

NORWOOD NEWS

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■ February 9–22, 2012

**Get Heart-Healthy
in February**
page 3

URBAN FARMING



Photo courtesy NYPD

LAST WEEK, police discovered an entire building, in Van Nest on Morris Park Avenue, dedicated to growing and packaging marijuana. Inside, they rounded up 1,550 pounds of product. Outside, they arrested three Bronx residents and charged them with illegal marijuana and paraphernalia possession.

At Armory, Hockey Group Wants School and Programs

By LINDSAY ARMSTRONG

There was only one item on the agenda for the most recent meeting of the Community Board 7 Land Use Committee: the proposal to transform the Kingsbridge Armory into a state-of-the-art complex for ice sports.

In late January, a group of private investors, known as the Kingsbridge National Ice Center (KNIC), presented their vision for the Armory, which included plans for a school and youth programs, to the committee and a handful of community members.

"The idea isn't to create just another rec center in just another armory, but to create an iconic arena in an iconic building," said Jonathan Richter of KNIC. "The hope is that it becomes a

(continued on p. 5)



TWO WEEKS AGO, John Nolan (right) and Jonathan Richter (left) talked with Community Board 7 about their group's vision for an ice center at the Kingsbridge Armory.

Photo by Lindsay Armstrong

Pair Arrested for October Murder of Bronx Father

By ALEX KRATZ

It took three months, a relentless detective, some luck and a trip to North Carolina, but it appears 52nd Precinct Commander Joseph Dowling has delivered on his promise to bring the men who killed Bimal Chanda to justice.

Chanda, a 59-year-old Bengali immigrant who left behind a wife and teenage daughter, suffered fatal injuries during a robbery and attack on Oct. 29 inside his longtime apartment building at West 190th Street, near Grand Avenue. He died five days later, sparking an outcry from local residents who felt the area was becoming an increasingly dangerous place to live. In a cruel twist, Chanda was in the process of moving to another part of the Bronx for safety reasons.

In response, Dowling vowed to track down the killers. The NYPD posted flyers urging the public to come forward and offered a reward for information leading to an arrest.

(continued on p. 6)

Locals Blast State Redistricting Proposal *Norwood, Bedford Park Split in New Maps*

By JEANMARIE EVELY

A plan devised by a group of state lawmakers to redraw the boundaries of New York's legislative districts is drawing fire from a number of Bronx residents and groups that are worried the new maps could divide the political power of certain neighborhoods.

A bipartisan panel of Senate and Assembly members, known as LATFOR, is charged with creating the new districts every 10 years based on Census data to keep up with population changes. LATFOR released its proposed maps for the State Senate and Assembly two weeks ago and is holding hearings across the state this month to collect feedback on the plans.

For years, good government groups have advocated for an independent redistricting process, arguing that politicians can't map their own districts without bias. In the past, the majority parties — Republicans in the Senate and Democrats in the Assembly — have used the process to consolidate power.

At a hearing in the Bronx last week, nearly 50 speakers testified, many of them saying the new maps are gerrymandered and drawn in ways that benefit incumbent candidates.

"The lines were drawn for no other purpose than allowing an elected official to handpick his own constituents," said Fernando Tirado, chair of Bronx Community Board 7.

Norwood and Bedford Park leaders said the proposed districts for both Senate and Assembly split the adjacent neighborhoods politically,

(continued on p. 8)

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In The Public Interest

Ex-Tourism Director Hired as Rivera's Chief of Staff

Doris Quinones remembers meeting her new boss, Bronx Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera, more than a decade ago. Quinones was just starting out as the director of the Bronx Tourism Council and Rivera worked for then-Borough President Fernando Ferrer as his director of special events.

Rivera would go on to seek elected office and is now entrenched as the representative of the Bronx 80th Assembly District, which includes parts of Norwood, Bedford Park and almost all of Morris Park. Meanwhile, Quinones continued her work at the tourism council, took up residence in Norwood and then later moved to Morris Park, where she lives with her husband and twin boys.

Late last year, the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, which runs the tourism council, went through what Quinones described as a process of "re-organization." That re-organization plan did not include keeping Quinones on as director of the tourism council.

Fortunately for Quinones, Rivera was

also going through a similar re-organization, and so she invited Quinones to join her as chief of staff. Quinones officially started her new job on Jan. 5, but went up to Albany with Rivera for Governor Andrew Cuomo's State of the State speech a couple of days earlier.

Quinones speaks with great pride about her tourism council work fighting an "uphill battle" against the stereotypically negative perception of the Bronx over the past decade. Over the last couple of years, Quinones says she noticed a sea change in people's attitude toward the borough.

Before, Quinones says she would go to gatherings and parties and make small talk about work. When Quinones would say she worked for the Bronx Tourism Council, people would get a funny, "quizzical" look and say, "Oh, wow, really?" In the last couple of years, however, she says people usually say the same thing, only without the quizzical look and questioning phrasing: "Oh wow, really!"

This "amazing transformation" didn't happen overnight, Quinones says. "Good

news takes longer to travel than bad news," she says.

Obviously, with a high unemployment rate and serious health problems, the Bronx "faces many of the same challenges as other urban communities." But Quinones says many of the current perceptions — like those portrayed on "American Idol" last winter, which stirred a harshly-worded rebuttal from Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., — are based on "tired myths" that are no longer true.

Quinones says she will be going up to Albany periodically, but will spend much of her time in Rivera's Bronx district. She wants the people, especially those in the western side of the 80th District, including the areas bordering the north and south of Moshulu Parkway, to know that Rivera's office is open and able to help with any number of problems or issues.

"I'm really looking forward to helping the Assemblywoman continue to fight for the needs of our communities," says Quinones.

—ALEX KRATZ

Council Candidate Wants To End Political 'Distrust'

Cliff Stanton, a business owner and education activist who lives in Kingsbridge Heights, says he is running for City Council in 2013 because he is tired of local politics as usual.

