

JANUARY 2019

PARK WEST

NEIGHBORS



THE DIAZ-MESH FAMILY:
HELPING OTHERS



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Have feedback, ideas or submissions? We are always happy to hear from you! Deadlines for submissions are the 25th of each month. Go to www.bestversionmedia.com and click "Submit Content." You may also email your thoughts, ideas and photos to:

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HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM

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DEAR RESIDENTS,

Welcome to the New Year! In the midst of this bleak winter, the days are beginning to lengthen. We have this opportunity to start afresh, reflecting on the year past and setting goals to make this one even better. For myself, this month marks one year of writing for Park West Neighbors. This year, I have had the honor of getting to know a score of amazing Upper West Side residents and families, along with a great many local businesses and organizations, that exemplify the neighborhood's rich character and community spirit. It has been a real joy to dive into this fantastic community and share the unique and interesting stories of its incredible residents with others in the community. Thank you, Upper West Siders, for making my job such a pleasure this past year!

Speaking of inspiration for the New Year, this month's feature family sets an example of doing good that's hard to beat. The Diaz-Mesh family is centered around helping others, from the parents' early intervention service agency to their three kids' many charitable and leadership activities. Read about these generous and accomplished Upper West Siders on page 6. And for some sound and simple New Year's advice from St. Agnes Library, turn to page 15. Unsurprisingly, the Calendar of Events on page 12 is full of fun shows and activities to liven up the cold days and get your year off to a fun and inspiring start.

Another force for good in the community is the National Council of Jewish Women New York, the largest and oldest branch of this national non-profit organization that supports the rights and well-being of women, children, and families through grassroots advocacy and community service. From food pantries to educational programming about the lives of significant Jewish women, read about this organization's mission and services on page 5.

Lastly, we have a special treat this month - a contribution from our very own graphic designer, Robert Alexander! Robert is the one doing all the design work behind the scenes to make the magazine look as beautiful as it does, but now you finally have a chance to hear from him directly. On page 10, he gives some helpful tips on finding and working with the perfect graphic designer for your business, based on years of personal experience.



With much warmth,

SIERRA POWELL
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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN NEW YORK: A Faith in the Future. A Belief in Action.

By Andrea Kopel

National Council of Jewish Women New York (NCJW NY) is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW NY strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. NCJW NY directly impacts the lives of 40,000 New Yorkers annually, with the help of nearly 400 volunteers. NCJW NY serves New Yorkers from all walks of life, from all racial and religious backgrounds, and all programs and services are non-sectarian.

At its very core, NCJW NY is about developing women's leadership through meaningful opportunities for hands-on community service and grassroots advocacy. The organization was formed in 1894 by smart, dynamic women who had few other outlets for their energies. NCJW New York is one of the oldest and largest chapters of NCJW, Inc. Times have certainly changed since 1894, but the spirit of NCJW NY, and the need for our work, has not.

NCJW NY takes a multifaceted approach to social change. We address the needs of today through our direct service programs, and we address the needs of tomorrow through our education and advocacy efforts.

NCJW NY's social service programs include:

- Hunger Program: A weekly Food Pantry provides emergency groceries, and a twice-weekly Community Kitchen provides a fresh-cooked, sit down meal for all who need it.
- Council Lifetime Learning: Creates community and provides support and enrichment services for isolated seniors.
- Pregnancy Loss Support Program: Provides comfort and validation for parents who experienced this devastating and often misunderstood form of loss.
- Children's Literacy Program: Works one-on-one with economically disadvantaged public school children to foster a love of books and reading.
- Back 2 School Store: Enhances school-readiness by providing children from low-income families with everything they need to go back to school with pride and enthusiasm.

NCJW NY engages in advocacy and education programming in the areas of:

- Reproductive health, rights and justice
- Immigrant and refugee rights
- Combatting abuse
- Hunger and nutrition access
- Exploring the lives of Jewish women past and present through films, conferences, and other events

NON-PROFIT SPOTLIGHT



NCJW NY is a legacy organization with a long and rich history of effective programming. We've been making change happen for 125 years. We hope to continue to grow our community of volunteers into an even more powerful force for positive change, with a vision of creating a city in which all women, children, and families have equal rights, equal protection, and equal opportunity. When you join NCJW NY, you are joining a community of compassionate, courageous, and powerful women, working for social justice. Visit www.ncjwny.org.



