



NORWOOD NEWS

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Youth Reporters
Tackle Bronx Issues
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A DEVOTION IN FULL BLOOM



Photo by Adi Talwar

The Church of St. Ann's in Norwood holds a processional in honor of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in December. Roses are a big part of the ceremony, which is popular among the area's increasing Mexican population.

Bronx Science Students, Alumni Protest Against Principal

By JEANMARIE EVELLY

A group of current and former students from the Bronx High School of Science, organizing under the name "Take Back Bronx Science," rallied across the street from the prestigious public school last Thursday, protesting administrative policies they say are harming the school's reputation and causing a number of teachers there to resign or retire prematurely.

The students, a few dozen in number, stood on the edge of Harris Field across the street from the school, holding signs that read "Where Have the Teachers Gone?" and "We Have a Voice."

Organizing members of the group said the dissent stemmed from reports that a number of teachers have left the school in recent years over conflicts with administrative staff, namely the school's principal, Valerie Reidy.

"Me and other alumni, and also current students, saw wonderful teachers who were very intelligent, very effective, leaving because they've had enough of the harmful, hostile working environment," said Jonathan Aris, a graduate from the class of 2010. "Some of these teachers helped us get into college," he said. "They

wrote us letters of recommendation."

In September, an article in the *New York Times* reported that eight of the school's 20 social studies teachers had opted not to return this year. The story cited interviews with teachers who claimed to being publicly berated by administrators, and who said that Reidy was overly-critical and unfairly discriminated against teachers who didn't subscribe to her preferred style of instruction.

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Photo by Jeanmarie Evelly

A GROUP OF ALUMNI protesting the current administration at Bronx High School of Science last week.

Bronx Councilman Arrested During 'Prayer Protest'

Planning More Rallies Against City's 'Anti-Religious' Policies

By ALEX KRATZ

Bronx Councilman Fernando Cabrera and six other demonstrators were arrested last week in Manhattan during a peaceful protest designed to highlight what they say is the city's increasingly discriminatory policies against religious groups that rent public spaces for worship.

While the protest appears to have staved off eviction for churches using public facilities at city housing complexes, Cabrera and other clergy are continuing to fight a government policy that bans religious groups from using public school buildings for worship services. Another protest, at Morris High School in the Bronx, is planned to coincide with the mayor's "State of the City" address on Thursday at noon.

Last week's "prayer protest," held in front of the building at 100 Church St. that houses the city's law department, was organized by Pastor Dimas Salaberrios after the New York City Housing Authority told him that his church, Infinity New York, might not be able to continue to rent space at the Bronx River Houses, a city-run housing complex where the church has worshipped for the past five years. (Salaberrios said the church has had a presence there for the past seven years.)

On Dec. 17, Salaberrios said NYCHA officials told him they would no longer be able to accept rent from Infinity after Jan. 1 because of a recent court ruling that upheld a city policy preventing religious groups from worshipping inside public schools.

Salaberrios and Pastor Joe Fletcher of Bronx Bible Church, who was (continued on p. 2)

Teen Arrested in Shooting of 11-Year-Old Boy

By ALEX KRATZ

Police arrested a teenager last week and charged him with the attempted murder of an 11-year-old boy who was shot when bullets were fired through the door of his apartment on Creston Avenue. Investigators say they are still seeking another suspect who was caught on surveillance video at the time of the shooting.

Late last Thursday night, inside 2735 Creston Ave., police say two suspects, including Kijana Jenkins, 17, walked up to the apartment of 11-year-old Ryan Aguari and rang the doorbell. As Ryan approached the door, four shots were fired through the door, one of which hit Ryan in the hip. The bullet remains lodged in Ryan's hip at Jacobi Hospital where he is listed in serious condition.

Police released video footage of the two suspects and sought help in (continued on p. 4)

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ALBERT EINSTEIN COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

In The Public Interest

By JEANMARIE EVELLY

Bronx Councilman Arrested During 'Prayer Protest'

(continued from p. 1)

told his congregation could no longer worship at the Justice Sonia Sotomayor Houses in Soundview, called NYCHA and asked them to reconsider their stance. Salaberrios said they were told they could stay while NYCHA reviewed its rental agreements with input from the law department.

That's when Salaberrios, who is on a hunger strike and says his church is helping keep the peace at the traditionally-violent Bronx River Houses, decided to take the fight to the law department offices.

"I went to tell them, 'If we can't have church in our building, we're going to bring church down to them,'" Salaberrios said in an interview after the arrests.

The law department and NYCHA said the Department of Education policy that bans religious groups from worshiping in public school buildings is completely separate from NYCHA's policies. NYCHA says it doesn't have a policy against worshiping in its facilities, but that it is reviewing all of its permit agreements with every group that uses its space for activities. Although Infinity pays \$350 per week to rent space, NYCHA spokesperson Sheila Stainback says the agency doesn't have typical tenant-landlord agreements with groups.

Stainback said the groups will be allowed to use the facilities until at least Feb. 26 while NYCHA continues its review of all of its permit agreements.

Cabrera, a deeply religious councilman who heads New Life International Outreach Church on Morris Avenue, just north of Kingsbridge Road, went to support Salaberrios and about 20 other clergy and church members who had gathered in front of the law department's office building.

He arrived at about 8:40 a.m. and joined six others, including Salaberrios, in kneeling in front of the entrance to the building while police, who organizers told of their plans, looked on. Following a prayer and the singing of a religious song ("Our God is an Awesome God," Cabrera recalled), police arrested the seven protesters and charged them with trespassing.

While Cabrera and Salaberrios said they were given little warning before being arrested, a spokesman for the Police Department said they were given several warnings and were only arrested after they refused to move away from the entrance.

By 9 a.m., Cabrera and the others were handcuffed and carted off in a van to the 1st Precinct.

For Cabrera, it was a new experience and one that he wasn't expecting when he went down to the protest. "I've never been arrested for anything in my life," he said, adding that his family found out about it from news reports.

Salaberrios, on the other hand, said he had a pretty good idea the protest would end in their arrest and didn't fault police, saying they were just doing their job.