"There's a distrust that permeates all aspects of our life here, a destructive 'us versus them' culture, that I think has been perpetuated by the elected leadership," says Stanton, who is running for Oliver Koppell's seat, which includes Norwood, Kingsbridge Heights, Woodlawn and Riverdale. "I think it's time for a change. They've been in power now for going on two decades."

Known in the neighborhood for his role with parents associations at Bronx Science and PS 24 and for organizing a boycott of a local tabloid newspaper, the *Riverdale Review*, Stanton said he felt compelled to run by what he sees as dysfunction in the current local political landscape.

"There's a culture of pettiness and cynicism in the community, which I think does not bode well for us," Stanton said in an interview recently.

The district is currently represented by Oliver Koppell, a lifetime politician who defeated Tony Cassino in 2009. Cassino also ran as a challenger to the status quo and lost badly.

Stanton said he's watched a number of community projects — like the proposed ice skating rink at Van Cortlandt Park, and attempts to recruit a charter school for the area — get stalled because of what he sees as political bickering.

"We're shooting ourselves in the foot," he said. "These are things the community needs. There's so much potential here that we could unleash if we allow ourselves to take some risks."

Stanton has a few political jobs under his belt. He was chief of staff to Brooklyn Councilman Noach Dear, and campaigned for former Bronx Borough President Fer-

nando Ferrer in 1997 during his first attempt to run for mayor. For his day job, Stanton co-owns a company that supplies snack foods to pushcarts, "not a direct correlation" to City Councilman, he joked.

"My business experience, I think, also gives me a very unique perspective on what we need to lift ourselves [economically]," he said.

Who the competition will be in next year's election is yet to be determined, though several names have been thrown around. Robert Press, a columnist for the *Bronx Times* and a member of the political group Committee of 100 Democrats, announced in a letter to the *Riverdale Press* that he might run, after the paper reported on Stanton's plans.

It's been rumored that Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz, who has represented the area in Albany since 1981, might make the switch to the City Council.

Dinowitz would neither confirm nor deny the possibility of a run.

"The future is the future," he said. "As

far as Cliff goes — everyone who wants to run should run. The more candidates, the better."

—JEANMARIE EVELLY

Public and Community Meetings

- COMMUNITY BOARD 7's committee meetings will be held at the Community Board office, 229A E. 204th St., at 6:30 p.m. on the following dates: Thursday, Feb. 9—Sanitation, and Traffic & Transportation; Monday, Feb. 13—Youth Services; Tuesday, Feb. 14—Economic Development; Wednesday, Feb. 15—Health & Hospitals, and Senior Services.
- THE CROTON FACILITY MONITORING COMMITTEE meets on Thursday, Feb. 16 at 7 p.m. at the DEP Outreach office, 3660 Jerome Ave.
- COMMUNITY BOARD 7's general board meeting will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 21 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Scott Tower's Community Room, located at 3400 Paul Ave. For more information about CB7 meetings and events, call (718) 933-5650 or go online to bronxcb7.info.



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Be Healthy! 3,500

The number of Bronx residents who died from heart disease in 2009, according to the New York State Department of Health, the latest year for which there is data.

Vital Stats

National Heart Month Off to a Healthy Local Start

By PETER MOSKOWITZ

When Montefiore Medical Center nurses and doctors walk or run through hospital hallways, it's not usually associated with a celebration. But when 50 or so employees took four laps through the Bronx hospital's central building last Wednesday, it was.

They were kicking off "Heart Month," a series of national events sponsored by the American Heart Association to bring greater awareness to heart health. The hospital began the festivities with its fourth annual mile-long walk.

Donald Stark, the hospital's director of cardiology, admitted the short walk around the hospital was more symbolic than about actual exercise, but he hoped it would inspire local employees to bring the message of prevention outside the hospital.

"This is where we live, and our people who work here live here too," he said.

"Our goal is that we won't have to go all the way to heart transplantation," said Dr. Mario Garcia, Montefiore's chief of cardiology. "That's why we're here today."

Garcia said that Bronx residents are particularly susceptible to heart conditions. According to New York City Health Department data, residents of the Bronx are admitted to hospitals for cardiovascu-



Photo by Peter Moskowitz

EMPLOYEES AT Montefiore Medical Center take a one-mile walk through the hospital to kick off their celebration of National Heart Month.

lar disease at a higher rate than the city overall.

"We are handicapped in many ways here," Garcia said, adding that the geography of the borough puts Bronx residents at a health disadvantage.

"They have a very sedentary lifestyle," he said. "Transportation is usually a bus or car. It's not as convenient to walk in this borough."

As if the lifestyle factors weren't enough to make the Montefiore cardiolo-

gy department's job more difficult, Garcia said the current healthcare system in New York doesn't do enough to emphasize preventive care — addressing an illness before it requires invasive and costly solutions, like surgery.

One goal of Montefiore's Heart Month is to raise awareness of the shift the hospital is making in trying to take care of people before their condition lands them in a hospital. It is one of several dozen hospitals in the country, and the only one

in New York, participating in a federal program designed to shift Medicaid and Medicare spending toward primary care.

"The idea is that, if right now a person who has diabetes comes to the hospital with a heart attack, that costs you \$200,000," Garcia said. "If we prevent them from getting sick to begin with, they don't have to develop those end-style conditions."

Heart Month is personal to some hospital employees.

"There's heart disease in my family," said Registered Nurse Geraldine O'Connell. "My dad had his first heart attack at 47, so it's a risk factor for me."

O'Connell said she has been trying to lose weight and is hoping to set a healthy example for her patients.

"I can't be here being several pounds overweight, and expecting people to take me seriously," she said. "You've gotta practice what you preach."

If employees like O'Connell are any indication, Heart Month has been working.

"Once you lose a little bit of weight, you feel good about yourself and you get healthy," said Paula McFall, a medical records staffer at the hospital. After participating in the mile-long walk previous years, McFall says she now does the same walk four times a day, every day, whether it's Heart Month or not.

