



NORWOOD NEWS



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**INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
UNRESOLVED 311 ISSUES | PG. 4**



**KINGSBRIDGE SSA
OFFICE RELOCATES | PG. 3**

BEDFORD PK. BLAZE GUTS TWO STORES

Nearby church spared; Owner of torched deli plans to rebuild



Photo by David Cruz

FIRE CREWS SPENT two hours extinguishing this three-alarm fire that started at 358 Bedford Park Boulevard near St. Mary's Orthodox Church (left).

By DAVID CRUZ

In two hours, Ali Rahimi's store, 358 Famous Deli, was in smoldering ruins. His store, a familiar staple on Bedford Park Boulevard between Decatur and Marion avenues, bore the brunt of a three-alarm fire that began at the laundromat

abutting his grocery store on the morning of Oct. 25.

Grieving near the charred remains of his business, Rahimi stood surrounded by family members, employees and friends, offering condolences as the hum of the fire trucks added to the surreal-like morn-

ing. Sipping his coffee, Rahimi told the *Norwood News* that he plans to rebuild his business.

"Life is always like that," said Rahimi's cousin, who declined to give his name. "Not always good, not always bad."

The scene of the blaze was unlike what most eye wit-

nesses have seen in the low-key business area. Bedford Park Boulevard is home to a small business strip that caters to the working class community, with several mainstays such as Webster Avenue Café, Leroy Pharmacy, and the Jolly Tin-
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EDITORIAL

A Bronx Newspaper Now Shadow of Its Former Self

It came as a surprise to us when a Facebook post read that the *Bronx News*, established for the past 42 years, would downgrade. Instead, the paper will serve as an advertising vehicle loaded with horoscopes, trivia, random fun facts, comics and virtually no original reporting. For all intents and purposes, the new *Bronx News* is a trivialized version of its former self.

The publication certainly had an edge, with stories largely focusing on the darker side of the Bronx with a sprinkle of good news thrown in here and there. But say what you will about the newspaper, the important takeaway is it was published, falling into the hands of Bronx readers who may not have known an event such as the newspaper's downgrade took place.

This should concern you. After all, there is now one less newspaper watching what's happening in the Bronx, a growing trend that began when unfortunately, the *Daily News* closed its Bronx bureau a year ago.

Here's the general lowdown of newspapers: they exist for you. They are here to keep people honest, shedding light on injustices all in the name of improving your quality of life status. It's a system that works so long as the advertising revenue pours in. For the Bronx, a largely impoverished borough that's under-reported, lack of news only weakens the populace and does not train them to question the governed. That job, with the high hope of effecting ground-level legislative change, is left to the community boards and the handful of journalists covering this great borough.

Community newspapers certainly inform neighbors on what's happen-



THE BRONX NEWS publication revamped its newspaper to include virtually no news about the borough. Instead, it's a vehicle for ads.

ing in their communities by utilizing a set of newsgathering guidelines that compel us to be even-handed, free of bias and always open to hearing two or three sides to an argument. Whether it's education, crime, politics or the regular stories of the day, the journalist is consistently keeping your interests in mind without spouting their own personal beliefs. At least that's how it should be.

More importantly, there is a connection between lack of news and an increased level of malfeasance. The fewer newspapers, the more it can encourage the powerful to make bad decisions and call them right ones.

With the *Bronx News* no longer delivering its brand across the borough, the silence becomes ever-more present. This development puts the rest of Bronx media under intense pressure to write the first draft of the borough's history. It's a piecemeal job, sure, but it certainly gets the job done.

The borough can only become stronger if more reporters are hitting the pavement, questioning lawmakers on policy matters and uncovering the ants of malfeasance.

News coverage is flourishing elsewhere in the city, notably Brooklyn and Queens. This is partly due to a number of variables that include demographics, socioeconomic and population. Be that as it may, it's effectively covered, and rightfully so. But the Bronx, with its many injustices, socioeconomic divide, and quality of life issues, lacks the strength in numbers. Journalists are becoming few and far between in the borough.

With the original *Bronx News* now etched in the annals of Bronx history, the erosion of news continues. It makes us wonder about a line we heard at a recent journalism conference at the New York Press Association: "A community without a newspaper no longer exists."

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 committee meetings are held on the following dates at the board office, 229A E. 204th St. at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Public Safety and Quality of Life Nov. 5; Education/Libraries & Youth Services Nov. 5 at 7:30 p.m.; Senior Services Nov. 9; Parks & Recreation Nov. 9 at 7:15 p.m.; Traffic & Transportation Nov. 12; Veterans Committee Nov. 12 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

BEDFORD PARK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION meets Nov. 4 at 8 p.m. at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So., apt. B1 (lobby floor).

THE OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN CHARLES RANGEL hosts a town hall meeting Nov. 9 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. For more information, visit rangel.house.org.

Marquee Building on Jerome Avenue Up for Grabs

By DAVID CRUZ

For 18 years, Kingsbridge residents who've relied on the Social Security Administration office knew the nearest site was 2720 Jerome Ave.