As a youth, Salaberrios, now 38, spent

FIRST NYC BABY OF 2012 ARRIVED IN THE BRONX



Photo courtesy Montefiore Medical Center

NEW YORK CITY'S first baby of the year was born in the Bronx this New Year's Eve, just as the clock struck midnight. Rania Ali was born at Montefiore Medical Center's North Division, weighing in at 7 lbs. 3.8 oz. and measuring 18 1/2 inches. Her parents, Alia and Imdad, live in Throgs Neck with 3 1/2-year-old big brother Ryan.

time in jail for criminal acts. But as a pastor, Salaberrios said he has dedicated his ministry to curbing violence.

There hasn't been a murder in the Bronx River Houses for six years and Salaberrios credits the efforts of his church for breaking up gang violence there. In addition to volunteering at the Bronx River Community Center, Salaberrios said his church donated \$30,000 to upgrade the facilities, helps residents with legal problems and gives college scholarships to local kids.

Salaberrios and Cabrera can't understand why, with government making cuts to social services across the board, the city would want to evict churches who contribute to their communities.

In early December, the Supreme Court declined to review a ruling against Bronx

Household of Faith, a church in University Heights, which upheld the DOE's policy banning worship in public school buildings. (The law department says it is simply separating church from state and protecting itself from being seen as promoting or favoring certain religious practices.)

Bronx Household and 60 other city churches have until Feb. 12 before they lose the right to worship in schools. Cabrera is pushing for legislation on the state level that would abolish the DOE's policy.

"Now we're starting to see a mushroom event," Cabrera said, calling Mayor Michael Bloomberg "anti-religious."

He added that his first-ever arrest was "worthwhile" and that he would do it again if necessary. "Like Martin Luther King, Jr. said, 'It is unjust not to stand up against an unjust law,'" Cabrera said.

Public and Community Meetings

- **THE 52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** will meet Thursday, Jan. 26 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Jewish Home Life Care Center, 100 W. Kingsbridge Rd. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.
- **COMMUNITY BOARD 7** will host a public hearing to discuss traffic and congestion along East Gun Hill Road, on Monday, Jan. 30 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center auditorium, 3450 DeKalb Ave. For more information, call (718) 882-4000.
- **COMMUNITY BOARD 7** will host a public hearing to discuss safety and quality of life issues on Friday, Jan. 27 at Monroe College's King Hall gym, 2501 Jerome Ave., from 6 to 9 p.m.
- **COMMUNITY BOARD 7's** committee meetings will be held at the Community Board office, 229A E. 204th Street, at 6:30 p.m. on the following dates: Thursday, Jan. 19—Traffic & Transportation and Health & Hospitals; Wednesday, Jan. 18—Senior Services; Thursday, Jan. 19—Community Relations/Long-term Planning; Thursday, Jan. 26—Land Use/Zoning.
- **COMMUNITY BOARD 7's** general board meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 17 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at St. Phillip Neri School located at 3031 Grand Concourse. For more information about CB7 meetings and events, call (718) 933-5650.



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POTS Unveils New Facility, Returns to Business

By ALEX KRATZ

After all the politicians, reporters and board members had left the grand opening of its sparkling new building on Webster Avenue, Part of the Solution, known as POTS, quickly got back down to business.

For POTS, a nonprofit organization that started 30 years ago as a soup kitchen and has since blossomed into a multi-service center offering everything from hair cuts to legal advice, that means putting food on the table and serving those in need. It was almost noon. Lunch was about to begin.

Bright-eyed high schoolers shuffled in to volunteer and friendly staffers, some of them former clients and volunteers, put them to work.

Though food wouldn't be served for another half hour, a line 30-deep had already formed outside of POTS' new building near the corner of East 197th Street. As it does almost every day, POTS would go on to feed around 400 people.

Less than an hour earlier, Speaker Christine Quinn helped Wally Johns, a former POTS client who volunteers and hangs around the place so much he was dubbed the "mayor" of POTS, cut the ribbon on the organization's new \$8 million, 15,000-square-foot building.

The facility has been operational since the fall, but POTS waited until its 30th anniversary, Jan. 6, to officially open its doors. The delay also allowed the group to



Photo by Alex Kratz

THE "MAYOR" OF POTS Wally Johns (right) is congratulated after cutting the ribbon for POTS' new multi-service center on Webster Avenue by (right to left) Council Majority Leader Joel Rivera, Council Speaker Christine Quinn and State Senator Gustavo Rivera.

fill its vacant executive director position with former finance director Chris Bean, who had left POTS for about two months before returning in his new role. They announced his hiring at the ribbon cutting.

Sister Mary Alice Hannan, who stepped down as executive director last June, said she felt like a proud parent handing the organization over to Bean, who she credited with making sure the

new building became a reality.

Bean said putting together the finances for the facility was like playing a game of Jenga, every little piece — from board member contributions to foundation funding to corporate money to government tax breaks — played a key role.

Their goal in creating the new building, Bean said, echoing Quinn and others who spoke, was not only to expand, but

remove the stigma attached to reaching out for help. For example, in the smaller, former building, POTS handed out bags of groceries from its food pantry. Now, clients can come in and "self-select" what they need from a large, well-lit pantry area that looks like a supermarket. Bean said this simple change will help empower their clients.

The organization's evolution still isn't complete. In the near future, POTS plans to open a free medical clinic in its basement. And they're still trying to figure out how to utilize the old building next door.

Back out in front of the building, Tammy Macy and Walter Velez, an unemployed married couple who had trekked to POTS from Crotona, about a 30-minute walk, were among those standing in line for lunch.

They had only recently discovered POTS and were happily returning after enjoying a hot meal of pork chops the previous day.

"I love this place," Macy said, smiling. "All these programs, food, free showers, haircuts, a mail room."

The couple said they were about to get evicted from their apartment and were eager to speak with one of POTS' lawyers.

Despite their situation, they sounded optimistic and excited about the future.

"It's a stepping stone," Velez said about POTS, "a way to get our hopes up and a step in the right direction."

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Vital
Stats

Cuomo Calls to End Fingerprinting for Food Stamps

By JEANMARIE EVELLY

Gov. Andrew Cuomo delivered his annual State of the State address early this month, and one item on his agenda has food and hunger advocates cheering. While addressing his plans to eliminate child hunger in New York, the governor called to end the controversial practice of fingerprinting food stamp applicants in New York City.

