



NORWOOD NEWS

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**INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
BAG FEE BAGGED FOR NOW | PG. 4**



**BRONX BARRIERS:
A NN-WFUV COLLABORATION | PG. 9**

ST. ANN SCHOOL TO CLOSE DOORS

News comes two years after parish church closed



Photo by Adi Talwar

STUDENTS AT ST. ANN School on Bainbridge Avenue at East Gun Hill Road show off their dance moves at a recruitment pep rally in March 2016. Officials with the Archdiocese announced the school will close at the end of the academic year.

By **DAVID CRUZ**

Nearly three years after the Archdiocese announced the closure of Shrine Church of St. Ann, church officials announced it will close St. Ann School resting above the now-defunct church, surprising parents who've long considered the school a major part of their lives.

In a message posted on

its website, the Archdiocese of New York announced the Bainbridge Avenue school at the corner of Gun Hill Road will "cease operations at the end of the current academic year," citing a cost-saving analysis.

Many parents, the bulk of whom live in the community, were shocked and angry over the school's imminent clo-

sure.

Many of the parents were disappointed with the decision to close down the school. "My little one just started," said Melissa Martinez, 39. "Now we have to start the process all over again and look for another school that has what we're looking for."

Eric Olivo, 36, said the school's fate is hard to ac-

cept. "I know the teachers and I'm comfortable with the teachers, down to the people that serve lunch," said Olivo. "My child was crying. I was trying to keep it away from him."

The school is one of three Bronx Catholic parishes set to close by the end of the school year. "St. Ann

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EDITORIAL

Right to Counsel Levels Playing Field

The passing of the Right to Counsel Bill, a measure that offers pro bono attorneys to residents taking their landlords to Bronx Housing Court and relieves tenants unaware of the archaic Housing Court system that is by all intents and purposes chaotic. The New York City Council debated this agreement for two years, and have finally done right by the Bronx's working poor.

For anyone who faces the task of taking their landlord to court, they would tell you it can be overwhelming, especially for those facing eviction. Usually, landlords, particularly big name ones, do not go to court. They hire attorneys who have spent years gaming the system to their advantage. In some instances, a housing court case can drag for months, perhaps years, before a resolution is secure. By then, a tenant may have moved out despite having a winnable case against their landlord. For the poor, going to court costs money, including the loss of a day's wage.

This lack of representation and ability to understand the Housing Court system has allowed landlords such as Ved Parkash, the Bronx's worst landlord, to operate smoothly and get out of legal jams. It's allowed landlords such as MK Realty Group LLC to take John McKee of Norwood to court even as he struggles with a stroke that's rendered him virtually immovable.

But while it's commendable for the Council to have come through

“But while it’s commendable for the Council to have come through on the promise of leveling the playing field, its members should keep a critical eye on whether this new system will morph into the dysfunctional public defender system.”

on the promise of leveling the playing field, its members should keep a critical eye on whether this new system will morph into the dysfunctional public defender system, where overworked attorneys in the criminal justice system spend less than an hour poring over a case before literally defending their client in court. It's characterized the system as imbalanced, work-

ing against criminal defendants whose lives are in the hands of a public defender still familiarizing themselves with the case even as they're in a courtroom representing their client.

Over 10 years ago, the Kaye Commission on the Future of Indigent Defense released a report declaring the public defender system to be “incapable of providing each defendant with effective legal representation that he or she is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution and Laws of the State of New York.” The trend continues, though not on an egregious level, thanks to groups like the New York Civil Liberties Union, which won a landmark case in 2014 that mandated New York State improve its public defender system. Still, problems persist. A public defender simply cannot handle the barrage of caseloads it must take on.

It's the hope that the new system can stave off evictions at a critical time in New York City, where the quest to fix the housing crunch has inspired price gouging among landlords seeking to replace an existing tenant for one who can pay more rent. The stories are all too common in a borough that remains comparatively cheaper than the rest of New York City.

And with gentrification, an all too real event in pockets of the Bronx, the rollout of housing attorneys couldn't come at a more opportune time.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting on Feb. 28 at Kittay House, 2550 Webb Ave., at 6:30 p.m. Community Board 7 committee meetings are held at the board office, 229 E. 204th St., at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Website, Acknowledgment & Media Committee on Feb. 22. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO will host a Town Hall Forum on Feb. 28 at 7 p.m. at MS/HS 368 In-Tech Academy, 2975 Tibbett Ave. in Kingsbridge. Registration is required. To RSVP, email district11@council.nyc.gov or call Councilman Andrew Cohen's Office at (718) 549-7300.

THE 52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL meets on Feb. 23 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Tracey Towers, 40 W. Mosholu Pkwy. N., in Community Room B. For more information, call (718) 220-5824

THE BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION meets March 1 at 8 p.m. at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy So., Apt. B1 (lobby floor).



Letters To The Editor

More Fires at Oval Park

Today (2/6/17) as my wife and I entered the Oval Park at the entrance near your office, we noticed smoke by the top of the stairs that go down to the lower level, to the left (or northeast) of the top of the stairs. It came from a small fire in the leaves that had accumulated there. It was probably started by kids who were 'tempted' by the pile of dry leaves and I was able to stamp it out in a few minutes.

However, there are many larger accumulations of dry leaves in the park, especially along the perimeter fence running from the entrance mentioned above to the Holt Place entrance, and beyond. I often pick up litter in that area, and the dry leaves are sometimes a foot and a half deep, just asking for someone to light a fire.

We reported the small fire today to a Parks Department guard/officer near the Recreation Center, after it was no longer burning, but I am not sure that will be enough to get them to take action. The Parks people now seem to be gathering fallen leaves near the tennis courts, but have been pretty slow about getting around to that, not to mention the large accumulation near your office. I'm hoping your office may be able to contact the right people in the Parks Department, so that leaves are picked up all over the Oval Park in a more timely fashion. It has been several months since most of the leaves fell.

Thank you for your attention, and, also, thank you for serving our community,

Fred Kurtz
Norwood Resident

Defending Trump

You must've voted for "Crooked Hillary"!

The nation has to accept and respect our President of the United States, Donald J. Trump.

President Trump is enforcing immigration laws that past presidents ignored or just didn't want to. For Sanctuary Cities: if local law enforcement agencies are not arresting criminals

who are "undocumented," then the grants for these purposes should be cut off.