But come Nov. 2, the SSA office will be relocated to 2501 Grand Concourse. Its more spacious office includes extra seating and interview windows for clients.

The two-story property on Jerome, covering 19,000 square-feet of rentable space, is now up for grabs. Steeped by a main road and plenty of mass transit, the Kingsbridge SSA office was centralized around a bustling corridor. But a more attractive point is the fact it lies across the Kingsbridge Armory, slated to be refashioned into the Kingsbridge National Ice Center, though dragging its feet on actual development.

Speculation has run rampant over whether the area will be gentrified, though real estate trends have indicated Kingsbridge and neighboring Norwood to be hot at the moment. The KNIC project, for instance, has drawn more real estate activity to the neighborhood than in previous years.



Photo by David Cruz

WITH THE SOCIAL Security Administration office at 2720 Jerome Ave. (left) relocating, property owners will likely snatch up this key site across from the Kingsbridge Armory.

The SSA office opened in 1997, after the federal General Services Administration signed a lease with 2720 Jerome Avenue Inc., a limited liability corporation. The GSA paid a yearly rent of \$497,000, according to the real estate website Property Shark. It has a market rate value of \$2.4 million. The current lease ran through 2017, two years before the GSA relocated the Kings-

bridge SSA. It's unclear why the GSA reneged on their lease early.

A spokesperson for the SSA referred the matter to GSA. A spokesperson did not return a phone call over the circumstances behind the move.

The move by SSA adds to a growing list of real estate activity happening in Kingsbridge, though real estate analysts told the *Norwood News* it's too

early to tell whether credit should be given to the KNIC project.

In June, an anonymous buyer purchased 135-145 W. Kingsbridge Rd. for \$15 million. Sitting across the street from the James J. Peters Veterans Hospital, the 67,000-square-foot property is home to a six-story walk-up complete with 10 occupied retail stores and 57 mostly rent-regulated apartments.

A year before, a Kingsbridge landlord imposed a rent increase on tenants occupying a site at the southeast corner of Jerome Avenue and Kingsbridge Road. The businesses—a diner and retail stores—faced a 200 percent rent increase that was later scaled back.

On a recent morning, SSA beneficiaries lined up outside the Kingsbridge office before opening, musing over what should occupy the site. "We don't need more retail," said Ed Nolan. "Maybe Lehman College can expand here."

One Kingsbridge resident, who declined to give her name, suggested any project will go to the highest bidder. "It's just about money, money, money," she said.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers about complaints to the city's 311 hotline and how fast they got results.



[A woman claimed to be a landlord and wasn't.] 311 responded quickly, but they just put in the paperwork saying they gave the woman a violation. On that side it went fine. But we're still left homeless and without a place to stay because this lady took our rent money and now eight people are left in the cold.

Anthony Simpson
Fordham



I called 311 to complain about the hydrant in my neighborhood because it's been running since the summer. It's on low pressure, not full blast, but it upsets me because I pay for water. It could also have been a problem if we ever had a fire. So I called, but it still hasn't been resolved. They said it takes a couple of weeks. I think it's been a few months.

Teresa Rivera
Soundview



Sometimes you call [311] and it takes anywhere from a month to three months for them to even come and check out the complaint that you've made. We have the drunks in the park that when you try and pass through the park, they don't move out of your way. You call 911; they say they can't do anything for you. You call 311 and make a complaint; they say they will come and check it out, but they never do.

John Hand
Norwood



I called 311 for snow removal during the winter time and it took them about a month, just to come and dump a little salt on it. I think their response time wasn't that good. They did remove it after some time, after they put down that first layer of salt, but when you make a complaint, you expect the city to actually deal with it within a certain amount of time.

David Berrios
Bedford Park



I made complaints about the 'No Standing Anytime' signs that popped up overnight and the construction on the side streets. If you go down to Holland Avenue, the road is all bumpy. They're fixing the street, but it's all broken up. Now there's no parking on all the corners and it's been going on for a year. They put up the sign. I didn't even know and I got a ticket. The city has never responded to my complaints.

Minerva Perez
Pelham Parkway

Editor's Note: Have an idea for an Inquiring Photographer question? Send suggestions to dcruz@norwoodnews.org.

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Learning About Time At KHCC

Photo courtesy discountwatchstore.com
JUST IN TIME! This child (left) standing with her mom learns the value of time at an event designed to help kids tell time the old fashioned way. The Kingsbridge Heights Community Center hosted discountwatchstore.com, which taught kids to read a traditional clock on Oct. 22. Over 100 kids were on hand to learn about the helpful skill that seems to be going by the wayside, thanks to digital clocks.

Housing Advocates to Landlords: Ease Up

By JASMINE GOMEZ

Several tenants and activists from Bronx organizations shouted and drummed buckets as they called for a change in landlord practices they claim are pushing Bronx residents out of their homes.