"I'm saying stop fingerprinting for families with children for food. Stop it all across the state, and let's stop it this year," Cuomo said, echoing the concerns of hunger advocates who say the requirement further stigmatizes the food stamp program and discourages New Yorkers in need from accessing the benefits.

New York City is one of only two places in the country — the other is Arizona — that requires food stamp recipients to get fingerprinted before receiving benefits. Mayor Bloomberg has defended the practice as a necessary protection against fraud.

But advocates and local officials have

criticized the requirement as unnecessary and time-consuming.

"Mountains of evidence prove that the practice keeps nutrition benefits away from eligible families, costs the state millions of dollars and, even when working properly, finds only duplication that can be detected through less costly, less intrusive methods," said Joel Berg, of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger.

Fitness Tips for the New Year

After a December filled with cocktail parties and high-calorie meals, you might be looking to start 2012 off on a healthy note, and maybe shed a few pounds that were packed on during the decadent holiday season. Todd Belin, a personal trainer with Belin Sport and Fitness, runs a number of "boot camp" style fitness and weight loss classes in the Norwood area. He shared these tips with *Be Healthy!* for getting back into shape after the holidays:

- Drink lots of water. It sounds boring,

but it's effective. Americans consume 20 percent of their calories from beverage drinks. Switching from juice and soda to water helps reduce the number of calories you consume, keeps your metabolism moving at a maximum rate and combats hunger cravings.

- Increase your exercise regimen just a little bit each day. Aim for at least 15 to 20 minutes of cardio exercise, with an intensity that will make you sweat.

- Eat breakfast. Studies show that people who skip breakfast are more likely to snack throughout the day and consume more calories.

- Avoid eating at night or before bed. The earlier in the day food is eaten, the more likely it is to be burned off. When you eat late at night, this food is more likely to be stored as fat. Our digestive system slows down when we sleep, and any food we consume before bedtime gets stored into fat and possibly converted into toxins.

Ed. Note: For more information about Todd Belin's boot camp classes, call (646) 801-3153.

Visit Be Healthy! On the Web

For more health news and information, be sure to visit www.norwoodnews.org every Wednesday afternoon for a new, weekly web-exclusive installment of Be Healthy!

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Teen Arrested in Shooting of 11-Year-Old Boy

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tracking them down.

The next day, police arrested Kijana and charged him with attempted murder, assault and criminal possession of a weapon. As of press time on Tuesday, the other suspect remained at large.

Kijana pleaded not guilty at his arraignment on Saturday, said a spokesman for the Bronx District Attorney's office. He is being held on \$500,000 bail and is scheduled to appear in court again on Jan. 12.

According to court records, police said Kijana admitted to firing bullets into the

door, telling detectives that he had had a dispute with someone in the apartment, that someone had stolen his jacket and that he had returned to get the jacket back.

Last week's shooting marked the second time a child has been shot in the past two months in 52nd Precinct. Both incidents reportedly involved disputes over jackets. In November, 4-year-old Cincer Bathazar was shot during a botched robbery attempt about a mile away on Grand Avenue and Evelyn Place. In that case, a group of young men allegedly tried to rob Cincer's father for his designer jacket.

Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.

released a statement condemning both shootings and saying he was "deeply saddened" by the violence.

"My heart goes out to Ryan Aguari and his family," Diaz said. "I will keep them in my prayers as we hope for Ryan's quick recovery."

Editor's Note: Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call *Crime Stoppers* at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477). The public can also submit their tips by logging on to the *Crime Stoppers* website at www.nypdcrimestoppers.com or by texting their tips to 274637 (CRIMES) then enter TIP577.

Protest Against Bronx Science Principal

(continued from p. 1)

"When I read that article, I was like, something has to be done," said Catherine Jung, a graduate of the class of 2008 who is now studying at Cornell University. She found out about the protest through an alumni group on Facebook.

"It's about so much more than the prestige factor," she said. "It breaks my heart to hear that there's this intimidation and fear."

Conflicts at Bronx Science are nothing new. Tensions between teachers and administrative staff have been simmering on and off for most of the decade that Reidy's been in charge. In a phone interview Thursday, the principal said that while she understands the students' feelings of loyalty to their teachers, the issue is a bigger one of instructor accountability.

"There have been teachers who have been rated poorly because they did their job poorly," she said. "A kid will say, 'I like that teacher.' Perhaps that teacher related to you. But my job is to assess

teacher performance, and that is an arduous process. It's not something I take or do lightly."

"We have very high standards for our teachers, just like we have very high standards for our kids," she said.

Reidy dismissed accusations that she forced any one particular teaching method in classrooms. The high staff turnover, she said, was "not an exodus at all," but due to the fact that she inherited "a very senior staff."

Students remain skeptical.

"There is this big disparate between what she says and her actions," Jung said. "How can she explain and justify teachers leaving in droves?"

According to the *Times*, the teacher turnover rate at Bronx Science last year was 19 percent, compared with 14 percent citywide.

"We have high standards here," Reidy said. "We hope you can meet those standards. We will help you meet those standards. But if you can't, then perhaps it is best if you move on."

New Year's Murder on Webster Ave.

In the predawn hours of New Year's Day, one teen was shot dead and two others were wounded when a Webster Avenue house party turned violent.

Officers from the 48th Precinct were called to the four-story building, at 2366 Webster Ave., just after 2 a.m. on Saturday to discover the wounded victims had been shot inside the building's lobby.

The most seriously injured was a 19-year-old male, shot three times in the torso and one time in the head. He was pronounced dead at the scene. Another 28-year-old man was shot in the back and listed in stable condition at Jacobi Hospital. The third victim, an 18-year-old male, was shot in the leg and transported to St. Barnabas Hospital, and was also reported as stable.

The murder victim was later identi-

fied as Shaneek "Boom" Young, a lifelong resident of the Pelham Parkway Houses who was described as a leader and keeper of the peace at the complex.

Hours after the killing, Young's grief-stricken friends gathered outside his home and set up a makeshift memorial.

"He was always cracking jokes, I never heard anything bad about him," said one neighbor, who said her own son was a friend of Young's.

"That's why I tell my son, I don't like house parties," she said. "It's too much for a parent to bear. Kids are supposed to be burying us, but we're burying our kids now."

Police continue to investigate the killing, but no arrests have been made. Police have not yet released a description of the shooter. —DAVID GREENE

Inquiring Photographer

By DAVID GREENE

This week we asked readers what they thought our local elected officials should be working on in the coming year.



