



NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 29, No 15 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • JULY 21-AUGUST 17, 2016



INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
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NORWOOD MAN BATTLES HOSPITAL
1600 MILES AWAY | PGS. 10-11

TENANTS CONFRONT WORST BX. LANDLORD

Ved Parkash looks to get himself off notorious bad landlord watch list



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Park Reservoir Could See Diff. Mgmt. Co.
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Photo by Tatyana Turner

A TENANT TAKES advantage of a rare opportunity to voice her frustrations and demands to her landlord, Ved Parkash (far right), a landlord notorious for countless violations in many of his properties.

By TATYANA TURNER

With more than 2,300 housing violations and a muddled reputation, the time had come for New York City's worst landlord to take his place on the hot seat.

Ved Parkash, long dubbed the worst landlord in New York City by the Public Advocate's annual worst landlord's watchlist, finally met with some of his

residents in a Q&A forum at the Concourse House at 196th Street and the Grand Concourse in Bedford Park on July 12.

For his part, Parkash sat in the center by his lonesome, left to answer tough questions from raging tenants.

The Parkash Tenant Coalition, a team of residents living in several of his unkept buildings across the Bronx, made

a number of attempts to push their landlord to take responsibility, ultimately scheduling the forum. Though the meeting was intended to plan for a better quality of life, those attending say it was a disappointment and a waste of time.

"I really didn't like the meeting because I was sitting there listening to other people's complaints, and I couldn't even

make my own complaint," said Maria Cruz, who was behind dozens of tenants.

Cruz was one of some 100 residents assembled in a room at the Concourse House meeting, wearing T-shirts with the words "Our Bronx, Our Lives, Our Solutions" emblazoned on the back. Among them were members of the Northwest Bronx

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EDITORIAL

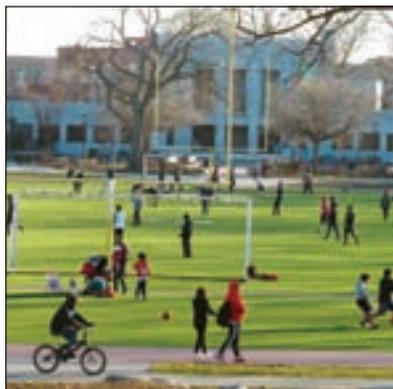
Bring the Soccer Initiative to Oval Park

The Williamsbridge Oval is one of those parks so vital to Norwood's character one can equate it to the neighborhood's heart. Attracting a multitude of first and second generation immigrant families, one can expect well over 100 people taking advantage of the jungle gym, the sprinkler system to cool down or the recreation center for some air conditioning and computer help.

At the center of the Oval, as neighbors know it, is the multi-purpose field used primarily for football, and the other kind of football: soccer. Players, mostly men, hold organized games that often last for hours. These players have sons and daughters, a second generation of new Americans, enrolled at the local schools.

So when Mayor Bill de Blasio announced a soccer mentorship initiative (see page 6 on coverage of the announcement) for the city, the Oval, appears to be a perfect fit. And we challenge the Mayor's Office to vet the neighborhood of Norwood for a slot in this \$3 million initiative.

Norwood is a melting pot, with immigrants from South America and India carving a working class life here. They've also made plenty of use of the soccer field, notwithstanding the trash that gets left behind the park over the weekend (another editorial subject, we suppose). Batting around the ball, coordinating with a team and learning the value of gracious winning and losing is



File Photo

WILLIAMSBIDGE OVAL PARK (pictured) is the perfect place to introduce the city's new soccer initiative.

a cornerstone attribute to the program. For children taking part in the sport, or any sport, the discipline can certainly be a guide to leading a good life.

The International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education, a group espousing the power of sports, wrote in a 2013 report that, "Sport and physical activities are popular all over the world and can be a powerful tool for social inclusion, creating a strong sense of community and togetherness. This is particularly important in times of crisis, whether the cause is economic crisis, on-going poverty, natural disaster, conflict or a health crisis.

The soccer initiative was announced in the Bronx, a borough of immigrants. It's also a borough where incomes are low, health disparities are high, and

amenities are severely limited when compared to the rest of the city. Norwood shares those attributes. A look at the New York City Health Departments Community Health Profiles of Norwood, Kingsbridge, and Bedford Park show its obesity rate is over three times the rate than in Stuyvesant Town and Turtle Bay with 27 percent of residents labeled obese.

Organizers have already picked the first wave of fields to be rehabbed and adopted into the initiative, with Millbrook Playground in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx among them.

The city is expected to gauge local community boards on whether Norwood could benefit from the program. The *Norwood News* says "yes," though the true power in bringing the soccer initiative to the community relies on you. Do your part in convincing the city to consider Norwood by visiting <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/fund/initiatives/city-soccer.page>.

Kicking around the idea is one thing; best-laid plans are those that are actually done.

Editor's Note: *The Norwood News is set to take an awkward break. We will be going on hiatus until August 18, when we release a special edition of the paper focusing on neighborhoods. We will return again on September 1. Have a safe and healthy summer.*

(Cut and Save)**Helpful Numbers**

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New York City Agencies

NY Police Dept. 52nd Precinct, 3016 Webster Ave., (718) 220-5811

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NY Fire Department, N. Bronx Firehouse, 2928 Briggs Ave., (718) 430-0279

NY Dept. of Sanitation Action Line, (212) 219-8090

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Community Board 7, 229A East 204th St., (718) 933-5650

Chair: Adaline Walker-Santiago; District Mgr: Andrew Sandler

Elected Representatives

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简体中文

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Русский

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한국어

nyc.gov/housingconnect 에서 온라인으로 신청하십시오. 이 광고문과 신청서에 대한 한국어 번역본을 받아보시려면 반송용 봉투를 **G&M PROPERTIES II: c/o Bronx Pro Real Estate Management, Inc. 1605 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Bronx, NY 10453**으로 보내주세요. 봉투 뒷면에 "KOREAN" 이라고 영어로 적어주세요. 2016년 9월 16일까지 온라인 신청서를 제출하거나 소인이 찍힌 신청서를 보내야 합니다.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE

This week we asked readers their thoughts on the recent shootings of police officers and black men across the country.



I believe that no matter what race, religion or sexuality, we are all at the end of the day human. Racism has always been a big issue in this society. We shouldn't harm or hate one another just because we are different from each other. I personally believe if we stopped this nonsense and just accept the fact that we're all different, but at the same time we all still breathe, eat and feel the same things, then maybe we will reach the point when we learn to respect each other.

Stephanie Rivera
Norwood



I think it actually comes down to a conspiracy; This is the government's agenda. Of course, nothing is going to be done and it's going to continue. Unfortunately, I believe we have a long fight ahead of us. You don't need a call to action, you just need to act. And sadly there's not much being done; so worse times are coming and I'm just praying.

Ana Rosa Peguero-Miles
Washington Heights



Ultimately, the issue is lack of education on all sides. The truth is it's a multifaceted issue. It has so many causes and the problem is everyone is playing the blame game. Not enough people are aware of what's going on in the black communities and why the numbers, statistics and trends show the things that they do. So they have this opinion that black people commit more crimes or dangerous and deadly attacks. Acknowledging a problem is the first step to solving it and people are doing a lot of ranting on social media that isn't accomplishing anything.

