**Bloomberg-era DEP Chief to Re-run Agency**

By DAVID CRUZ

Amid a decade of delays for the Croton Water Filtration Plant project, Mayor Bill de Blasio has re-hired the city Department of Environmental Protection commissioner largely criticized for turning the plant project into the city’s costliest endeavor.

Emily Lloyd was once again tapped to run the DEP, replacing outgoing chief Carter Strickland. She was DEP boss from 2005 to 2008 under Mayor Mike Bloomberg, charged with overseeing construction of the plant. But the project gradually spiraled out of control, resulting in federal fines for slow work, federal probes into the project’s mob-connected construction firms, and audits showing ballooning cost overruns. Costs have since been passed on to Bronxites, soaked with sky high water bills over the last decade.

It’s long been considered a boondoggle by dogged activists and elected officials who’ve followed the plant’s unfortunate story: creating a divide between them and DEP officials who’ve stonewalled over requests for more transparency. From the beginning, activists have harangued the city to investigate the mishandling of the project under Lloyd’s tenure.

**Passing the Torch Back to Lloyd**

Still, de Blasio labeled Lloyd a “highly-respected leader” when he announced her encore at a ceremony on Feb. 18, adding that he’s known her for over 20 years and has “just the greatest faith in and the greatest respect for [her].” After leaving city government, Lloyd served as president of the Prospect Park Alliance, a nonprofit group that beautifies Brooklyn’s Prospect Park.

Lloyd ignored the filtration plant in her remarks, focusing primarily on making repairs to the Delaware Aqueduct, another New York City waterway system that carries half of the drinking water into the city. With steel portions currently leaking from age, DEP was tasked to build a temporary 2.5-mile bypass tunnel. DEP Deputy Commissioner said the (continued on page 6)

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**Yet Another Supportive Housing Proposal in CB7**

By HAYLEY CAMACHO

A housing developer received a lukewarm reception during Community Board 7’s Housing Committee meeting on Feb. 19. There, board members and residents heard a presentation by Praxis Housing Initiatives for another supportive housing development in the district. Praxis laid out plans for a supportive/affordable housing development project at 2270 Loring Pl. in University Heights for homeless HIV/AIDS residents with possible chemical dependency.

The proposed development, a block from Bronx Community College, will be built along three rundown private homes that were illegally occupied by squatters. The homes will be torn down and an eight-story building will rise, comprised of six floors of living space with a setback on the sixth floor to be used as a terrace for tenants. Praxis, which already has a supportive housing facility at 4338 White Plains Rd. in Wakefield slated to open this spring, intends to house the HIV/homeless tenants in 70 percent of its units. The other 30 percent of the units would be earmarked for affordable housing.

Along with a rooftop terrace, plans for the space include 1400 square feet of common space on the first floor that’s open to neighborhood groups interested in holding meetings. The second floor will house the offices of social service providers for residents. The apartments will be comprised of 60 studios measuring 310 square feet and 10 one- and two-bedroom apartments measuring 645 square feet and 780 square feet respectively.

In an attempt to allay concerns about the size of the studios, William Stein, principal of Dattner Architects, said that the studios were “well designed with compact kitchens, full bathrooms.” “This is not SRO (single room housing),” he said, adding that the more compact, shoebox studio designs are largely accepted by the city Housing Preservation and Development Department today.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea,” said community board member Sandra Erickson.

(continued on page 7)

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**Protecting Precious Parklands**

CATHERINE O’BRIEN (left) takes a few minutes to speak with Doug Condit (center) and Elisabeth von Uhl (right), Norwood neighbors and members of Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval. The pair shared their passion for the leafy jewel during the 20th anniversary of Bronx Parks Speak Up on Feb. 22. The forum gave a voice to park advocates, who addressed park-related dilemmas.

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Espaillat Garners Early Support

By DAVID CRUZ

With petitioning already underway for Congressional contests, candidates in the 13th Congressional District are waging a no holds barred race. And with a hot race comes the emphasis on who will endorse whom. For state Sen. Adriano Espaillat, the Dominican-born legislator has gained early traction thanks to some endorsements from colleagues, including City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito.

Espaillat will go toe-to-toe once again with political heavyweight Congressman Charles Rangel, the 22-term incumbent whose star power slightly faded in recent years following several political scandals that impacted his influence. Still, Rangel’s star power helped him keep his seat during the 2012 Congressional Primary, though barely.