The rally on Oct. 15 at 1118 Grand Concourse organized by the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) called for an end to what they say is tenant harassment by landlords who've made living conditions so bad it's compelled the tenants to move. The rally comes at a time when the subject of gentrification has become a growing topic in the Bronx given increased interests in development and investment.

At the rally, members from NWBCCC, the Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance (KARA), and the People's Power Movement voiced their concerns to the crowd via megaphone, while tenants who feel they have been treated unfairly by their landlords also shared their stories.

The rally coincided with tenants who had their cases heard in Bronx Housing Court as a show of solidarity, according to Claude Copeland, a board member of NWBCCC's housing committee. "We felt since we had a group inside today...we can support [them] by being outside and speaking about them," said Copeland.

Some claims of harassment NWBCCC outlined included illegal evictions, failure to provide repairs in a timely manner, lack of gas for as much

as 14 months, and no chance for a lease renewal. All parties called for the end of unjust practices to tenants that are already struggling to pay increasing rent rates.

Joseph Cepeda of Soundview, in court the day of the rally, claimed his landlord had falsely accused him of not paying rent for two years, but the photocopies of his rent payments helped him dispute this.

"He wants to get us out. My mother's been living there 44 years. It's a three-bedroom apartment. If he gets rid of her, the rent will go from \$1200 to \$2500," said Cepeda, adding he is not alone in enduring a type of harassment in his building by a landlord who's trying to push people out.

Driving increased claims of harassment, tenants say, are big development projects, such as the most talked about Kingsbridge National Ice Center, which would stand as the world's largest indoor ice center.

Finding a vacant apartment is already tough in the Bronx, with 85 percent of units currently occupied across the borough. The New York City Housing Preservation & Development Agency also estimates that 56 percent of renters use more than a third of their income to pay rent and utilities.

"We want development, not displacement. We want the people who stayed here, invested in raising their families, coming to work every day, paying their rent, to stay here and not give in to greedy landlords," said Ileia Burgos of KARA.

Putting Their Heads Together at PB Workshop



Photo by Miriam Quinones

RESIDENTS JOT DOWN and brainstorm their wants at a Participatory Budgeting session hosted by Councilman Andrew Cohen. Spending a couple hours at the Sister Anunciata Senior Center on East 204th Street Oct. 21, locals made it a point to have their needs recorded. Some capital projects locals had in mind were benches and rehabbed stone pillars along Mosholu Parkway. Participatory Budgeting allows residents to identify capital projects for the neighborhood. Qualifying projects must have a long-term public benefit and must cost over \$35,000.

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Photo by Jasmine Gomez

AT A RALLY IN front of Bronx Housing Court, members of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition lead the crowd in chanting phrases such as "The Bronx united will never be defeated."

Spelling Bee Champs Hailed at PS 94

By MICHAEL BROWN JR.

Students at PS 94 Kings College School took part in the elementary school's ninth annual spelling bee completely abuzz with support from proud parents, faculty, and community police officers.

Nadia Sharia won the coveted first place prize after beating out second place finisher Brian Puma in the final round of the Oct. 21 competition, correctly spelling "absence." Nadia is in the 4th grade and like a typical nine-year-old was nervous as she stood in front of the auditorium with a crowd of cheering supporters. But she certainly came to the spelling bee to win, studying with her sister every night beforehand. The time spent memorizing and learning the root of a word paid off. She hopes to be a teacher when she grows up, "because [she has] nice teach-



Photo by Michael Brown Jr.

W-I-N-N-E-R-S! THIS YEAR'S PS 94 spelling bee champs are (top row, 3rd, 4th and 5th from left), Nadia Sharia, Brian Puma, and Abdullah Zidan, each holding a golden trophy. They're joined by other participating spelling bee students.

ers."

Nadia and Brian were joined by Abdulla Zidan, who clenched the third place spot

in a two-hour match. The top three, all 4th graders, also took home a dictionary to continue ramping up their spell-

ing skills. A group of other students stood alongside them, walking away with a commendation for participat-

ing in the contest.

The spelling bee was originally pitched as an idea by Nadine Hickson, whose own children attended the school. Her son took part in his first spelling bee in 3rd grade at P.S. 94. "I just want to see the children express themselves through the means of spelling." Spelling bees are known for helping students gain confidence, enhance vocabulary and better prepare for tests.

Inspector Nilda Hofmann, commanding officer of the 52nd Precinct, was invited as a guest speaker by Miriam Seminario, PS 94's parent coordinator and a founding member of the spelling bee. Hofmann sat in the front row with another fellow officer, clapping with jubilant parents and teachers. "I truly enjoyed myself. It was an honor," she said following the competition.

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Beating the Cold: Staying Warm During Chilly Months

With heating season under way, the West Bronx Housing and Neighborhood Resource Center has these tips for you to understand and what to avoid when chronicling your heat complaint.

There is a difference between NO heat and INSUFFICIENT heat. It's rare to have no heat at all. Most common is heat early in the morning and then off until 3 p.m. or later. If you say there is no heat, HPD will send the inspector whenever they're available. *Tell 311 about the pattern, and HPD will try to get an inspector there when the problem is most likely to occur.*

Give your name, apartment #, and/or phone. If you do not, when HPD comes to the building, they will check the heat in the lobby, or in another apartment.