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Inquiring Photographer

By DAVID GREENE

This week we asked readers about a plan that would raise New York's minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.50 an hour.



I agree with that. Food prices are very high and people need the extra money to get along, times are tough. I go with the little people who are trying to support a family who go out and work, they're not on welfare, they're working and prices just keep going up, so let them get a few bucks.

Walter Pofeldt



I think it's a great idea with inflation and everything. It's only fair that they spread the wealth around a little bit. I don't know how people do it today with gas prices the way they are and everything going up. I don't know how they survive on that kind of money. I could never work for it.

Jody DePasquale



I think it's a pretty good idea. The minimum wage has been the same for awhile, so it's time for the poor people to get a little extra. If employers can't pay it, maybe they can give close to it, just find a happy medium.

Brian Fearon



I feel that if small businesses can't afford it, it's kind of hard. As much as it would help the worker in everyday life and what they have to pay for, for some people it's tough right now. It's tough for any [business owner] to pay even the amount they are paying now. The store that I work in now can't do anything.

Paul Bennardo



I think it's a very good idea because if you raise it, it will give them an incentive to actually get a job. At least they'd bring home a decent salary, instead of sitting back and doing nothing and trying to collect unemployment or welfare and food stamps. In this day and age, everything's going up and you need a little extra money.

Nancy Weihe

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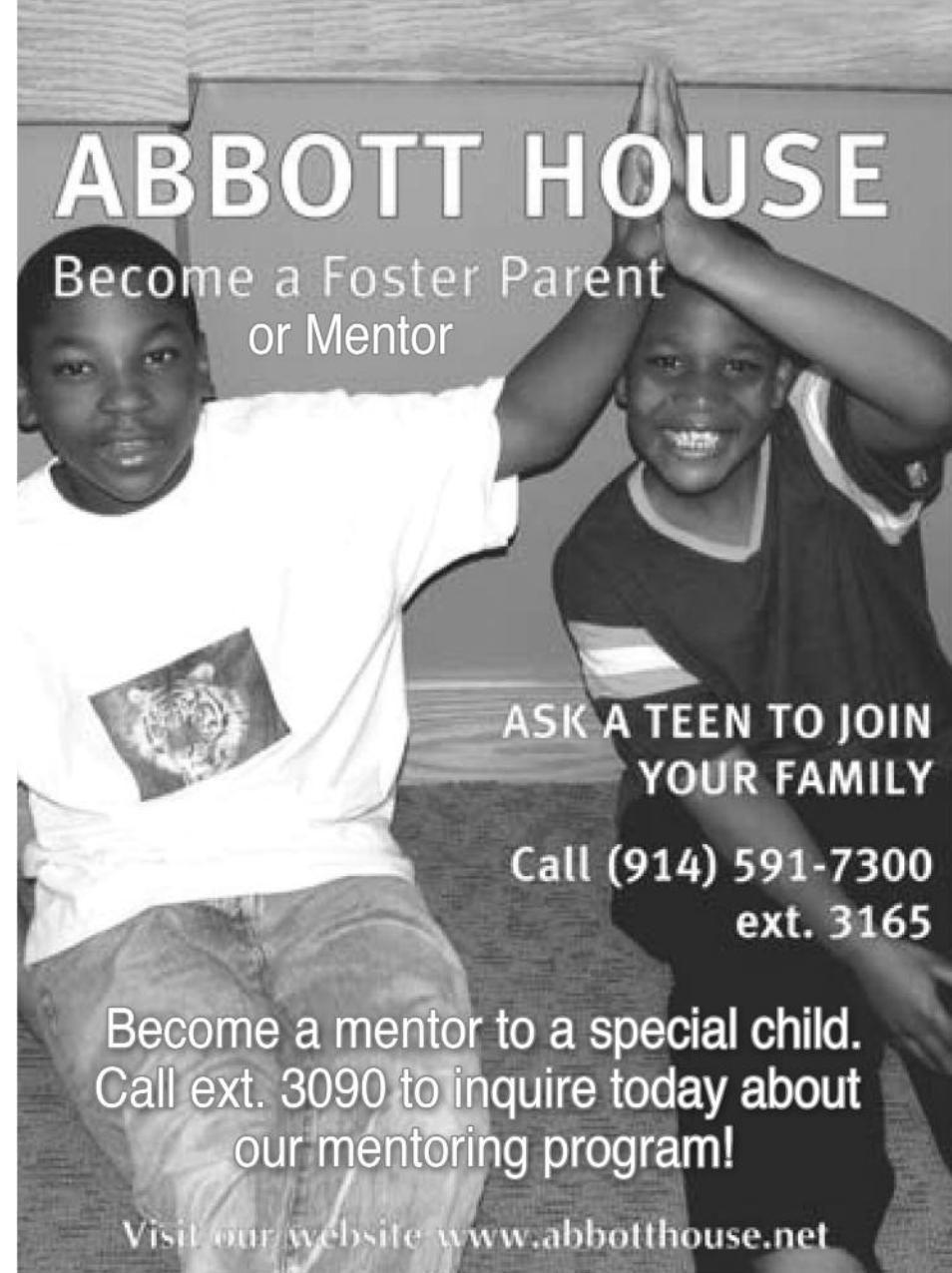
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At Armory, Hockey Group Wants School, Programs

(continued from p. 1)

best-in-class facility and a destination on par with the [New York] Botanical Garden."

The facility would include a 5,000-seat arena and seven or eight additional ice skating rinks. Unlike other interested parties, the group plans to fund the project with private investments and would not rely on city subsidies. In his State of the City speech, Mayor Bloomberg specifically alluded to the group's interest when announcing the new request for proposals to redevelop the vacant Armory.

KNIC representatives were tight-lipped on many of the specifics of the plan, not wanting to reveal too much information before the city's March 22 deadline for proposals. They did, however, provide an overview of how the ice complex could address community needs, specifically in the realms of education and youth development.