Viverito, who campaigned in Harlem for Rangel in his 2012 race against Espaillat, switched sides last month, explaining that Espaillat is in tune with the “economic challenges New Yorkers are facing, and how we can be enthusiastic stewards of leadership to Washington on the issues that matter.”

Espaillat’s colleague, Sen. Gustavo Rivera, has also given an early endorsement for Espaillat. The two were spotted in the Fordham area, touching base with business owners on Saturday, March 1.

Rivera’s early endorsement of Espaillat could likely run counter to Bronx Democratic County Leader, Carl Heastie, who’s known to back the incumbent. He did not respond to early emails over whether he would back Rangel for re-election. Rivera has gone against the borough’s political winds, having recently endorsed Viverito for Council Speaker when the Bronx political elite supported Manhattan Councilman Dan Garodnick.

But knowledge of the issues by Espaillat, Rangel and potential challenger Rev. Michael Walrond was not much to sway the Benjamin Franklin Reform Democrats, the northwest Bronx group which held off its endorsement of any candidate during a forum on Monday, Feb. 24. The group had voted for Espaillat in his last battle against Rangel, eventually winning the Bronx but ultimately losing.

Members voted unanimously to postpone their endorsement during their gathering shortly after Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz, whose district falls within the political club, spoke in favor of delaying the vote. “...I don’t think we should feel under the gun to decide tonight,” said Dinowitz, advising a packed house of members at their Kingsbridge headquarters. “There may be other people considering to weigh in, elected officials or unions. I’m not saying we have to be the last, but we don’t always have to be the very first to make an endorsement.”

By holding off the vote, members can pore over the qualifications and strengths of each candidate extensively. Rangel made his pitch to the public, citing his longtime experience in Congress as the main reason why he should retain his seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. “I challenge anybody anywhere saying they could do a better job,” said Rangel, who arrived with his wife and Manhattan Councilman Inez Dickens to the forum. Rangel mixed his liberal rhetoric with a touch of statesman-like experience that was largely missing from the two challengers.

CB Mtgs. May Go Hi-Tech

Imagine attending a community board meeting from the convenience of your couch. It can happen. If the New York City Council approves it.

On Monday, Feb. 24, the Council’s Technology Committee pored over a bill that aims to create a public access website on all full board community meetings.

The legislation, first proposed in 2013, was discussed at an oversight hearing chaired by Bronx Councilman Jimmy Vacca, who also drafted the bill. The legislation is designed to record and webcast public meetings for those unable to attend.

Videos of the meetings would then be streamed live, archived, and made available to the public on a website. Some exemptions to the law would be board executive committee sessions or general committee meetings.

While the legislation is now waiting to be voted on by the committee, the timetable is not set yet. CB 7 chairperson Adaline Santiago Walker said the innovation could be helpful, but expressed concerns over how to pay for it. “We have a very active community and many disabled people would be happy to follow our meetings on-line, but I have no idea how they’re going to buy all the equipment,” she noted.

John Marano, chairing Community Board 10 that includes Westchester Square, Throggs Neck, and City Island, called Vacca’s move a “great idea,” though he asked how the plan would be paid. “…Funding is a major problem as we have a budget of about $20,” he said. “And who will be in charge of the videos?”

While it’s unclear how the city will fund the video cameras needed to record the meetings, Vacca’s office said the proposal is positive, believing that it would increase participation of citizens otherwise excluded by the board’s activities.

—PAOLO MOSSETTI

Public and Community Meetings

• COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will meet Tuesday, March 18 at the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave. CB7 committees are held on the following dates at the board office, 229A E. 204th St., at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Public Safety & QOL committee meets Thursday, March 6; Health & Hospitals Committee and Environment & Sanitation committees meet Tuesday, March 11; Community Relations & LTP and Economic Development committees meet Wednesday, March 12; Traffic & Transportation Committee meets Thursday, March 13. For more information, call (718) 933-5650 or visit bronxcb7.info/calendar. All meetings are subject to change. Call to confirm.
King to NCBH: Please Deliver on Maternity Ward

By JUSTIN MCCALLUM

With a deadline approaching, hospital union leaders and their local City Councilman are pressuring the city to re-open North Central Bronx Hospital’s maternity ward on time or risk losing the medical service.

“We come together this morning to get this done, to hold them to a timeframe,” said Councilman Andy King, flanked by hospital union leaders in front of the hospital on Feb. 25. “We’re here to remind NCBH that they have a responsibility not only to themselves, not only to jobs, but more importantly, to the residents who rely on their services every single day.”