I think they should raise the minimum wage to at least \$10 an hour, to try and find jobs for the unemployed and to help people living in the street, like young kids. Find the homeless a home and find them jobs.

Emad Yehiya



Getting all the jobs for the people that need them more than anybody else, and try and help people become successful in what they want to do in their lifetime. It also bothers me that some of the laws we have are unjust.

Marco Rodriguez



They really need to create more jobs for people because they have been laying off people because of the recession. And the United States needs to stop involving the Chinese. Everything that's sold in the United States is made in China. Nothing is really made in the United States anymore.

John "Ya-Ya" Jackson



I think the politicians should be focusing on child care and school reform. It has to start with the children and that should be the focus. I think they've done an adequate job, but I think there's a lot of programs that have been cut and a lot of things that are negatively impacting our youth.

Jamal Harris



They need to work on new energy sources. They definitely need to work on manufacturing more American goods and selling it and marketing it in America, instead of outside the country. And they definitely need to investigate possible treason that may have been committed by the previous administration.

Mario Medina

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Business Beat

VIP Cafe Reopens After Fire

By EMILY PICCONE

The VIP Café, on the corner of Rochambeau Avenue and East Gun Hill Road, recently reopened after a fire in early July left its doors closed for four months.

Steve Larous, the restaurant's owner since 1997, said that they had cleaned up the water damage from putting out the fire, but it was a complicated permitting process that kept their doors closed until Dec. 5.

"For safety reasons we had to be issued all new permits," he said.

Whatever the reason, VIP, located directly across from the Montefiore Med-

ical Center, is finally open again and sporting a fresh facade and a leaner menu.

The large solarium (glass room) that faces the street brightens the restaurant and creates a cozy ambiance for a lunchtime meal, while the attentive wait staff and friendly owner who can usually be found in-house add to VIP's simple charm.

VIP's has diner favorites like chicken wings, nachos, burgers and bottomless cups of coffee to be enjoyed in a booth, as well as very generous salads that don't skimp on the toppings. Several options feature all organic ingredients and are noted on the menu.

Sandwiches are also creative, such as the Ultrasound, which comes with grilled chicken, avocado, tomatoes, sautéed onions, jalapeño peppers and melted cheddar cheese, on your choice of a wrap, bread or hot panini.

VIP also has a popular catering service, and by the looks of the quality of their food and its presentation, it makes sense why. Their healthy alternatives and good flavors make for a deserved stop amid the bodegas and pizza joints on Gun Hill Road.

Ed. Note: VIP is located at 131 E. Gun Hill Rd. For more information, call (718) 655-8500.



Photo by Adi Talwar

VIP OWNER Steve Larous is happy to be open after a July fire kept him closed until December.



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2:30pm-3:30pm 7th-12th grade & adults

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beginning January 18
5:30pm-6:30pm K-3rd grade
6:30pm-7:30pm 2nd-6th grade

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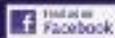


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Bronx Youth Heard

Officials Step Up Efforts Against Cyberbullying



PHOTO BY GISELLE LAM

A recent study found that 60 percent of kids have experienced cyberbullying.

BY GISELLE LAM

Last month, 17-year-old Kenneth Wong was tidying up his bedroom when his Blackberry vibrated on his desk. He was expecting to read a text from a friend, but instead found words that beat him up inside. The anonymous text accused him of being a bad friend who would “die alone from smoking” and need a “brain transplant for being a dumbass.”

Sixty percent of kids have experienced mean and hurtful things said to them either online or through their phones, according to i-

SAFE, a non-profit foundation dedicated to educating the youth on internet safety. In addition, more than 50 percent have admitted to saying these insulting words to another person online.

Traditional schoolyard bullying has moved from campus grounds to the computers and cell phones of many teenagers. After a rash of bullying-related deaths last year, the public’s awareness of cyberbullying has grown, and school administrators and government officials are taking more serious actions to prevent it.

This September, Bronx/Westchester State Senator Jeffrey Klein proposed a bill that would criminalize cyberbullying. The legislation expands the definition of third-degree stalking, a class-A misdemeanor, to include online bullying, of anyone under the age of 21. The bill also calls for second-degree manslaughter charges for those deemed responsible for another’s suicide due to cyberbullying, an offense punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

A Klein spokesperson said he hopes the legislation will publicize the problem and create “a chilling effect” on internet taunting.

The bill began with the death of Jamey Rodemeyer, a 14-year-old from Buffalo who committed suicide after being tormented online and over the phone. When Klein found out there were no laws relating to this type of

harassment, nor were there any statistics and evidence to effectively pass a law, he decided to do something about it.

In New York City, the Department of Education recognized the severity of cyberbullying and now considers it “dangerous or violent behavior.” The DOE classifies cyberbullying as a misdemeanor in its Discipline Code. According to the handbook, cyberbullying is described as “engaging in intimidating and bullying behavior through electronic communication, such as texting, e-mail, instant messaging, etc.”

Like Kenneth, another high school student who wished to remain anonymous, said she deals with online harassment on a regular basis. She often finds anonymous messages on her Tumblr micro-blog calling her “a hypocrite and a ho.” She tries to laugh it off but said she is still hurt by what she reads.

“I feel I’m being attacked,” she said, adding that she thinks Klein’s bill is a step in the right

direction to prevent any more teens from “crying and dying.”

Some teens, however, think the issue has been blown out of proportion. Teenager Zoey Soto says that while she does not cyberbully or support it, she doesn’t think authority figures should be getting involved. Those

GISELLE LAM



on the other side of the screen can “still find a way around it” by doing things like creating fake online identity. She advises victims to shrug it off.

“[You] won’t be cyber bullied unless you let them,” she said.

Bronx Residents Make ‘Occupy’ Their Own

BY BRANDON DIOP

While Occupy Wall Street has been raging in downtown Manhattan since September, New York City’s outer boroughs have commenced their own protests that focus more on problems in that particular community.

Each Saturday, a group of residents and local activists have held Occupy the Bronx events at various locations: Fordham Plaza, “The Hub” at 149th Street and 3rd Avenue, the No. 6 train station at Hunts Point, and along

and power,” said Sean Petty, a registered nurse at Jacobi Medical Center. “That money and power should belong with the 99 percent.”