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By Sierra Powell
Photos by Brett Deutsch

HELPING OTHERS THE DIAZ-MESH FAMILY

“There are three words I want on my tombstone,” announces Scott Mesh, with a dramatic pause before letting it out: “He helped others.” And after one conversation with Scott, his wife Edita, and their kids Max, Sofia, and Maya, I would have to agree that no other words could better sum up Scott’s life and indeed the spirit of the entire Diaz-Mesh family. One and all, they possess an extraordinary sense of responsibility towards others – not only Edita and Scott, psychologists who have dedicated their careers to helping children with special needs, but also their children, who despite their youth already express the same spirit of social service that they seem to have inherited from their parents. With an awareness and maturity beyond their years, Max, Sofia, and Maya show striking initiative, whether it be fundraising for charitable causes, taking leadership roles at school, or participating in feminism seminars. Meanwhile, their parents provide services for thousands of young

kids with special needs and their families through their agency Los Niños Services, which they founded 20 years ago and has grown to be one of the largest service providers of its kind in the state.

Edita and Scott are warm and generous individuals with an evident concern for the feelings of those around them. A small, soft-spoken, but confident woman with a disarming smile, Edita grew up in Ecuador and moved with her family to the Bronx when she was 17, speaking not a word of English – but she quickly managed to get into college and eventually earned a master’s degree. Scott, whose grandparents lived in Manhattan and who grew up in the suburbs, has a succinct, professional way of speaking tempered by an open friendliness and wry sense of humor. When he and Edita met as coworkers in the Bronx, Scott was already fluent in Spanish, having

traveled throughout South America and studied abroad in Spain, and they have gone on not only to raise a bilingual family but also to make multilingualism a key part of their service agency.

Upper West Siders for 22 years, Edita and Scott were drawn to the neighborhood, as so many are, by its beautiful, quiet, tree-lined streets, family atmosphere, and excellent schools. Edita emphasizes what a great place it’s been to raise the kids, with the parks on both sides and so many activities and events; now that the kids are older, they enjoy considerable independence, thanks to the convenient public transportation. Symphony Space is one of Max’s favorite local features and he relishes the ease of having everything within a radius of a few blocks. Maya, with her keen awareness of social justice issues, loves the diversity of the Upper West Side but can’t help noticing the disparities among different groups in the area, especially from her



perspective within the public school system. The whole family loves the 84th St. movie theater, the children’s museum, Barnes & Noble, and all the restaurants, and for the kids it’s impossible to imagine any other place as home.

Both Edita and Scott are psychologists with specialties in early childhood development who “shared a common vision about starting a company that would help young children with special needs,” Scott says. In 1998, they created Los Niños Services with the mission of helping all families and especially the under-served, providing state-funded special education, therapies, and other services through in-home care and three service centers in Westchester and Staten Island. The company has its

roots on the Upper West Side, originally operating out of Scott and Edita’s apartment and then in offices on 93rd St until 2005. To date the agency has served around 40,000 families and currently employs more than 300 people.

(Continued on Pg. 8)

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the awards event. Max studies piano, and Maya loves to sing and is leader of her school's vocal club. Sofia belongs to a school club that aims to foster relationships and interactions between special needs students and the rest of the students; she is also involved in girls' education and anti-hunger campaigns and has attended a seminar on feminism at Columbia University. Maya is a leader in her school's student government and has developed a curriculum survey to give voice to students in her school as well as co-founding a mentorship program between juniors and freshmen. Both girls served as leaders of the mentorship program at their middle school, the Computer School, which Max currently attends.

Max has already shown incredible initiative and charitable spirit – not to mention fundraising savvy – with his recent campaign to raise money for an organization that strives to bring water access to South Sudan. After reading the book "A Long Walk to Water" in school about a South Sudanese refugee, Max was inspired to organize a fundraising event in support of the organization founded by the subject of the book. He managed to convince an Upper West Side hotel to provide free event space, got a few sponsors, was able to get the book's subject to attend – and ended up raising nearly \$10,000. On a less astonishing but still impressive scale, he and a friend also raised a few hundred dollars for Puerto Rican hurricane relief by selling lemonade outside an Upper West Side subway station.