As for Democrats, they make stink for Republicans, just as Republicans make stink for Democrats! This is nothing new.

So chill and wait for four years to pass because Democrats had the spot for eight years and did nothing for the poor except to make the poor poorer and giving them less resources to survive and live with the little dignity they have left! That's why I voted as and am a Republican!!!

Rosemarie Reyes
Bedford Park resident

Hurting Animals

As he was signing edicts hurting one group after another over the past two weeks, it was only a matter of time before Donald Trump got around to hurting animals - already the most oppressed sentient beings on earth.

The animals' turn came yesterday - by taking down the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) site that reports on government regulation of roughly 9,000 animal handling facilities. These are laboratories, dog breeders, fur farms, circuses, zoos, and aquariums. The site is used every day by animal protection activists to monitor government enforcement of the 1966 Animal Welfare Act, the only effective federal law protecting animals.

Taking down the APHIS inspection site is a huge setback for animal protection. It will almost certainly lead to reduced government inspection of animal facilities and more animal suffering - a virtual repeal of the Animal Welfare Act.

Ironically, this oppressive act was launched by the same dark-of-night process as that of pulling more than 100,000 visas from thoroughly vetted Muslim immigrants one week earlier - no notice, no hearings, no due process, no public announcement.

Trump's oppressive mindset doesn't really care who the victims are. Hopefully, the courts will.

Newman Nalpers
Williamsbridge resident

Cuomo's Injustice

It's an injustice that Juan Guzman has to worry about being deported for selling something that should be perfectly legal. Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposal to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of marijuana is better than nothing, but outright legalization is more just. Cuomo says "The illegal sale of marijuana cannot be tolerated in New York State, but data consistently show that recreational users of marijuana pose little to no threat to public safety."

So if that's the case, then why should possession be subject even to a summons? Also, he's saying that it's okay to use it, but not okay for anyone to sell it to you. Imagine if when prohibition was repealed, people were told they could drink but no one could sell them alcoholic beverages

But Cuomo's position is reasonable compared to the hysterical reaction from Republican State Senator Martin Golden, who represents a district in Brooklyn. He said, "Our kids are getting eaten up by these drugs," as

he described pot as a gateway drug.

That argument was always dubious. The fact that many users of hard drugs started with marijuana doesn't change the fact that many pot smokers never moved on to harder drugs. Also, many who use harder drugs started with alcohol. Many skipped pot and went straight to harder drugs. During the 1980s crack epidemic, many crackheads referred to pot as an "old man's drug." Yes, because if you smoke pot instead of crack, you're likely to live to be an old man.

As for the arguments about our kids, I would expect a legal smoking age to be set, just as we have a legal drinking age.

Golden also says of Cuomo, "He just wants to go so far to the left. I don't get it." What I don't get is people who use terms like left and right to justify injustice. Possessing, using and selling marijuana is not immoral. Putting people in prison for it is morally a crime. Legalization of marijuana is the only decent solution, no matter how "far to the left" anyone thinks it is.

Richard Warren
Norwood Resident



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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By **DAVID GREENE**



Although the plastic bag fee which stores would have charged shoppers for the disposable bag has temporarily been delayed, we asked readers their thoughts on the five-cent charge.



That's not a good idea because the poor people don't have the money to pay five cents for each bag. It adds up when you go to the supermarket. It's too much. How many bags do you need to carry your food? It adds up.

Deyanera Sebereno
Bedford Park



I agree with the [fee] only because I feel like people are wasteful with bags. They double bag everything. I think people should be encouraged to carry cloth bags and recycle, because if you truly believe it will help the poor and conserve resources, that's what you would do. So I actually would agree with [the charge].

Nicole Fortner
Morris Park



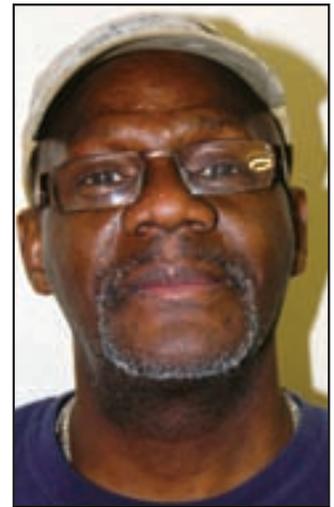
No, no it's not good. That's bad because it becomes too expensive and people are already paying a lot of money for the food and they have to pay for the plastic bags too? No, no, that's not nice to me.

Carlos Rodriguez
Pelham Parkway



Even though I know it will affect the poor, I believe overall it's going to help the environment. In England they already have this and it's having a positive effect. Right now, global warming has become such an issue and this is a great step to combat that.

Anja Cabrera
Van Cortlandt Park South



I don't support this bag [fee]. I feel they can find another way to do it. The reason they're doing it is to get people to recycle the bags, to go and take the same bags back, but they should try and find another way to get people to do this.

Sam Alston
Fordham

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Trump's Immigration Policy Hits Norwood

By **DAVID GREENE**
and **DAVID CRUZ**

Customers were caught by surprise on Feb. 2 when they noticed at least three stores in the Norwood section of the Bronx closed following fallout from President Donald Trump's ban on foreigners from predominantly Muslim countries. The stores, a 99-cent store and a smoke shop, are family owned and operated by those originating from the Middle East. Signs were posted on each of the stores with one reading, "My family detained in JFK."

Onlookers stopped to read the signs, talking among themselves as they noticed the show of silent protest against Mr. Trump's ban. One resident, who went by Ray W., said owners of the 99 cent store deliberately closed the store so they can take part in a protest in Brooklyn opposing the ban.

Abdul Razak Al-Kabili, 42, owner of the Smoke Shop at 3200 Bainbridge Ave., was busy pulling down the roll-down gates to his business on East 207th Street in Norwood. A 26-year resident of the Bronx, Al-Kabili explained, "I had some friends stuck at the airport, one... can't come in yet, but he's trying to come in but he's afraid he'll get stuck at the airport and they'll turn him back."

His friend who was stopped in Egypt, was sent back to Yemen without a fight. At the same time, Al-Kabili's brother was busy shutting the K & M Deli and Mini Market on East 207th Street, before the two would travel to-



Photo by David Greene

ABDUL RAZAK AL-KABILI, rolls down the metal shutters at the Smoke Shop at 3200 Bainbridge Ave. the day of the protest.