Organizers use the website occupythebronx.org to post a calendar of planned rallies and videos of past events. The website has become an archive chronicling the importance of the movement, as well as the various problems going on in the Bronx community.

Like the Occupy movement in Manhattan, protestors say they are involved for a number of reasons. Signs at a recent rally read: “Un-Occupy the Bronx from the NYPD,” “Cuts Hurt,” and “Somos el 99 Percent.”

“The rules are stacked against us,” said Sergio Cuevas, treasurer of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, who said he holds corporate banks responsible for much of the borough’s foreclosed property.

Desiree Pilgrim Hunter, the group’s president, says that she would like to see the banking industry better regulated instead of feeding off the Bronx’s low-income residents.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the median household income in the Bronx in 2009 was \$32,888.

“We are used to doing more with less,” said organizer Lisa Ortega.

BRANDON DIOP



Gun Hill Road.

While it started out small, the movement has grown. Well-known local advocacy group the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition joined the protests in October, and an average group of 75 people have been attending the weekly events.

“The one percent have too much money

A Trip Through Metal Detector Means Late for Class

BY ADAMA DIALLO

At 9:05 a.m. on a recent cloudy and windy Monday morning, a large crowd of students are eager to get inside the Morris High School Campus in the Bronx. They are already five minutes late for their first period and the process of going through the school’s metal detectors will make them even later.

“Metal detectors made me late a lot of times,” said Jimmy Marichal. “It makes my attendance drop and it wastes my time by making me take my stuff, such as belts and watch, off every morning.”

There are two metal detectors at the Morris High School campus, which contains four public schools and more than 3,000 students. The process to go through the detectors involves removing belts, necklaces, earrings and swiping ID cards, which can take a couple



PHOTO BY ADAMA DIALLO

There are only two metal detectors on the Morris High School Campus, to scan over 3,000 students.

of minutes.

“Sometimes lines are ridiculously long, some students miss their whole first period and some even leave,” said Samantha Velez, 19, an organizer at Sistas and Brothas United, a youth group that advocates against harsh policing practices in city schools.

Some students get to school early to make

ADAMA DIALLO



sure they are not late for their first class.

“I come to school earlier than usual,” said Aisha Diabate, 18.

But some students say they don’t mind the delay, because the metal detectors mean the building is more secure.

“I feel like metal detectors are useful, because that way students don’t get to bring stuff that can be harmful, and it makes me feel safe,” said 16-year-old Raymond Victorio. “We never know what will happen.”

Velez, however, thinks the metal detectors do more harm than good. “They are sending a message that students are not trustworthy. It shows that they are kind of incarcerated,” she said.

Most security guards that work schools with metal detectors agree that they don’t create a great environment, but say they are nec-

(continued on p. 13)

Bronx Youth Heard

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Packed Classrooms Cramp Learning

BY LEILA NOMBRE

At Jonathan Levin School for Media and Communication in the Bronx, there are as many as 37 students in a classroom, and learning has become a struggle.

"I barely learn anything," said Ashlee Sandino, a junior. "I don't get equal attention. It's a waste of time. Class is disruptive."

Students say the overcrowded classes make them feel left out of classroom discussions.

"I hate it," said Tanairie Mastarreno, a senior. "It's too much, and the teacher cannot focus on students, and less learning is done."

As for teachers, this kind of environment has also been a struggle. Osvaldo Mancebo, a math teacher at Levin, described his large class as "extremely challenging."

"There's a negative impact, a burden on teachers, and there is no opportunity for interactions among students and teachers," he said.

Barbara Powell, a health teacher, agreed. "I have to take away from class time to deal with discipline," she said. "There's not enough time for teaching. [I have] lost students, very lost students, that cannot get the attention needed."

Her ideal class size would be 20 to 22 students based on the group of kids in the school.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, on the other hand, said in a speech recently that large classes are fine by him. The mayor said that if he had the power to cut down teachers and double classroom size, he would do so, on the basis of raising teaching standards and weeding out those who the city finds ineffective. However, when Bloomberg was running for



PHOTO BY LEILA NOMBRE

Some classes at Jonathan Levin High School in the Bronx have as many as 37 students.

mayor in 2001, he vowed to reduce classroom sizes and acknowledged their detriment on learning.

Teachers at Levin don't agree with Bloomberg's large classroom policy.

"More can be accomplished with a small class than a big class," said film and broadcast

not able to teach them effectively," Raj said.

Class size may have larger implications on overall school performance at Levin. Last year, the school received a "D" for student performance on its city progress report.

According to the Department of Education, the maximum number of students in each class should not be over 34. The DOE would not provide any detailed information on repercussions for schools that exceed the limit.

A research project conducted in the state of Tennessee called Project STAR (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio) assessed the effects of classroom size on learning, and found evidence that students in smaller classes outperformed students in larger classes.

An administrator at Levin, who asked not to be named for fear of DOE retribution, blamed the crowded classrooms on budget cuts the school has endured. To get the best out of the situation, he said students and teachers have to work together.

LEILA NOMBRE



teacher Don Ceronne. "Packing a lot of kids into a room does not necessarily lead to a more productive education."

Lee Raj, a Living Environment teacher at Levin, said that in bigger classes, certain students can slip through the cracks. "Some students are in high need, and I'm afraid that I'm

Bronx Teens: What Presidential Election?

BY NATALIE L. AZUCENA

Teenagers in the Bronx aren't concerned about the upcoming presidential election next fall. The Republican candidates running for the party's nomination aren't even on their radar.

"I know that one of the guys running for president got caught in a 13-year affair," said Kiana Montero, a junior at Women's Academy of Excellence in the Bronx, referring to former candidate Herman Cain. That's all she knows

NATALIE L. AZUCENA



about the race. "I am not interested in politics," she added.

Though they don't know follow politics, local kids are concerned with a number of political issues.

"Pollution, global warming and the stock market," is what Bronx resident Jocelin Camilo, 17, said she was interested in.

Through movements like Occupy Wall Street and, closer to home, Occupy the Bronx, teens and young adults are finding avenues to voice their unease. However, few show any interest in who the next president will be. This concerns some Bronx leaders.

New York State Senator Gustavo Rivera, a Democrat who represents the Bronx's 33rd senate district, said teens should pay more

attention.