Darin May
Bronxwood



I don't think there is a solution right now because of what went on, because the police showed their brutality. So everybody is fighting back and it's going to be real hard to contain that now because of the deaths of the innocent bystanders and all the other occasions when people got hurt. It's kind of different now. I don't know when there can be peace, it's getting worse and worse. I don't see a solution, too many people want to retaliate. They're going to have to make peace with us.

Kashidy Little
Norwood



I think the solution is for people to come together, but people can't come together until they realize that all lives do matter. Most of the lives being taken are black lives and black lives are in jeopardy right now. [T]he more people that realize that, then we can finally come together and change can be done.

Reggie Nunnally
Fordham

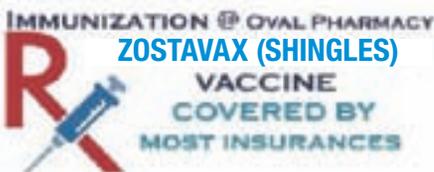
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Donald Bluestone, Executive Director of MMCC to Hang It Up in 2017

Bluestone leaving legacy 27 years in the making

By DAVID CRUZ

The Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) embodies an energy that courses throughout its three-story building on DeKalb Avenue and East Gun Hill Road in Norwood. Kids in MMCC summer camp T-shirts walk single file within the halls while a crowd of teenagers is ushered into a room to fill out forms for the city's Summer Youth Employment Program. At the entrance to the center, senior citizens chitchat over what's next on their agenda. For all intents and purposes, the building is constantly breathing, with the community serving as its lifeblood.

At its head is Donald Bluestone, the executive director hired in 1989 determined to grow the center further.

"I came in like a bull in a China shop," recalled Bluestone, 70, a bespectacled pragmatist with an undeniable New York accent. He spoke to the *Norwood News* from his office adorned with medals, quirky proverbs ("I said maybe, and that's final"), and old photos of MMCC's little league teams.

The trinkets and milestones represent 27 years of leadership by Bluestone, who will serve one more year at the helm. On July 1, the organization's Board of Directors received his retirement notice.

Bluestone's certainly not coasting for the year, though there will be periods of reflections. Among them is a legacy built upon seeing more children walk into the center and exit as adults. Indeed, under Bluestone's run, many MMCC alums have now enrolled their kids there. In some instances, some adults Bluestone knew as kids are now grandparents.

Through sheer common sense, Bluestone expanded the membership numbers at the Norwood center and beyond, with some 35,000 participants registered at MMCC's network of centers across the Bronx and Manhattan. It's grown as a \$26 million not-for-profit, from \$1.5 million in 1989.

MMCC functions as an education annex, offering arts and crafts, swimming, sports, and Head Start classes at discounted prices. It's also seen a new wave of elderly residents benefitting from MMCC's daily lunches, exercise classes, holiday parties, trips, and a legal clinic.

"People used to accuse me of building an empire," said Bluestone. "But I always saw it as expanding services all

the way around."

These services were seldom at MMCC, established in 1942 by several neighborhood women and later expanded with help from Montefiore Medical Center.

For Bluestone, who had sent his kids to MMCC, the question on expanding services was rooted on a personal level: "What do my kids want?" he asked.

Among his primary changes was introducing a little league team sponsored by MMCC. With young ball players traveling to nearby Riverdale to play and practice, Bluestone began a program that brought some 200 young people to sign up. Demand certainly exceeded Bluestone's expectations since he had guessed 60 would register. Long-time staffers at MMCC were equally impressed "with the changes because there were no changes ever," according to Bluestone, and became coaches.

"He was a visionary in terms of the type of programming he offered to the community," said Susan Memberg, a long-term board member. "He had his ear to the ground, meaning he would listen to what the community needed and would always attempt to provide programming for what the community needed."

Other changes would soon follow, including an expansion of programs offered on Sundays, usually a time reserved exclusively for social dancing among its senior citizen population back then. Bluestone, thinking the building was sorely underutilized over the weekend, began to open it for everyone. "We had art classes, dance classes, karate classes on Sunday," said Bluestone, seeing its expansion benefit plenty of nearby residents.

With new services in demand, Bluestone worked to clear out the clutter in some of MMCC's rooms, where a third of the rooms were simply used for storage at one point.

Bluestone holds a master's degree in human services, though he understood the power of outdoor recreation well before adulthood. Growing up in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan, Bluestone's endless summers saw him whisked away from the urban milieu and to more scenic pastures in upstate New York while enrolled at the Washington Heights YWHA. In sixth grade, he attempted to skirt the summer camp experience, against his father's wishes. But father knew best and forced him



Photo by David Cruz

DONALD BLUESTONE POSES in front of MMCC's main office in Norwood. Bluestone plans to retire as executive director of the center next year.

to go. Looking back, the younger Bluestone called it the "best summer of my life."

Indeed, the bonds with fellow campers sealed his appreciation for camp, an experience that's become a staple to MMCC, given its offering of a day camp where Bronx children trek to New York's countryside for a daily getaway. "My goal is to get kids to the country," said Bluestone, who notes camp can be the "best experience of your life or the worst."

"When it connects with them, it's forever. The friends they make are for-

ever; the counselor relationships are really forever," said Bluestone.

Transitioning out will be easy, thanks to his second-in-command, Rita Santelia, MMCC's associate executive director who will officially become the executive director next year. It also helps that Bluestone is drafting a kind of how-to manual on MMCC's rules and procedures.

When it's all over, Bluestone will experience something that's been rare in his life: summers off.

"It will be my first summer off ever," he said.



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Bedford Pk. Tax Preparer Admits To Tax Scheme

By ADRIANNA LOMBARDO

Christopher Ahern, a Bronx tax preparer, admitted to a federal court he prepared and filed falsified income tax returns for his clients from his Bronx office. Ahern, who owned Get My Refund Fast with two listed Bronx addresses--394 Bedford Pk. Blvd. and 2303 White Plains Rd.--cheated the government of roughly \$4.7 million in a scheme between 2012 and 2013.

Ahern, who lives on Long Island, obtained the \$4.7 million for his clients by falsifying tax returns and that included tax credits his clients were not entitled to, such as the American Opportunity Credit, an education credit that is awarded to taxpayers or children of taxpayers currently going to college. It's unclear which of Ahern's businesses took part in the graft.

"We remain committed to charging and convicting those who commit and facilitate tax fraud," said Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara, whose office prosecuted the case.

After submitting nearly 5,000 tax returns, Ahern was paid more than \$1.5 million in fees from his clients. The rest of the funds were doled out to taxpayers.

The maximum sentence Ahern could receive is 65 years in prison since each count of fraudulently filed tax return has a maximum sentence of 5 years in prison. But under the terms of the guilty plea, Ahern can receive the max 71 months in prison.

Ahern will be sentenced on Nov. 1.

Got a News Tip?
Send it to
dcruz@
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City Kicks Off Soccer Initiative in the South Bronx

By DAVID CRUZ

Fifty soccer fields are expected to be built over the next five years in the Bronx and across the city, as part of a public-private partnership to "leveling the playing field" and increase mentorship opportunities, city officials announced.

