

# NORWOOD NEWS

**HAPPY  
NEW YEAR  
2012!**

Vol. 24, No. 25 ■ PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION ■ Dec. 29, 2011–Jan. 11, 2012

## Bronx Bomber Dixon Won 9 Skateboard Races in 2011

*What Else Happened? The Norwood News Recaps the Year That Was*

Skateboarder Kiefer Dixon, a northwest Bronx native, kicks off the *Norwood News*' 2011 Year in Review issue. Dixon, a 22-year-old longboarder who you might see "bombing" around the Bronx or riding through Times Square on his hands, became a dominant force on the longboard circuit this year. He wrapped up his ninth win of 2011 by taking the South Beach Bomb race this December.

Dixon says his success was shaped by his environment and desire to avoid mass transit: "I just skate, skate, skate. My style is aggressive. When you see me skating through traffic and a car is coming at me I don't flinch; I look the driver in the eye. I like to represent my skating as a form of transportation, too. Every morning I see the buses sardine-packed going down Gun Hill; I'm happy to be one less."

For his success this year, Dixon makes our list of top stories in 2011, which you will find in this issue. (Read a Q&A on p. 6.) His story is joined by shockingly random acts of violence, a dramatic legal showdown between church and state, a mysterious piano disappearance, gay marriage, the return of a supermarket and, of course, the ongoing saga of the Kingsbridge Armory. (Yes, it's still empty.)

**THE YEAR  
IN REVIEW  
2011**



Photo by Emily Piccone

**AFTER HONING** his skills on Bronx streets, Norwood's own Kiefer Dixon dominated his longboarding competition this year. See story, p. 6.

## PS 51 Contaminated, Parents Still Outraged

Adaline Walker-Santiago sent all three of her children to PS 51, the Bronx New School in Bedford Park, without thinking she might be putting them and their long-term health in danger. But in late July, the Department of Education told school officials and parents that PS 51's building was contaminated with sky-high levels of trichloroethylene, a toxin linked to cancer.

With just weeks before the start of the year, the entire school was uprooted and moved to the old St. Martin of Tours building in Crotona.

But now Walker-Santiago and other PS 51 parents are outraged at the DOE, not only for allowing the school to operate inside a contaminated building for two decades, but also for the agency's lack of response to parents' concerns once the contamination was discovered.

"How would you feel?" Walker-Santiago asked angrily earlier this month.

Parents want the DOE to create a registry for students who have attended PS 51 and a system to monitor their health. They also demanded, in letters and at a rally this fall, a meeting with Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott to discuss the matter.

Walcott, however, only agreed to meet

with PS 51 administrators and the current parents association leadership, which didn't cut it for parents of past PS 51 students like Walker-Santiago. Earlier this month, a handful of angry PS 51 parents (continued on p. 5)



Photo by Adi Talwar

**DOZENS OF LOCAL KIDS**, families, elected officials and even Santa Claus came out for the annual tree lighting celebration on Mosholu Parkway, hosted by Community Board 7, on Dec. 15. For more photos, visit [norwoodnews.org](http://norwoodnews.org).

## Bronx Church's Fight with DOE Goes Supreme

The Bronx Household of Faith's 17-year legal battle with the Department of Education came to a close in 2011 with the University Heights church and dozens of other religious groups facing eviction from school buildings throughout the five

boroughs. The story thrust the small evangelical congregation into the national spotlight and struck up a debate that will move onto the legislative stage in 2012.

Thanks to support from local elected officials, including City Councilman Fernando Cabrera and State Assemblyman Nels on Castro, Bronx Household and its 48-member congregation may be able to continue holding worship services inside the PS/MS 15 auditorium on Andrews Avenue, as it has for the past decade. Castro introduced legislation that would change the state's education law to allow churches to worship in public school buildings.

Before this past June, few had heard of Bronx Household of Faith, which has operated in University Heights since 1973, first in a backyard on Andrews Avenue and then in a group home for struggling men nearby on University Avenue. In 1994, the church applied to worship inside PS/MS 15 and was denied, touching off a legal battle that would go back and forth over the next 17 years.

They won the right to worship inside PS/MS 15 in 2002 when a court ordered an injunction of the DOE's rule prohibiting (continued on p. 4)

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# 2011 In The Public Interest By JEANMARIE EVELLY

## Borough President Takes On 'American Idol'

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., started 2011 off swinging, after Fox reality TV show "American Idol" aired a controversial segment during an episode in January, where teenage contestant Travis Orlando took camera crews on a tour of the Bronx neighborhood where he grew up. The video accompanying his story showed shots of a street strewn with litter, ambulances whirring by, and a pay phone dangling off its hook, all set to ominous background music.

