

NORWOOD NEWS

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BIG CROWDS AT BENGAL STREET FAIR



Photo by Adi Talwar

RINKU, A FAMOUS SINGER IN BANGLADESH, visited Norwood to perform at the Royal Bengal Street Fair on June 8 at East 204th Street. The Bangladeshi Community of North Bronx along with the Bangladeshi-American Community Council hosted the family-friendly fair that attracted a huge crowd. The fair also showcased multicultural music and dance numbers that garnered plenty of attention throughout the day.

Lawsuits Mar Development Of Kingsbridge Armory

BY PAMELA SEGURA and DAVID CRUZ

For over two months, the Kingsbridge Armory has been at the center of ongoing legal drama that can likely stall the project for months. Plans to turn the landmark Armory into an ice skating facility are now at a standstill following ongoing disputes between Kevin Parker, the developer of the Kingsbridge National Ice Center (KNIC), and his partners Jonathan Richter, Jeff Spiritos and Marcos Wignell.

The suits raise questions over whether development is indeed in the works for the Armory, long considered a game changer for the borough. For the past year, Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. has touted the project to be an example of the “New Bronx,” which would solidify a renaissance for a borough largely lagging in development when compared to the rest of the city. Diaz main-

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Meet the Candidates For The 13th CD, pg. 4

Alternatives Sought for Public Access to Reservoir

BY SHAYLA LOVE

Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz grew up across the street from the Jerome Park Reservoir (JPR). He remembers seeing it filled with water and plant life through his window, and considered it a beautiful asset to his community—one that he wants to give back now.

The JPR has been empty for years, and barred from public access longer, mostly due to the work at the Croton Filtration Plant. The city Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recently announced a construction project at the reservoir that would delay public access even further. With the scope of the work unknown, Dinowitz and Senator Jeff Klein announced legislation that would restore the land around JPR to parkland and make it available for recreational use. The legislation can also offer a concrete date: Jan. 1, 2019.

The land is owned by the DEP. The bill would turn the green space into parkland, under the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). “The possibility of creating parkland around the reservoir is something the city should want to do, not that we have to push for,” Dinowitz said.

Klein and Dinowitz said that the Bronx de-

serves as much parkland as other boroughs, and the same reservoir rights as Manhattan residents have around Central Park. “What we’re asking for is very simple,” Klein said. “Bronxites in this community deserve the same privileges of open space. Boating, recreation and everything that goes with a park reservoir. Here in the Bronx we struggle to maintain all of the open space that we can.”

Security Concerns

Opening up the parkland presents questions of vulnerability, according to the DEP. The agency is largely concerned about security for a defunct jogging path on the perimeter of a live reservoir. Dinowitz said that the DEP had originally agreed to the path, and then ultimately rescinded the plan because of fears of terrorism. “Public access was offered after 9/11,” Dinowitz said. “They don’t have a strong case with security. We just want to create beautiful parkland. Nobody is saying it isn’t going to be protected or that people can throw things over the fence.”

Dinowitz also said that while the reservoir’s water is open to an airborne attack, it goes from the JPR into the filtration plant before entering New York City’s taps. The lake wouldn’t be the end of line.

Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. said



Photo by David Greene

A VIEW OF THE JEROME PARK RESERVOIR from behind a fence. The area is clean and legislation would give the

that the “security issues” imply that the Bronx is more dangerous than other boroughs with public-access reservoirs. “That’s totally unacceptable,” he said.

Clash With Construction?

The bill is announced following concern

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In The Public Interest

Advocacy Group Warns of PCB-Tainted Bronx Schools

BY IMANI HALL

Advocates for Bronx public schools are looking for answers over the city's mandated order to remove a dangerous toxin found in public school buildings.

As part of its agreement in a recent court case, the state Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) held its first public meeting on May 28 at the Highbridge Green School to discuss Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) contaminating Bronx schools. The New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) sent out a list identifying three schools—PS 024 Spuyten Duyvil, PS95, and The Angelo Patri Middle School—within District 10 in the north-west Bronx that were laden with PCB. Nine other schools were listed as possibly containing the poisonous substance.

"Schools built between 1958 and 1979 are likely to be PCB contaminated," said Christina Giorgio, a staff lawyer for the advocacy group.

