

# ManhattanTimes

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## Armory win Neighborhood Achievement Award

By Mike Fitelson 07-19-11

The Armory Foundation, which runs the nation's busiest indoor track at Fort Washington Avenue and W. 168th Street, was one of 14 organizations, businesses, and individuals to receive a Neighborhood Achievement Award on Tue., July 12th during a ceremony at Gracie Mansion. Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Small Business Services Commissioner Robert Walsh presented a Leadership Award to Dr. Norbert Sander, who started the Foundation in 1991 to rescue the immense track that had fallen into disrepair.



Armory Foundation Executive Director Dr. Norbert Sander, center, receives a Leadership Award from Small Business Services Commissioner Robert Walsh, left, and

Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The mayor holds a running shoe that Sander gave him as a token of appreciation. PHOTO: Mike Fitelson

Now the New Balance Track and Field hosts over 100 meets every year for more than 125,000 athletes from across the United States. Next year it will

also host the Millrose Games for the first time, relocating the 104-year-old event from Madison Square Garden.

When his name was called for the award, Sander, who in 1974 became the first – and still only – New York City resident to win the New York City Marathon, surprised Walsh and the mayor as he strode to the stage carrying a bag. From it he produced a pair of custom-made New Balance running shoes monogrammed with the mayor's initials. The mayor seemed to inspect them on the spot, ensuring that they were a size ten-and-a-half.

During a short interview after the event, Sander said that he was accepting the award on behalf of the entire Washington Heights community, and thanked the years-long support of Congressman Charlie Rangel, State Senator Adriano Espaillat, Assembly Member Herman "Denny" Farrell, and City Council Member Robert Jackson.

"I helped create a place where so many thousands of young kids compete and train in a safe inclusive environment in the most diverse setting you'll find in New York," he said. "I'm one of the many people who made it happen."

Sander said his next goal will be to work with the city to increase the number of high schools that offer track programs. Out of the city's 400 high schools, only 90 currently have teams, he said.

"We've got to do better," Sander said. "What's the missing ingredient? Money. We are willing to do the work, but we need the support."

The Neighborhood Achievement Awards have been given for 10 years, since the mayor created the Department of Small Business Services after he was elected. This year two local organizations won Leadership Awards as Dr. Sander was joined by Washington Heights Business Improvement District board chair Elba Arias, who recently changed her last name from Pichardo.

"It's a great night for Washington Heights, certainly," Walsh said.