Diaz immediately sent out a scathing press release, picked up by a number of media outlets, saying he was "disgusted" with the show's treatment of the borough. "Rather than focus on the amazing revitalization the Bronx has seen over the past three decades, the producers of the show chose instead to highlight the negative stereotypes that have plagued our borough for years," he said.



File photo by Jordan Moss

**AFTER NEW YORK** legalized same-sex marriage, Karen Cofield and Gwendolyn Williams, who met five years ago, were married at the Bronx County Courthouse in July.

## New York Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage

After years of lobbying by civil and gay rights advocates, New York became the sixth and largest state in the nation to pass a bill legally recognizing marriages between same-sex couples.

The bill was passed by the State Senate in an overtime legislative session at the end of June. It was supported by every Bronx state lawmaker, with the exception of State Sen. Ruben Diaz, Sr., a well-known gay marriage opponent who was the only Democrat in the Senate to vote against it. The law went into effect on July 24, and 27 couples tied the knot that day at the Bronx County Courthouse, including Spuyten Duyvil residents Rhea Greenberg and Janice Glock.

"This is where we've lived our lives," Greenberg told the *Norwood News* at the time. "This is where we have roots, family, friends, and this is where we want to get married."

## State Legislature Passes Budget, Ethics Reform, Rent Laws

Albany enjoyed a relatively productive session in 2011. In addition to passing an historic gay marriage law, the Senate and Assembly approved a number of bills

that were top priorities for many Bronx lawmakers.

The fiscal year started off with the passage of a \$132.5 million state budget at the end of March, the first time in five years that a budget has been approved in New York before its April 1 deadline. While the final deal spared cuts to senior centers, funding for SUNY and CUNY colleges, and the city's Summer Youth Employment Program, it included hits to education and human services funding, resulting in losses for a number of local nonprofits and social service programs.

Later in the legislative year, Albany passed an ethics reform package, long a priority for local lawmakers. The new law calls for the establishment of a Joint Commission to provide ethical oversight of the Senate and Assembly, requires lawmakers to disclose potential conflicts of interests and penalizes any lawmaker convicted of a felony by depriving them of their pension.

In the legislature's very last week, lawmakers hammered out a deal to renew the state's rent laws, which local officials and housing advocates had been pushing to see not only extended, but strengthened in favor of tenants. Many were disappointed with the final agreement because it failed to include a total repeal of vacancy decontrol—the rule that lets landlords raise rents of regulated apartments once the tenant there vacates—though it did raise the minimum monthly rent requirement for which apartments can be deregulated.

## Ongoing Legal Troubles For Seabrook, Espada

Two Bronx politicians who have been the subject of corruption probes for the last several years saw their legal battles continue in 2011.

Former State Sen. Pedro Espada, Jr., who was indicted at the end of 2010 for allegedly spending public funds on sushi dinners and luxury cars, is still awaiting trial on those federal charges, but took on

yet another case in court this year—keeping his network of nonprofit health clinics open. The Soundview Health Care network, from which Espada is accused of embezzling more than \$500,000, was kicked out of the State's Medicaid program in August, a decision Espada has been fighting all year in court but which a Bronx judge upheld just last week. The loss of Medicaid reimbursement could mean a likely closure for Soundview.

Meanwhile, a judge declared a mistrial earlier this month in the federal corruption case against Bronx City Councilman Larry Seabrook after jurors said they remained deadlocked after a week of deliberation. Prosecutors said they would re-try the case against Seabrook, who stood accused of directing more than \$1 million in taxpayer funds to family, friends and his own pockets.

## Census Count Reveals Bronx is Booming

The Bronx gained more new residents than the other four boroughs over the last decade, and had the second highest gain in the state, according to data released this spring from the 2010 United States Census.

The Bronx gained 52,458 people over the last decade, the numbers show, a growth rate of 3.9 percent, which was only surpassed in the city by the borough of Staten Island.

The population boost is due to a spike in the number of Hispanic residents here in the Bronx, who now account for 53.5 percent of the borough. The number of white residents decreased sharply since 2000, by 22 percent, while the number of African-American residents has stayed about the same.

The Bronx neighborhoods that saw their populations grow the most over the last 10 years are Morrisania, Melrose and Mott Haven, according to Census data compiled on the Department of City Planning's website.

Local neighborhoods Norwood, Bedford Park, Fordham North and University Heights saw their populations decrease just slightly since 2000, by a few hundred residents.