The ward closed last August over concerns there weren’t enough doctors to tend to expectant moms. The remaining physicians were re-located to area hospitals, which resulted in overcrowding. Activists rallied in November to convince NCBH brass to re-open the ward with new maternity physicians on hand. NCBH agreed to re-open the ward, with the city Department of Health giving it an April 30 deadline or risk permanent closure.

Director of New York State Nurses Association Jill Furillo is outraged at the prospect that these resources for expectant mothers could disappear altogether.

“We reject the idea that the Department of Health services would decertify any of the beds that are needed in this community,” she said. “Bronx moms need the NCBH neonatal unit to open on time and with no further delays. A soon-to-be mother with a complicated pregnancy does not deserve a long commute to her doctor, and to wait in long lines and in overcrowded rooms.”

Before it closed, NCBH’s maternity ward delivered 1500 babies in 2012, which amounted to 10 percent of childbirths in the Bronx. Since its closing, other area hospitals have had to pick up the slack, resulting in overcrowding, long waits, and life threatening situations for mothers and newborns.

“If you’re going to get a surgical procedure like a heart transplant, you can travel a few miles, but if you’re in labor you can’t do that,” said Judy Sheridan-Gonzalez, a head nurse at the neighboring Montefiore Medical Center. “You have to have something on location, otherwise you’re going to have taxicab deliveries. It’s really dangerous.”

Sheridan-Gonzalez described how area hospitals are seeing a spike in precipitous births in facilities not meant for delivery and labor services. Rather, many are being forced to give birth in emergency rooms, discomforting expectant moms and their attending doctors. “Fifteen hundred births don’t get absorbed easily,” she said.

Edwin Diaz, a contract worker with 1199SEIU, depicted the problem as a moral, life and death issue, which was recognized by longtime resident and hospital advisory board member Fay Muir. “I hear it every day how pregnant women are facing difficulties having to travel for services that they used to have here that were taken away,” Muir said. “I think it’s so important they keep to the timeline. They promised it to us in April; we need it in April, we deserve better.”

A spokesman for NCBH assured the Norwood News that the restructuring of the labor and delivery services is on track, thanks to the November appointment of Dr. Michael Zinaman as chairman of the OB-GYN service and recruitment of senior level service providers.

“In January, Dr. Zinaman provided the hospital’s community advisory board with an update on his plans,” the spokesman wrote in an email to the Norwood News. “We are poised to finalize that plan (this month) and expect to retain sufficient senior level providers to permit us to resume labor and delivery services by the end of the summer.”

The city Department of Health was unavailable to comment on whether this move was enough to re-certify the 1500 beds. Nevertheless, King remained hopeful at the prospects for NCBH given community engagement on the issue. “This is the first part of our public conversation,” King said. “We want to make sure everyone is informed, so we can all participate and make sure the community is served the way we want it to be.”
Inquiring Photographer

We asked readers their thoughts on this year’s Democratic Primary Race for representative of the 13th Congressional District, currently Charles Rangel’s seat.

I don’t know much about the other candidates who are running against [Charles] Rangel. He’s helped the community a great deal and is starting to influence the neighborhood. I hope he wins.

Steven Avallone

Rangel’s been in office 40 years, he’s an old-timer. I guess I remember Rangel from the ’70s and ’80s and he’s always served his constituents very well, compared to some other elected officials who don’t do anything.

Mary Leon

Rangel should be replaced. He has not notified us that he has an office in [the Bronx]. There are things that people want to see their Congressman about, but can’t because they don’t know where he is. I think we need someone younger in office.

Ed Gelfand

I understand Charlie Rangel is running against [Adriano] Espaillat, but I don’t really know Espaillat. I know what to expect from Charles Rangel. I know he’s older but he will vote for issues I care about. He’ll vote for issues that help poor people and he’ll stand up against the Tea Party in Congress.

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Dale Kinney

My hopes about this upcoming Congressional race is that whoever wins the election knows the Bronx. I don’t believe that Mr. Rangel knows the Bronx. Congressmen are supposed to be men of action, but I haven’t seen that yet from him and I think we deserve more.

Sheila Sanchez
The Creation of Clark: A Street Artist

By SHAYLA LOVE

Outside of Clark’s window on Lowell Avenue in Longwood, the 6 train rumbled from its underground tunnel and into the sunlight of the above-ground tracks. Clark was eight years old when he looked out of his apartment and noticed something he considered beautiful. The subway car was spray-painted from top to bottom in bright colors. The names “Duster” and “Lizzie” shone from the surface of the car.

