual construction at this point," said Susan Giuliani, the park director. "It takes time to develop the plans and to get the plans implemented."

There are plans to further enhance storm resiliency, streamline park entry and construct new dining and recreational facilities, possibly including a zipline and a rock climbing wall.

"I think the state of New York realizes this particular park is of utmost importance for tourism," said Wilfried Thewes, a beach patron. "I think they did the right thing."



JONES BEACH DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS HANK LEGGIO showed a photo of a bayside pier after Sandy struck, and, at right, how it looked last weekend.

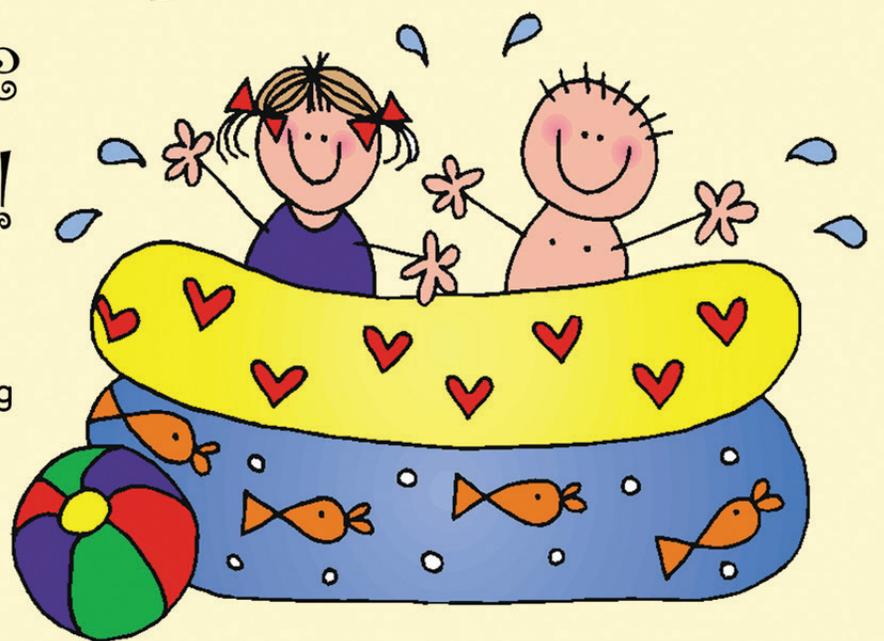
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