## Public and Community Meetings

- **THE BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** will meet at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 4 at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So. #B1 (lobby floor). All are welcome.
- **COMMUNITY BOARD 7** will hold its general board meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 17 at 6:30 p.m. at St. Philip Neri School auditorium, 3031 Grand Concourse. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.
- **COMMUNITY BOARD 7 committee meetings** will be held on the following dates at 6:30 p.m. at the board office, 229A E. 204th St.: Education & Libraries, Thursday, Jan. 5; Parks & Recreation, Thursday, Jan. 5; Youth Services, Monday, Jan. 9; Public Safety, Wednesday, Jan. 11; Sanitation & Environment, Wednesday, Jan. 11; Traffic & Transportation, Thursday, Jan. 12. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.



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# Opinion.

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## Editorial

### A Bronx Christmas Story

Scott Lebron, a sophomore at Discovery High School in Kingsbridge Heights, delivered a letter this holiday season. It wasn't to Santa Claus. It was addressed to Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., who inspired him to write it during a visit more than a year earlier.

Along with numerous other elected officials, nonprofit leaders, news reporters and "green" development advocates, Diaz made a point to stop by and see what was going on in the bustling, photosynthesizing classroom of special ed science teacher Steve Ritz. At Discovery, Ritz was generating big-time buzz through an urban farming project designed to teach kids life science through hands-on horticulture.

The students were learning how to grow their own plants and vegetables on vertical gardens in the classroom. The project and the gardens exploded into what has become the Bronx Green Machine, a nonprofit program that teaches students like Scott how to grow nutritious food as well as "green" construction skills (see related story, p. 6).

Diaz spoke to Ritz's students and urged them to keep up the good work. Scott, then just a ninth grader, was brought to tears by Diaz's words. He

decided to write him a letter.

In it, he thanked Diaz for speaking positively and said it "inspired" him to keep working hard.

"The Bronx and people like me are always getting and hearing negative comments," he wrote. "You are right! We need to do something about it."

Scott goes on: "We will start in Discovery and spread across campus. We will plant trees, grow food and say no to bad people and dangerous things. We will make safe parts for neighbors and families."

For more than a year, the letter, dated Nov. 12, 2010, stayed with Scott as he continued to work with Ritz and the Bronx Green Machine. He's now excelling in school. Finally, the perfect opportunity arose — the borough president's Christmas tree lighting event earlier this month. Dressed in his best suit, Scott went down to Borough Hall, delivered the letter to Diaz and got his picture taken with the borough president, his inspirational hero.

Like all of Ritz's kids, Scott is a special ed student, which means he needs more help than other students. But special ed or not, the light turned on for Scott last fall through Ritz's program and Diaz's words. And for all the doubters still out there, Scott says: "We're going to show them."

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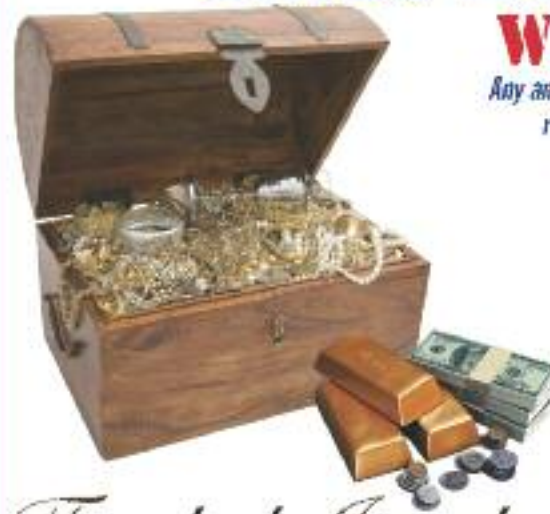
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## In Kingsbridge Armory Plans, Lots of Ideas, But No Substance

Two years after the City Council voted down plans to turn the hulking and empty Kingsbridge Armory into a shopping mall, local groups and elected officials spent much of 2011 pondering what should be done now with the 575,000-square-foot space.

In June, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., who has made the redevelopment of the Armory a top priority of his administration, released a long-awaited report on possible future uses for the building, created by a special Armory task force and a group of New York University faculty and graduate students. Despite detailing a number of suggested ideas and totaling 267 pages, the report was criticized by many for lacking substance, and because it offered no clear plan for how the redevelopment of the building would be paid for.