Mayor Bill de Blasio visited Millbrook Houses in Mott Haven to announce NYC Soccer Initiative, a \$3 million venture among the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, sports apparel Adidas, U.S. Soccer Foundation, and the New York City Football Club (NYCFC). The club's base of operations is at Yankee Stadium.

Millbrook Houses, falling under the city Housing Authority, is one of eight locations to see an upgraded soccer field by the summer of 2017. Mentorship pro-



Photo by David Cruz

MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO (at podium) speaks at an announcement that would see the creation of 50 soccer fields in the next five years.

grams and soccer clinics also come with the upgrades.

"What we're doing here today is not just about soccer, it's about developing these young people and letting them reach their potential," said de Blasio, flanked

by officials involved in the initiative.

Locations will be solely based on how underserved they are and whether there is space to fill the need for soccer. Officials have already pinpointed possible locations, thanks to the

Building Healthy Communities Initiative and Youth Mentorship Initiatives, city-backed mentoring programs targeting underage youth in low-income neighborhoods. City officials also plan to stop by local community boards to determine how much of a need there is for such a program in their neighborhoods.

Norwood's key park, the Williamsbridge Oval Park, is rife with year-round soccer activity. Soccer is popular among Norwood residents hailing from Mexico and Central America.

Once fields are identified for the initiative, the US Soccer Foundation will take the lead in instituting a mentorship program.

The project is expected to be completed by 2021.

Classics at Poe Park, Courtesy of Bardekova Ensemble

By ADRIANNA LOMBARDO

A quintet of musicians forming the Bardekova Ensemble put on a free performance at the Poe Park Visitors Center in Fordham on July 10.

The music troupe is a non-profit organization funded through the Bronx Council of the Arts. They bring free or low priced concerts to the Bronx community, an area lacking in music performances when compared to the rest of the city. These free concerts are open to the public.

Members from the Bardekova Ensemble have performed with members of the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera. Members of the Bardekova Ensemble include Richard Parately (flute), Akari Yamamoto (clarinet), Shotaro Mori (bassoon), and Nancy Vizza (French horn).

Ellen Bardekoff, the director and



Photo by Adrianna Lombardo

THE BARDEKOVA ENSEMBLE performs several musical numbers from Beethoven and other classical composers.

founder of the ensemble, sums up her passions with a simple phrase: "Music is who I am." Her early introduc-

tion to the musical world set the stage for the rest of her life.

Although she was told at the age of six that she was too stupid to play, she continued to follow her dream and went for an audition at the Juilliard School, the premiere music school at Lincoln Center in Manhattan, at age 8. A month later she received an acceptance to Juilliard. Her acceptance was followed by private lessons, furthering her education in the arts.

"Music is so important to the community. It expands everyone's awareness and it's great for the kids and for adults. It's healing," said Bardekoff, adding, "Children who start early with music lessons tend to do great with the maths and the sciences."

There's arguably a greater comparison Bardekoff links to music. "Music is love," she said.

Mitchell Lama's Long Relationship With Management Firm Jeopardized

By DAVID CRUZ

The fate of a well-respected management firm that's provided services to a Mitchell-Lama complex in Kingsbridge was put on hold by the building's board of directors who seek to replace it.

For some 60 years, Amalgamated Houses has been tethered to Park Reservoir, the first Mitchell-Lama complex in the Bronx. It offers amenities for the three-building complex, which rise upwards of 14 stories, that include community get-togethers, and custodial services such as pre-dawn snow shoveling during the winter season. Tenants fear those services will be diminished should a new management firm be hired.

"The board felt there was a lot of confusion and anger at them so they smartly decided to postpone the vote and have an informational meeting where all sides can be heard," said Andy Kimerling, board president.

The decision by Park Reservoir's 12-member board of directors came on July 12, a day after a cantankerous meeting attended by nearly 100 cooperators criticizing the board's premature process. Following pressure, the board tabled its vote until after a Sept. 11 informational meeting. The emergency meeting, acrimonious and at times hostile, further crystalized divisive infighting by the board that's likely to have caused several procedural missteps.

Kimerling has been at odds with his vice president, Steven Zitrin, who sounded the alarm on changing management companies to one he and other board members found with little consultation from blindsided cooperators. Kimerling told tenants he was against the decision of moving forward with approving a management company without input from tenants. He later apologized to cooperators for adhering to the board's decision in not sending a notice two months ago about the impending decision.

For his part, Zitrin declined to comment to the *Norwood News* on the decision to vet management companies. He did explain to tenants that financial decisions Amalgamated's Board of Directors makes have an impact on Park Reservoir, which he says has no control over what's spent.

"Raises have been given against our vote even when there were times that we didn't have the money," claimed Zitrin. "We're supposed to have input



Photo by David Cruz

ANDY KIMERLING (BACKGROUND), with hands clasped) apologizes to cooperators of Park Reservoir who felt they were left in the dark over a proposal to replace Amalgamated Management. To his right is Steven Zitrin.

on approval or disapproval."

Among the cooperators living in the apartment building is Gary Axelbank, a longtime cooperator at Park Reservoir, who suggested the board air out its grievances with Amalgamated before cutting them off completely.

Mitchell-Lama housing was created in the 1950s for middle-class families unable to afford a private home. It falls under the purview of the state Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), which institutes rules and regulations every Mitchell-Lama needs to adhere to. The board's unilateral decision to seek a new management firm appears to violate those state rules, which call on boards to submit a Request for Proposal that must be approved by DHCR. The board did not do so, but instead called four companies before settling with Midas Management.

The agency does stipulate a board doesn't have to solicit bids if it establishes to DHCR "unique circumstances or emergency conditions [that] render the use of a bidding procedure impracticable or inappropriate."

Notwithstanding its process, the looks replace Amalgamated with Midas Management, a family-owned realty management based in the Bronx. In its proposal, Midas Management offered two to three live-in supers, five porters/utility workers, and one manager. The bulk of the members determined that Midas Management would save cooperators several hundred thousand dollars in the long run.

The firm shares family ties to Daniel Padernacht, a practicing attorney and chair of Community Board 8. The board covers the Bronx neighborhoods of Kingsbridge, Riverdale, Fieldston and Spuyten Duyvil. With Park Reservoir falling within CB8, it could present conflicts of interest should Park Reservoir's board hire Midas Management.

"I do not have an interest in Midas Management," said Padernacht, in a

statement. "In general, community boards do not get involved in the internal affairs of a cooperative building. As such, I don't see any issues that could arise in a cooperative's decision to change its management company that a community board would be involved. It seems to me that the individual suggesting the issue either has no knowledge of the way community boards function or is seeking to create an issue to suit his own purposes."