He ran out of his building into an empty lot and searched for something to paint with. He found a broken statuette and scratched an image onto the sidewalk.

Clark the Tagger

Clark FLY I.D. is his full artist name now, declining to reveal his birth name. It can be seen painted above a mural named “Blessed” on Webster Avenue and 205th Street in Norwood, along with something unexpected: Clark’s phone number. The mural was painted by Clark and his crew member, GARCIA, with permission from the deli. The majority of his work done in recent years has been legal and commissioned graffiti, unlike the street scrawls of his youth.

Clark donated this mural, an adaptation of The Creation of Adam fresco by Michelangelo, the classical artist. Clark said he wanted to paint something that a passerby could identify, and then re-interpret upon closer examination, once they realized that Adam was not Adam, but a tagger.

“I believe that when I was a kid, I destroyed a lot of the neighborhood,” Clark said. “And now that I’m older and more talented, I can give back. And this is my way of giving back: painting a free mural.”

Clark’s crew is also named FLY I.D. and it originally stood for “Infinite Destruction.” Clark spent his teenage years in the 1980s tagging subway cars and writing his name on walls. He stole paint to support his hobby. “It’s a gateway to crime,” Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj said. “There could be one tagger who goes over another piece, and it can beget violence. Most of these kids who are tagging may not be employed. It raises the question of where they’re getting the money for the spray paint. It’s quite an expensive habit.”

He believes that some of the painters are talented, but that tagging results in gang or crew affiliations. He doesn’t think that city streets are the appropriate setting for this type of expression. Gjonaj said if he were to get his way he would “paint over every mural that exists out there.”

Clark decided to redefine his and his crew’s alias. Infinite Destruction was his mentality of the 80s, but he had changed. While on a bus back from Yonkers, his friend uttered the five words that have since defined Clark’s crew: FLY I.D., Forever Living Your Infinite Dreams.

CLAIRK FLY I.D. proudly takes ownership of his mural, “Blessed,” that he legally painted on Webster Avenue at 205th Street.

Opposition

Clark’s story of transition from illegal to legal painting doesn’t resonate with a local policy maker who fights to keep the streets clean. Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj, representing the Norwood area, said that he doesn’t care for street murals, whether they were painted with permission or not. His zero-tolerance policy is borne out of the abundance of graffiti scrawls surrounding parts of his 80th Assembly District.

“It’s a gateway to crime,” Gjonaj said. “There could be one tagger who goes over another piece, and it can beget violence. Most of these kids who are tagging may not be employed. It raises the question of where they’re getting the money for the spray paint. It’s quite an expensive habit.”

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Clark said that while every politician has had a stance against graffiti, he’s not going anywhere. “If somebody comes and paints over my wall, that’s okay,” he said. “I’ll just go paint another wall in another community. If they say I can’t, I’ll do it illegally. If that’s not their way, I’ll do it on a canvas, they can’t stop me. It’s how I feel.”
De Blasio’s view of Lloyd ran counter to Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz, whose 81st Assembly District falls within the filtration plant. “I question, especially given some of the good appointments [de Blasio] made, why he would bring back a re-tread from the Bloomberg administration who presided for some time over the cost overruns,” said Dinowitz.

Gary Axelbank, an activist delving into the plant issue for the last decade, said Lloyd barely attended meetings held monthly by the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee (CFMC). When she and her deputy commissioner attended a July 2007 private meeting at Dinowitz’s district office, Axelbank recalled her as standoffish, often speaking in a “condescending tone.”

During CFMC gatherings, Lloyd allowed a policy that forbade the public from asking direct questions to DEP officials or managers related to the project. Instead, questions were deferred to board members who later broached those inquiries to the DEP. “We had to fight and petition to get them to change the rules,” said Axelbank, adding that de Blasio’s choice for DEP suggests more of a regressive than progressive stance, which de Blasio has self-popularized. “If the mayor was going to move forward and really understand what the issues were here, he would find somebody who would rein in the costs, [and] understand the problems,” said Axelbank. “[Lloyd] doesn’t appear to be that person.”