After leading the defeat of the Bloomberg-backed shopping mall plan in 2009, Diaz is under considerable pressure to make progress on the Armory. The building remains empty, while major development projects in other areas of the Bronx have taken off this year, including multi-million dollar shopping centers in Co-op City and at the former Stella D'Oro factory on West 237th Street.

John DeSio, a spokesman for the borough president, told the *Norwood News* at

the time that the point of the task force was not to come up with a proposal or a clear financial plan for the Armory, but to show there was still interest in the site and to call on Mayor Bloomberg to issue a request for proposals (RFP) for the building.

"The work of the task force shows just how much interest there is in this historic structure," Diaz said in a statement at the time.

Among those interested in taking over the space is Creflo Dollar, a controversial evangelical preacher from Georgia who wants to turn the West Kingsbridge Road building into a "state of the art church facility," fit with administrative offices, daycare and afterschool program space, a gymnasium, and a recording studio.

Another idea for the Armory that gained traction this year was a proposal by a group of bicycle enthusiasts who want to see the space converted into a bicycling center, complete with a velodrome — an angled, oval bicycling racing track that would be used to host days-long cycling tournaments.

The National Cycling Association, the group behind the plan, is trying to garner support for their idea by attempting to put together a six-day bicycle race at the Armory sometime this spring. But the association cycling idea has yet to identify clear funding sources to prove the viability of their plan.

Jack Kittle, who served on the Armory task force as a representative of the build-



Rendering by Ralph Schuermann

**THE NATIONAL CYCLING ASSOCIATION** wants to turn the Armory into a bicycling center complete with a world-class velodrome.

ing and trades unions, told the *Norwood News* in June that this has been the common thread among proposals for the Armory: while there have been plenty of ideas, none have had the political or finan-

cial resources to make them a reality.

"We listened to one guy after another," Kittle said, of the proposals. "No one wanted to bring their own resources to the table." —JEANMARIE EVELLY

## Norwood Shopping District Rebounds

This past March, Foodtown, one of Norwood's premier supermarkets, reopened to rave reviews 15 months after being destroyed in a fire.

It marked a welcome sign of resurgence for a neighborhood shopping district crippled by two devastating fires at the end of 2009.

While the first fire took out 10 small businesses on the corner of Bainbridge Avenue, it was the second major fire, on East 204th Street, that left the neighborhood without a major supermarket and all the foot traffic it generated.

In the aftermath, the Katz brothers, who own the Foodtown chain and whose father opened up the family's first produce stand in Norwood 55 years ago, vowed to rebuild. And they did, expanding the store by 50 percent and introducing new features, such as a sushi bar, an olive and cheese counter, more seafood and a more spacious design.

Customers and employees were glad to be back. "It was tough watching something you put 12 years into go up in smoke," said

store manager Rick Shinnerer, "but out of the ashes, a new store has emerged."

Meanwhile, elsewhere on East 204th Street, a new bar, Beso Lounge, opened up where the old Sandbox used to be. Radioshack also opened a branch down the block to accompany mainstays like Hillside Meats, Freilich Jewelers and McKeon and Son Funeral Home.

The area's merchants association also got a shot in the arm. Eli Garcia, the owner of Beso Lounge, was elected president, Allan Freilich of Freilich Jewelers became vice president, Bill Curran of McKeon and Son Funeral Home became treasurer and Hamlet Aquino of Metro PCS became secretary. Their first act brought decorative lights to the area this holiday season.

On the downside, the lot on Bainbridge Avenue that burned down on Halloween of 2009 remains a rubble-strewn wasteland. The owner, Evelyn Jacobson, who also vowed to rebuild after the fire, is now putting the lot up for sale.

—ALEX KRATZ

## Bronx Church's Fight with DOE Goes Supreme

(continued from p. 1)

worship inside schools. Other churches citywide promptly followed their lead.

In June, however, an appeals court ruled, 2-1, to uphold the DOE's policy against worship services inside its buildings. Bronx Household and the Alliance appealed the ruling, which brought the case all the way to the Supreme Court. But after deliberating on the case for at least a week, the Supreme Court declined to review the case without comment on

Dec. 5.

That move upheld the lower court ruling in favor of the DOE, which gave churches until Feb. 12 to find a new place to worship. Bronx Household leaders hope that will be enough time for state legislators to pass the bill, introduced by Castro, that would allow them to stay at PS/MS 15 indefinitely, or at least until they can complete construction on a new church in a building just across the street.

—ALEX KRATZ

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## Senseless Acts of Violence Put Grand Ave. in 2011 Spotlight

At a community meeting near Fordham Hill in November, Inspector Joseph Dowling told the crowd that a recent uptick in random neighborhood violence, which had claimed the life of a 59-year-old father and badly injured a 4-year-old boy, did not tell the whole story of violent crime in the 52nd Precinct.

