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## Say 'cheese!' to the Flushing Camera Club

by Andrew Benjamin , qboro contributor

A jogger taking a run in autumn. A majestic sunset in Costa Rica. A flamboyantly dressed girl hitting a tambourine. These are just a few of the pictures members of the Flushing Camera Club have snapped. But, this isn't some group of artsy snobs with cameras. It's a club in which all lovers of photography can gather to bask in the field they enjoy.

Founded in 1972, the Flushing Camera Club offers more than just an opportunity to meet fellow lovers of the lens. A member of the Photographic Federation of Long Island, the club has monthly competitions, workshops, lectures and seminars. Members range from those who take pictures as a hobby to professionals.

Billing itself as "the friendly club," there aren't any outrageous requirements for interested members. You don't need a Nikon D5000 and you don't need connections to join. Stan Strauss, the president of the club, said photo enthusiasts are encouraged to visit with no pressure to pay the membership fee. It's that easy-going attitude that often attracts camera aficionados to their meetings.

"This one was listed as the friendly club," said Louise Destefano of Whitestone, a member for two years. "Some of the other clubs were a little more competitive. I needed a club that was going to help me."

"It's a support group," said member Ramiro Agredo. "And also you come here to get the support of education from the lectures and courses."

A photography expert from outside the group is usually brought in for lectures and seminars, though sometimes Strauss also occasionally leads a forum. "We do a lot of teaching in terms of things you can do in the digital darkroom," Strauss said. Other lectures cover composition, night shooting and other photographic techniques. During a meeting on Nov. 17, Strauss held a one-hour course on Adobe Photoshop Elements, demonstrating how to use some basic tools of the program.

The club also has competitions wherein members submit photographs they have taken to be assessed by an outside judge. They are usually held on the first Wednesday of every month. Photographs may be submitted as black and white prints, colors prints or digital images. A contest might sound intimidating, but even amateurs are encouraged to participate. There are categories for beginners and for advanced photographers. The contests gives budding photographers the opportunity to see what they are good at and what can be improved upon, Strauss said.

The club doesn't just stay in Flushing. Members also travel together to take pictures of new sights. In Maine, members took photos of lighthouses. When visiting St. Augustine, Fla., they took pictures of nesting and migrating birds. Other places the group has visited include upstate New York, Virginia and New Jersey.

"One of the best things is when you go out on a photo shoot with others," Strauss said, referring to the opportunities the trips can provide photographers.

Marty Fleischer, who has been a member of the club since 1976, has seen photographers come and go and watched the club switch to digital cameras from film, but one trait has always stayed with the club. "Camaraderie has always been there," he said.

### Flushing Camera Club

When: Dec. 15, 7 p.m. Meetings held on the first, third and fifth Monday of each month.

Where: Flushing Hospital Auditorium 45th Avenue and Parsons Boulevard Flushing



Clockwise from top right: "NYC Parade" by Joe Caruso; "Blue Boat, Green Water" by Joe Crupi; "Wheels" by Joan Egan; "Balloonfest" and "This is Fun" by Ann Grodman.