The KNIC group plans to build a K-12 school on the Armory grounds. The school would be focused around ice sports and would provide seats for 750 children. Students would participate in activities like hockey and figure skating and also learn about careers in the sports and health field. In an area of the city where school crowding is an issue, this could be a major benefit for the community and give a boost to the group's proposal in the eyes of the board.

KNIC would also create an after-school tutoring and ice sports program open to any Bronx resident. Their idea is based on a successful program that Philadelphia Flyers owner Ed Snider implemented in inner-city Philadelphia.

Board 7 Chairman Paul Foster said that more work needed to be done to determine if KNIC's proposal is the best plan for the Armory.

"It sounds promising," Foster said. "We want to get something moving here, but we also want to make sure that our community is having our needs addressed."

Several committee and community members expressed concerns over the proposal, specifically in terms of how the development would impact traffic and parking and the lack of dedicated space for other sports.

Gardenia Slade, a member of the Kingsbridge Neighborhood Improvement Association, said she is not sure that ice sports would attract local residents.

"Right now, I don't see the interest," Slade said. "Maybe once it's built and people see it, they'll be interested, but I'd like to see other options in there too: basketball, baseball, soccer."

KNIC members plan to meet with Community Board 7 again at the Feb. 21 general meeting at Scott Tower (see Public and Community Meetings on page 2 for details).

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Opinion

Letters

Lamenting Loss of 'Green' Program

I felt compelled to address the article, "For All His Success, Discovery HS Teacher Lands in the Basement." I wish Mr. Ritz future success and a supportive environment. The problem is that the bureaucracy persists, such that the Prin-

cipal Rolando Rivera supports the structure of education rather than the child. His statement, "It didn't fit with our vision for Discovery, which is a college prep school and not a place for sustainable agriculture and job training," is dumbfounding. Finding a way to engage a student such that they become an independent and empowered learner is the ultimate goal of an educator; it seems like Mr. Ritz has made that connection. Now if college prep is the vision of Discovery, why not ask how such a program could serve a student in that endeavor. Could it spark an interest in nutrition in a community plagued by both diabetes and hunger, or activism in food justice. Will the students pursue college at NYU Steinhardt with programs such as Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health, SUNY College of Agriculture and Technology — Cobleskill or Ivy League's Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences? I don't quite understand why the school is called Discovery if Mr. Rivera and other administrators have all the answers.

Lorita Watson

Where do I start? It was three short years ago when we taught the very first class after meeting Steve. As a former teacher I appreciate the way in which students were now engaged. Authentic learning! STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Math] at its very best. We personally contributed time, materials and love to the efforts of Mr. Ritz. He has helped make a program that is now being taught at the State University of NY (SUNY) schools and other schools not only in NYS but now across the globe. He (Steve) is a champion within his domain. Rhetorically speaking....Data, data, data is what is important to the economic contribution of a school. Our data for three years running: 100% graduation rates, 93% attendance, 100% post graduation employment or higher ed learning! This one classroom and program has shown it can change lives! To Steve's point, it didn't cost a dime and the program, after a small initial investment, pays for itself year after year after year!

George Irwin

Green Living Technologies

Ed. Note: This letter was adapted from a comment posted on norwoodnews.org.

—By NORWOOD NEWS

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Bronx Crime Briefs

Police: We Caught Car/Child-jacker

A Bronx mom got a scare on Saturday after a thief took off in her Honda mini-van — with her 3-year-old son still in the back seat. The woman had parked on Jerome Avenue when a man jumped into the driver's seat and drove off, her boy still in the back. The terrified mom attempted to stop the car by jumping in front of it, but was hit with the vehicle, breaking her leg.

The suspect dumped the van and the child a few blocks away on Davidson Avenue. Police found them both an hour later, and the child was uninjured. Police have arrested Harlem resident Joseph Fuscaldo, 58, and charged him in the crime.

iPhone Robbery Attempt Ends in Gun Violence

Police are looking for two suspects who they say shot a 23-year-old man who refused to give up his iPhone during a recent robbery attempt in University Heights last month.

The victim and a friend were walking on West 190th Street, between Grand and Aqueduct avenues. Two men approached and demanded the victim give up his iPhone; when he refused, one of the suspects shot the victim in the back. Both suspects then fled on foot. The victim was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital and treated for his injuries, which were not life-threatening.

Ed. Note: For more Bronx crime updates, check out the Breaking Bronx blog on norwoodnews.org.

—By NORWOOD NEWS

On Monday, Jan. 30, New York State Department of Health will launch a media campaign ad entitled "What's Worse" to promote cessation and the New York State Smokers' Quitline. The goal of this ad is an appeal to smokers to keep making the attempt to quit for the sake of their loved ones. What's Worse focuses on a woman reacting to the diagnosis of lung cancer from her doctor, and now forced to tell her young children. "What could be worse: hearing this from your doctor or saying it to your children?" It calls attention to the real health consequences of smoking and how it affects not only the smoker, but the family as well. Will this ad motivate smokers to quit? We sincerely hope so!

In New York State there are 2.4 million adult smokers. Of these, 41 percent or 1,001,684 live with children in the household. Smoking kills 25,500 New Yorkers every year. Based on the most recent data, approximately 18 percent of adult New Yorkers over age 18 statewide are smokers. Smoking related illnesses cost the state over \$8 billion in medical costs annually. Helping smokers to quit reduces morbidity and mortality and alleviate the social and economic burden caused by tobacco use in New York State.

For help quitting, talk to your doctor, or call the New York State Smokers' Quitline, 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487).

Cynthia Blount
Bronx BREATHES

Applauding Minimum Wage Hike

I applaud the efforts of Assembly Speaker Silver and his members for putting forth this proposal. As we all know, \$7.25 is not enough to maintain a home and a family in New York any longer. It's obvious that New York has become a very expensive place to live and increasing the minimum wage is good for business and most importantly, is good for hard-working individuals.