Photo by Daniela Beasley

A PAIR OF SIGNS captures the impact of President Trump's travel ban.

gether to the rally in Brooklyn. Even the M & G Bus Stop Deli on East 206th Street was closed. The owner of that deli garnered some unwanted media attention in 2015, when his 10 year old son was assaulted by an irate customer.

Ibrahem Alqushi of Manhattan was visiting his uncle's store, the Bedford Park Deli of East 202nd Street. Alqushi said of the protest, "The Yemenese people are helping everyone today. We had a bunch of family members that were stranded in other nations that were not their own."

Alqushi noted that his dad would also be closing his deli on East 180th Street, before he continued, "They're all coming from other nations, trying to get into America for a better life, because in Yemen right now, there's a lot of problems, a lot of bombings, a lot of people losing their homes."

Alqushi added, "America all began for everyone to be free for their religious beliefs and to come and make a living and now Donald Trump is trying to change everything... with all this craziness that is going on."

Samantha Figueroa, a Hull Avenue resident and frequent customer, sympathized with the shuttered shop, adding, "It matters because other people want to come here to study and they can't. This is so sad, especially for the families and what about their kids?"

Sounding more like a politician from another era, Figueroa added,

"It's sad that they can't come to a conclusion that everyone can be comfortable with."

President Trump signed an executive order that bars immigrants orig-

inating from seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States for 90 days. He also ordered the US to no longer accept refugees from battle scarred Syria.

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CRIME FILE

By DYLAN CROLL

Operation Clean Halls

Civil rights groups have reached a settlement with the NYPD that scales back “Operation Clean Halls,” a 26-year NYPD program that allowed officers to perform stop-and-frisk encounters inside the halls of apartment buildings. The settlement, reached on Feb. 2, enforces a mandate that officers complete reports every time they stop, frisk, or arrest someone. The settlement also mandates substantial training and supervision of police officers patrolling enclosed buildings as well as the tightening of standards by which buildings can be enrolled in Clean Halls.

Illegal Spending Spree



Police are looking for suspects (pictured above) who used a 69-year-old woman's stolen debit card and making illegal cash withdrawals totaling \$11,600. Police say the trio, two men and one woman, went to two

Citibank branches in the Bronx-704 Allerton Ave. and 1463 Southern Blvd.—to make the withdrawals. The men were both last seen sporting black hooded sweaters while the woman was last seen wearing a brown coat and white sneakers.

iPhone Robbers



The NYPD needs the public's help in identifying two suspects (pictured above) who robbed a 17-year-old of his iPhone on board a Bx10 bus on Dec. 12, 2016. The duo approached the teen and removed the iPhone 6 from his hands before taking off. The first perp captured in surveillance video is described as a young Hispanic man at 5'9", 150 lbs. with a slim build and beard. He was wearing a green jacket with a fur hood, blue sweat pants, a Yankees baseball cap, blue sneakers, and a black Nike duffle bag. The second was also a Hispanic man, with a heavy build and a beard. He was wearing black sweat pants, a black jacket, a gray hooded sweatshirt, and had tattoos on his hands.

Would-Be ATM Thieves Wanted



The NYPD is asking for the public's help in tracking two individuals (pictured above) wanted for questioning in connection with a stolen wallet. Police say the 34-year-old victim had left her wallet near an ATM at a Bank of America branch at 299 E. 204th St. on Dec. 29, 2016. Two men found the wallet and attempted to take money from the women's account before fleeing on foot when they were unsuccessful.

Mystery Car Wreaks Havoc



A white sedan with dark tinted windows (pictured above) has been linked to several criminal incidents that included the use of marbles as projectiles to break glass windows at commercial establishments and other locations. On Jan. 8, 28 incidents were reported at several Bronx precincts, including one at Chase Bank at 215 E. Fordham Rd. and a Burger King at 257 E. Fordham Rd. Police are currently on the lookout for a van matching this description.

Anyone with information on these incidents can call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at (800) 577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-Pista (74782).

NYPD: Crime Continues Downward Trend

By DAVID CRUZ and DANIELA BEASELY

Crime is hitting a record low, according to NYPD officials, and the trend is trickling into the local 52nd Precinct.

At a news conference on Feb. 6, Mayor Bill de Blasio and NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill announced that fewer than 1000 shootings were reported in January 2017 citywide, the lowest number of homicides and the lowest number of shootings in modern New York City, according to de Blasio.

The statistics were presented within the 43rd Precinct, a stationhouse that dealt with two high-profile shootings last year. In October, an NYPD sergeant shot and killed Deborah Danner, a mentally ill senior citizen, inside her apartment. She was not armed. The next month, Sgt. Paul Tuozzolo was fatally shot during a confrontation with Manuel Rosales of Long Island in the Van Nest section of the Bronx.

By the time of the two shootings, the 43rd Precinct had already implemented the Neighborhood Coordination Officer (NCO) program, which assigns officers to specific communities, relieving them of radio runs.

“So it's really starting to have a deeper and deeper impact,” de Blasio said of the NCO program.

The program appears to have worked in favor of the precinct, which saw a 22 percent decrease in crime this year. “That's a pretty big decrease,” said O'Neill, the architect behind NCO. O'Neill did note shootings



Photo by Daniela Beasley

COMMISSIONER JAMES O'NEILL (second from right) at a news conference in the Bronx announcing a major drop in crime across the five boroughs.

have increased slightly, up to five this year compared to three the same time last year. “There are zero homicides this year so far. So it's a testament to the hard work of the men and women of the Four-Three.”

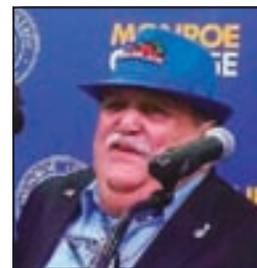
The program appears to have benefitted the 52nd Precinct, which covers Norwood, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge Heights, Fordham, and University Heights. As of Feb. 5, the last time high profile crime statistics were released to the public, the Five-Two saw a 26 percent drop in crime, a considerable drop. The precinct's commanding officer, Deputy Inspector Peter Fiorillo, was unavailable for comment.

The program ushered more officers into the 52nd Precinct, a notoriously busy precinct, where marathon radio runs are common. Overall, 2,000 more officers have been added to the organization, with New Yorkers feeling “the full impact” of the increased roster, according to de Blasio.