Gator Mobile Lurks at VC Park



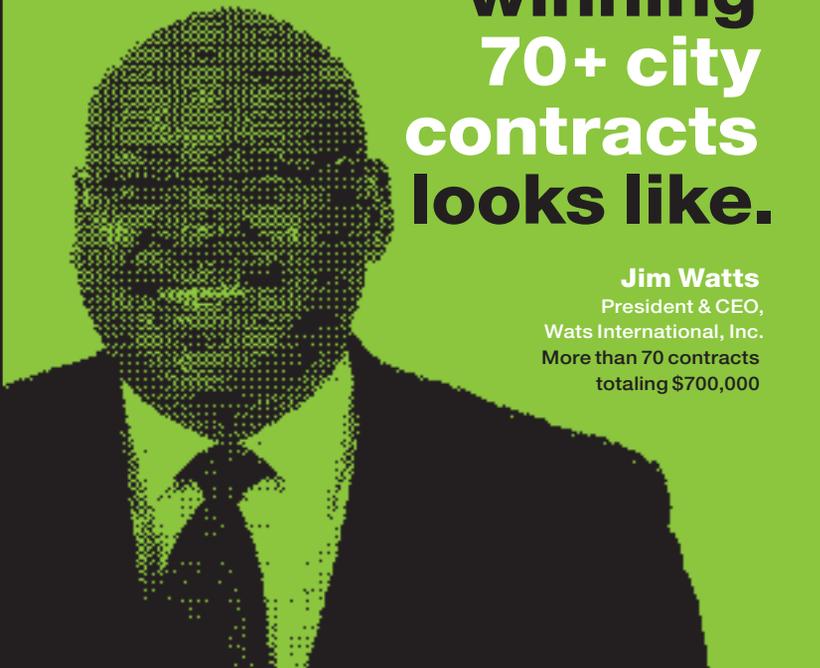
Photo courtesy Councilman Andrew Cohen's Office

ANDREW COHEN ALLOCATES \$49,000 of capital funds for this so-called Gator vehicle to be used by the 50th Precinct to increase patrols at Van Cortlandt Park following a recent uptick in crime in the park's area.



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Celebrating Eid Ul-Fitr



Photo courtesy Siddiq Mohammed

THE NORTH BRONX Islamic Center draws a crowd of some 200 Muslims to Williamsbridge Oval Park on July 6 for Eid ul-Fitr, a celebration marking the start of a feast after the month-long fast of Ramadan.

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Letters To The Editor

Save Park Reservoir

Thank you for your article [which appeared online prior to this issue's print version] about the proposal for Park Reservoir to change management companies. Your revelation that not even the RFP process has been done properly was quite revealing.

We are against leaving the Amalgamated management team to work with a new company and it is unacceptable for the Park Reservoir Board to make this decision secretly without input from the cooperators as a whole. This is far too great a decision with too many consequences to ban the voices of the people who will be most affected by this unwanted change. The contentiousness and blatant incivility that was rampant at the two meetings in our buildings' lobbies make it obvious that this discussion needs to be fully open to our cooperators to create inclusion and to regain trust in our Board of Directors.

Maybe there are some issues/problems with being part of Amalgamated, but the benefits of staying with the company that essentially "birthed" our historic coop far outweigh the "perceived" benefits of leaving our long established relationship. Apparently, this new management company has no experience with the Mitchell-Lama program and all its regulatory requirements and demands. Rather than reinventing the wheel, and it is a complicated wheel, we should be focusing on improving our relationship and services with Amalgamated, which is likely even more strained now because of the Board's covert actions of secession.

The maintenance department knows these 60-year-old buildings inside and out, where the problems and weaknesses are, and how to address them. For example, management has been doing an excellent job overseeing the massive renovations of balconies and facades with more work due soon. To change management in the middle of such large projects is foolish.

Our porters and service staff do an

excellent job keeping our buildings clean and managing the vast amounts of recyclables and garbage, as well as maintaining our grounds in conjunction with the gardening department. They are also an additional form of security, in that they know the families and keep an eye out for us.

Also, in a new alignment, security and emergency services would be far less efficient, whether concerning snow and ice removal, 24/7 immediate help, transportation for cooperators when forced to park far away, help for seniors, and unforeseen problems like power outages requiring stairwell escorts and emergency lighting. For example, we take comfort in knowing we can call security any time of day if we see potentially unsafe situations.

The nature of our community will be changed dramatically without our Amalgamated affiliation. From all the resources of the Education Department such as classes for every age group, trips and events for seniors, family events, our weekly newsletter and *Community News* publication — all these services and activities make our community what it is — a quilt of diverse cultures and peoples coming together to have a safe and comfortable quality of life, sharing our interests, looking out for our neighbors and living cooperatively.

Our wonderful Amalgamated Nursery School would no longer treat our cooperators as priority members during registration periods. Our families would have to wait until open registration, competing for spots with families outside our community. Families would also lose their direct invitations to all the family events sponsored by the nursery.

This is a bad idea.

Committee to Save Park Reservoir:

Gary Axelbank, Suzanne Axelbank, Ariya Blitz, Eric Blitz, Murray Citron, Marjorie Copeland, Mary Copeland, Harriet Guttman, Robert Guttman, Rama Mastronardi, Rosa Perez

Fire at Jerome Avenue Furniture Store



Photo by Miriam Quinones

THIS COUCH WAS a victim of a small blaze at the R.B.S. Furniture Warehouse Store on Jerome Avenue near 190th Street. The abutting post office needed to evacuate following the daytime blaze on July 18. Initial reports indicated the blaze was electrical. There were no other reported injuries.

Rolling Over Graffiti



Photo courtesy 52nd Precinct

NEIGHBORHOOD COORDINATION OFFICER (NCO) for the 52nd Precinct Paul White paints over this illegible graffiti tag as part of a graffiti initiative on Webster Avenue. White is part of the NCO program that assigns officers exclusively to one area of a precinct to improve community relations.



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Fighting a Hospital in Puerto

By DAVID CRUZ

Jose Cotto, living a seemingly solitary life on Decatur Avenue for the last several years, replays the circumstances leading to his mother's death, Santa Torres, at a hospital in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

She died June 6, 2014, a day after undergoing simple surgery on a fractured hip from a fall while seeing her daughter in Puerto Rico. But after receiving several multiple doses of morphine Torres, 89, passed away from a heart attack.

Torres' main residence was in the Bronx. Living with her son for several years, the two were inseparable. These days, the apartment she lived in that Cotto occupies is quieter. Cotto, who lives alone, can't stop thinking about his mother, a symptom of nagging survivor's guilt.

"I left you alone, I'm sorry," Cotto recalled saying to his mother the day she died.

Burying his mother would not be Cotto's only step to remember her. He's now launched a malpractice lawsuit against the hospital, citing contradictory statements the hospital made about Torres' death as evidence. His goal has been singular, if not obsessive—his mother died and he wants someone held responsible.

Cotto, who is Puerto Rican, has spent the last two years taking on the Hospital Universitario del Centro Médico de Adultos (University Hospital Medical Center for Adults), the island's large state-run hospital where his mother died. In the five trips he's taken, Cotto has been met with closed doors, endless phone calls, a bureaucratic runaround, and a dwindling bank account.

Seeking justice from 1600 miles away has also proven costly for Cotto, who relies on disability payments to get by.

He's since created a page on the crowd-funding website Go Fund Me, cobbling donations for his case against Puerto Rico's health care sector. Cotto has already earmarked any future funds on an independent health care expert in Colorado state to offer expert testimony on why the hospital should be held responsible for his mother's death.