If your landlord says that the sensors show the heat is sufficient when it's not, add that to your 311 complaint. Most Bronx buildings are going

to a computerized system. Sensors in the buildings provide owners with up to date temperature readings. *But the law says the temperature in each room must be at least 68, not that it has to be 68 where the sensors are. Do not hesitate to call, but only call when the temperature in the middle of the room is under 68 and the temperature outside is under 55. Too many false calls and your building may be labeled a low priority.*

Don't let yourself be intimidated. An owner can yell and scream, but that's all. Retaliation is illegal and taken seriously. *It is OK to hang up on an owner who is yelling on the phone. Any eviction attempt without a Marshall's order or deprivation of water and electricity services is a CRIME and should be reported to 911.*

It is a good idea to work with other tenants in your building where possible. *There is strength in numbers, and government will take the problem more seriously.*

Over 20 Honored at 52nd Precinct Council Breakfast

By JASMINE GOMEZ

The 52nd Precinct honored its officers, community stakeholders and businesses for going above and beyond their duties over the past year at the 12th annual Fellowship Recognition Breakfast.

Hosted by the 52nd Precinct Community Council, the yearly event was held at Monroe College Oct. 23 and featured a ceremony where several elected officials, NYPD officers, and community members delivered speeches.

The council, a volunteer-based group, serves as a liaison between the community and Police Department. Their meetings are held the fourth Thursday of every month and addresses police matters. Inspector Nilda Hofmann, commanding officer of the 52nd Precinct, routinely appears at the forum, taking questions from residents.

A number of awards were



Photo by Jasmine Gomez

OFFICER JAMES LUNDY (left) stands alongside Brenda Caldwell-Paris, 52nd Precinct Community Council President, and 52nd Precinct Inspector Nilda Hofmann after receiving the Police Officer of the Year Award.

given out at the breakfast including the Team Award given to the precinct's Anti-Crime Team, the School Crossing Guard Award going to Theresa McDonald, and the Auxiliary Award to Argenis Checo, an auxiliary officer who accumulated more than 300 hours of service at the

precinct.

Hofmann presented the Police Officer of the Year award to Police Officer James Lundy, who also received an award for his duties as part of the Anti-Crime Team. "He gives his heart out there to the community," said Hofmann of Lundy. "You're gonna do big



Photo by Jasmine Gomez

SCHOOL CROSSING GUARD Theresa McDonald (left) smiles after receiving the School Crossing Guard Award. She stands with Brenda Caldwell-Paris, president of the 52nd Precinct Community Council and Inspector Nilda Hofmann, commanding officer of the 52nd Precinct.

things in the community."

The event also featured several civilian awards that went to Councilman Andrew Cohen, the clergy at Creflo Dollar Ministries/Ambassador of Change and Leah Takantzas, an assistant district attorney at the Bronx District Attorney's Office.

The event was made possible through donations by many sponsorship teams including the Marble Hill Target team, the Government and Community Relations team at Montefiore Health System, Dean Simon and the Monroe College team, among others.

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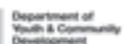


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NORWOOD NEWS



Photo by David Cruz

CUTTING THE CEREMONIAL red ribbon is Senator Gustavo Rivera (right), who ushered in the grand opening of Metro Urgicare at 3200 Grand Concourse in Bedford Park. Intended to ease the heavy patient load at area hospital emergency rooms, administrators at Metro Urgicare will take on pressing medical needs that fall just shy of an emergency. The urgent care center features examination rooms and an X-ray machine. Joining Rivera for the Oct. 21 ribbon cutting are Metro Urgicare officials (l-r) Mark Hirschhorn, Dr. Sumir Sahgal, Shervin Mortazavi, and Adam Henick.



Photo courtesy Bedford Mosholu Community Association

VOLUNTEERS GOT DOWN and dirty on both sides of Mosholu Parkway from Webster to Hull avenues, spending several hours cleaning up the scenic dale. It was a true team effort with members from the Bedford Mosholu Community Association, Friends of Mosholu Parkland, and Legionnaire Greys Cadets. Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj (center) shared a moment with volunteers during the Oct. 17 event.



Photo courtesy Vera Galeas

MONTEFIORE HEALTH SYSTEM employees (l-r) Miosotis Munoz, Vera Galeas, Tina L. Rodriguez and Joanne Sanchez hosted a Day for Women's event Oct. 17 in recognition of October's Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Ladies received a spa-like treatment that included makeovers, yoga classes, stress-relieving tips and mammogram screenings.



Photo courtesy New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

STUDENTS FROM PS 246 join Bronx Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa and Councilman Fernando Cabrera in welcoming a newly installed multi-use field at St. James Park on Oct. 23. Participants fittingly kicked a soccer ball to usher in the \$800,000 synthetic turf that's already in use. "I hope that community members will benefit from having this beautiful synthetic turf field in their 'backyard' for years to come," said Cabrera, who contributed \$735,000 in council funds to install the field.