Community Mourns Death of Active Five-Two Resident

Residents in Norwood and Bedford Park's civic community were shocked over the death of Carlos Ortiz (pictured), an active member of the 52nd Precinct Community Council.

Brenda Caldwell, president of the community council, alerted members of the community of Ortiz's passing on Feb. 9. In an email sent to residents,



Caldwell remembered Ortiz as a resident who “loved his community; was so devoted in doing what he could to help and be involved in making a change

and difference in our community.” Ortiz was recently voted as the council's sergeant-at-arms.

Ortiz was very active with the community council, having recently participated in a parade float along Webster Avenue. He also dressed up as Santa Claus for the group's holiday get-together. Cause of death is unclear.

—David Cruz

A Salute to Veterans By Community Board 7

By DAVID CRUZ

For Community Board 7's Robyn Saunders, you can't salute a veteran enough. The scion of a family of veterans, Saunders sees service to country as a crucible that should never be overlooked.

"I just don't want us to forget," Saunders told the *Norwood News* midway through a recognition breakfast honoring veterans whose service to country goes back to World War II. "They protect us even when we're unaware they're protecting us."

Saunders and CB7 organized the breakfast on Feb. 10 at Lehman College, with the school's Office of Veterans and Military Affairs sharing hosting duties. The ceremony saw 19 living veterans from around the borough honored, while also drawing a large chunk of elected officials stopping by to thank them. And for most of the recognized, the awards were presented by a loved one or a friend.

Joseph Binder, a Navy veteran who served during World War II, stood among those being honored. A resident at Providence Rest nursing home in the Country Club section of the Bronx, Binder surprised guests and veterans alike when they learned he was 106 years old.

"I've worked very hard since I was eight years old and when I went into the Navy, I worked just as hard. I did a good job, and the captain told me he kept me from shipping out because he didn't want to lose a good man," Binder, who served as a cook, said. His longevity and service earned him major applause from guests.

The event drew career military veterans, including Retired Brigadier General, Dr. Loree Sutton, currently the



Photo by David Cruz

(L-R) NAVY VETERAN DOUG CONDIT, community activist Sheila Sanchez, Navy veteran and honoree Anthony Riviuccio, and veteran supporter Ken Brown were among the guests at the veterans' breakfast.



Photo by David Cruz

JOSEPH BINDER (CENTER), a Navy veteran who served during World War II, holds court while accepting his award. He stands between Luis Soltero-Rodriguez (left), and Councilman Andrew Cohen (right), who presented Binder with the award.

commissioner for the New York City Department of Veterans Services, an agency created under the de Blasio Administration. The agency is intended to "improve the lives of all veterans and their families, regardless of discharge status," according to its web page. In November, the agency built and found

homes for 16 homeless veterans in the Concourse section of the Bronx.

Local veterans were honored, including Anthony Riviuccio, a Navy veteran who spent part of his tour of duty in a submarine. Riviuccio is known in the Norwood and Bedford Park communities as a neighborhood activist.

Other honorees included Latisha Rusaw, Tiffany N. Barker, and Ayana Ahmand of the Air Force, Stanley Scriven of the Marines, Marco A. Bongiani, Joseph A. Bello Robert Eppich Jr. of the Navy, Johnnie R. Brooks, Johnnie H. Williams Jr. and Irvin Queens of the Army, and Michael C. Alford whose military branch was not disclosed. Shawn C. Kingston of the James J. Peters Veterans Administration Medical Center was the only honoree not to have officially served in the military, according to the program.

Community Board 7 stands as the city's first civic panel to have created an official veterans committee, which formed in 2015 to address issues for military veterans. The board's boundaries include Kingsbridge Heights, home to the James J. Peters Veterans Administration Medical Center. Overall, some 35,000 veterans live in the Bronx with 5,000 of them living within Community Board 7's boundaries, according to U.S. Census figures.

The program showed the ceremony to be the first annual, signaling perhaps a return of the ceremony next year. For Saunders, holidays or events should not signal the sense of gratitude veterans deserve for only one day. "It's not just about Veterans Day or Memorial Day; it's about every day," Saunders said.

Editor's Note: A slideshow of the event can be found on the *Norwood News'* Facebook page.

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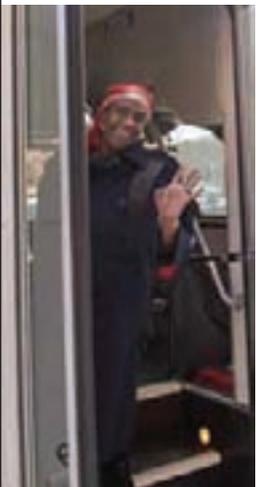
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A View From on High Bridge

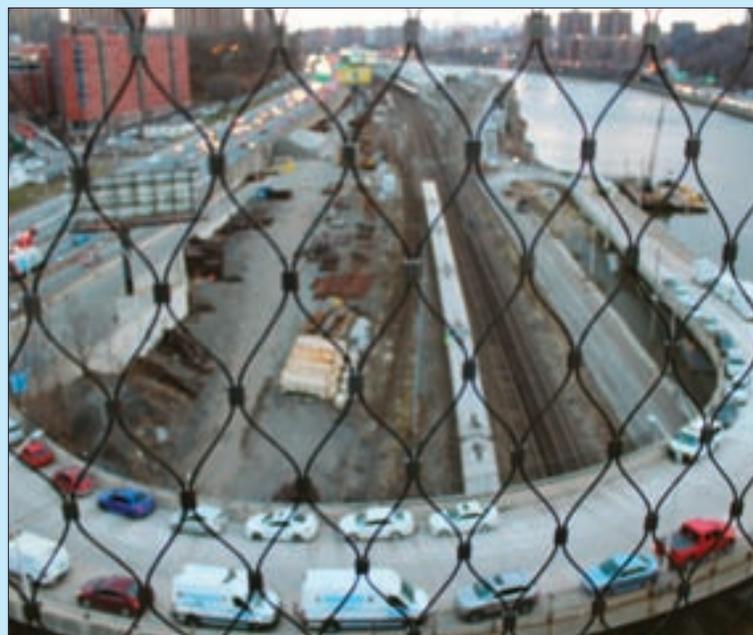


Photo by Christine Owusu-Ampaw

THE NORWOOD NEWS captured this photo overlooking I-87 from atop the High Bridge, the revived pedestrian walkway that connects Bronx residents to Manhattan, offering scenic views. The photo was taken on a cold Feb. 7 just at the beginning of rush hour.