Maya, who has been applying to colleges all over the country, has a clear and ambitious idea of what she hopes to do with her life: social entrepreneurship. Last year she received a grant to begin creating a comprehensive website that will bring together all the pieces needed to assist students and families with the difficult and sometimes obscure high school application process in New York City. Currently, students without access to the information, resources, and support to navigate the system are often inadvertently left behind, exacerbating socio-economic disparities in the schools. Maya hopes that creating a centralized hub of information about the application process and about high schools themselves will make things easier and more accessible for everyone. She hopes to continue this project in college.

Biking, rock climbing, and traveling are a few of the Diaz-Mesh family's recreational interests. They've traveled many times to Ecuador and completed a road trip down the West Coast. Last year, Maya masterminded a month-long trip through Europe all around the Mediterranean! Community volunteer work is also very important to them, and they've volunteered at their temple's shelter and for the program Hour Children, which helps incarcerated and formerly incarcerated mothers and their children. After Hurricane Sandy struck in 2012, the family drove out to Coney

Island with a car-load of food, which they handed out to residents in need.

In a family led by two psychologists, emotional intelligence and an awareness of the feelings of others are key tenets, as Sofia astutely points out. "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but they'll never forget how you made them feel," she says, repeating a powerful quote passed on to her by her dad. This translates into the deep commitment to bettering the lives of others who motivate the many good deeds and accomplishments of the Diaz-Mesh family. As Maya says, the idea of healing

the world, expressed by the Hebrew phrase *tikkun olam*, is at the center of the family's philosophy: "Doing whatever we can to give back just a little, so we can give back more than we take – I think that's really guided a lot of the different projects that we've all done," Maya says. It was the desire "to help others and make life a little bit easier for them" that prompted Edita and Scott to start Los Niños Services, Edita says, and that same selfless drive inspires every member of this most inspirational family. From their home base on the Upper West Side, Edita, Scott, and their kids are busy spreading good in their own community and far beyond.



In addition, they have developed an offshoot of the company, Los Niños Training, that provides professional training in early childhood services.

The Diaz-Mesh kids are hardly less accomplished for their age than their accomplished parents. Edita and Scott are justifiably proud of their three children and treat them with a deep respect that is clearly reciprocated. Max, who is in 7th grade, Sofia, a sophomore in high school, and Maya, a senior, are all well-spoken and sharply intelligent, comporting themselves with confidence and assurance as they describe their diverse interests and remarkable accomplishments. Sofia and Maya have a strong interest in English and history, and both are contributing writers for the online teen-written magazine KidSpirit. In November, Sofia was honored with an award for an article she wrote for the magazine, and Maya served as MC for

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Easeful Tips to Help You Find the Right Graphic Designer

By Robert Alexander

Now is the perfect time of year to start designing the lives we want. As the Graphic Designer of Park West Neighbors, I am honored to share with you some of my experiences and wisdom concerning finding the right designer to work with. I have worked with businesses both large and small all over the world for almost two decades, offering graphic design, sound design and much more! Indeed, I have worked with many industries and personalities and believe me, once you find your graphic designer, it will change your world – especially since you have a member on your team who truly has your marketing message in mind.

If you own a business, you know the importance of marketing and advertising. Design is one of those key elements that is essential for your branding and marketing. It is practically unavoidable if you want to promote your business on social media (let alone the internet), and many people respond to the power of images and sound.

Looking for a quality graphic designer isn't easy. I'm here to help ease the process. So... on that note... let's get started!

Communication is key

Make sure that the designer is communicating in a way that feels right for you. Some designers will only connect through email or texting. Does that sit well with you? It's best if you find someone whom you can connect with in a way that works best for the both of you.