"Any donation is accepted; the important thing is to help me fight," wrote Cotto on the Go Fund Me Page. "I'm tired of asking, but believe me I am not tired of fighting."

Driven to seek justice for his mother, Cotto's desire to sue isn't monetary



Photo by David Cruz

JOSE COTTO HOLDS a photo of himself with his mother, Santa Torres, who died at a hospital in Puerto Rico in June 2014.

(he's not seeking compensatory damages), but merely punitive, hoping medical staffers that worked on his mother never treat anyone again.

He's outlined his dilemma via photographs, notes of every contact made with hospital officials and government agencies in the hopes of proving negligence. Cotto detailed his account to the *Norwood News*, finding the following:

- When Torres arrived to the ER on June 3, 2014, she was injected with a dose of morphine, a painkiller known to cause heart failure when taken in high doses, to numb the pain from her fractured hip. She was taken to surgery June 4, 2014.

- Following his mother's successful surgery on June 5, 2014, everything seemed normal. She was told she would leave the next day.

After leaving for the night, Cotto returned the next morning to find his mother in deep sleep, appearing pale and white.

- Medical personnel concluded his mother would be discharged that day, June 6, 2014. They gave him a prescription. Cotto asked what was wrong with his mother, and explained it was anesthesia that put her to sleep.

- Cotto learned via hospital records that a nurse injected Torres with 4mg of

morphine 7:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. on June 5, 2014 separately.

- On June 6, 2014, Torres received another 4mg dose of morphine at 12 a.m. and 5 a.m. each time, prompting the doctor to conclude Torres had overdosed on morphine, according to Cotto.

- The doctor administered to Torres a dose of naloxone, reversing the side effects of the opioid drug. She was immediately revived.

- Known to nurses and doctors was a clogged catheter tube that did not discharge the naloxone and morphine fluids, remaining in Torres' system, according to Cotto.

- The revival was short-lived. Another doctor was brought in, who said another dose of naloxone would be used should she undergo deep sleep. The naloxone was only available at a nearby pharmacy.

- Because of a nurses' strike that triggered a backup of prescription services, the naloxone never came in time, according to Cotto.

- His mother later died at 8:15 p.m. from a heart attack. CPR attempts were unsuccessful.

Cotto admits his next steps were a miscalculation. An autopsy performed by the hospital, not an independent body, concluded Torres' official cause of

death to be an underlying head fracture, which Cotto says conflicts with original statements made by the hospital.

"I have proof that when my mother was in a hospital, they did a CT scan," recalled Cotto. "If she had a fracture on her head it would show on the CT scan. And I have proof it was negative."

Cotto took his complaints to patient relations in San Juan, which denied to hear his case since he and his mother were not residents of Puerto Rico. He then took it to Puerto Rico's federal and state courts, which bounced the case around because of his and his mother's status as New York residents.

"I feel that there's discrimination for people who live here in New York," said Cotto. "They closed all the doors because I'm not a citizen of Puerto Rico, even though I'm Puerto Rican and my mother is Puerto Rican."

Lawyers on the island haven't been helpful. Having sifted through several attorneys, Cotto managed to find one he could trust. The lawyer, though not officially hired, found the Colorado doctor to offer expert testimony on where the hospital deviated from its standard of care.

Cotto has been working on this case for two years and although it was discontinued, he was given a year to find

Rico...From 1600 Miles Away

the doctor and refile his case.

"In Puerto Rico, it's hard to find one to testify against the hospital because the [Hospital Universitario del Centro Médico] belongs to the state," said Cotto, referring specifically to Puerto Rico's Department of Health, adding that his lawyer cautioned his malpractice case is "infected."

The agency also oversees Hospital Universitario Dr. Ramon Ruiz Arnau. Through its Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline and Medical Services Administration of Puerto Rico, the state effectively controls the careers of doctors, making Cotto's search for an independent doctor impossible. And with these entities part of Puerto Rico's government, it enjoys an Eleventh Amendment protection that bars individuals from suing the government without permission, forcing Cotto to go through the Tribunal Supremo de Puerto Rico.

For Cotto to prevail in his case, he must establish that the hospital's standard of medical care fell below expectations. He intends to have the



Photo courtesy Jose Cotto

SANTA TORRES LAYS on her bed at Puerto Rico's Hospital Universitario del Centro Médico de Adultos.

world know, for the sake of his mom.

"I want them to know that I'm not going to stop doing justice for my mother," said Cotto. "It's not going to end like this."

Representatives from Puerto Rico's Department of Health did not return calls or emails to the Norwood News. A spokesperson for Puerto Rico Governor Alejandro

García Padilla also declined to comment over questions on what would happen to medical personnel involved in the case should negligence be proven.

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Out&About

TESTING THE WATERS

City Eyes South Bronx Land as Space For 40-Story Mixed-Use Housing



Image courtesy New York City Economic Development Corporation

A BIRD'S EYE view with a red outline showing the property under consideration for major redevelopment.

By DAVID CRUZ

An enormous but barren parcel of land at the southwestern tip of the Bronx is one step closer towards large-scale development by the city, testing further interest in revitalizing the waterfront while advancing Mayor Bill de Blasio's overall vision for the South Bronx.

The 158,000-square-foot property, settled in the shadow of the Major Deegan Expressway and Bronx Terminal Market near 149th Street, represents one of the city's larger available spaces in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx. The city, through a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI), is envisioning a whopping 40-story, mixed-used affordable housing complex overlooking the Harlem River. RFEI's are a precursor to a Request for Proposal, aiming to pick the brains of potential vendors to demonstrate how to best move forward with a specific development

project.

In a statement, Maria Torres-Springer, president of the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), which owns the property, said one goal is to offer "residents of the South Bronx much-needed access to their waterfront." At the moment, virtually all access to the waterfront is inaccessible or private property.

Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., a proponent of waterfront development in the South Bronx, said the space "has tremendous potential" to spur more development in the Bronx. "[C]onsidering the location of the proposed site, it would be an invaluable asset to convert that vacant lot into a mixed-income affordable housing project that will enhance the area, add commercial and community facilities as well as new open space," said Diaz.

Diaz would have a say in reviewing projects, tell-

ing the *Norwood News* he looks forward to "working with the city on the appropriate development of this location."

In its RFEI, the city stated it would rezone the lot, currently designated an R7-2 zone, to allow for 40 stories following a lengthy public review process that involves the recommendation of local Community Board 4 and Diaz. As it stands, the site does not fall under a so-called "Transit Zone," which would relieve developers from having to build parking given the proximity of public transportation.

Should zoning changes be implemented, it would take into account the increase in traffic. As it stands, the area is a nexus of travel for drivers coming in and out of the Bronx, creating backups on both sides of 149th Street during regular rush hour or when drivers head to Yankee Stadium.

The affordable housing model aligns with Mayor de Blasio's Housing New York initiative, which seeks to build or preserve 200,000 units of housing over the next decade. In March, zoning changes approved by the New York City Council made it easier for development in the five boroughs by eliminating certain stipulations.

Mayor de Blasio had already eyed redeveloping the South Bronx, thanks to a \$200 million commitment he announced during his 2015 State of the City address. The funds would see the creation of 4,000 new units of mostly affordable housing and offer "parks, schools, and commercial development," according to remarks he made during his annual speech.