Spreading Love Along E. 233rd St. Corridor

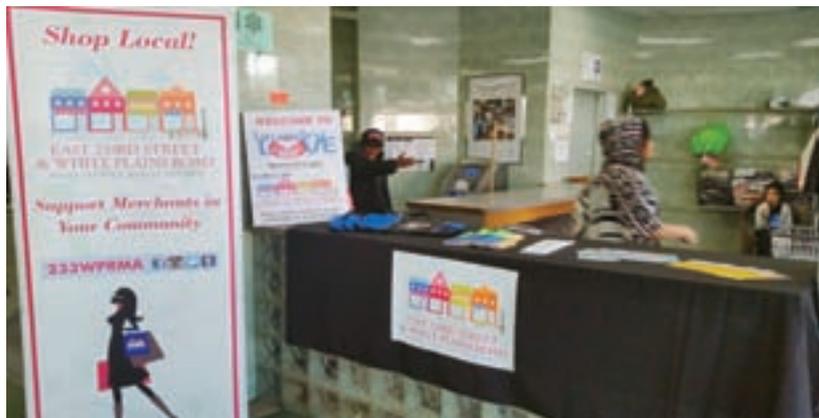


Photo courtesy East 233rd Street and White Plains Road Merchants Association
LOVE FOR CUSTOMERS at Lavamax Laundry Center! Customers were able to get a free wash and dry at the small business found on White Plains Road between East 212th and East 213th streets.

The East 233rd Street and White Plains Road Merchants Association spread love ahead of Valentine's Day as it hosted its first-ever Laundry Love in the Bronx on Feb. 13 from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Lavamax Laundry Center on White Plains Road between East 212th and East 213th streets.

The Laundry Love initiative consists of regular opportunities to help people who are struggling financially by allowing them to do their laundry for free. For those living below the poverty

line, washing clothes presents both a logistical problem and a financial hardship. Laundry Love seeks to save Bronx residents some money in the hopes laundry costs can be redirected toward food, medical, gas or transportation expenses as well as school supplies and other basic, everyday necessities.

This initiative is multipurpose as it supports the merchant, gives back to the community, and promotes local shopping.

--Jessica Gordon



BRONX BARRIERS:

The Literacy Challenge



Part 1

The Norwood News and WFUV are collaborating on a five-part series profiling ongoing challenges impacting the Bronx.

By SHANNON MEEHAN of



The South Bronx, a vibrant neighborhood of working families, faces a literacy crisis that is affecting most of the area's residents. Despite efforts by nonprofits and reading programs, the South Bronx has one of the lowest literacy rates of all five boroughs, intertwining with incomes in the South Bronx. Both facets remain low.

Strides to break the cycle of illiteracy are being made in the South Bronx, though progress has not advanced enough. It still remains the poorest and has the most unemployed, according to a 2016 report by South Bronx Rising Together (SBRT), a group linked to increasing educational success for students in the South Bronx.

"It's not that some people can read, while other people simply cannot read, end of story," says Elizabeth Clay Roy, chief of staff at Phipps Neighborhoods, a social service nonprofit, and co-director of SBRT. "It's that many people can read, but have trouble deciphering a complex letter or phrase."

The inability to read to get by on daily living and job responsibilities is defined as functional literacy. In some cases, it can lead to not having a job or not having a well-paying job, at least. Figures by Literacy Partners, an education nonprofit, show those with limited reading skills, or low-literate, earn a maximum income of \$18,000. Meantime, only three in five adults living in the South Bronx have earned a high school diploma while one in 10 has earned a four-year college degree, according to the SBRT report.

"Forty percent of children living in the Bronx are living in poverty and that adds another layer of challenges," says Chabely Ramos, a former community manager for Literacy Inc. "A child raised in poverty is 13 times less likely to finish high school on time, if at all."



Photo by Shannon Meehan

(L-R) **NORMA HERNANDEZ** and Juanita Bermudez are friends and classmates at Phipps Neighborhoods' Adult Literacy Program.

Critical Time

Third grade stands as a time when students transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." The bulk of third grades in the South Bronx haven't caught up yet, with 70 percent of third grade students unable to read on grade level, according to Ramos. The New York City Department of Education has found that children who fail to meet the third grade benchmark are more likely to drop out of high school and remain in poverty.

Regina Campbell, the assistant director of Learning and Career Development at Phipps Neighborhoods says, "The correlation with illiteracy and poverty is a chicken and the egg situation of what comes first. Is it illiteracy that leads to poverty or is it because it's the areas of poverty there is an increased risk of illiteracy?"

To address that, centers such as the Crotona Park Family Reading Room, established as part of Phipps Neighborhoods' early learning initiative, opened to the public. The reading room recognizes the need for parents and children

to have access to an environment that makes learning fun, while also encouraging one-on-one reading time with parents and children.

Beth James takes her children, ages 2, 5, and 13 to the Family Reading Room every day and says that it would be impossible for her to take them to the local library since it's 10 blocks away from her home. James credits the center with sparking her children's zest for learning, especially reading.

Phipps Neighborhoods offers literacy programs for children and adults of all ages with various literacy needs and goals. "In our adult population we see that for whatever reason, they (the students) see the importance of getting their education now. A lot of them recognize that they need it to be able to meet the needs of their own kids at home, whether their child is bringing home homework and they don't understand and they can't assist," says Campbell.

Language Barriers

While economic factors may contribute to literacy crisis, a student's literacy is also determined by parent involvement. That poses challenges for children whose parents can't read or children of foreign-born parents.

Maria Gonzalez de Sanchez moved to the Bronx from the Dominican Republic six months ago and just last month started taking an English as a Second Language course after she was unable to communicate with her child's teachers. Through a translator, Gonzalez de Sanchez says even as her son translates for her, she still "feels lost." Even basic tasks "become a challenge not knowing the language when there is no one there that speaks Spanish."

Gonzalez de Sanchez's peers, Norma Hernandez and Juanita Bermudez, came from Puerto Rico and have taken part in the adult literacy program since last September.