I am confident that Governor Cuomo will push this bill forward, since he understands that people on the ground are really struggling to get by, for those who are fortunate to have a job in this tough economy. As for the Senate, I hope that they can do the math and come to the same conclusion folks with common sense have: \$7.25 is not enough.

Haile Rivera
University Heights Resident

Just Asking About Toxic Buildings

Regarding PS 51, the toxic elementary school building closed due to trichloroethylene (TCE) exposure: Has anyone contacted the surrounding area to see if the tenants there are worried if they have been exposed as well? Has any testing been done or requested for the surrounding area? Just asking.

Annette Melendez
Norwood Parent

Pair Arrested for October Murder of Bronx Father

(continued from p. 1)

Two weeks ago, Detective John Ferretti and other members of the 52nd Precinct, acting on a tip from someone who had seen the reward poster, tracked down and apprehended Devon Downs, a 29-year-old resident of Aqueduct Avenue. Downs was charged with murder and robbery.

Downs pleaded not guilty and was scheduled to reappear in court this week.

According to Dowling and court documents filed by prosecutors, Downs told police he and an accomplice robbed Chanda and threw him down a flight of stairs head first.

At that point, police had identified the suspected accomplice as 34-year-old Abdul West, but were having trouble locating him. Last Wednesday, Ferretti and Detective Joseph Ciatto of the violent crimes unit, traveled to Charlotte, NC, because they believed West was hiding out there.

On Thursday, Feb. 2, with the help of local police, the detectives arrested West on charges of murder and robbery. Ferretti and Ciatto extradited West and he was arraigned in the Bronx on Sunday.

West pleaded not guilty.

According to Dowling, prior to the

attack on Chanda on Oct. 29, video surveillance footage showed the two suspects "looking to rob somebody." They even attempted to rob somebody walking their dog, but the dog freaked out and scared them off.

They later focused in on Chanda, who was returning to his apartment building on West 190th Street from a local store where he had bought packing tape for his family's pending move to a condo in Parkchester. They followed him into the building and attacked him in the second floor stairwell.

"They're two bad guys with long track records," Dowling said. "It's a relief to the family and it ensures that they won't do this to anybody else."

He added, "It's what's right for Bimal Chanda."

Mohammed Ali, a friend of Chanda's who launched a media campaign to bring light to the crime after it happened, was happy about the arrest, but still fearful of violent crime in the area where the attack took place. He lives and owns a business nearby.

"It's good news for the community," he said. "For a long time we were hopeless and thought the men [who did this] would never be arrested."

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Locals Blast State Redistricting Proposal

(continued from p. 1)

despite their common demographics and socio-economic needs. They said the community's political clout is lessened when it's broken up by districts.

"Norwood and Bedford Park are separated and broken apart in this plan," said Don Bluestone, executive director at the Moshulu Montefiore Community Center in Norwood. "This is a poor community. Part of the reason it is poor, and has gotten poorer, is because it cannot speak with one voice."

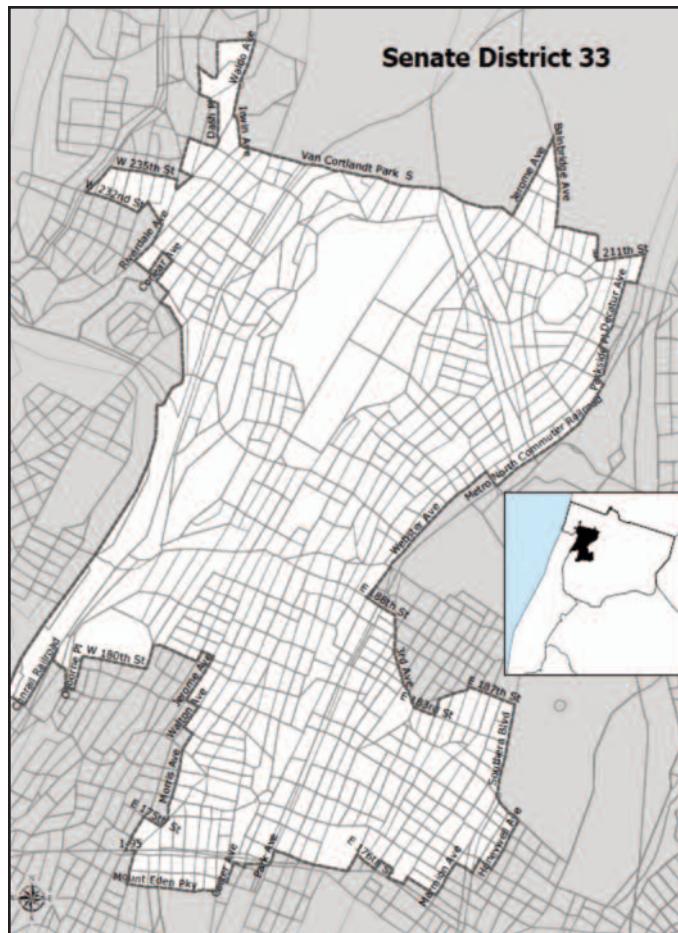
"To break up what little political influence we have — you're going to devastate this community," Bluestone added.

He and others testified against the proposed maps for the assembly districts encompassing Bronx Community District 7, which, like the ones put in place 10 years ago, continue to divide the area across three separate districts — the 81st, 80th and 78th, currently represented by Assembly Members Jeff Dinowitz, Naomi Rivera and Jose Rivera, respectively.

The changes proposed to local senate districts drew even greater criticism. For the last 10 years, most of Norwood and Bedford Park has fallen collectively within the 33rd District, now represented by Gustavo Rivera.

The new proposal would drive a jagged line through much of Norwood, splitting the community haphazardly between the 33rd district and the 34th district, represented by Jeff Klein.