This contributes to more than \$1 billion in reinvestment for the South Bronx, an area once known as a national symbol of blight that's now seeing pockets of gentrification. Last year, Somerset Partners L.L.C. and Chetrit Group announced a joint venture to build a \$400 million residential and retail complex in neighboring Port Morris. The plan was met with controversy after the developer held a chic party that appeared to commercialize the area's dark history while revving up efforts for major redevelopment against the wishes of residents.

The Port Morris waterfront is part of the Special Harlem River Waterfront District, an area focused in a 2014 report by the Borough President's Office, which outlined the economic benefits to building in the largely industrial waterfront.

"Over the next few years, my office will continue to aggressively push this development agenda, in partnership with our institutions, businesses, elected officials, non-profits and the 1.4 million citizens who call the Bronx their home," wrote Diaz Jr. in the report.

But Ed Garcia Conde, an activist and popular blogger of South Bronx matters, believes that space would be better suited for a park as he was told was initially intended. The park was to have extended upwards to Mill Pond Park, which offers views of the waterfront. Conde is weary of supporting housing that won't necessarily be affordable to the existing demographic of nearby communities. "[W]e need more open spaces, not just buildings," said Conde.

A spokeswoman for NYCEDC said there will be available green space that will connect with the existing park.



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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

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Anyone can turn in their handguns and assault rifles in exchange for a \$200 pre-paid card. Gun holders can also hand in their operable rifles, shotguns, and airguns for a \$25 pre-paid card to the Fellowship Tabernacle Church of God in Christ, 1234B E. Gun Hill Rd. or Evangelical GarifuAna Church, 344 Brook Ave., on Aug. 6 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. No questions will be asked.

Back-to-School Event

North Central Bronx Hospital hosts its annual Back-to-School Healthfest on Aug. 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Kosuth Avenue between 208th and 210th streets. Events include free health screenings, children's ID fingerprinting, and giveaways.

Oval Events

The Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval E., offers free zumba lessons on Sundays from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.; walk, jog, and run exercises with Road Runners, and free yoga lessons, both on Thursdays from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.; and self defense classes for women only on July 24 from noon to 2 p.m. For more information, call (718) 543-8672 or email warriorsistersnyc@gmail.com.

Free Pet Events

The Animal Care Centers of NYC is hosting two domestic pet events and a clinic, all free, as follows: July 23 from 2 to 3:30 p.m. - dog training sessions at Bronx-Works, 1130 Grand Concourse; July 24 from 1 to 2:30 p.m. - Family Paws Parent Education workshop that promotes safety between pets and babies at The Bronx Library Cen-

ter, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd.; and July 30 from 8 to 11 a.m. - vaccination clinic at Mullaly Park (corner of East 165th Street and River Avenue next to Yankee Stadium). For more information, call (646) 688-5208.

SNAP Benefits

Families of three earning a total \$2,512 a month are now entitled to benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). For more information or to find the SNAP office nearest you, call the Bronx Human Resources Administration office at (718) 722-8013.

Free Rain Barrels

Reserve a free rain barrel that will be available for pickup at the football field of Evander Childs High School Campus, 800 E. Gun Hill Rd., on Aug. 6 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., by calling (718) 684-5511 or emailing sleaton@council.nyc.gov.

Walk-ins are welcome, but will not guarantee a barrel.

Alternate Side Parking

Alternate side parking will be suspended on Aug. 15 in observance of the Feast of the Assumption. Meters must be paid.

Free Summer Meals

Free summer meals for children age 18 and under is available until Sept. 2 at public schools, community pool centers, New York City Housing Authority complexes, libraries and other locations around the city. No registration, documentation, or ID is required to receive breakfast or lunch. Nearest school location is PS 8, 3010 Briggs Ave. Breakfast is 8 to 9:15 a.m. and lunch from 11 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. For additional locations and times, go to <http://bit.ly/UuevOA>.

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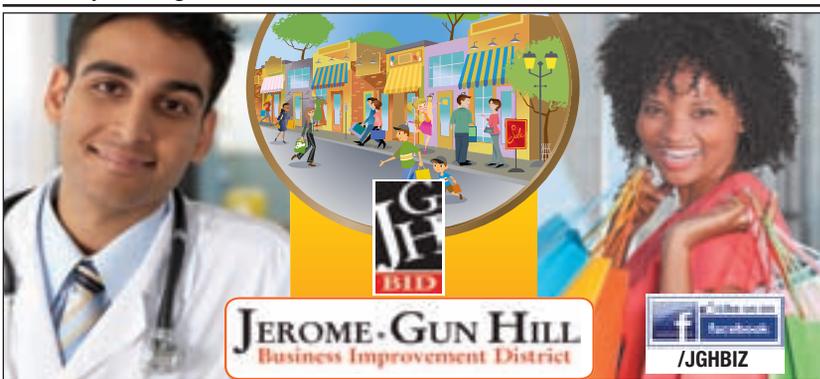
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Random Selection of Housing Pervades Fordham University

By ADRIANNA LOMBARDO

On Fordham University's website, it states, the college's "sense of community that shapes so much of your college experience starts from the moment you move in." For some students, an inconvenience could begin during the moving-in process, with some cases involving the denial of recommended housing requirements by medical personnel, according to interviews of some Fordham University Students.

When asking students how their college living experiences are, many responded negatively. While it is impossible to please all students, a serious question arose: Is Fordham University fair when it comes to the medical housing process?

A review by the *Norwood News* saw Fordham's policy for accepting students based on medical needs is marred with inconsistencies due to an unclear set of criteria.

After submitting a three-question medical form, Fordham's housing department determines a student's accommodation. Sometimes denials happen despite an outside doctor's recommendation. But by denying students who apply for housing specific to a doctor's recommendation, Fordham University, an institution that receives federal funding, does not appear to abide by section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act which states those with disabilities should not "be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

This murky process has left many students who face mental or physical ailments struggling to receive specific housing requirements. It's also left students unsure of Fordham's evaluation procedure and what the requirements are for acceptance of medical housing.

Krystin Beltoff, a junior at Fordham, said she is one of those worrying students.

Beltoff is part of the 2018 graduating class, whose student population has increased by 15 percent compared to the class of 2017, according to an article from the school's newspaper, *The Ram*. This has made the housing search problematic. In addition to this challenge Beltoff has to apply for special medical housing where approval is not guaranteed.



Photo by Daniela Beasley

AT FORDHAM UNIVERSITY, a blurry approach to mental health policies and procedures relating to housing matters persist, say students.

She has been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder and depression, experienced constant anxiety attacks, has sleep issues, and fell behind in schoolwork during her freshman year. During that time she had a negative living experience and after appealing to Residential Life, which manages housing-related issues, she was denied a request to be moved into a single room. It took more than two months to change roommates.

The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, an organization that assists those with mental disabilities fight housing discrimination, believes schools must provide "reasonable accommodations" defined as modifications to normal housing rules that will enable students to continue to succeed in higher education. Academic accommodations vary according to the individual's particular needs, but include measures such as allowing students to change roommates or rooms.