Hernandez, a mother of four, says she wants to get her GED because she is unable to get a job without it and hopes to serve as an inspiration for her children. While she finds going back to school a challenge, she hopes going back will show her children that anything is possible.

After leaving her job of nearly 20 years, Bermudez realized she needed her diploma for her next job. "When I started working, having your GED was not a requirement, but things have changed. Now you need your high school diploma for a higher paying job. If you don't have it, you don't fit in," Bermudez says.



Photo by Shannon Meehan

(L-R) **REGINA CAMPBELL**, assistant director of Learning and Career Development for Phipps Neighborhoods and Tamara Brown, program coordinator for the Young Adult Literacy Program for Phipps Neighborhoods.

City Rolls Out Summer Jobs Application Process Early

The city is giving young people extra time to sign up for a summer job.

The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development announced early applications are available for its Summer Youth Employment Program. The program connects young people ages 14 to 24 with paying jobs available from July 5 through Aug. 19.

Mayor Bill de Blasio, who's pushed for more young people to get summer jobs, hopes the early applications will "connect even more youth from across the five boroughs to meaningful opportunity."

Applicants, after submitting an application, are chosen via a lottery system. In 2015, a record 60,113 people were employed. Positions

include jobs at government agencies, hospitals, summer camps, nonprofits, small businesses, law firms, museums, sports enterprises and retail. SYEP also offers opportunities for disabled, foster care, runaway, homeless and court-involved youths. SYEP helps youth get access to paying jobs who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity -- and according to studies, it improves school attendance and reduces incarceration rates.

Online applications are available on the DYCD website (www.nyc.gov/dycd) or at a participating community-based organization during the application period. For more information, call 311 or DYCD Youth Connect (1-800-246-4646).

—Adeline Hanssen



Photo by Daniela Beasley

(L-R) DR. LUIGI DI BIASE, M.D., Ph.D.; Dr. Steven Safyer; Dr. Peter Semczuk, and Donald Stark, lead a group of Montefiore employees around so-called "Montefiore Mile" to kick off February Heart Month.

With One Step, Monte Kicks Off Heart Month

By DAVID CRUZ and DANIELA BEASLEY

For the last decade, Montefiore Health System has taken steps to lower the rate of heart disease in the Bronx. That mantra has taken place literally and figuratively.

It was at the hospital's Moses Campus on East Gun Hill Road in Norwood on Feb. 2 where a queue of Montefiore employees took a stroll around the hospital's perimeter where one loop equates to a quarter mile. Walking has its merits, and has a greater chance of lowering the risk of heart disease.

The queue was led by Dr. Steven Safyer, president and CEO of Montefiore Health System, who kicked off February Heart Month along with Dr. Peter Semczuk, executive director of the Moses Campus; Dr. Luigi Di Biase, M.D., Ph.D. of Albert Einstein College of Medicine's Division of Cardiology; and Donald Stark, a clinical administrator for Montefiore's cardiology department. A series of events,

"We invite people from all over the Bronx to kick off the month emphasizing heart health...so that you don't get sick and you don't need our help."

—Dr. Steven Safyer, president and CEO, Montefiore Health System.

including the walk, aimed to underscore the importance of staying active as a way to ward off heart disease. For Dr. Safyer, the events also emphasized the need to stay healthy year round.

"We invite people from all over the Bronx to kick off the month emphasizing heart health...so that you don't get sick and you don't need our help," said Safyer, "because unfortunately too many peo-

ple in this borough have diabetes, have heart disease, they still smoke, they're not eating properly, but certainly not exercising."

Throughout February, Montefiore has hosted heart events that included a lecture on heart disease and a walk with a doctor event.

Heart disease stands as the leading cause of death throughout the country, with some 610,000 people dying from some form of heart disease yearly, according to a 2009 study by the Centers for Disease Control. In the Norwood, Bedford Park and Kingsbridge sections of the Bronx, heart disease was ranked the leading cause of death in the neighborhoods with 1,229 people dying from the disease between 2009 and 2013, according to the New York City Health Department.

Editor's Note: A full list of events can be found on <http://www.montefiore.org/documents/heartmonth/heart-monthcalendar2017.pdf>.

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How a BDCC Insider Holds Fate of Proposed Mall

By DAVID CRUZ

The long and lumbering review process for a mall directly across a mega-mall in the Bronx is under way. And while review processes involve the approval of the sitting Councilman, the real decider could be the Bronx political machine's attorney doubling as the developer's lobbyist.

Stanley Schlein, the attorney representing the Bronx Democratic County Committee and key advisor to its chair, Marcos Crespo, is registered to speak on behalf of Grid Properties, the developer behind the proposed Baychester Square Mall. Developers are eyeing the 400,000 square foot lot of land directly opposite the Bay Plaza Shopping Center, owned by real estate magnate Sam Shalem of Prestige Properties. The two lots are divided by the I-95 highway.

Schlein has long been considered the man behind the Bronx political curtain, using his deep knowledge of Bronx politics to shift the fortunes of rising political stars. He's also advised big name companies such as Exxon Mobil and Silverstein Properties as recently as 2013.

In normal circumstances, a lobbyist's influence has limits. But with Schlein deemed a major party insider, it could put pressure on Councilman Andy King, a legislator whose 12th Council District overlaps with the proposed mall, to come through on behalf of Schlein. But King told the *Norwood News* he's against the project for now.

"[W]e just opened one of the greatest malls in the city of New York more than 300 yards away, so why do I need all outlets across the street? I know outlets hurt malls. So I'm not trying to kill one project just to establish another so I want to make sure it is a complement to us being built, not something that leads to the extinction of another mall," King said.

He compared Schlein's involvement to apples and oranges. Hank Sheinkopf, the lobbyist hired by Prestige Properties, said the spotlight should focus on the impact a new mall can have on the borough's economy.

"The issue is not Stanley Schlein," Sheinkopf said. "The issue is: can you put a property that has



THIS AERIAL VIEW from the New York City Department of City Planning shows where a proposed mall by Grid Properties would be built.

created 5,000 jobs, paid tens of millions of dollars in taxes, provided stability and economic development in a place that didn't exist before."

Council members' voices matter greatly in land review processes, formally dubbed the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). Their vote for or against a project is usually honored by members of the Council once it comes before an official vote.