Photo by Jasmine Gomez

CONGRESSMAN CHARLES RANGEL answers a question from an attendee at a Town Hall Meeting and Constituent Service Day. The sessions hosted at the Bronx Library Center's auditorium at 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. included various speakers from several agencies including the Social Security Administration and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as a question and answer session with the congressman. Representatives, including members of Rangel's staff, were available for constituent services in another room of the library.



Photo by David Greene

CYCLISTS WENT ON an expedition through Bronx neighborhoods during the annual Tour de Bronx on Oct. 25. Roughly 7000 cyclists toured the Bronx on some nifty-looking two-wheelers, riding through local neighborhoods, including Bedford Park (pictured).

Be Healthy

2M

Number of U.S. citizens age 65 and older suffering from Alzheimer's disease

(Source: Alzheimer's Foundation)

Vital Stats

Alzheimer's Awareness Month Highlights Importance of Getting Checked

With 15 percent of Bronx residents 65 and older, and a population that's living longer, Montefiore Health System is preparing for what it's dubbed a "looming crisis" in the number of impending sufferers of Alzheimer's disease.

"When the first wave of baby boomers reach age 85, which is about 2031, there's going to be more than 3 million people age 85 and older with Alzheimer's disease," said Dr. Jessica Zwerling, associate director of neurology at Montefiore's Center for the Aging Brain in Yonkers.

Alzheimer's disease stands as the most common form of dementia, leading to a gradual decline in memory and ultimately death. The condition remains irreversible with no cure, leading experts to collaborate on how to pinpoint its presence early on.

"What the center is doing that's really important is trying to get these patients in who may have early signs and symptoms," said Zwerling. Tracking

neurological changes is one of the center's key tenets to identify Alzheimer's disease. In some cases, genetic and spinal tap testing is available to determine whether a patient with memory problems will develop the disease. Advanced testing now shifts the focus on assessing Alzheimer's onset from the standard age of 65 and older to age 40.

The center also delves into the needs of the caregiver, whose burdensome nursing duties can affect their well-being, according to Zwerling. "They really have an increased risk of mortality and morbidity, and there's been some studies showing an increased risk of heart attack and stroke," said Zwerling, who works with a team of doctors that include neurologists, neuropsychologists, psychiatrists and rehabilitation doctors. Geriatric and psychiatric services are available at the center, offering consultations that range from memory disorders to declining health. Home care visits go so far as to ask whether firearms are in

the house.

Its counterpart in the Bronx is at the Memory Disorders Center in Morris Park, a community that's also surrounded by several Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities. With two grants from The Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation Inc., the center hired a social worker, care coordinator, and a Spanish-speaking neuropsychologist.

"There's a high proportionate of the Hispanic population, and we need to have validated measures and testing in their native language to really understand how a patient functions," said Zwerling. But even before entering the center, Zwerling recommends starting a conversation with a loved one vulnerable to Alzheimer's. "Having that one-minute conversation gives you so much information about [Alzheimer's disease] that you may have missed throughout the year when everyone is so busy," she said.

10 Early Warning Signs of Alzheimer's

1. Challenges with planning or solving problems
2. Difficulty with completing simple tasks
3. Confusions with time and places
4. Trouble understanding visual images or spatial relationships
5. Changes in mood or personality
6. Withdrawal from work or activities
7. Decreased or poor judgment
8. Misplacing things and losing inability to retrace steps
9. New problems with words when speaking and writing
10. Trouble understanding visual images



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Norwood Business Strip Gets Extra Manpower

By ADEAMOLA AGBOOLA

Businesses lining the commercial corridor on Bainbridge Avenue between East 205th and East 208th streets will receive cleaning services through a nonprofit agency that helps to beautify the neighborhoods.

“When I got elected, the number one issue people in this district complained about are the quality of life issues,” said Councilman Andrew Cohen, who represents the 11th Council District, which covers Norwood.

His support to improve the Norwood strip came in the form of a \$65,000 council grant for Fedcap, a Bronx-based workforce agency. Under Fedcap is the WildCat Service Corp., which runs the Neighborhood Improvement Program. The service provides cleaning services using employees who are ex-felons or the downtrodden. The program started in early October, with workers maintaining the commercial area three days a week. Their employment complements the work by the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY), which will continue picking up trash there.



Photo by Adedamola Agboola

WORKERS SWEEP UP debris along Bainbridge Avenue at 207th Street as part of a cleanup service funded through Councilman Andrew Cohen’s office.

“We act as the first employment contact for people who are newly entering the employment market from the Department of Corrections and other agencies,” explained Mario La Rosa, manager of Fedcap Operations. “The program also helps those we hire to develop marketable skills before they head up to another job.”