"What you're seeing right now is a bunch of folks trying to cater to you, trying to pander to the worst elements of this country," he said, of the ongoing Republican race.

"Herman Cain said 'If you're not rich, if you don't have a job, don't blame Wall Street, blame yourself,'" Rivera said. "That is exactly what some of the Republicans believe about us... about the families and the people that live in my district," he said.

He also believes that public opinion of Barack Obama has changed since the president was elected in 2008, but he continues to support him fully.

Young people say their opinion of Obama has also changed. "He might be trying, but he's not giving people what they need," Kiana said.

"I think Obama is a very good leader considering what he has done, coming into office in a messed up situation," said Ashley Brea, a 16-year-old junior at Women's Academy of Excellence.

Carina Rodriguez, another 16-year-old junior, is indifferent. "I don't really have an opinion of him," she said. "I don't know what he has done for me."

Though few Bronx youths have been following the race, some say that as it gets closer to the election season, they're realizing they should.

"I'm going to start following the race," said 17-year-old Bronx resident Jeanetta Serrano. She'll be 18 and eligible to vote by November and says she'll be casting her ballot for Obama.



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For Some Students, Negative Statistics Are Motivation

BY ANTHONY CALDWELL

This year, Mayor Michael Bloomberg invested \$127 million into a new Young Men's Initiative to address the city's racial achievement gap. Black and Latino male students in New York City are three times more likely to be in special education

ANTHONY CALDWELL



classrooms than their white counterparts, and are less likely to graduate from high school, according to a report from the program.

On television, on the radio and in the news, young people often hear that Hispanic and African-American teens don't do as well in school, or in life. But for many Bronx youth, this data only motivates them.

"Us black people should try not to be another statistic," said Richard Bennett, a senior at Urban Assembly for Careers in Sports, who says he often sees these statistics play out in his neighborhood.

Willy Reyes, another Urban Assembly senior, is one of the school's higher performing students — he holds a 91 average

and ranks fourth in his class. He said hearing negative things can drive students to perform better out of a sense of competitiveness. "A person is always looked at how they perform in closing situations," he said.

Educators say that many of the teens who have a difficult time achieving academically are dealing with issues within the family, such as a lack of support or financial instability.

Bronx State Sen. Gustavo Rivera, who has taught as an adjunct professor at Pace University and Hunter College, said he made an extra effort to work with high-needs students or those who struggled in his class. "It was my job to give them a way to catch up because I knew they did not have the experience," Rivera said.

But not all students can rely on their teachers, and must make the extra effort themselves.

"To succeed in college, students have to be more independent," said Sadie Mahoney, director of Teen Center at the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center.

Melissa Morales, a college advisor at Urban Assembly, said it's important that students hear positive encouragement. "They don't need to hear negative stereotypes," she said. "They need to be empowered and supported throughout their educational endeavors."

Students Want Healthier Snack Choices



PHOTO BY DONDRE LEMON

Some Bronx students say they'd like to see healthier options in their school vending machines.

BY DONDRE LEMON

Two years ago, New York City installed healthy vending machines in 14 public schools throughout the city, with three of them in the Bronx.

These new vending machines, at Bronx Science, DeWitt Clinton and Herbert H. Lehman high schools, are stocked with water, low-calorie drinks with no artificial flavors, fruits and vegetables.

Some students at other schools say they would enjoy having these healthy vending machines in their own cafeterias.

"I would like if the school had healthy vending machines because of obesity and diabetes," said David Nelson, 14, a student at Mount Saint Michael Academy.

"My school vending machines have a lot of healthy snacks like Fiber One Bars and water," said Alicia Cameron, a freshman at Mount Vernon High.

The Bronx has the highest rate of diabetes in the

city: 12 percent of residents have been diagnosed with the disease. Citywide, one in six public high school students are overweight, according to the Department of Health.

While the Department of Education has banned foods like soda and candy in their vending machines for the past several years, private and Catholic schools like Mount Saint Michael don't have the same rules.

"We eat too much fatty foods," said Lamar Love, a freshman.

Most of the snacks in the new, healthy machines are sold for \$2 to \$3.50 each, compared to the \$1 price tag items in the old machines.

Some are undecided if their school should have healthy vending machines.

"Yes, too many teens are gaining weight," said

DONDRE LEMON



Ayanna Punter, 14, from St. Barnabas High School in the Bronx. "But [sometimes] you need junk food."

The solution, some say, is to have more choices. "I would rather have a mixture of both vending machines," said Justin Henry, a 14-year-old freshman at Cardinal Spellman.

Jaylin Washington, a freshman at Scanlon High School in Co-Op City, agreed. "We can have one healthy vending machines and the rest can be junk," she said. "Some people may want to stay healthy, and others would still eat junk."

Local Groups Campaign Against Cigarette Ads in Bodegas

BY MICHAELA RITZ

Bold colors, a large font, highlighted words and smiling people. Producers of cigarette ads use these design elements to lure customers. Health advocates say these ads prey on low-income communities of color, particularly in the Bronx.

"The tobacco industry saturates poor communities like ours, where there are high stress levels and unemployment," said Juan Ramon Rios, of the High Bridge Community Life Center, which runs the Partnership for a Smoke-Free Bronx. The group has been pushing for legislation that would limit the number of cigarette ads displayed in city bodegas, and

regulate where ads are placed in stores so that teens and kids are not targeted. The effect of such a law would be large in the Bronx, advo-

MICHAELA RITZ



cates say, as there are more than 1,600 bodegas and small groceries here.

Many teens, however, say they aren't influenced by the advertisements.

"I have never seen a cigarette ad before,"

said Nusrat Ahmed, a 16-year-old student who lives in Parkchester. Nusrat says she's never smoked before and that she has a built-in prejudice against it because her uncle smokes and her father chews tobacco.

"Cigarettes make you feel good for a short while, but they bring you closer to your death," she said. "Cigarette companies try to promote the short-term experience."

Nic Arenas, a 16-year-old smoker who lives on Allerton Avenue, says he thinks graphic anti-smoking ads — such as those launched by the Health Department — are more noticeable than those that advertise the sale of cigarettes.

"Smoking ads are very simple and anti-smoking ads are disgusting, so I think Truth ads are more persuasive because of the images they present," he said.