King is not alone in his opposition to the project. Community Board 12, the board representing the area of the mall, received a petition signed by 64,000 people opposing the proposed mall, arguing it would increase traffic, further congesting the neighborhood. The group, Speak Up for a Better Bronx, instead demanded more affordable housing be built in the swath of city-owned land that's occupied by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The group has been championed by Prestige Properties.

In a statement, a representative for Speak Up for a Better Bronx said, "Local residents do not want additional traffic in the area, which will only negatively impact air quality, safety and quality of life."

A spokesperson for the New York City Economic Development Corporation, which handles real estate transactions, reportedly told the *Bronx Times Reporter* that

monies from the sale of that land to Bay Plaza Square developers will go to the MTA should the deal go through.

For now, the ULURP process will get under way in March, with Community Board 12 putting the development proposal to a vote.

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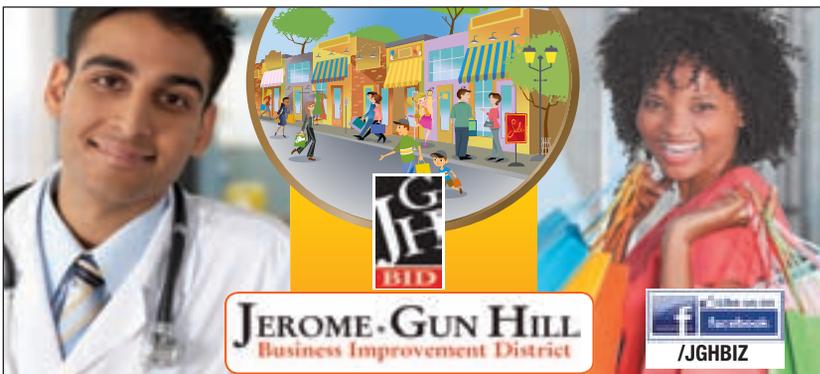


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SAVE THE DATE - RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Bedford Park Congregational Church, located at 201st Street and Bainbridge Avenue, will hold the following 2017 Easter services:

Ash Wednesday, March 1, 7:30 p.m.

Palm Sunday, April 9, 11 a.m.

Maundy Thursday, Thursday April 13, 7:30 p.m.

Good Friday, Friday, April 14, 11 a.m.

Easter, Sunday April 16, 11 a.m.

All are welcome to join us in worship.

For more information, call (718) 733-3199.

HELP WANTED

Apply now to work as a full-time community development professional, community organizer or planner for the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District, under the Neighborhood 360° program. Applications are due March 12. For more information, and to apply, go to www.nyc.gov/360fellows.

TRIP

To Foxwoods Casino in Connecticut on Sunday, Feb. 19, 2017 at 9 a.m. from East 163rd Street and Southern Boulevard. For more info, please contact Eddie at 718-757-5485

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Flea Market Donations Sought

Donations are needed for the Bedford Mosholu Community Association flea market scheduled to be held on March 4. Bring new and used items (except clothing) to the BMCA office at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So., apt. B1 (lobby floor) on Feb. 22 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., Feb. 25 from 1:30 to 4 p.m., and March 1 from 7:30 to 9 p.m. For more information, call (718) 367-2230 or email bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

State Job Exam

Exams that qualify you for a state job in the fields of health and human services, environmental conservation, human resources, administrative analysis, and transportation will be administered on April 8, 9, and 15.

College juniors and seniors are eligible to apply. Candidates must complete and submit an exam application by Feb. 22. To apply, go to www.cs.ny.gov/pco

"Oscars" for Local Libraries

Nominations for best library based on exceptional service can be submitted at www.nyclibraryawards.org, or in person at any local library through March 13. Five libraries will be chosen for a \$20,000 prize, and another five will receive \$10,000.

Paid Position Available

Apply now to work as a full-time community development professional, community organizer or planner for the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District,

under the Neighborhood 360^o program. Applications are due by March 12. For more information, and to apply, go to www.nyc.gov/360fellows.

Snow Laborers Sought

NYC seeks emergency snow laborers to help remove snow and ice from bus stops, step streets, and other locations throughout the city this winter. Interested applicants must be at least 18, eligible to work in the USA and capable of performing heavy physical labor. Registration is at the DOT garage, Bronx Yard, Mosholu Avenue and Broadway (Van Cortlandt Park), weekdays from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Bring two small photos (1-1/2" square), original and copy of two forms of ID, and SS card or Tax ID number. Hourly salary is \$15; and \$22.50 after 40 hours are

worked in a week.

Free NYS Tax Filing Assistance

The NYS Tax Department is hosting free online tax return filing for individuals or families in the Bronx with Federal adjusted incomes of \$64,000 or less. Online assistance is offered from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Eastchester Library (1385 E. Gun Hill Rd.) on select Wednesdays and at the Melrose Library (910 Morris Ave.) on select Fridays. For more information and a detailed schedule, visit www.tax.ny.gov.

Free Tax Filing Service

Free income tax preparation for qualifying residents is available at University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP) on select Wednesdays and Saturdays

through Apr. 18 by appointment only. Tax preparers can also review your credit report, provide financial advice, and freeze your rent. Applicants must have all tax documents available before meeting with tax preparer. To learn the qualifications and to schedule an appointment, call (718) 933-2539 or www.unhp.org.

Free Tax Service at MMCC

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave., offers free tax preparation services for families with an income of \$34,000 and under and individuals with income \$30,000 and under, Tuesdays through Fridays (call for times). For more information and details regarding required forms, and to make an appointment, call (718) 882-4000 ext. 209.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Do It Your Way

Van Cortlandt Jewish Center presents Tribute to Frank Sinatra performed by Steven Maglio, Feb. 26, to be held at Vladeck Hall, 74 Van Cortlandt Pk., So. Scheduled at this fund raising event will be a raffle and Chinese buffet with dessert. Entrance is free for purchase of raffle tickets only and is from 11 a.m. to noon. A kosher Chinese lunch will be served at noon followed by the show at 1 p.m., concluding with dessert and raffle drawing. The entire event costs \$35 up to Feb. 21 and \$40 after Feb. 21. Cost for show and dessert only is \$20. Cost for buffet only is \$35 (reserve in advance). For more information and to RSVP, call (718) 884-6105.