It may not tell the whole story, but it was certainly the biggest crime story of 2011.

Last March, Dowling took over command of the Five-Two from John D'Adamo, a young deputy inspector who was re-assigned after making tabloid headlines when his wife was caught lying to Westchester County police.

Up until this fall, Dowling, who previously commanded a precinct in Washington Heights, had enjoyed a relatively quiet beginning to his tenure. Then, at the end of October, a series of seemingly random acts of violence, most of them on or around Grand Avenue and Fordham Road, put the community on edge and a neighborhood in the spotlight.

The three most frightening and disturbing incidents happened within days of each other.

On Oct. 29, Bimal Chanda, a Bengali immigrant who had lived in the area around West 190th Street and Grand Avenue for decades, was in the process of moving the last of his family's belongings to a condo in Parkchester. (He wanted to move to a safer neighborhood.) He went out to get packing tape in the morning. His wife would later find him badly beaten in the second floor stairwell and called for help. Days later, Chanda died from his injuries. Police said thieves stole \$15 from Chanda, who still possessed more than \$70 in cash and all of his credit cards after the beating.

On Nov. 1, just around the corner from Chanda's building, police say Gabriel Sherwood was stabbed to death by friends of one of Sherwood's neighbors after a verbal altercation earlier in the day. Two were arrested and charged with Sherwood's murder.

The following week, 4-year-old Cincer Balthazar was shot during a botched robbery attempt on Grand Avenue near Evelyn Place, just south of Fordham Road. Police said Cincer's father was returning the boy to his mother who lived in a homeless shelter on Grand Avenue when a group of young men tried to rob him for his designer jacket. Cincer was shot in the face in the process and remains in critical yet stable condition. In a bizarre twist, Cincer's father wrestled the gun away from the attackers, chased one of them down and shot him in the neck. Two of the attackers have been arrested and charged. The father was not charged.

In mid-November, friends of Chanda held a candle-light vigil to show their support for the victim and his family. Only four people showed up.

"They are afraid. They don't want people to see their faces," said Chanda's friend Mohammad Ali, a Bangladeshi man who lives in the area. "Even my wife said she wouldn't come tonight. She said, 'Don't make yourself a target.'"

—ALEX KRATZ

## PS 51 Contaminated, Parents Still Outraged

(continued from p. 1)

ents went downtown to testify at a City Council hearing for the DOE's community engagement office.

At the hearing, parents were told only two of them could testify because of time constraints. Walcott, who attended the first two hours of the hearing, bailed before hearing from PS 51 parents.

—ALEX KRATZ (with reporting by RONALD CHAVEZ)

### Correction

In our last issue (Dec. 15-28), the *Norwood News* made an editing error in its "Holiday Gift Guide" when describing the jewelry options at Freilich Jewelers. The store, located at 312 E. 204th St., offers jewelry from a wide range of prices and styles. We regret the error and apologize for the mistake. For more information about Freilich Jewelers, visit [freilichjewelers.com](http://freilichjewelers.com) or call (718) 798-1063.

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Wednesday,  
beginning January 18  
5:30pm-6:30pm K-3rd grade  
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Monday, beginning January 23  
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### Spring Children's Baseball League

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Bantams 7 & 8 years old Seniors 13-15 years old  
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Montefiore Hospital Employees	\$95 per year	\$10 per month



# Be Healthy!

By JEANMARIE EVELLY

## Through Walks and Weigh-ins, Senator Promotes Healthy Living

Bronx State Sen. Gustavo Rivera spent much of this year — his first in office — looking for ways to make the Bronx healthier. Citing a slew of statistics that rank the borough last in terms of health indicators, Rivera launched the Bronx CAN (Changing Attitudes Now) Health Initiative this June.

Partnering with Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., local hospitals, a number of faith and community-based organizations and local schools, Bronx Health CAN held health-themed events across the borough throughout the spring, summer and fall, encouraging Bronxites to set small health goals for themselves, like cooking more meals at home or working out a few times a week. Rivera hosted weekly walks, health screenings and free exercises classes. He worked with bodega owners in an effort to get them to sell more fresh fruits and

vegetables in their stores.

To publicize the initiative, the Senator made it personal: at the launch of the program last spring, he pledged to lose 15 to 20 pounds before the first leg of the initiative wrapped up, and held weekly “weigh-ins” where he stepped on the scale. As of November, Rivera has lost 16 pounds.