Williamsbridge Oval Park, for example, would be divided in half between the



Maps courtesy LATFOR

THE DISTRICT LINES proposed by a group of lawmakers to define the 33rd State Senate District, currently represented by Sen. Gustavo Rivera, would split portions of Norwood into Sen. Jeff Klein's 34th District.

two districts, with its west side falling in Klein's district and the east side remaining in Rivera's. [See map, above]

"Our community will again be sliced and diced," said Barbara Stronczer, of the

Bedford-Moshulu Community Association. "If Bedford Park is going to be in the 33rd, fine, just keep us in the same community. Don't pick up a building here and there."

Several speakers were concerned that some sections of Norwood, which the proposed maps would move into Klein's district, appeared to be ones which are historically white, and more affluent.

"This is so systematic, it makes me think of redlining," testified Gregory Jobo Lost, a Norwood resident and deputy director of the nonprofit University Neighborhood Housing Program, referring to the old bank practice of ignoring certain neighborhoods.

The proposed border between the 33rd and 34th districts is so crooked and illogically drawn, he said, that his 15 minute walk to work would involve switching back and forth between them five separate times.

"Words cannot describe what this district looks like," he said.

Klein said that while redistricting is always a "heart-wrenching process," he

does not think the map drafted for his district changes much. Under LATFOR's proposal, Klein's district would also absorb most of wealthy Riverdale from Rivera's 33rd District.

Rivera, a vocal supporter of independent redistricting, called LATFOR's maps "laughable."

"We should not be picking our voters, they should be picking us," he said. "It's a perfect example of how that process leads to a bad product."

During the 2010 election year, Rivera and hundreds other legislators and candidates signed a government reform pledge sponsored by former New York City Mayor Ed Koch, promising to establish an independent panel to take over redistricting. Two years later, that pledge has fallen flat.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, however, has vowed repeatedly to veto any maps put forth by LATFOR or any other legislators if they aren't arrived at independently. The issue will most likely be decided in court.

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City Revamp, Gangs Take Focus at MS 80 Meeting

By RONALD CHAVEZ

At a town hall meeting to discuss persistent problems with gang activity in the area, school officials at Norwood's MS 80 came out against a city plan to dramatically overhaul the school by replacing half of its staff.

MS 80, on Mosholu Parkway North, has been labeled a "turnaround" school by the city. If the turnaround plan is approved by the state, the entire MS 80 staff will have to reapply for their jobs and only a maximum of 50 percent of the current staff will be able to return.

While the school will remain a zoned school and number of faculty and staff will not be cut, according to Children's First Network representative Bob Cohen, the changes would also include re-opening the school with a new number. The turnaround designation also opens the door to increased federal funding, Cohen said.

The middle school is one of 33 the city plans to overhaul after the schools failed to meet state standards, Cohen said.

Parents were skeptical about the changes having a positive impact.

"The worst thing you can do [to students] is not provide a consistent structure," said Parent Association head Cecilia Donovan. "You take away resources and expect them to function the same way? It's like you're setting them up for

failure."

Donovan said the Parents Association would look into networking with other schools going through the same procedure. She said her daughter in the sixth grade has a "great" relationship with her teachers.

At the same time, parents at the hearing discussed how to tackle the endemic gang activity and violence that has saddled the school for years.

Parents said gangs hover around local parks and wait for students leaving the middle school in the afternoon. Donovan said she's heard of gang members approaching students to try to pull them into the gang. She said that while fights in the school do occur, students mostly encounter problems outside of school.

Fernando Tirado, district manager for Community Board 7, said neighborhood parents have a responsibility to their kids. "We need parents to be more involved," he said. "When we try have programs here, nobody participates."

The school's walls no longer prominently display graffiti tags that identify certain gangs, said Lovey Mazique-Rivera, the school's principal. Still, she echoed Tirado in emphasizing parental involvement. "When parents call me and say 'the school is bad,' what you are telling me is that my kids are bad. So let's start collaborating about what's going on."

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Bedford Park Hit by Commercial Robberies

By MARCOS SIERRA

Bedford Park merchants and vendors are on guard following two commercial robberies and a "noticed increase" in crime during the past month. The two robberies happened on Bedford Park Boulevard, near Jerome Avenue.

No arrests have been made, but detectives have video footage from both robberies and are seeking help identifying the suspects.

At around 3 p.m., on Jan. 5, a robber, described by police as a Hispanic male, standing between 5-feet-5 and 5-feet-7, and weighing approximately 150 pounds, brazenly entered the K & C Candy Store, located at 239 E. Bedford Pk. Blvd., while the store was filled with customers.

According to the owner who declined to be identified, he walked up to the cash register and menacingly barked two words, "Open" and "money," while gesturing as if he were armed.

"I was in shock and afraid to move, so he just reached over and grabbed all the money; he didn't care that the store was full of people and children," said the owner who has been a staple in the area for the past 21 years.

At approximately 6 p.m., on Jan. 22, after the last two customers had exited Connie's Laundromat, located at 39 E.

Bedford Pk. Blvd., the perpetrator entered brandishing a firearm. He forcefully pushed the lone employee toward the back of the store, while rummaging through his pockets for the keys to the cabinet where the money was kept. He was able to get away with approximately \$300 in quarters, and an undisclosed amount of bills.

Two days later, employees said another suspicious man barged into the store near closing time and ignored their questions while walking straight toward the back of the store. The employees positioned themselves near the entrance. The man left without incident.

Other businesses in the area say they have experienced harassment in one form or another, from rude and disruptive customers to employees being physically assaulted. In one instance an employee quit after being robbed and assaulted after leaving work.

"I noticed it's a lot of the young kids in the neighborhood who seem to be causing the most trouble," said one employee of a local business, who asked not to be named out of fear of retribution.

Ed. Note: See video of the suspects on norwoodnews.org by searching, "Bedford Park robberies" Anyone with information can call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at 800-577-TIPS.