A History Marred With Bungling

The filtration plant has remained a bruise in the north-west Bronx, largely because of its sheer mishandling that extends beyond Lloyd’s tenure. The plant was ordered built by the federal government 20 years ago after finding that raw water from the New Croton Aqueduct was frequently colored. Forcing its hand, the DEP constructed the filtration plant beneath the Mosholu Golf Course in Van Cortlandt Park, seizing 43 acres of parkland and sectioning off the public walkway at the Jerome Park Reservoir, where filtered water would travel.

“We’ve always wanted access to the Reservoir,” said Axelbank. “Under Emily Lloyd we just got farther and farther away.”

The city pledged $200 million in beautification projects for Bronx parks in exchange for the community’s approval. But assurances went unfulfilled after an audit by then Comptroller John Liu found that roughly $107 million worth of projects were completed. Meanwhile, the number of construction jobs promised to Bronxites didn’t pan out. When Lloyd came on board, she often balked at matters of more transparency. When asked if she would agree to bi yearly budget updates and community roundtable discussions with experts who calculated the bids, she declined. Although she promised no more blasting will happen along the Reservoir site, she reneged after insisting that blasting will help speed up the timetable.

When the inflated costs became apparent, the city’s independent Budget Office found that the project went $2 billion over budget, from its original $900 million estimate. This analysis came just a year after Lloyd voted down a resolution by CFMC to launch a probe into the project’s finances. Lloyd maintained that the inflated costs were due to surprise price jumps in construction material. Dinowitz disputed the charge, blaming design changes to the project’s ballooning price tag.

More Problems

A host of problems further delayed progress for the plant, including original contractor, Tutor Perini, bowing out of the biggest phase of the project in 2007. Swedish-firm Skanska was hired at an extra $200 million, but the delays incurred federal fines after violating agreed-upon start times. All this happened under Lloyd’s watch. After Lloyd left, the problems at the plant persisted with one construction firm being charged for two separate violations that included ties to the mob and fraud.

The project is now at the tail end of construction, four years after the city’s initial completion date of 2010. In February, DEP made some headway in the project by entering its test phase of the filtration plant, monitoring the mechanical and filtration systems, according to a DEP spokesman. He did not answer questions on Lloyd’s qualifications, though he mentioned she is expected to resume her post in mid-March.

The de Blasio administration did not answer questions relating to Lloyd, including the administration’s process when vetting Lloyd given her lackluster response to the community.

EMILY LLOYD (at the podium) is picked as the head of the Department of Environmental Protection once again, tasked to oversee the troubled Croton Water Filtration Plant. She stands alongside Mayor Bill de Blasio who appointed Lloyd.
Yet Another Supportive Housing Proposal in CB7

(continued from page 1)
Florencio Cuevas, Director of Operations for Praxis, said the building would have 24-hour security and security cameras. He also distributed a copy of the criminal background form required by all supportive housing tenants to submit as evidence of Praxis’ stern review process. “If any flags come up, we have to sit down with that individual and let them know they can’t come into that facility,” he said. Affordable housing tenants would also have to sign a lease.

Community Grumblings

Skepticism abounded among the board members already frustrated from the influx of supportive housing development in the district. Indeed, sites within Community Board 7’s borders are nothing new. In a report by the Borough President’s Office in 2009, there were 13 supportive housing sites scattered about Community Board 7. The sites ranged from supportive housing for low-income earners to those who once suffered mental illness. Supportive services are included on-site, which include job counseling, social work and recreational activities. CB7 ranked sixth in the number of supportive housing sites, though it was disproportionately higher than neighboring boards 8 and 12, which hold one and six sites respectively.

New facilities are developing in the neighborhood, specifically Webster Avenue. The corridor was re-zoned three years back under the city Economic Development Corporation’s Vision Plan as a way to entice developers in building affordable housing and commercial space. Cuevas backed supportive housing as a boon to any community, citing the benefits of supportive housing for its residents and the larger community. “People in supportive housing developments get stabilized and learn how to manage their life better,” he said. “They shop in the community and that helps the community at large.”

Housing Committee Chair Jean Hill said the board is largely concerned that an overabundance of supportive housing will lead retailers to look elsewhere, a move that would run counter to the Vision Plan’s intentions. “The type of businesses we want to attract into the area are not going to come because they’re not going to feel that residents have money to spend in their establishment,” she said.