Get organized before looking for your designer

Make a list of items that you are looking to accomplish. It's OK if you don't exactly know all of the details. The right designer will help you with any questions or concerns – especially with the end result. Are you looking to have T-shirts made? Do you need an ad designed for a national magazine? How about a menu for your new restaurant? It's important to write down as much as you can. Your ideal designer will be able to connect with you and see what steps are important to help you create your final result. S/he will help you retrieve information to complete the job. You also want to make sure that you have any other design assets available (photos, logos, verbiage, etc) so you can offer them what they need to complete the project.

It's OK to ask questions

If you know very little about graphic design and you don't know what questions to ask, make sure that your designer is capable of educating you. The right designer will ask you the right questions in order to educate you, and confidently inform you about his/her needs to maximize the end results, according to your need. One of the most common issues I



have is when my clients send me images that have poor resolution and cannot be used for their various projects. It's my responsibility to help inform them in the most authentic and transparent fashion.

Clearly written project agreements and descriptions

This is where things get interesting! I have seen many projects go south because of unclear agreements, assumptions from both designer and client – even financial arrangements! It is so important to have an outline of all arrangements – time, money, project scope and more. Also make sure that the agreement is signable by both parties and there is a clause that gives you and the designer the opportunity to modify the agreement if necessary.

Screening is a great thing. It's important to be mindful of your decision

Definitely go with your gut. This person or team is responsible for the look and feel of your business. Regardless of how much competition is out there, it's really important to make sure that you are fully aligned with the person you are working with. A great designer will be mindful of your budget and other questions and concerns that will come up for you.

You deserve to work with people who are there to bring out the best in you and your business. In fact, it's vital! It's my pleasure to be in touch with you if you have any questions or comments about anything that I described above. Feel free to write me at ralexander@bestversionmedia.com and I am more than happy to help as much as I can.



Happy New Year everyone! Hope it's a creative one!

Robert Alexander

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www.grownyc.org

TUES., JANUARY 8

Potions and Painting: Transfiguration

@New-York Historical Society
Create paintings inspired by the *Harry Potter: A History of Magic* exhibit and the Historical Society's collection, while socializing and partaking of light refreshments. After the class you can take home your own unique work of art. Age 21 and up.
Time: 6:30-8:30pm
Cost: \$25-\$35
www.nyhistory.org

TUES., JANUARY 8

The Year in Review with Neil deGrasse Tyson

@American Museum of Natural History
Spend the evening with celebrity astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson as he reviews the top news of the Universe from 2018.
Time: 7pm
Cost: \$12-\$15
www.amnh.org

FRI., JANUARY 11 & 25

Free Music Fridays

@American Folk Art Museum
A free evening of music from a varying array of folk and indie musicians at the American Folk Art Museum.
Time: 5:30pm
Cost: Free
www.folkartmuseum.org

FRI., JANUARY 11 & FEBRUARY 8

Jerry Seinfeld

@Beacon Theatre
Legendary New Yorker and comedian Jerry Seinfeld comes back to the Beacon following a sold-out two-year residency at the iconic Upper West Side venue.
Time: 7pm & 9:30pm
Cost: From \$87.50
www.beacontheatre.com

SAT., JANUARY 12

Music Across Borders: Animals Into Song – The Cunning Little Vixen

@Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center
A New York Philharmonic Young People's Concert, this family program features Janáček's beloved opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*, bringing us into the animal world, and Dvořák's *Rusalka*, set in the realm of mermaids.
Time: 2pm
Cost: From \$15
www.lincolncenter.org

SAT., JANUARY 12

Just Kidding: Beats, Rhymes, and Breaking

@Symphony Space
New York City collective Manzana City Crew will bust out their jaw-dropping break dance action in this unique program of head spins and windmills, six-step and popping and locking. A fast-moving atmosphere of fun – and kids can join the dancers onstage to try out their own moves.
Time: 11am & 2pm
Cost: \$17
www.symphonyspace.org

MON.-WED., JANUARY 14-16

Juilliard ChamberFest

@Juilliard and Lincoln Center
During their final week of winter break, select Juilliard students participate in a unique chamber music intensive, with unlimited rehearsals and daily coaching. This series of performances showcases the results: chamber music from all over the map of classical music, interpreted by the energetic, talented young musicians of Juilliard. The matinee on Wednesday is free.
Time: 4:30pm and 7:30pm each day; also 1pm on Wed.
Cost: \$5-\$10; free on Wed.
www.juilliard.edu