But experts say the ads are more subtle in their appeal to youth. Bolded words such as "pleasure," "menthol," "cooling effect," and "smooth," are one way the ads create pleasant associations with cigarettes, according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

"The warning signs are small and ambiguous in comparison to the rest of the ad," said Elizabeth Zaslavskaya, a 15-year-old Pelham Parkway resident. She noted that many ads are located in the windows of drugstores, while the signs warning about the negative health effects of cigarettes are usually very small or obscured.

"Ads are placed in the store and storefront windows. As soon as you go to the counter... the first thing you will see is colorful tobacco," said Rios. This observation touches on two strategies used by tobacco companies, he said, which are saturation, a larger number of ads,

and point of sale, ads and products near the cash register. A study conducted by the American Academy of Pediatrics found that "point of sale is the dominant channel for advertising cigarettes, and adolescents are routinely exposed to these messages."

According to a report from the Centers for Disease Control, Marlboro cigarettes target whites and Asians. The survey found that 60 percent of black middle school students and 79 percent of black high school students smoke Newport brand cigarettes. The American Academy of Pediatrics also conducted a study which found that Camel ads in magazines were popular with teenage girls.

Most bodegas are paid to promote the cigarette company's product, but Richard Ricardo, a 42-year-old store manager at Harb Discount and Stationery Store on Bedford Park Boulevard, said the amount is not much.

"There's really no money in it," he said. "We bring the cigarettes for the customers."



PHOTO BY MICHAELA RITZ

Cigarette ads on display at a Bronx deli.

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International Students Miffed by Mandarin-Only Classes

BY KIKI OLAFIMIHAN

Despite its multicultural name, International Leadership Charter High School offers its students only one language class choice for all four years of their high school attendance: Mandarin, a dialect of Chinese most commonly spoken in northern and

KIKI
OLAFIMIHAN



southwestern China.

Some students dislike this arrangement and wish it could be different.

"I don't only want to learn one language," said Mariamah Bah, a junior at the school. "I don't like [Mandarin]. It's hard, and I wish we had other subjects to learn, like French."

According to the Department of Education, public and charter schools are only required to offer one language other than English to students. Last school year, International

Leadership offered both Spanish and Mandarin classes — students were required to take Mandarin in grades 9 and 10, then transitioned to Spanish during grade 11. The school's administration got rid of the Spanish classes this year, which upset many students who regarded Spanish as an easier option for the state's Regents language exam.

Other students, however, say they enjoy Mandarin, especially freshman who are excited to take their first new language class. But many juniors and seniors say it gets exasperating when it's the only language option for all four years, and one of the most difficult to learn.

Ms. Huang, the Mandarin teacher for juniors at International Leadership, said she does think it's unusual that the school offers only Mandarin, especially when there are very few Asian students at the school, which is made up of mostly Hispanic and African-American teens.

"This is a non-Asian heritage, so it's interesting," Huang said.

Still, she said she thinks learning the language is a great opportunity for students.

"Mandarin is a rich topic," she said.



PHOTO BY KIKI OLAFIMIHAN

While most high schools offer language classes like Spanish and Italian, students at International Leadership Charter School in Marble Hill can only take Mandarin.

School Cell Phone Bans Don't Apply to Teachers

BY ELFRIDA JOHNSON

At Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communications on Morris Avenue, some students leave their cell phones at home. Some try to sneak them in. Others pay a dollar to keep it at the bodega next door. Their teachers, on the other hand, don't have this problem.

While students are forbidden from having cell phones in school, some say their teachers use them in class. They find the double-standard distracting and unfair.

"The rule says phone prohibited - not phone prohibited except for teachers," said Alexis Watson, a student at Levin.

The Department of Education banned cell phones at public schools for students in 2006, but there is no official policy for teachers and administrators. Teachers at Levin said they are told not to use their cell phones in class, but some still do.

"Their ring tones distract me and make me lose focus on what I'm supposed to be doing," senior Patrick Johnson said.

"I think teachers who use their phones in class should be fired," said Don Cerrone, a broadcast journalism teacher. "If the teacher asks permission from the principal about an emergency, then it's ok, but if it's just a regular conversation, then he or she can't just disrupt everything." He said students' class time is

wasted when teachers use their cell phones in class.

According to Principal Nasib Hoxha, the official school policy bans teachers from using their phones in class. He said students who see their teachers using cell phones should give him a written report.

The bigger issue for students is that they think it's unfair that they cannot have their phones.

"I think students should have the right to bring their phones to school," said Katheryn

ELFRIDA
JOHNSON



Espinal, a senior. She said students should have their cell phones with them in case of an emergency outside school. She also believes that just because certain students use their phone for unnecessary stuff doesn't mean every student does it.

But Raul Acevedo, the guidance counselor, said teachers have more reasons for needing a phone on them than students do. "You cannot compare the two," he said. "Adults have more responsibilities than students do."

The parent coordinator, Celsa Lopez, agrees with the school policy. She said teachers need to bring their phones because they have responsibilities, like a second job or children to check up on.

Still, students say they should have the same rights as teachers.

"I need my phone for protection; nobody knows what might happen outside school," said Katheryn.

"It's not safe for students to come to school without a cell phone," said Stephen Mensah. "There could be an emergency and the student needs to call home."

A Trip Through Detector Means Late for Class

(continued from p. 10)

essay for security reasons.

"We are here to make sure that students don't get inside of the school with a gun or other harmful stuff," said Victoria Sanchez, a security guard at the Morris Campus. "This isn't a prison. We are just trying our best to protect the environment that we live in and we want everyone to feel safe and comfortable."

Though schools have been resistant to the idea of removing metal detectors, student

advocacy groups like Sistas and Brothas United say the Department of Education should look for other ways to make campuses safe, ways that don't negatively affect students' learning.

"There are a lot of other security measures schools can take, such as peer mediation," said Shaun Lin, 28, an organizer for the group.

"The presence of police creates a tense environment in the school," he continued. "It makes students feel intimidated and watched, because it seems like the space is not theirs."

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

Onstage

■ The **Albert Einstein Symphony Orchestra** will perform classical music in Robbins Auditorium, Forchheimer Building, of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, 1300 Morris Pk. Ave., on Jan. 15 at 2 p.m. For more information, visit einsteinorch.tripod.com. Contributions

suggested.