Supportive Housing Landscape

With Praxis eying the neighborhood, the supportive housing stock would once again increase in Community Board 7, whose attempts at sprucing up the community has been met by resistance. Erickson of CB7 reminded Cuevas about the other supportive housing projects slated to arrive: Concern for Independent Living, Project Renewal, the Doe Fund and L&M Development Partners. Erickson slammed Praxis for its number of affordable housing units versus the number of supportive housing units. “Even theirs have better percentages than yours because they are 50/50 supportive, affordable housing and one is 70 percent affordable, 30 percent supportive,” she said. “Yours is 70/30, that’s 21 affordable apartments and 59 supportive, so that is even less desirable for us.”

Stein noted that the typical model for supportive housing is a ratio of 60 percent of the units earmarked for the supportive population and 40 percent for affordable housing. Due to the complexity of the services Praxis was offering its supportive housing residents and the economics of providing them, the ratio of supportive housing was higher for the project. “We can revisit that,” he said.

With Praxis building as-of-right, not much can be made in stopping them from construction of the site. The project is expected to be completed in 2018.

LONGTIME CB7 MEMBER HONORED

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 member John Franco (holding plaque) says so long as he steps down from his membership on the board. He was the man of the hour at the latest CB7 General Board meeting. Board chair Adaline Walker-Santiago was teary-eyed as Franco was awarded a plaque for his commitment to the board that covers Norwood, Kingsbridge, Fordham, Bedford Park and University Heights. Pictured with Franco (l-r) are Assemblyman Victor Pichardo, Council members Fernando Cabrera and Ritchie Torres, and Walker-Santiago.

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OPEN HOUSE: March 22 @ 10:30 am
Carman Hall, Room B08
By the NORWOOD NEWS

Coverage for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is slated to take effect April 1, offering folks cheaper healthcare for everyone, including those with pre-existing conditions. In the Bronx, an estimated 250,000 people are uninsured for various reasons, inspiring healthcare firms to launch efforts in enrolling them in coverage. The end result, according to President Obama, will save families from going bankrupt and further a healthier America.

With healthcare on the minds of many for months, Montefiore Medical Center has since launched on-the-ground awareness campaigns on the new healthcare law, hosting workshops, which in some cases have been in English and Spanish respectively. Workshops are still under way, even happening well past March 15, the deadline when individuals and families are to have signed up for coverage to take effect in April.

Before the law went into effect, states across the country chose whether to create a so-called marketplace, a website where folks can buy insurance that fits their current needs. New York created its own site—www.nystateofhealth.ny.gov. Its help-line toll-free phone number is (855) 355-5777.

In educating the public, Montefiore’s priority has been to offer a clearer look at the role of an exchange, hoping to clarify points to folks still perplexed by the law. That and convincing more Bronxites to sign up. Anecdotally, the number of Bronxites enrolled under the new healthcare law has been lower when compared to the rest of the state. “To me, that says there’s potential for a lot of people to get help and they either don’t know how to access it or they need help accessing it,” said Rose, adding the hospital’s efforts to engage the public “really picked up the pace once open enrollment started” in October.

Workshops cover several topics relating to the marketplace, presenting a step-by-step guide in how to navigate the state-sponsored site. A question and answer session is held, including questions on what happens if folks don’t sign up. The answer is a penalty fee that appears on an individual’s tax return, which varies according to the individual’s yearly income.

One way to avoid a penalty is to apply for an exemption.

One way to avoid a penalty is to apply for an exemption.

It seems fitting for Rose to take the helm in launching an aggressive push to enroll Bronxites into the program. After all, before working at Montefiore, Rose worked in Washington, D.C. to help with the passage of the ACA. She worked as a healthcare advisor for U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller, pegged as one of the lead architects behind the new healthcare law.

Her team’s outreach began in late spring, with a venue that featured Congressman Jose Serrano and New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. Since then, the hospital’s hosted over two-dozen workshops, serving as how-to guides in navigating the law. One of Montefiore’s more recent workshops, which attracted leaders from the business, civic and religious communities, functioned as a training session, with healthcare experts leading an ad hoc class.

But outside of events, Montefiore still has outreach services available for folks who can’t make a high-profile event. The hospital’s hired Certified Applicant Counselors (CAC) to help people fill out the appropriate forms. CACs are available at all of its main campuses in the Bronx, with office hours that run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. And while April 1 is the start of ACA coverage, Rose maintains that more events are in store for those who’ve yet to sign up. This could be advantageous for folks who have Medicaid since they can enroll past the deadline and still be covered.

“It’s estimated that the vast majority of people who are going to get coverage in the Bronx are actually eligible for Medicaid coverage,” said Rose. “So it’s incumbent upon us to help get the word out and make sure that folks know how to be able to see if they’re eligible for that program.”