“There’s no better way to do it than to set an example myself,” he said.

## Bronx Students Grow Food, Get Jobs

What started a couple of years ago as a science lesson in the classrooms of Discovery High School ballooned this year into a full-fledged, borough-wide nonprofit that trains students in growing and selling their own food.

The Green Bronx Machine was started by a group of Discovery students and science teacher Steve Ritz, who for years has had his students grow their own plants and vegetables in their Walton campus classroom, part of his lessons on biology

and earth science. The program became so popular that it expanded beyond the school, and students were soon planting rooftop and urban gardens across the Bronx, selling the produce to local restaurants and farmers markets, or donating it to soup kitchens. This year, Green Bronx Machine began offering students the option of completing a certified training program.

“We’re not just growing vegetables, we’re growing citizens and engaged communities,” Ritz said.

Their efforts have won the group citywide and national recognition. They won an “Excellence in School Wellness Award” from the Strategic Alliance for Health, and an “Above and Beyond Award” from ABC news this year.

## Smoking Bans Expanded

The Bronx became a less welcoming

place for smokers this year, with the passage of a citywide bill that bans lighting up in parks, beaches and other public places. Health advocates had been pushing for the legislation, which went into effect in May, making anyone caught smoking in a city park or beach eligible for \$50 fine.

Supporters of the ban included a number of local organizations and many Bronx City Council members, who said it’s a key step in reducing the harmful effects of second-hand smoke.

“The Bronx has one of the highest asthma rates in the whole city,” said Juan Rios, of the Highbridge Community Life Center, which is teaming up with the Bronx Smoke-Free Partnership to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking. “Hopefully the legislation will give us sanctuary for nonsmokers, and also smokers who are trying to quit.”

Last spring, Montefiore Medical Center, the Bronx’s largest employer, expanded its own campus no-smoking policy to ban cigarettes around any of its 100 locations across the borough.

## Webster Ave. Rezoning Paves Way for Change

Webster Avenue, a major roadway that runs through the neighborhoods of Norwood and Bedford Park, was rezoned by the City Council this spring after years of planning by local Community Board 7 and other major neighborhood institutions.

The new zoning is designed to encourage more retail stores and residential housing in an area now largely composed of parking lots and auto body shops.

Though not necessarily a direct result of the city’s change — zoning plans are more like gentle hands that shape a neighborhood, and depending on market conditions, it can take years before any real changes are seen — new projects already took root this year along Webster.

Jackson Development Group is constructing over 400 new apartments in four buildings along the south end of Woodlawn Cemetery, just north of Gun Hill

Road. The massive development will be called “Webster Commons,” and contain rentals for low- and moderate-income tenants.

Another, much smaller affordable housing complex is planned for Webster Avenue just north of 204th Street. Development groups Azimuth and Sebco proposed building 60 apartment units, a portion of which would be set aside for formerly homeless families and a first floor that would be leased to a for-profit daycare company.

The rezoning adopted for Webster intentionally creates incentives for affordable housing, and a City Planning spokesperson compared it to a similar plan approved years ago in Morrisania — a south Bronx neighborhood that’s subsequently been transformed by a building boom over the last decade, where brand new, low-income housing complexes have



Photo by Adi Talwar

**WEBSTER AVENUE**, for years comprised of mostly auto body shops and parking lots, was rezoned this year to encourage more retail and residential housing.

sprung up like dandelions.

The city and the Bloomberg administration heralds this growth as “revitalizing” to communities; the mayor has even

set a goal of creating or preserving at least 165,000 units of affordable housing by 2014, part of his New Housing Marketplace Plan.

## Q&A with Bronx Bomber Kiefer Dixon

*Starting as a lone wolf skateboarder from the Norwood area, Kiefer Dixon, 22, has won fame and a few nice paychecks from his speed and stamina on a longboard (a long skateboard). Before winning his ninth race of the year in Miami, Dixon sat down with the Norwood News to talk boards, handstanding his way through Times Square, his recent win in Puerto Rico and how the borough has influenced his style.*

### How did you start out on the longboard?

The first board that actually made me like speed skating was given to me by these Jamaican dudes. They said they had a longboard laying around and always saw me skateboarding. It was faster than the one I had at the time, and I was always by myself, so the speed was definitely what entertained me. The Bronx isn’t the safest

place, but I’ve always kept moving.