The services mirror that of a Business Improvement District (BID), a commercial area that exclusively receives cleaning services through a special tax property owners pay towards the private service. The BID eases the daily stress of business owner, who can be hit with heavy fines by DSNY for improperly maintaining the sidewalk

adjoining their store. At any given day, trash can accumulate considerably, turning off potential shoppers.

The effectiveness of the program will be evaluated by next June and might be renewed by Cohen, though that’s largely determined by how well the program did. “[W]e’ll cross that bridge when we get there,” Cohen said of whether he’ll renew the grant.

The \$65,000 is part of the \$103,921 Cleanup NYC grant awarded to each City Council member for cleaning services including street sweeping, litter pickup, and graffiti removal.

“Through this initiative, Fedcap will help ensure that residents enjoy the dynamic neighborhoods they call home, while welcoming visitors to experience all this community has to offer,” Cohen wrote in a statement. “I look forward to working with Fedcap to enhance the cleanliness of our shopping corridors.”

Editor’s Note: Residents are encouraged to call Councilman Andrew Cohen’s office to alert them of areas requiring a cleanup. They can be reached at (718) 549-7300.



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HRA Now Reviewing Shelter Contracts, With DHS Approving

By DAVID CRUZ

The New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) is picking up some responsibilities normally handled by the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS), triggering a bygone coordinating process amid an explosion of homeless people across the city.

Speaking before a panel of journalists, New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer revealed that HRA, an agency that provides social services to the marginalized and working poor, is now reviewing some contracts of homeless shelter providers. Those duties are normally handled by DHS, whose main task is to unconditionally secure housing for the homeless by contracting with not-for-profit shelter providers.

The unofficial review of contracts by HRA has been happening since the agency's commissioner, Steven Banks, a dogged activist for the city's homeless, became head of the agency in 2014, according to a former HRA employee who confirmed the practice. Since becoming HRA commissioner, Banks has attempted to undo some policies created during former Mayor Michael Bloomberg's tenure.

"Steve took over running a number of the contracts, and [DHS Commissioner Gilbert] Taylor was okay with it, understanding this had to be worked as a piece so that when you

wanted not to evict somebody you had to also be working from the other side with how do you get someone out of a homeless shelter," said the former employee, who asked not to be named since they still have ties to other office employees.

The decision to review provider contracts indicates a more hands-on approach by Banks, considered a major champion for the city's homeless for over 30 years. Banks, while working as a lawyer for the Legal Aid Society, successfully won a case against the city that enforced the federal "right to shelter" mandate.

Shelter contract reviews often involve assessments of building conditions, its level of social services for families, and effects on families living in a particular shelter. But it's clear why Banks would review the shelter.

"I would assume [Banks is] wanting to make sure the money is going into effective contracts. There's a lot of city contracts that sort of go on. No one really looks at the deliverables, whether they were met, or how they are met. So I think it's very important to him since it costs a lot of money to try to keep people out of the shelter, but it costs more having them in," said the former HRA employee.

A spokesperson for the New York City Department of Homeless Services confirmed the practice, noting "in order to expedite registration, HRA will be assisting DHS in the process."

News of Banks' hands-on approach to shelter contracts signifies a closer relationship between HRA and DHS. While HRA's initiatives are a proactive step to keep the poor inside their homes, their approach contrasts with DHS's reactive approach toward homelessness. But the agencies are also cut from the same cloth since they both fell under a larger department until 1993, when DHS was formed.

The news also comes amid problems within the homeless shelter system. In March, the Department of Investigation released a report that detailed hazardous and unsanitary conditions at city shelters, resulting in 621 violations made against 25 shelter buildings. The report also noted DHS' subpar follow-up on problem shelters, which include ensuring building violations have been resolved.

Following the report, Stringer later rejected several shelter contracts for



Photo by Adedamola Agboola

NEW YORK CITY Comptroller Scott Stringer (left) participates at the Center for Community & Ethnic Media's Newsmakers series, speaking with (2nd l-r) Errol Louis, NY1 political reporter and Director of the CUNY J School's Urban Reporting department; David Cruz, editor-in-chief of the *Norwood News*; and Tequila Minsky, a photojournalist for *Caribbean Life*.

non-fiscal reasons, explaining that families should not be subjected to living in unsafe conditions.

HRA's budget currently stands at \$9.7 billion, allocated to services that

include SNAP benefits, rent vouchers and HIV/AIDS services. Its social service efforts are largely preventive measures to keep poverty stricken New Yorkers inside their homes.



File photo/David Greene

A HOMELESS MAN finds this bench to sleep on one recent afternoon.

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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Snow Laborers

Early registration has begun for part-time emergency snow laborers for the upcoming snow season. Pay is \$13.50 per hour, and \$20.25 per hour after 40 hours are worked in a week. To register, visit the Bronx Yard at Mosholu Avenue and Broadway in Van Cortlandt Park, Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Applicants must be at least age 18, bring two small photos (1 ½ square), original and copy of two forms of ID and a Social Security card.