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Business Beat

It's the Thought (and a Nice Piece of Jewelry) That Counts

With Valentine's Day just days away, we went straight to the most tenured and trusted jeweler in the area, Allan Freilich, of Freilich Jewelers, which opened in Norwood in 1939, to get some advice on buying the perfect gift for your special someone. Here are the highlights from our conversation.

What's an "appropriate" Valentine's gift?

As a traditional old-time jeweler, I believe your gift should be proportional to your relationship. If you met the young lady on Friday night and Valentine's Day is the next Tuesday, a gift might be something slightly different than someone who is in a long-term relationship, married or otherwise. Now that's appropriate behavior. Of course in today's world, everything's thrown to the wind.

How much should you spend?

That level of money has changed with our times. The reality of it is that, for many of us, times are tougher. So times have definitely changed. You can buy a lovely thing here for \$20, no question about it. The real question is remembering and coming home with something, whatever it is. Yes, I would love for everyone to leave with a \$5,000 item, but the realities are what they are.

Is it okay for women to buy jewelry for men?

Absolutely. There was a day many years ago when men didn't wear much stuff, but that is not the case anymore. Men adorn just like the pirates in the old days.

Rings can be tricky

When you bring home a ring and it looks like an engagement ring you can get into some trouble if you're not prepared for that. Most rings, of course, are not engagement rings, but if it even looks like one and the young person who's getting it was looking for [an engagement ring], that could be less than shrewd — if you're not prepared for that [kind of conversation]. It's a delicate line.

Start with a heart

When you come to a jewelry store, you want to come out with a nice piece of jewelry. And the first thing I think of is a heart. It's Valentine's Day, I can't help it. To me, there's nothing more beautiful than a diamond heart. I would suggest a heart, of any sort. Then we decide on our budget and whether the heart should be in a ring or necklace or whatever.

A flowery alternative

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Bottom line: It's the thought!

It's the thought, I think, that mostly counts, without the detail. The fact that you thought about it and remembered the day and that you came home with a gift. Even though it is required it is still nice that you went that extra mile and got that gift at whatever level you think is suitable. —Interview by ALEX KRATZ



Photo by Alex Kratz

ALLAN FREILICH and the staff at Freilich Jewelers.

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Neighborhood Notes

Blood Drive at St. Brendan's

St. Brendan's Parish, located at 333 E. 206th St., between Perry and Bainbridge avenues, is conducting its annual neighborhood blood drive on Sunday, Feb. 12, from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., in the school's cafeteria. Social Security numbers are not required, but a valid picture ID is. Eligible donor ages are 16 to 75, but anyone under the age of 18 will need to provide his or her parent's written consent. For more information, call (718) 547-6655.

Bronx Town Hall Event

Montefiore Medical Center, in collaboration with Connect to Protect (C2P) Bronx, is hosting a Bronx Town Hall meeting on Adolescent Sexual & Reproductive Health for teens, parents and educators, Feb. 16, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. Free food will be available 5:30 to 6 p.m. For more information or to RSVP, contact Bianca Lopez at

(718) 882-0232 or blopez@adolescentaids.org.

Support for Immigrant and Minority Entrepreneurs

The Center for an Urban Future and the Fund for Public Advocacy are facilitating a discussion about the role of immigrant and minority entrepreneurs in the Bronx, the challenges they face, and how to support their growth, Feb. 14, from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at Hostos Community College, Savoy Building, 120 E. 149th St. (corner of Walton Avenue), multi-purpose room, 2nd floor. A light breakfast will be served. To register, e-mail rsvp@nycfuture.org. Registration deadline is Monday, Feb. 13.

Teen Center Re-opens at MMCC

The free Teen Center at Moshulu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave., is open again, offering a vari-

ety of activities, including tutoring, Tuesdays to Thursdays, 6:30 to 9 p.m., and Saturdays, 7 to 10 p.m. For more information, call Theodore Allen at (718) 882-4000 ext. 0.

Human Rights Activist Speaks at Lehman College

Father Alejandro Solalinde Guerra, a Catholic priest from Oaxaca, Mexico, a leading advocate for the rights of migrants travelling through Mexico to the U.S., will speak in Lehman College Music Building's East Dining Room on Thursday, Feb. 16, from 6 to 8 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, e-mail alyshia.galvez@lehman.cuny.edu.

Free Tax Prep Help

- Bronx Borough President, Ruben Diaz Jr., in conjunction with Bronx Independent Living Services is offering Free Tax Assistance and preparation to seniors in the Bronx, on Wednesday, Feb. 22, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 4419 Third Ave., Suite 2C, (between 181st and 182nd streets). You must bring your W-2 and/or 1099 statements, and your 2010 tax return. All tax forms are prepared by IRS trained certified volunteers. Complimentary refreshments will be served. For more information or to RSVP, call (718) 590-6248.

- The University Neighborhood Housing Program is sponsoring free Federal and State Income Tax Assistance to low-income residents of the Bronx provided by IRS certified tax preparers at Refuge House, 2715 Bainbridge Ave. (near East 196th Street), by appointment only. Services are provided on Wednesdays from 3 to 8 p.m. on Feb. 15, 29, March 7, 28, April 4, and 11; and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Feb. 11, 25, March 24, 31, and April 14. For more information or to RSVP, call (718) 933-2539.

- Ridgewood Savings Bank, 3445 Jerome Ave., is hosting a free Tax Preparation Day for eligible low-income Bronx residents by IRS certified volunteers on Saturday, Feb. 18, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information regarding required documents, additional locations, or to RSVP, call (718) 881-3430.

Flea Market Donations Needed

Donations are needed for the Bedford-Moshulu Community Association's Flea Market on March 10. Bring new and used items (except clothing) to the BMCA office, 400 E. Moshulu Pkwy. So. Apt. B1 (lobby floor), on Wednesdays, Feb. 15, 22 and 29 from 1:30 to 4 p.m., Saturday, March 3 from 1:30 to 4 p.m. or Wednesday evening March 7, from 7:30 to 9 p.m.