TUES., JANUARY 15

Screening of "Paa Joe & The Lion" and Ghanaian Drumming Performance

@American Folk Art Museum
An evening of events celebrating exhibition artist Paa Joe and the culture of his native Ghana. A screening of the documentary "Paa Joe & The Lion" by Benjamin Wigley, capturing the creation of one of the artist's signature figurative Ghanaian coffins from workshop to burial, will be followed by a Q&A with the filmmaker and the exhibition's curator. Concluding the evening, there will be a Ghanaian drumming ensemble performance and a reception with Ghanaian street snacks.
Time: 6pm
Cost: \$5
www.folkartmuseum.org

WED., JANUARY 16

The Epic Tale of Children's Literature

@New-York Historical Society
Join eminent children's book scholar Leonard Marcus on a journey through a century of colorful writing and illustrating for kids. See how the field has evolved, from Madeleine to Mo Willems, from the Hardy Boys to Harry Potter. Includes wine and cheese. Age 21 and up.
Time: 7-8:30pm
Cost: \$25-\$35
www.nyhistory.org

FRI., JANUARY 18

National Theatre Live: Antony and Cleopatra

@Symphony Space
From England's premier theater company comes this hotly anticipated new production of the classic Shakespearean tragedy, directed by Simon Godwin and broadcast to theater screens around the world. With Caesar dead, General Mark Antony rules the war-torn Roman empire, but his passionate love affair with Queen Cleopatra threatens to bring him down. Torn between duty and devotion, obsession becomes a catalyst for war.
Time: 1pm
Cost: \$24
www.symphonyspace.org

SAT. & SUN., JANUARY 26 & 27

Mouth Open, Story Jump Out

@Clark Studio Theater at Lincoln Center
An inventive piece of interactive children's theater, at once a one-man show and a creative writing workshop, by master storyteller Polarbear. Throughout Polarbear's own story, winding through a world of international assassins, boa constrictors, and endless adventure, he takes time to engage with his young audience members, giving them the chance to let their own stories come to life. Suitable for ages 8-11.
Time: Sat. 11am & 2pm, Sun. 2pm
Cost: \$25
www.lincolncenter.org

TUES., JANUARY 29

Rick Riordan Presents: The Making of a Myth

@Symphony Space
Under his new publishing imprint, Rick Riordan Presents, bestselling children's author Rick Riordan, creator of the *Percy Jackson* and the *Olympians* series, is bringing together a diverse range of fantasy authors to tell mythological stories from their own cultures. At this exciting event, the first three authors of the imprint, Roshani Chokshi, J. C. Cervantes, and Yoon Ha Lee will join Riordan in celebrating the myths and folklore of cultures around the world. There will be an on-stage book signing following the event. Note that the event will be taped live to be presented later in classrooms throughout the country.
Time: 6:30pm
Cost: \$17
www.symphonyspace.org

THURS., JANUARY 31

Atrium 360°: Ani Cordero

@David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center
Puerto Rican singer, songwriter, instrumentalist, and activist Ani Cordero is a longtime fixture of the indie and rock music scenes. A stellar musician and master songwriter, she brings messages of hope, love, and protest to her memorable melodies and irresistible pulses. She has performed and recorded with bands such as Os Mutantes and her own band Cordero as well as releasing several solo projects.
Cost: Free
www.lincolncenter.org

ONGOING TROUGH SUN., JANUARY 27, 2019

Harry Potter: A History of Magic

@New-York Historical Society
The ultimate feast for Harry Potter fans looking to dive deeper into the world of magic that lies at the heart of the stories! This exhibition explores the magical history, folklore, and traditions that inform the wizarding world of Harry and the whole Hogwarts crew, with centuries-old artifacts such as rare books, manuscripts, and magical objects. Drafts and drawings from J.K. Rowling herself, art from several Harry Potter illustrators, and costumes and set models from the musical *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* will round out the exhibition. To delight fans even further, interactive activities such as trivia nights and more will accompany the exhibition.
Time: Museum hours
Cost: From \$13
www.nyhistory.org