Free Flu Shots

Free flu shots will be administered on Nov. 9 at the Riverdale YWHA at 5625 Arlington Ave., and Nov. 10 at Vladeck Hall, 74 Van Cortlandt Park So., both from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The shots are only available to residents 18 and over who reside in the 81st Assembly District and are not allergic to eggs. Residents MUST register with the office of Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz by calling (718) 796-5345.

Immigration/Legal Services

Immigration and legal services are available at the Office of Councilman Fernando Cabrera, 107 E. Burnside Ave., Thursdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. A housing lawyer is available every other Monday. Appointments are required. To schedule one, call (347) 590-2875.

Yankee Leadership Awards

Applications are available for the Youth Leadership Awards. Nominees are expected to perform 50 hours of leadership/volunteer service as a tutor, mentor, community unity developer, and/or as an advocate against violence in the community. Submit applications by Nov. 20 to New York Yankees Community Council, Attn: Brian Smith, Senior Vice President, Corporate/Community Relations, Yankee Stadium, One East 161st Street, Bronx, NY 10451. For more information, email community_relations@yankees.com.

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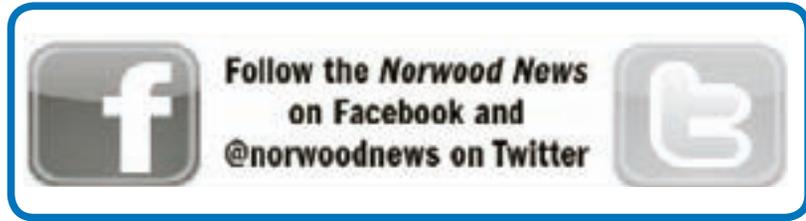
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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Halloween Happenings

Oct. 30 and 31, store hours - Jerome-Gun Hill BID offers special Trick or Treat Bag Giveaway, on Jerome Avenue between Mosholu Parkway and Gun Hill Road and on Gun Hill Road from Jerome to Webster avenues. For more information, call (718) 324-4946.

Oct. 30 - Pumpkin Party, 6 to 8:30 p.m., featuring carnival games, arts and crafts, and photo ops, for kids 12 years and younger (wear costume for a special treat); and Haunted House, 7 to 9 p.m., for ages 12 and over; both at Williamsbridge Oval. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

A full list of Halloween events in your neighborhood can be found at www.norwoodnews.org.



Photo by Joshua Bright

FAMILY ART PROJECT at Wave Hill includes a Dancing With Leaves program where kids can play and toss around fallen tree leaves.

Onstage

Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture, 450 Grand Concourse, presents **Caridad de la Luz and Nene Ali**, Oct. 30 at 7:30 p.m. (\$10; \$5/students and under 18), offer rappin' and riffin'; and **Hot Peas n' Butter**, Nov. 7 at 11 a.m. (\$5), performing Latin, Afro-Caribbean rhythms, jazz, folk, and rock; both in the Repertory Theatre. Shows are subject to change. For more information and to reserve, call (718) 518-4455 or visit www.hostoscenter.org.

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E.

Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Murder and Madness and Poe**, drama with poetry, music and readings, Oct. 31; and **Double Entendre Music Ensemble**, performing classical chamber music, Nov. 7; both at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Events

The Williamsbridge Oval offers **Hip-Hop Aerobics Classes**, Thursdays from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. For more information and to become a member, call (718) 543-8672.

The Church of the Holy Nativity, 3061 Bainbridge Ave., holds its **115th Anniversary Dinner & Dance**, Nov. 6 (\$60; \$110/couple; \$30/under 12). Cocktail hour begins at 8 p.m. For more information, call (718-652-5853).

The Woodlawn Conservancy presents free: **movie** "The Book of Life," in Woodlawn Cemetery's Woolworth Chapel, Nov. 1 at 2 p.m., preceded by **craft activities** at 1 p.m., and followed by **tour** at 3:45 p.m. Registration is required. For more information, call (718) 920-1469 or visit woodlawnconservancy.org.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Ears, Eyes and Tails, to wear an animal costume, Oct. 31 and Nov. 1; and Papermaking in Autumn Color, to make paper using colored pulp, then decorate, Nov. 7 and 8; both in WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Grounds admission is free until noon Saturdays and Tuesdays all year. For more information and a schedule of events including tours and walks, call (718) 549-3200.

The Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Chess Class**: (ages 6 to 12), from beginners to advanced, Nov. 6 at 3:15 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **Super Hero Canvas Art**: make a collage out of superhero comic books, Nov. 6 at 3:30 p.m. Adults can attend: **Beaded Jewelry at 11 a.m.**: (bring your materials), Oct. 29; **Where Poetry Begins**: free workshop to share, read and write poetry, Oct. 31, Nov. 7 and 14; and **Free Computer Classes**: to learn email and basic computer information, Wednesdays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for kids: **Kids Get Active Fridays at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), dance and zumba, Oct. 30; **The Halloween Party From the Black Lagoon**: come in costume for storytelling, a Halloween craft, candy and games, Oct. 30 at 4 p.m.; and **Buttons, Buttons, Everywhere**: (ages 3 to 12), make collage with various buttons and decorate, Nov. 9 at 4 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy **NYPL Investigations at 4 p.m.**: free workshop to learn to solve crimes using fingerprinting and blood testing, Nov. 2 and 9. Adults can attend **Computer Basics at noon**: Oct. 29. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents the following events for children: **Hands-on Projects at 4 p.m.** (ages 7 to 12; preregistration required): Black Cat Making, Oct. 29; Thankful Hand Making, Nov. 5; and Gingerbread Making, Nov. 12; **Static Electricity**: (ages 7 to 11; preregistration required), workshop, Nov. 10 at 4 p.m.; and **Birds of Prey** (ages 5 to 12), meet bird species, Nov. 7 at 2 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **Wildlife at the Library**: Nov. 5 at 4 p.m., meet wild animals. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Public Service Announcement

Daylight Savings Time falls on Sunday, Nov. 1. Turn clocks back one hour at 2 a.m.

NOTE: *Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Nov. 2 for the next publication date of Nov. 12.*



File Photo

A FULL PROGRAM of free events awaits at the Bronx Library Center.

Bedford Pk. Fire Claims Two Stores

(continued from page 1)

ker Bar lining the corridor.

"This is the biggest fire this neighborhood has seen," said Sandra Taylor, a 26-year resident of Bedford Park.

The morning began like most Sundays on Bedford Park Boulevard: quiet. On that morning, Sylvester and Veronica Aquino had been among a large number of regular customers tending to their clothes inside Chang Chang Laundry at 358 Bedford Pk. Blvd. The business, with its commercial washers and dryers and pick-up service, had been a neighborhood fixture for well over 20 years, enjoying a good deal of business.

Midway through cleaning their clothes, Sylvester smelled smoke coming from one of the dryers. He quickly rushed to the owner, who declined to give his name to the *Norwood News*, and unplugged the dryer after seeing a cloud of smoke billow from behind. But the flames immediately spread from one dryer to the next, forcing customers to abandon their clothes and flee.

The flames soon engulfed the back of the laundry, overpowering the one-story business. Not even an attempt to extinguish the blaze by an employee at 358 Famous Deli was enough to stop it. The flames would soon seep into the deli, which opened May 2014. This year has not been good to its owners. Over the summer, owners were cited with fines for overextending their store sign



Photo by David Cruz

THE CHARRED REMAINS of Chang Chang Laundry and 358 Famous Deli on Bedford Park Boulevard.

into the property of a two-family home.

Several feet away, an altar boy at St. Mary's Orthodox Church, smelled smoke coming from the outside. He would rush to Fr. Paul Cherian to alert him about the fire, who then signaled his congregation to exit. Outside, on Decatur Avenue that was cordoned off by yellow tape, parishioners stood curb-

side with eyes locked on the fire. They were joined by neighbors, snapping photos on their cell phones.

The church was left with some damage caused by water firefighters used to douse the back of the laundry.

Ten trucks, ambulances and police vehicles were on the scene, with nearby streets sectioned off for several hours as

fire crews battled the stubborn flames left ablaze by heavy winds. A thick, heavy smoke cloud could be seen for well over a mile. Water used to extinguish the fire temporarily flooded the street.

Several firefighters were treated for smoke inhalation, while another unidentified person was rushed to Montefiore Medical Center and listed in serious condition.

Dryer fires are common. They ranked first in the number of appliance-related fires in 2014, according to a 2014 FDNY annual report. Of the 147 fires attributed to appliance fires, 74 of 147 reported appliance fires were caused by a dryer that was powered either by gas or electricity. Gas-powered fires accounted for nine injuries last year, according to the report.

It took two hours for firefighters to contain the blaze. Parishioners of St. Mary's Orthodox Church were allowed back in, relieved the church sustained only a slight bit of damage. Before given the okay to enter the church, Fr. Cherian stood resigned, though he remained optimistic since the church had survived the fire. "I think in 43 years we've gone through difficulties and this hardship we'll get through as well," said Cherian.

Editor's Note: A photo gallery capturing firefighters putting out the blaze can be found at www.norwoodnews.org.



Photo by David Cruz

A CLOUD OF SMOKE surrounds fire crews fighting the blaze from a fire truck ladder.

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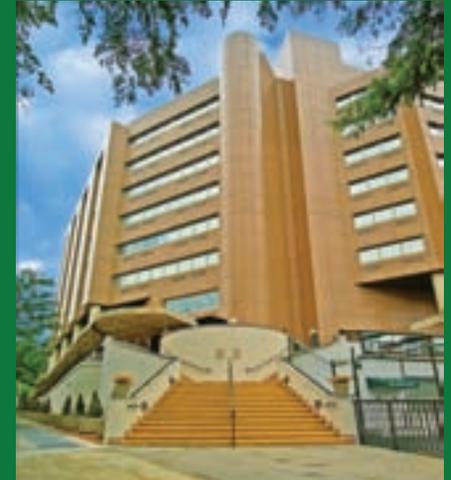
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