The next open enrollment period begins Nov 15.

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Neighborhood Notes

**Homebuyer Counseling & Free Tax Prep**
The University Neighborhood Housing Program holds a homebuyer counseling session on March 7 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Northwest Bronx Resource Center, 2715 Bainbridge Ave., offering free one-on-one professional assistance (appointments are available on the first and third Friday of every month); and free tax preparation sessions most Wednesdays (1 to 5 p.m.) and Saturdays (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) until April 9. For more information or an appointment, call (718) 933-2539.

**SYEP**
NYC’s Summer Youth Employment Program is accepting applications for residents ages 14 to 24 through April 25. Those chosen will be selected via lottery among New York City residents ages 14 to 24 through April 25. For more information, call (347) 324-4998 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday thru Friday.

**Open House**
The Bronx Campus of Boroicua College at 890 Washington Ave., holds an open house from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 8. For more information, call (347) 964-8809.

**Summer Camp Applications**
The Fresh Air Fund is accepting applications for its free 2014 summer camp program for eligible children ages 6 to 12 from the Volunteer Host Family Program, and ages 13 to 15 for the camping program in Fishkill, NY. For more information, call (800) 367-0003 or go online to www.freesh: for the Volunteer Host Family Program, and ages 13 to 15 for the camping program in Fishkill, NY. For more information, call (800) 367-0003 or go online to www.freesh.org.

**MetroCard Vans**
MetroCard vans will be making stops on the Bronx on the second and fourth Friday of each month at Fordham Road and the Grand Concourse from noon to 2 p.m.; and Fordham Plaza from 2:30 to 4 p.m. For more information, call (212) 836-6662 or go online to www.mta.info.

**Volunteer for Food Pantry**
Part of the Solution (POTS) seeks volunteers to help feed the hungry year-round. For more information, call (718) 220-4892 or email serve@potsbronx.org.

For more Neighborhood Notes online, go to www.norwoodnews.org and click on “Neighborhood Notes.”

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Business Beat

Belmont BID: Selling Authentic Italian Traditions

By JUSTIN MCCALLUM

For Bronxites and beyond, traveling to the Bronx’s Little Italy is often compared to a trek to the old country. It’s a destination. The smell of seasoned Italian sausage, blended with sights of Italian-named eateries and singers greeting its customers make the area a must-see.

And behind a push to attract visitors to the destination is the Belmont Business Improvement District, the agency tasked to promote the epicenter for Italian fare.

Unlike most BIDs, which usually promote merchandise stores, Belmont’s marquee draw is its neighborhood, intertwined with tradition and Italian fare. “...[W]hat strikes people about this neighborhood is you have two bakeries almost side by side, five or six pastry shops within a stone’s throw, and a lot of Italian delis and restaurants all on the same street,” said Philip Marino, executive director of the Belmont BID.

Since managing the agency in the fall, Marino was shocked to find that the historically Italian neighborhood has seen shifting demographics, yet still embodying the cultural enclave that’s characterized the neighborhood. What was predominantly Italian in the 1800s is now mostly Albanian and Mexican, said BID chairman Frank Franz.

Keeping With Tradition

Still, the character of the neighborhood has remained largely Italian. Marino pointed out that many non-Italian merchants consciously reinforce neighborhood tradition by serving Italian food. “To even my surprise, a lot of the merchants here, although they might run Italian stores, are not all Italian,” he said. “For example, Teitel Brothers has been here nearly a hundred years, and they’re Jewish.”

Gilbert Teitel, the Jewish owner of the 99-year-old family-run shop, keeps the shopping experience authentic for customers by importing directly from Italy. “We do what we can to help the neighborhood and keep customs going, and we’re doing well in spite of it,” Teitel said.

Orazio Carciotto, a native Italian who moved to the Bronx 27 years ago, keeps his shop Casa Della Mozzarella at the corner of East 187th Street and Arthur Avenue as genuine as possible. “[T]his neighborhood feels like you’re in Italy,” Carciotto said. “I really try to make my place feel and look like home.”

Carciotto has had success in business, churning out 3,000 pounds of hand-made mozzarella weekly. His philosophy that “a few little secrets make a big difference” has garnered his eatery a Zagat rating, and a partnership with The New York Yankees.

