



# Salute to Russian heritage

## Day of fun, education kicks off fest

BY SNEJANA FARBEROV  
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

PROTECTED FROM wet weather by white tents, members of New York's Russian community flocked to Brooklyn's Asser Levy Park last week for a day of fun and education at the kickoff of the fourth annual Russian Heritage Week.

Dozens of groups represented at the sprawling fair included hospitals and medical centers, as well as prominent cultural institutions, colleges, local press agencies and private businesses, including Uno Money Transfer, a spinoff company of the Omnex Group.

"This event is a great example of Russians coming together and a great opportunity for us to network and build our Russian client base," said Mike Simanovsky, account executive at Omnex.

Keeping in mind the acute and ubiquitous problem of affordable health care, the organizers of the fair brought leading insurance companies — including Health Plus and New York Presbyterian Community Health Plans — directly to their potential customers, allowing them to receive detailed information about each health plan and sign up right away.

"We help our community receive free medical insurance," explained Marina Lazovskiy, a representative of the New York Presbyterian Community Health Plan. "We have to check their income to make sure they're eligible, depending on the size of the family and, if we see that they are, we help them fill out the applications."

Marina Yankelevich, manager of the Russian program at the



Tiger International Martial Arts Center and Combat Samba Center took part in annual festival in Asser Levy Park last week.

Visiting Nurse Service of New York, emphasized that the focus of its assistance program is on elderly Russian-Americans.

"We realize how hard it is for [senior citizens], many of whom don't speak English and don't understand the American medical system — that's why we have Russian-speaking nurses, physical therapists and home-care specialists," said Yankelevich.

One of the most popular spots in the park was the tent of Columbus Medical Institute of New York, which offered health-conscious festival-goers a unique computer presentation of cutting-edge medical technology, including three-dimensional

virtual colonoscopies and heart scans.

"We demonstrate the capabilities of modern medicine, particularly preventive medicine and early diagnosis prior to the appearance of the first symptoms of an illness," said Leo Futerman, executive director of Columbus Medical. "I can probably say that for more than a year, we've been the best-equipped facility in the world."

In addition, all the guests of the health and sports fair had the opportunity to get a free podiatry checkup and blood-pressure testing performed by nurses at the mobile clinic of Coney Island Hospital, which was parked by

the central lawn throughout the day.

Sunday's event, however, was not all about serious health concerns and medical screenings — there was plenty of time left for a loud and colorful celebration of life and culture, complete with ethnic foods, dances, musical numbers, athletic showcases and clowns. In short, the fair had something special for everyone, from toddlers to retirees.

Several youth dance studios, including the award-winning Bukharian ensemble Malika and the Shostakovich School of Music, Art and Dance, entertained the crowd with traditional folk dances and musical extrava-

ganzas that featured talented kids of all ages.

"The children live for the stage, they want to show people what they've learned and I think it's a great pleasure for the children and for the people who watch them perform," said Angela Kirshon, head of the Russian Dance Academy.

One of the highlights of the day was a surprise appearance by Borough President Marty Markowitz, a longtime supporter of the local Russian community. "I'm here because Russians are very important to Brooklyn and New York," said Markowitz. "Brooklyn is the Russian-American capital of America, and an event like this reinforces that truth."

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**Ukraine prez rapped**

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukraine's main opposition party, which is sympathetic to Russia, said pro-Western President Viktor Yushchenko was plunging the country into chaos by seeking NATO membership in the face of public resistance.

Officials announced they had to postpone the "Tight Knot 2006" exercises with Britain, one of a series of such events in the coming months, because of a political stalemate that meant parliament could not approve the war games.

Small but noisy protests over another exercise — involving U.S. reservists in Russian-speaking Crimea — have underlined how divisive an issue NATO is for Ukraine.

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The presence of foreign troops must be approved by the assembly, embroiled since a March election in talks between bickering liberal parties on forming a new coalition government.

"Ukraine's statehood is under threat," opposition Regions Party leader Viktor Yanukovich told reporters in Kiev.

"Ukraine is in the grip of destabilization and political crisis." Ukraine has held joint exercises with Western countries under NATO auspices since 1997.

**Bush to visit Hungary**

WASHINGTON — President Bush has dropped tentative plans to visit Ukraine this month and will instead go to Hungary to mark the 50th

anniversary of the Hungarian revolution against Soviet domination.

Although the Kiev stop was never officially announced, U.S. officials had discussed it and White House spokesman Tony Snow said that Bush would be going there at a later date. "We just postponed the trip. There will be a [Ukraine] trip, but we're going to go to Budapest," Snow said.

**Race attacks probed**

GENEVA — A United Nations human rights investigator will visit Russia this week to probe a growing wave of racist killings and beatings, a UN spokesman said.

Doudou Diene, UN special rapporteur for contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, will meet officials and activist groups in Moscow and St. Petersburg.