### Tell me about the board you have with you.

When I made it, I didn’t measure anything, I did it all by eye. I like riding big boards because I feel more comfortable and faster, but I made it narrow so I could get through tighter spaces. I got these precision trucks from my sponsor. They’re small so I don’t step on my wheel. I have it angled so it’s super stable and so I don’t get speed wobbles going down hills. I like big wheels too. I use these ones for training because they’re super heavy.

### Do you have a reputation forming in the borough?

My reputation around here is that you’ll never see me walking. If I’m on the train, people are like, ‘what are you doing here, don’t you skate?’ Everyone has some story of me doing a trick or riding on my hands through

a busy intersection. Even my brother’s bus driver says he’s proud of me because he never sees me on the corners with my pants down. My trick that I’m know for the most is my handstand on the board. I’ve done handstands through traffic, down hills, through 42nd Street. The longest I’ve held it is four blocks going down Broadway.

### What are your roads of choice in the Bronx?

I take University Avenue when I feel like bombing that hill to Manhattan. When I want to go fast through the Bronx, I take Jerome. When I want to take the scenic route, I take the Concourse.

—Interview by EMILY PICCONE

**Ed. Note:** For the complete version of the this interview, visit [norwoodnew.org](http://norwoodnew.org) and search “Kiefer Dixon.”



# PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

## Simón Bolívar Foundation 2012 Grant Cycle Now Open



The  
Simón Bolívar Foundation Inc.  
(the "Foundation"), the charitable  
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**Applications must be received by  
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### MISCELLANEOUS

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# Inquiring Photographer

By DAVID GREENE

This week we asked readers for New Year's resolutions and wishes for 2012.



I just had a baby, so to be a great mom, along with my boyfriend, become great parents, keep going to school, get a job. Hopefully get an apartment and just start a better life.

**Vanity Tejada**



My New Year's resolution is to work on budgeting my finances better and my hopes for the New Year is a rebounding economy and continued good health.

**Jorge Nieves**



My New Year's resolution is to be more serious about my health and to just step it up and be more health conscious, and hopes for the New Year? To do better in school and take things more seriously.

**Alexis Nieves**



For one, help me find a home. I'm like living between shelters. I know the economy is kind of tough, I'm wishing that things get better for all of us. I hope the economy gets better. I hope we as a community pull together and help one another, but things are not looking too good right now... I know, I've been struggling for a very long time.

**Anthony Carroll**



I hope to spend time with my family and going to school and learning neat handwriting at school.

**Shantavia Carroll**

## The Highs and Lows of the Oval Pop-up Piano

The story of a community piano project in Williamsbridge Oval Park took so many twists and turns this past summer it felt like a roller coaster.

In June, the nonprofit group Sing for Hope placed a decorated "pop-up" piano for anyone to use in Oval Park as part of a project to inject music into the life of parks throughout the city. Later that month, the *Norwood News* and dozens of other news outlets reported the piano stolen after it disappeared.

Some were quick to call the stolen piano evidence of a neighborhood and a borough trending toward the dark side.

"This type of activity continues to give the Bronx a bad name and will make it difficult to bring any type of activity to parts of the Bronx that is not called Riverdale," said a commenter on the Bronx News Network blog.

Later, as the resurgent Friends of Williamsbridge Oval Park volunteer group was searching for ways to replace the piano, the *News* discovered that the piano had not been stolen. In fact, Parks

Department workers had mistaken the piano for trash and hauled it out of the park. (The agency soon apologized for its error.)

By then, the Friends group had already secured a new piano and was in the process of bringing it back to the park where it would be triumphantly painted by dozens of young local residents.

The story went from feel bad, to feel confused, to feel good in a matter of days.

"People are dying to have a reason to get involved and contribute to neighborhood cohesion," said Eileen Markey, a member of Friends of the Oval. "There were people who came out of the woodwork to help."

Later in the summer, however, before it could be shipped to a permanent home, the new/old/replacement piano was vandalized and rendered unplayable.

—ALEX KRATZ

**THE YEAR  
IN REVIEW  
2011**

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing will be held concerning a local law which will increase the annual budget amount of the Jerome-Gun Hill Road Business Improvement District (BID), not to exceed \$259,000 for the 2012 assessment.

Wednesday, January 18, 2012  
10AM  
250 Broadway, 16th Floor, Hearing Room  
New York, NY 10007

This date may be subject to change. Please call the BID for more information at (718) 324-4461.

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# Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

## Events

■ The Mosholu Montefiore Senior Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave., presents a **New Year's Party**, luncheon at 11:30 a.m., followed by karaoke and dancing at 12:30 p.m. (\$4 in advance; \$5 at the door). For more information, call (718) 798-6601.