To get the medically required housing for her sophomore year, Beltoff was given the ultimatum of joining an integrated learning community, a program requiring students to further their education and religious growth through community activities. She was not intending to join.

In addition to the issues with the undergraduate housing department, Federal Judge Jesse Furman recently dismissed a civil rights lawsuit against Fordham University. Emily Pierce, the Fordham graduate student who filed the lawsuit, plans to appeal to the courts again.

On Pierce's website, she explains how after staying in the hospital for three weeks, she was called in to speak about re-entering Fordham. After talking to the dean of students, Pierce said she would comply with the school policy and got an evaluation from her psychiatrist. The school then requested Pierce hand over her entire psychiatric record. Pierce responded by telling the school that they were violating her civil rights and ADA laws and hired an attorney.

"We found out through Fordham University's attorney that someone from the hospital released information without my consent, and based upon that, they would not allow me to go back," states Pierce on her website.

Legally, Fordham is barred from denying students medical requests, according to Pierce's attorney Andrea Risoli. But she counters that, "Fordham can arbitrarily make it difficult for the student and the term 'reasonable' accommodation is left up to interpretation."

Beltoff, the junior, feels that if a student has a note from a doctor detailing that they need special housing, it should be taken seriously, regardless if it's a physical or mental disability.

While some cases have risen to the point of a lawsuit, other special housing cases were smoother. During her sophomore year at Fordham, Kristen Guzman, a 2016 Fordham graduate found out she was pregnant. She was terrified after

hearing rumors that the university kicks pregnant woman out of housing. However, Guzman's story puts all of the myths to rest.

After clarification from her residential director, Guzman learned that pregnant women are allowed to dorm at Fordham as long as they are okay with their living arrangements. Not only was residential life supportive of her pregnancy, but, they also offered to move her into a building with an elevator and switch dorms when the measles broke out in her building. She declined.

"I don't want you to think everything about my pregnancy on campus was smooth sailing - there were definitely things that were hard," said Guzman, who faced disapproval from certain students and had to deal with glaring looks from professors. "Housing was just not one of them."

Guzman and Beltoff's treatment appeared to be drastically different when: "It seems like the only people who are able to receive accommodations are people who have a physical disability, and people with mental or emotional disabilities are just ignored," said Beltoff in an email.

Preferential accommodations were offered to Guzman in the middle of the year, but not to Beltoff. "I provided a doctor's note," said Beltoff, "but Fordham still would not accommodate my request."

Beltoff understood the difficulties the housing department would face trying to move her in the middle of the year, but was more bothered by the way they were reacting to her condition. "The [housing department] did not take my special mental health condition seriously, or even recognize that I had a disability that required special accommodations," she explained.

Discrimination towards people with mental illnesses is not only apparent at Fordham but is a widespread problem. According to Risoli, "There is societal stigma, fear, and discrimination against those persons diagnosed with a mental illness, especially ones who have a history of psychiatric hospitalizations, which deter students from seeking treatment."

The *Norwood News* reached out to Fordham University numerous times but did not receive a response.

Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

National Night Out

The public is invited to National Night Out held by the 52nd Precinct and Community Board 7 at Poe Park on Grand Concourse near Kingsbridge Road on Aug. 2 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. For more information, call (718) 220-5807.



File Photo

WALK WITH A Doc, sponsored by Montefiore Health System, will see medical personnel taking a few laps around Williamsbridge Oval Park.

Onstage

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Strings n Keys - Three Centuries of Global Music**, featuring piano and violin performing a variety of music, July 23; and **Sonido Costeño Trio in Concert**, Latin band, July 30; both at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents drummer **Roberto Roena and his original singers**, featuring Latin Fusion Apollo Sound, Aug. 6 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$50 to \$65. For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

City Parks Foundation presents **Summerstage**, a variety of free performances, all at 10:30 a.m., as follows: At Van Cortlandt Park's Sachkerah Woods Playground, Jerome Avenue and Gun Hill Road - **PuppetMobile's Puss in Boots** on July 21; and **Marc Cary: The Harlem Sessions** on July 28; and at Poe Park, next to the bandstand, Grand Concourse at East 193rd Street - **Janice Marie Robinson's Melodic Magic** on July 22; **LaRocque Bey Dance & Drum** on July 29; and **PuppetMobile's Puss in Boots** on Aug. 5. Schedule is subject to change. For more information, visit www.cityparksfoundation.org.

[org/arts/summerstage-kids/](http://arts/summerstage-kids/).

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz and Bronx Council on the Arts host free concerts at 7 p.m.: At the Amalgamated Train Park, Van Cortlandt Park at Orloff Avenue - **John Benitez and his Latin Jazz Band** on July 21 and Aug. 16; and **Ginetta's Vendetta** on Aug. 4; at Henry Hudson Park, Independence Avenue and Kappock Street - **The Just Nuts Party Dance Band** on Aug. 1; and **Mystery Tour Beatles Tribute Band** on Aug. 9; and at Williamsbridge Oval - **Orquesta SCC** on Aug. 18. For more information, call (718) 796-5345.

Free Shakespeare in the Park presents **"As You Like It,"** July 31 at 5 p.m., at Van Cortlandt Park, Broadway and 245th Street, preceded by a free interactive children's workshop, "Kids & the Classics."

Events

Lehman College, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., offers **summer camp** with affordable tuition, flexible payment options for half or full-day, olympic-size swimming pool, and breakfast and lunch included. Activities include sports, dance, computer technology, academic enrichment, and more. For more information, call (718) 960-8512.

A one-hour physician guided healthy walk outdoors, **Montefiore Walk With a Doc**, will take place at the Williamsbridge Oval July 21, Aug. 4, 11 and 25 at 5 p.m. In the event of rain, meet in the main lobby of Montefiore Medical Center, 111 E. 210th St. for an indoor walk.

The public is invited to **International Family Day**, Aug. 13 from noon to 5 p.m. at East 205th Street at the intersection of Bainbridge Avenue and 204th Street. Events include live performances, kids activities, hayrides, giveaways and more. Vendor and sponsorship opportunities are available. For more information, call (718) 409-0109.

Fordham Road BID presents **Fordham Film Festival** at two locations. Events begin at 5 p.m. and include music, games and activities. At Bryan Park, East Fordham and East Kingsbridge roads: July 22 at 8:30 p.m.: "Roger Rabbit;" Aug. 19 at 8 p.m.: "Batman;" Aug. 20 at 8 p.m.: "Superman;" and Sept. 9 at 7:30 p.m.: "E.T." At Fordham Plaza, Third Avenue and 189th Street: Aug. 25 at 8 p.m.: "West Side Story." For more information, visit fordhamroad.nyc.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Handmade River Rafts, collage a mixture of materials to make into a handmade boat, July 23 and 24; Delicate Dragonfly Wings, to study them, then make your own, July 30 and 31; Sundials and Sunprints, to create a sundial, Aug. 6 and 7; Fishy Fun, to turn paper bags into 3-D fish that swim through the air, Aug. 13 and 14; and Spray a Garden, to use watercolors to create blossoms, Aug. 20 and 21; all in WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled are **concerts** on the Great Lawn from 7 to 8 p.m.: **Duo Jalal**, performing classical, klezmer and jazz, July 27; **Libby Richman Quartet**, performing contemporary jazz, Aug. 3; and **Bronx Salsa Fest**, featuring 11-member male salsa band, Aug. 10. Bring chair or blanket. 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.