■ The Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents musical legends, **The O'Jays**, Jan. 14 at 8 p.m. (tickets are \$55 to \$65); **Ralph Levitt y la Selecta** and **Spanish Harlem Orchestra**, featuring salsa from Puerto Rico to el barrio, Jan. 21 at 8 p.m. (tickets are \$45 to \$55); **Doo Wop**

with leading singers and musical groups, Jan. 28 at 8 p.m.; and **Blast!**, featuring music and theatre, Jan. 29 at 6 p.m. (tickets \$25 to \$40; \$10/ages 12 and under). For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

■ The Bronx Opera presents **The Poisoned Kiss**, a romance between a prince and a vengeful magician's daughter whose kiss can kill, at Lehman College's Lovinger Theatre, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., Jan. 14 at 7:30 p.m. and Jan. 15 at 2 p.m. (tickets are \$15 to \$30). For more information, visit www.brownpapertickets.com/event/184320.

■ The Bronx Library Center, at 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. off Fordham Road, presents **Silk and Sword**, by the Red Silk Dancers, Jan. 14 at 2:30 p.m.; and **Charlie Porter Jazz Quartet**, Jan. 21 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

■ The Mosholu Library, at 285 E. 205th St., presents **Opera With Anne**

Tormela, Jan. 21 at 2 p.m. featuring highlights of opera, operetta, Broadway and popular classics. Special requests welcomed. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

Events

■ JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center, 3880 Sedgwick Ave., presents a **Sing Along**, Jan. 12 at 1 p.m.; **music entertainment**, Jan. 17 at 11:30 a.m. followed by lunch at 12:15 p.m. and lively dance music (\$2/lunch; \$2/entertainment; call by Jan. 13 to reserve); **Trip to Empire City Casino**, Jan. 25 (call Maritza Silva to reserve); and **Art History Talk**, about Columbian sculptor Botero, Jan. 27 at 1 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-4700.

■ The Bronx Council on the Arts presents free workshop, **Greeting Cards**, as part of its third Saturday of the month series, at the Huntington Free Library, 9 Westchester Square, Jan. 21, from 12:30 to 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 829-7770.

✓ EDITOR'S PICK

Extend the Holidays...

The entire family can extend the holiday season to Jan. 16 by visiting the New York Botanical Garden's **Holiday Train Show**, featuring replicas of NYC landmarks made of natural materials such as bark, twigs, fruits and seeds, and large-scale model trains running along nearly a quarter mile of track featuring bridges, tunnels and waterfalls. Included will be a glimpse at the making of the exhibition at the Artist's Studio. Children can enjoy **Gingerbread Adventures**, **Holiday Film Festival**, **The Little Engine That Could Puppet Show**, and **All Aboard With Thomas & Friends**. The Bronx Community Pride Center invites the public to a special evening viewing of the train show on Jan. 13 from 6 to 8 p.m. (\$20/person) with drink specials and cash bar available (show details at nybg.org/hts; tickets: nybg.org/pridetickets). For more information, tickets, and details of holiday events and rates, call (718) 817-8700.

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■ Bronx Parks & Recreation presents its second annual **Winterfest Celebration**, featuring sports and fitness, arts and crafts, storytelling, entertainment, raffles, light refreshments, and more, on Jan. 21 at Hunts Point Recreation Center, 765 Manida St. at Lafayette Avenue, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 860-5544.

Exhibits

■ The Pregones Theatre, 571-575 Walton Ave. (149th Street) presents **Breathing History**, through Feb. 4. For more information and a schedule, call (718) 585-1202.

■ The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse at 165th St., presents **Muntadas: Information, Space, Control**, through Jan. 16. Admission is free on Fridays. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

■ Norwood artist Barbara Korman will have her work featured as part of the **Rock, Paper, Scissors Exhibit** through Jan. 25 at the Flinn Gallery on the second floor of the Greenwich Library, 101 W. Putnam Ave., Greenwich, CT. For more information, call (203) 622-7947.

Library Events

■ The Bronx Library Center, at 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. off Fordham Road, presents programs for kids including **Preschool Story Time**, Jan. 12, 19 and 26 at 11 a.m.; **Toddler Story Time**, Jan. 21 at 11 a.m.; **Family Time**, Jan. 14 at 11 a.m.; **Film Day**, Jan. 18 and 25 at 4 p.m.; **Tales for the Teeny Tiny** (ages 3 to 5), Jan. 14 and 21 at 11 a.m.; **Spin, Pop, Boom Show** (ages 3 to 12), Jan. 14 at 2 p.m.; **Mad Science Workshops at 4 p.m.** (ages 3 to 12; registration required): on *Life In the Sea*, Jan. 17, and *All About Animals*, Jan. 24; **Global Partners, Jr.** (ages 5 to 12), students connect worldwide via the Internet, Jan. 18 and 25 at 4 p.m.; **Ship Book Making**, Jan. 19 at 4 p.m.; and **Stories and Songs of Latin America**, (ages 3 to 12), Jan. 21 at 2 p.m. Adults can attend **Single Stop/Government Benefits**, Jan. 12, 17, 19, 24 and 26 at 9 a.m.; **IRS Collection and Tax Payment Options for Financially Distressed Small Businesses** (online registration required), Jan. 14 at 10:30 a.m.; and **Planning for Retirement**, Jan. 17 at 10 a.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

■ The Mosholu Library, at 285 E. 205th St., offers **Knitting Circle**,

Thursdays at 3 p.m.; and **Wii Program**, Tuesdays at 3 p.m., each for seniors and adults; **Afternoon Movie Time** (for teens and young adults), Jan. 19 at 3 p.m.; and **Gate of Equality** (ages 5 to 12), one-man show about Martin Luther King, Jr., Jan. 24 at 4 p.m. Speakers of other languages (ages 16+) may register for free **English Conversation Program** (intermediate level), Jan. 17 at 6:30 p.m. (groups meet Tuesdays from 6:30 to 8 p.m.; call (212) 340-0918). For more

information, call (718) 882-8239.

■ The Jerome Park Library, at 118 Eames Place, offers **Toddler Story Time**, Jan. 18 at 11 a.m.; and **Film**, Jan. 23 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Jan. 16 for the next publication date of Jan. 26. Find more events at www.bronxnewsnetwork.org.

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