ONGOING THROUGH SUN., FEBRUARY 24

John Dunkley: Neither Day nor Night

@American Folk Art Museum
John Dunkley (1891-1947), widely considered one of Jamaica's greatest artists, here receives his first exhibition outside of his native country. Comprised mainly of dark, psychologically suggestive landscapes alongside rare carved figurative sculptures, this exhibition highlights Dunkley's work in relation to the broader history, culture, and social factors of Jamaica during the pivotal period of the 1930s and 40s.
Time: Museum hours
Cost: Free
www.folkartmuseum.org

ONGOING THROUGH SAT., MARCH 30

Voice of My City: Jerome Robbins and New York

@New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
Jerome Robbins was a life-long observer and creator, reimagining and recreating the world around him through his diaries, drawings, stories, poems – and of course, through his dances, which changed the face of American dance. Born in New York City one hundred years ago, Robbins' beloved hometown was the core and the inspiration of his artistic imaginings, from his ballets *Fancy Free* and *NY Export: Opus Jazz* to the musicals *West Side Story* and *On the Town*. This exhibit traces Robbins' life and works alongside the history of the city that was both his muse and his home.



Time: Mon.-Sat. 10:30am-6pm/8pm; Sun. closed
Cost: Free
www.lincolncenter.org

ONGOING THROUGH TUES., APRIL 30, 2019

Backyard Wilderness

@American Museum of Natural History
This film, shown in 2D and 3D, follows a young girl and her family who are blind to the splendors of the natural world, absorbed in their devices – until the girl steps outside and uncovers an extraordinary new world. With breathtaking detail and immersive filming of animal and their habitats, this film reminds us of the teeming and inspiring life to be found in the most ordinary places.
Time: Hourly showing from 10:30am-4:30pm
Cost: \$16.50-\$28
www.amnh.org

ONGOING THROUGH MON., MAY 27, 2019

The Butterfly Conservatory

@American Museum of Natural History
At this popular annual exhibition, dive into the colorful world of the fascinating insects known as butterflies and escape winter weather in a lush, humid greenhouse full of butterflies of every kind.
Time: Museum hours
Cost: From \$13
www.amnh.org

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A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION FOR ALL NEW YORKERS FROM ST. AGNES LIBRARY

By Justin Glasser, Senior Librarian



New York Public Library

Did you know the average price of a new hardcover book is \$27 or that monthly streaming with Netflix is \$10.99/month? The staff at St. Agnes Library has a New Year's resolution that's easy to keep: save money by visiting your local library!

If you love getting the latest best-seller hot off the press, talk to your librarian! Perhaps you've tried to reserve a title you just read about in the Times Sunday Book Review only to learn 100 other people beat you to the punch. Librarians usually find out about books months before publication, and as soon as our cataloging department enters the record for the book (usually within a month or more of publication) we can reserve a copy for you. So the next time you're picking up the latest Lee Child, ask your librarian when the next one is coming out.

If you're a movie buff, we've got good news for you (and your wallet)! The streaming service Kanopy is available to all New York Public Library card holders. Now you can stream award-winning films from around the world from the comfort of your home without the worry of waiting for an available DVD or late fees. Simply create an account by clicking "Sign up" with your email address and library card number at nypl.kanopystreaming.com.

Kanopy works in most browsers without the need to download extra software. There is an App available

for Apple iOS 9 or higher and Google Android 4.3 or higher. Kanopy is also available now on Roku, Apple TV, Chromecast or via HDMI cable.

Each month you have the opportunity to stream up to 10 films. Once you select a film, you have three days to watch it before it expires; you never have to return a film. Check the top right of the website or App to see the number of films you have remaining for the month. Once a new month begins, your account will automatically return to 10 credits.

Kanopy might be the newest streaming service available, but it isn't the only one accessible to library cardholders. In addition to eBooks and eAudio Books, the OverDrive App includes over 400 movies ready to stream. You can visit <https://nypl.overdrive.com/> or download the OverDrive App for your iPhone, iPad, or Android device to set up an account with your library card and email address. While OverDrive's film collection is not as extensive as Kanopy's, you have the option to customize your lending period for 3, 5, or 7 days. This can be done by going into your account settings.

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