Onstage

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Luigi and Langston**, a program of one-act plays, Feb. 25 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Lehman College's Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents the following performances:

Balé Folclórico da Bahia, professional folk dance company from Brazil featuring dancers, musicians and singers, Feb. 19 at 4 p.m. (tickets: \$25 to \$40; \$10/12 and under); **Five Irish Tenors**, presenting a Salute to Ireland, March 5 at 4 p.m. (tickets: \$25 to \$45; \$75/VIP; \$10/under 12); and **Forever Freestyle 11**, featuring a variety of performers, March 4 at 8 p.m. (tickets: \$55 to \$100). VIP includes pre-concert wine and hors d'oeuvres reception and the best seats in the house. For more information and to



Photo courtesy Van Cortlandt Jewish Center

THE VAN CORTLANDT Jewish Center welcomes Steven Maglio, who will sing popular songs by Frank Sinatra (see Editor's Pick for more information).



Photo courtesy Joshua Bright/Wave Hill

CHILDREN CAN BUILD Kindred Totem Poles at Wave Hill on Feb. 18 and 19 (check out details under Events).

RSVP, call (718) 960-8833.

the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory. For more information, call (718) 817-8700.

Events

New Settlement Community Center, 1501 Jerome Ave. (172nd Street), presents **Bronx Voices: Empowering Community in the Face of Rezoning**, Feb. 25 from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Events include a visual art exhibit followed by an open mic with a special guest performer (\$10/suggested donation). For more information, call (718) 758-5901.

The Williamsbridge Oval offers free **Women's Self Defense Workshop** for females ages 10 and over, Feb. 19 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Learn self defense moves and discuss the threats faced by females. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects:** Kindred Totem Poles, to learn history of family and tribe members of the Pacific Northwest Indians, then sculpt interactive family totem poles using colored paper, Feb. 18 and 19; and Exotic Desert Dwellers, to sketch, then make your own paper plant, Feb. 25 and 26; both in the WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled is **Concert: Canellakis-Brown Duo**, cellist and pianist, performing classical and Bulgarian folk tunes (\$28; \$22/member; \$15/ages 8 to 18; \$12/child member), at the WH House 2 p.m. (info: ext. 251). 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.

Families are invited to **Creating Unity in the Community**, a conversation about service and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Feb. 21 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at the Parkchester Library, 1985 Westchester Ave. For more information, call (718) 829-7830.

The Bronx Documentary Center, 614 Courtlandt Ave. at 151st Street, presents **Whose Streets? Our Streets!**, a photo exhibit through March 5, Thursdays and Fridays from 3 to 7 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m., featuring New York events from 1980 to 2000. For more information, call (718) 993-3512.

Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents the following for children: **Hands-On Projects:** (ages 7 to 12; preregistration required), Winter Animal Making, Feb. 19 at 3:30 p.m.; and Heart Shaped Bee Making, Feb. 23 at 4 p.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: **Make It Happen:** workshop that provides career preparation for first-time jobs and preparing for college interviews, through interactive activities, Feb. 21 at 4 p.m.; and **film:** "The Secret Life of Pets," animated comedy, Feb. 25 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can enjoy: **Knitting Circle:** Thursdays at 3 p.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 2:45 p.m.:** (ages 5 to 12), dance moves on the Wii game console, Feb. 17 and 24; and **Preschool Story Time and Craft:** (ages 3 to 5), featuring books, puppetry, dramatics, crafts and flannel boards, Feb. 23 at 11:15 a.m. Adults can enjoy **Computer Basics**, Feb. 23 at noon. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Feb. 20 for the next publication date of March 2.

Exhibits

The NY Botanical Garden presents **The Orchid Show**, Feb. 18 through April 9, at

St. Ann School to Close Doors

(continued from page 1)

School, Visitation School, and St. Mary School students will have the opportunity to continue their Catholic education at St. Brendan School, St. John's School in Kingsbridge, and Our Lady of Grace, respectively, or at other neighborhood Catholic schools," read the message.

In August 2015, diocesan officials announced the church would close after 88 years. Church members wishing to continue the faith were offered to go to St. Brendan's Church at the corner of Perry Avenue and East 206th Street. The two parishes immediately merged to form St. Brendan and St. Ann. Meantime, the school portion of the parish is found on the second floor with children from preschool to eighth grade matriculating there. Instruction at St. Ann School varied, with students offered a robust curriculum ranging from drama club, intramural sports and art classes.

For now, parents will have the remaining school year to decide into which new school they will enroll their child.

Some of the parents were very re-

luctant to consider public school as an option since they value the teaching of faith in St. Ann School. Many parents believe that a faith-based program is essential for the education of the children. "That's why the parents bring their kids here," said Martinez, whose 4-year-old is in pre-K. "You want to implement faith values not just at home, but also in their education."

Renee Wilson, 30, believes that faith and education go hand-in-hand. "Faith is a strong factor when it comes to education, it makes them have empathy." Chris, her 12-year-old son, is in his first year at the school and has seen a drastic change in his attitude toward school, according to Wilson. "Religion in an everyday setting is more relatable. I think it is necessary for all these children. I mean, look at the neighborhood we live in; look at the world we live in."

However, religious affiliation is one aspect to these parents' loyalty. The quality of the classes, they note, is more personal since parents have become acquainted with the staff. "He is doing so much better here than

in public school, he actually tells me he loves school," said Wilson. "In public schools the classes are bigger, and here they're smaller."

Many of the parents are saying that they would consider public school as an alternative, but others will be seeking different options. "I'll send my child to charter school," said Clifton Bruno, 40, unflinchingly about his 5-year-old son, Giovannni.

"I don't want to send my child back to public school. I am strongly against it," said Wilson.

A few of the parents like Dominga Vazquez, 40, are ready to see the schools that will be offered to them. "It's a very drastic change to go into another school," said Vazquez. "They have an open house next week especially for us."

The Archdiocese has ensured students of closed Catholic schools will be given a seat elsewhere.

News of the closure also comes a week after National Catholic Schools Week, an initiative intended to bolster the benefits of Catholic school education. A message on the school's official Facebook page read, "As another unforgettable National Catholic Schools Week comes to a close, we thank our students and staff for all they do to make our school a great place. We look forward to another year of offering an invaluable Catholic education!"

The secretary answering the phone at the school said its school principal, Ajeia Beebe, declined to comment.



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