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Martial Arts at The COVE

The COVE, a Knox-Gates neighborhood organization, 3418 Gates Place (basement) between Moshulu Parkway and Gun Hill Road, is offering Martial Arts classes for ages 5 to adult, Saturdays, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., at \$5/session. For more information, call (718) 405-1312.

For more Neighborhood Notes online, go to www.norwoodnews.org and click on "Neighborhood Notes" in the right-hand column.



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Out & About

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Onstage

■ The Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents **Salsa con Amor**, featuring Latin entertainers, Feb. 11 at 8 p.m. (tickets are \$45 to \$60); and **Tschaikowski St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra**, performing classical music, Feb. 19 at 3 p.m. (tickets are \$25 to \$40; \$10/12 and

under). For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

■ Lehman College, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents a free concert performed by the Lehman College Chamber Players featuring **classical works**, Feb. 15 at 12:30 p.m., in the Music Building's Recital Hall on the 3rd floor. For more information, call (718) 960-8247.

Events

■ The Bronx Council on the Arts presents free craft workshop, **Puppet Making**, as part of its third Saturday of the month series, at the Huntington Free Library, 9 Westchester Square, Feb. 18, 12:30 to 3 p.m. All supplies are provided. For more information, call (718) 829-7770 or (718) 931-9500 ext. 33.

■ The Bronx Museum of the Arts, at 1040 Grand Concourse (165th Street), invites the public to submit up to five historical or contemporary photographs of anyone playing baseball, from amateurs to pros, of any age or gender, in neighborhoods, parks, schools, etc., for its **Baseball in the Bronx exhibition**, to be held April 13 to May 13. Submission deadline is March 16. Photos will be returned only if they are submitted with a self-addressed stamped envelope with proper postage. For more information of submission rules and details, call (718) 681-6000 or write bronxitesinbaseball@gmail.com.

■ The New York Botanical Garden presents a **trip to the tropics**, through Feb. 26, in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory. Included will be a new virtual tour, photo display, children's scavenger hunt and weekend salsa and photography lessons. For more information, call (718) 817-8658.

■ Wave Hill, located at 249th Street and Independence Avenue, presents **Cooking Demonstration**, featuring pineapple treats, Feb. 11 at 2 p.m. in the Ecology Building; and **Winter Workspace Open Studios**, for artists to develop new work and share their space with the public, Feb. 12 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. (free with grounds admission). For more information, call (718) 549-3200.

Exhibits

■ The public is invited to the Bronx Museum of the Arts, at 1040 Grand Concourse (165th Street), open house, Feb. 12 from 2 to 5 p.m. with a tour led by guest curator at 1 p.m., free, in the



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**EDITOR'S PICK**

Celebrate Black History Month

■ In celebration of Black History Month, Woodlawn Cemetery's Memorial Chapel will host **author A'Lelia Bundles**, Feb. 26 at 1 p.m. to discuss her upcoming book, "Joy Goddess: A'Lelia Walker and the Harlem Renaissance." Walker is the daughter of the first African-American millionaire Madam C.J. Walker and hosted many famous people of her era at soirees at her salon, The Dark Tower. Tickets are \$15; \$10/students/seniors. Woodlawn Cemetery includes the final resting place of many prominent African-Americans. For more information, call (718) 920-1470.

■ The public is invited to enjoy an **illustrated talk** by Morgan Powell on the Bronx River's Afro-American Heritage in 100 Golden Moments, at the Bronx Library Center, at 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. off Fordham Road, Feb. 18 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

■ Lehman College's Lovinger Theatre, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents two free events in celebration of Black History Month: Its annual **tribute lecture** to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Feb. 15 at 11 a.m.; and a **one-man show** about Black political resistance. For more information, call (718) 960-8801.

South Wing Galleries. The exhibit **Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect**, will be on view through May 20. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

■ Lehman College Art Gallery, 250

Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents **Under the Influence: The Comics**; and **Michael Ferris, Jr.: The Bronx Series and Other Work** (figurative sculpture), through May 12. For more information, call (718) 960-7492.

Library Events

■ The Bronx Library Center, at 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. off Fordham Road, presents programs for kids including **Preschool Story Time**, Feb. 9, 16 and 23 at 11 a.m.; **Toddler Tales for the Teeny Tiny** (ages 3 to 5), Feb. 11 and 18 at 11 a.m.; **Be Tobacco Free** (ages 3 to 12), Feb. 11 at 2 p.m.; **Mad Science Workshops at 4 p.m.** (ages 3 to 12; registration required): on The Science of Sport, Feb. 14; on Birds & Beasts, Feb. 21; **Global Partners, Jr.** (ages 5 to 12), students connect worldwide via the Internet, Feb. 15 and 22 at 4 p.m.; **Animal Mask Making** (ages 5 to 12), Feb. 16 at 4 p.m.; and **Storytelling and Shadow Puppetry** (ages 3 to 12), Feb. 18 at 2 p.m. Adults can attend **Single Stop/Government Benefits**, Feb. 9, 14, 16, 21 and 23 at 9 a.m.; **MOMA Presents Diego Rivera**, lecture/slideshow on murals, Feb. 11 at 2:30 p.m.; **Movie Screenings**: ("Ocean Heaven With Jet Li, Feb. 9 at 11 a.m.; and "Defining Beauty: Ms. Wheelchair America," Feb. 9 at 1 p.m.); and **It's a Long Month: Living on a Fixed Income**, Feb. 21 at 10 a.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

■ The Jerome Park Library, at 118 Eames Place, offers **Toddler Story Time**, Feb. 15 at 11 a.m.; and **Film** (ages 5 to 12), Feb. 20 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwood-news@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Feb. 13 for the next publication date of Feb. 23. Find more events at www.bronxnewsnetwork.org.

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