Name Recognition

The BID has also been striking the right chord, given the increasing number of patrons and revenue coming into Belmont. Marino credits happy customers and merchants to new advertising campaigns and special events such as Fergedosto, a religious-themed festival during the late summer. “Because Arthur Avenue is famous on its own, people come here on their own; people come with their kids, and they pass that down and bring their kids. It’s really traditional,” said Alyssa Tucker, the BID’s assistant director. “But we advertise, we post to our website and Facebook which has nearly 50,000 followers. We also just started Twitter not too long ago, so we reach out that way,” she added.

The Belmont Stakes

Despite their heavy community engagement and partnerships with nearby institutions such as The New York Botanical Garden and Bronx Zoo, the Belmont BID has higher ambitions. “Our budget is split between advertising, events, sanitation that cleans the streets, and some security, and believe me $340,000 is not nearly enough to do everything that business owners want to do,” Marino said. He has pressed for a bocce ball tournament, car show, and a hotel to settle in the community.

Franz said that for 20 years the BID has tried convincing hoteliers to invest in Belmont. “...There was a lot of interest before the recession,” Franz said. “We’re looking for something significant, but that doesn’t mean 40 stories, we don’t like tall buildings around here.”
Editor's Pick

Annual Flea Market

The public is invited to attend the Bedford-Mosholu Community Association’s free annual flea market on Saturday, March 8 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. Mary’s Orthodox Church, 360 Bedford Pk. Blvd. at Decatur Avenue. For more information, call (718) 367-2230 or (718) 584-1900.

Onstage

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents Retumba in celebration of Women’s History Month, performed by an all-female percussion and dance troupe, March 8; as well as a concert, performed by Celia Cruz Bronx H.S. of Music’s Chamber Orchestra and Women’s Choir, March 15; both at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 601-7399.

The Bronx Arts Ensemble presents Peter and the Wolf, March 9 at 1 and 2:30 p.m., at International Caterers, 3243 Ampere Ave. at Research Avenue ($6). For more information, call (718) 601-7399.

Lehman College, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents The MET: Live in HD, Massenet’s Werther, March 15 at 12:55 p.m., in the Lehman Center ($25 to $45). For more information, call (718) 817-8700 or visit nymet.org.

Events

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers Concert: Pianists Syeon Kae Lee & Ran Dank, performing classical music, March 9 at 2 p.m. in the WH House ($32; $28/seniors; $18/ages 7 to 18; $22/WH members; $12/kids). For more information or to order tickets, call (718) 459-3200 ext. 251.

The Bronx County Historical Society’s Museum of Bronx History at the Valentine-Vanar House, 3268 Bainbridge Ave., presents History Woven Into Cloth, selections from the Society’s textile collection, through April 6. For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

Andrew Freedman Home, 1125 Grand Concourse, presents Expanding Views: The Art of Daniel Hauben, March 11 to April 5, with a public reception on March 21 from 6 to 10 p.m. For more information, call (718) 293-8100.

Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents programs for adults including: Festival Ballet: Sleeping Beauty, March 16 at 2 p.m. (phone or in-person registration required); and Microsoft Word 2010 for Beginners: March 13 at 2 p.m. (in-person advance registration required). Children can enjoy Preschool Story Time at 11 a.m.: March 6, 13, and 20; Toddler Play Time at noon: March 6, 13, and 20; Cat Book Making: March 6 at 4 p.m.; Family Time: March 8 at 11 a.m.; and Caterpillar Book Making: March 20 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

The Moshulu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for seniors and adults: Knitting Circle: Thursdays at 3 p.m.; Wii Program: Tuesdays at 3 p.m.; and Health Care Informal Info Session: March 7 at 10:30 a.m. Children can enjoy Toddler Story Time at 10:30 a.m.: (ages 18 to 36 months), March 6, 13 and 20; and Reading Aloud Story Time at 4 p.m.: (ages 3 to 5), March 10 and 17. Adult speakers of other languages can join Free English Conversation Program: intermediate level, Tuesdays from 6:30 to 8 p.m., through April 8. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers: Kids’ Active Health: (ages 5 to 12), March 7 and 14 at 4 p.m.; Toddler Story Time: (ages 18 to 36 months), March 12 and 19 at 11 a.m.; and Chess: (ages 5 to 12), March 18 at 4 p.m. For adults: Computer Basics at noon: March 6, 11, 13, 18 and 20. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

Daylight Savings Time begins Sunday, March 16 at 2 a.m. Turn clocks ahead one hour.

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