Exhibits

Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse, presents **The Faces of Cuba**, a photo exhibition by Walter Pofeldt, through July 31, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 365-5516.

Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents the following events for children: **films at 2 p.m.:** July 26, Aug. 9 and 16; **Hands-On Projects at 2 p.m.:** (ages 7 to 12; pre-registration required), Game Door Hanger, July 21; Team Costume Making, July 28; T-Shirt Making (supplies provided, must be signed up for Summer Reading Program), Aug. 4; Jewelry Box Making, Aug. 11; and Sports Fan Making, Aug. 18. Teens/young adults can enjoy **films:** July 27 at 5 p.m. Adults can attend **Chess at 3 p.m.:** July 29 (chess set provided); and **Microsoft Word 2010 for Beginners:** (online registration required), Aug. 16 at 10 a.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

The Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for teens/young adults: **You've Been Framed:** (summer reading program; all materials provided), to decorate your own wooden picture frame, July 21 at 2 p.m. Adults can attend: **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 children: **Kids Get Active Fridays at 2 p.m.:** (ages 5 to 12), dance and zumba, July 22, 29, Aug. 5, 12 and 19; **Kids' Pajama Party:** (ages 18 months to 12 years; registration required), read-alouds and craft, July 25 at 6 p.m.; and **Toddler Storytime and Craft at 11:15 a.m.:** (ages 3 to 5), stories, songs and craft, July 21, 28, Aug. 8, 11 and 18. Adults can attend: **Computer Basics at noon:** July 21 and 28. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: See Editor's Note at the end of editorial on page 2 concerning upcoming issues.



File Photo

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT Against Crime strengthens ties between communities and the NYPD. This year's borough-wide events take place Aug. 2 (see Editor's Pick for more information).

Tenants Confront Worst Bx. Landlord

(continued from page 1)

Community and Clergy Coalition, which formed the Parkash Coalition. Nearly half the tenants waited impatiently, peering towards the front of the line to see how many other guests were left until they had a chance to describe their harsh realities.

Cathleen Clifford, a Fordham Heights resident, had an issue with her stove and requested a new one. Her long wait for the kitchen essential which is a dud, she described as something that came off the street. "When I turn my oven on to use it, there's more roaches coming out of it than anything else," said Clifford.

Concerns about a frequently absent super were raised by a tenant who has been living at a Parkash-owned apartment building on Valentine Avenue for 40 years. Her mother, who uses a wheelchair, relies on the super to unlock the old-fashioned elevator which requires manual assistance, to get to and from her floor. Should the super be unavailable, the tenant's

mother is confined to her apartment. The tenant requested Parkash give her a key to the elevator to make it easier to accommodate her mother and for other senior citizens in her building.

Complaints continued about supers in other buildings as two residents living in another building griped over surveillance cameras not working and claiming to have found trespassers smoking weed in the lobby.

When residents were finished with their minute on the microphone, Parkash simply responded by taking down their information with the promise to reach out to them the following day.

A few attendees said that the meeting would have been more of a success if Anurag Parkash, who is the son of the landlord and vice president of the company, had attended. Tenants say the younger Parkash handles the day-to-day business. Instead, the elder Parkash was joined by his wife and management employees who sat quietly throughout the meeting.

Parkash's newfound attention to tenants is mainly rooted in the city's recent reprimands against him.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) allows building owners to participate in rental subsidy programs by giving a lease to tenants who need financial assistance. The tenant pays a portion of the rent while the subsidy takes care of the rest. Landlords who own these subsidized apartments must sign a Housing Assistance Payment contract (HAP) which require responsibilities such as regular maintenance during the lease term and providing reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities. Once the landlord signs, the tenants are entitled to the guaranteed monthly rent subsidies.

City officials took action against Parkash and seven other corrupt landlords who are responsible for the "Dirty Dozen," 12 buildings in Queens, Manhattan and the Bronx that have been mismanaged. These build-

ing owners racked up a total of 2,075 violations. Of that number, 358 are considered Class C violations, deemed "most hazardous" by HPD. On May 24, Public Advocate Letitia James and Mayor Bill de Blasio sent a letter to these landlords threatening to stop offering subsidies to Parkash if repairs are not made in a short period of time.

On June 2, the Parkash Tenant Coalition organized a protest against their landlord in front of Bronx Housing Court to present a letter requesting repairs. The protest coincided with a hearing against Parkash. Those demands were put on hold as Parkash did not appear. The letter was rejected by Parkash's attorney, his son Anurag.

Parkash has taken measures by writing a letter to the Coalition where he agreed to meet with them and discuss issues such as building repairs, security, and improving relationships with his employees.

"I apologize for any inconveniences that may have arose

in the past due to my actions," wrote Parkash. "I have heard your complaints and will work to the best of my ability to improve the building conditions at the aforementioned addresses."

Cruz and her neighbor, Alisa White, claim that their building once had better days under a different management. The pair has seen three different landlords in their time, singling out one of them who they only referred to as Mr. Levine.

"Mr. Levine made sure his supers were doing what they needed to do," said Cruz. "He would knock on the door in the morning to check and see if the super is doing [what he] expected him to do."

Parkash left the meeting before he could speak to all of his tenants, who followed him out the door. With questions still being asked through the hallway, the slumlord rushed into his car heading back to his home in Long Island leaving behind the pleas of his tenants muttering, "Answer them."

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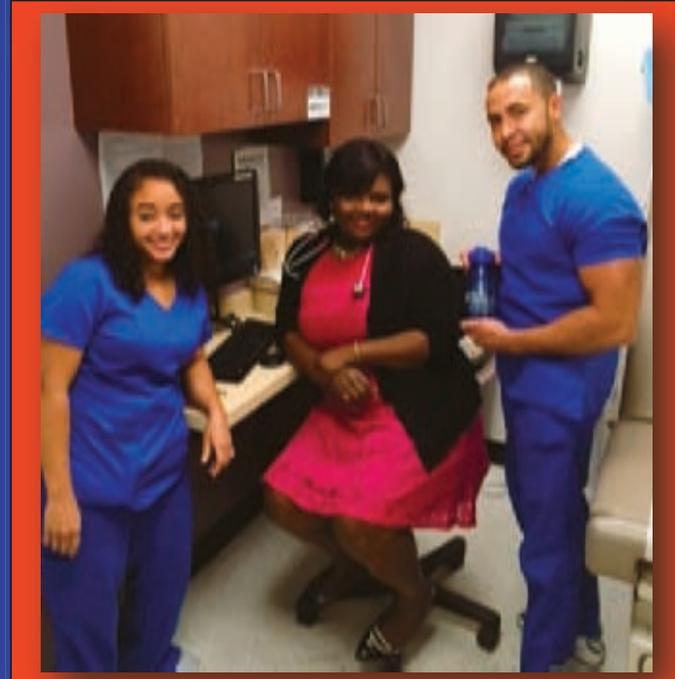
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