■ The New York Botanical Garden presents **Holiday Train Show**, featuring replicas of NYC landmarks made of natural materials such as bark, twigs, fruits and seeds, and large-scale model trains running along nearly a quarter mile of track featuring bridges, tunnels and waterfalls, through Jan. 16. Included will be a glimpse at the making of the exhibition at

the Artist's Studio. Children can enjoy **Gingerbread Adventures**, **Holiday Film Festival**, **The Little Engine That Could Puppet Show**, and in January, **All Aboard With Thomas & Friends**. For more information, tickets, and details of holiday events and rates, call (718) 817-8700.

■ Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse (165th Street), presents **First Fridays**, Jan. 6 from 6 to 10 p.m., featuring film, art performances, music and other special events. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

## Exhibits

■ The Pregones Theatre, 571-575

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

■ The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse at 165th St., presents **Muntadas: Information, Space, Control**, through Jan. 16; and **Urban Archives: Emilio Sanchez in the Bronx**, through Jan. 2. Admission is free on Fridays. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

■ Lehman College's Art Gallery, located at 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents free **Sticks and Stones**; and **El Museo's Bienal: The (S) Files 2011**; both through Jan. 6, free, Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 960-8731.

■ Bronx River Art Center, 305 E. 140th St., #1A, presents free: **Shifting Communities**, an exhibition highlighting dynamic initiatives in culture and the arts, through Jan. 6. For more information, call (718) 589-5819.

## Library Events

■ The Bronx Library Center, at 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. off Fordham Road, presents programs for kids including **Preschool Story Time**, Dec. 29, Jan. 5 and 12 at 11 a.m.; **Film Day**, Jan. 4 and 11 at 4 p.m.; **Winter Frame Making** (ages 5 to 12), Jan. 5 at 4 p.m.; **Tales for the Teeny Tiny** (ages 3 to 5), Jan. 7 at 11 a.m.; **Gates of Equality**, one-man show about Martin Luther King, Jr. (ages 5 to 12), Jan. 7 at 2 p.m.; **Mad Science Workshops at 4 p.m.** (ages 3 to 12; registration required): on wallowing weather, Jan. 10; **Global Partners, Jr.** (ages 5 to 12), students connect worldwide via the Internet, Jan. 4 and 11 at 4 p.m.; and **Tacky the Penguin and Other Frosty Winter Tales** (ages 3 to 12), Dec. 29 at 2 p.m. Adults can attend **Interest: The Key to Finance**, Jan. 3 at 10 a.m.; **2012 Tax Season Update Forum for Tax Professionals**, Jan. 5 at 5:30 p.m.; **Free Entrepreneurship Workshops**, Jan. 7 at 11 a.m. and Jan. 10 at 5:30 p.m.; **Movie: Czech Cinema: "Little Otik,"** Jan. 7 at 2:30 p.m.; **Raising Financially**



### EDITOR'S PICK

## Music Legends in the Bronx

The Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents musical legends, **The O'Jays**, Jan. 14 at 8 p.m. (tickets are \$55 to \$65). For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

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**Responsible Children**, Jan. 10 at 10 a.m.; and **Reproductive Rights and Health Services**, national and local updates: special training for health professionals, Jan. 11 at 10 a.m. **ESL classes** are offered for speakers of other languages (in-person registration required), Jan. 4 at 6 p.m. and Jan. 10 at 1 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org).

■ The Mosholu Library, at 285 E. 205th St., offers **Knitting Circle at 3 p.m.** (for adults), Dec. 29, Jan. 5 and 12; and **Wii Program** (for seniors and adults), Tuesdays at 3 p.m. For more information,

tion, call (718) 882-8239.

■ The Jerome Park Library, at 118 Eames Place, offers **Arts & Crafts** (toddlers, ages 18 to 36 months), Jan. 9 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

*A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS!*

**NOTE:** Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to [norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org](mailto:norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org), and should be received by Jan. 2 for the next publication date of Jan. 12. Find more events at [www.norwoodnews.org](http://www.norwoodnews.org).

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing will be held concerning a local law which will increase the annual budget amount of the Fordham Road Business Improvement District (BID), not to exceed \$625,000 for the 2012 assessment.

Wednesday, January 18, 2012  
10AM  
250 Broadway, 16th Floor, Hearing Room  
New York, NY 10007

This date may be subject to change. Please call the BID for more information at (718) 562-2104 or visit [www.fordhamroad-bid.org](http://www.fordhamroad-bid.org).

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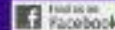
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