The NYLPI represented New York Communities for Change, a group of families from low income and moderate income areas. The suit resulted in the DOE agreeing to remove PCB-tainted light fixtures from more than 750 school buildings by Dec. 31, 2016.

In the settlement, the EPA agreed to hold five public meetings, one in every borough, to receive information and feedback from parents and com-

munity members about PCB in schools. The EPA agreed to use these meetings to solicit recommendations on how to properly dispose of PCBs. Those recommendations will then be submitted to city officials.

The lawsuit is one of two cases NYLPI has pursued to ensure PCBs are eliminated within the school system. In a separate suit in 2008, NYLPI represented Naomi Gonzalez, a Bronx mother who sued the city Department of Education over PCB-contaminated caulk in her daughter's elementary school, PS 178 in Baychester.

The DOE settled the case with the agreement that the EPA conduct a five-school study program in 2010 to address the caulk contamination in public schools and to determine whether any schools can be caulk-free going forward. The result showed exceedingly high levels of PCBs in public schools.

"A lot of good work was done during the public study," said James Hackler, an EPA representative at the meeting. Though the EPA said it conducted a study that resulted in "good work," some have questioned the results.

"I'm not sure why the peer review didn't ask about the appropriateness of doing air testing with the windows open," Giorgio mentioned.

Don Craft, a former EPA employee, claims that during testing, some windows at the



Photo courtesy Bedford Mosholu Community Association

BMCA Honors Park Advocate

ELIZABETH QUARANTA, president of Friends of Mosholu Parkland (l), receives the annual award for community service on June 4, standing with Barbara Stronczer, president of Bedford Mosholu Community Association (r). The Friends of Mosholu Parkland is a community group that strives to protect the environment and better the community by creating awareness of parkland issues and actively enhancing the parks' landscape.

school were indeed open, allowing for cleaner air to waft through, subsequently tainting the results of the study.

The EPA said that it opened the windows because on hotter days during the year, teachers typically open the windows. "Generally the windows are open wider through warm ones (days) than they are through cold ones...we tried to represent normal operating conditions in

the classrooms," said John Gorman, an EPA representative.

The EPA has conducted outreach efforts into the toxin, soliciting help from the federal Housing Urban Development agency. But the key challenge, according to Gorman, is finding the experts to take on the problem. "It's a widespread national problem and there's limited numbers of people the EPA can work with," Gorman said.

Upgrades for Sandy-Ravaged Roberto Clemente State Park

BY DAVID CRUZ

State and city officials unveiled plans to upgrade Roberto Clemente State Park from another Hurricane Sandy-like storm.

State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey, walking alongside Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. and park engineers, toured the 26-acre park on June 6 to point out upgrades expected for the borough's only state park. The park was ravaged and most of it destroyed during Hurricane Sandy, with its now infamous surge that brought a tidal wave from the Harlem River to the child-friendly park.

In many ways the park served as a martyr of sorts, protecting the neighboring River Towers and Metro-North station from Sandy's punishing surge.

"The water literally went into all our vehicles so we lost almost all our fleet of vehicles," said park director Frances Rodriguez. "The park took a massive, massive hit."

Electrical lines buried underneath park grounds were also compromised, forcing Rodriguez to close the park at sundown since the park lights were inoperable.

Much of the storm-proof work will take place along the perimeter of the park's esplanade, a 2100-foot wide seawall that sustained most of the damage. The bulkheads that keep the seawall in place were affected, as divers determined the metallic structure was punctured like "Swiss cheese," as Harvey pointed out.

"This project will rebuild an essential coastal protection measure for the Morris Heights

neighborhood, helping to ensure that the area's residents, businesses, and parks are safeguarded from the impact of fu-

ture flooding," Cuomo said in a statement. The project is expected to begin sometime this winter.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7's General Board meets Tuesday, June 17 at 6:30 p.m. in the NY Botanical Garden's Terrace Room Foyer. Committee meetings are held on the following dates at the board office, 229A E. 204th St. at 6:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted: Housing/Land Use & Zoning Committee, Wednesday, June 18; Parks & Recreation and Senior Services committees, Wednesday, June 25. Meetings are subject to change. For more information, call (718) 933-5650 or visit bronxcb7.info/calendar.

THE 52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL meets on Thursday, June 19 at 7 p.m. at the Bedford Senior Center at 243 E. 204th St. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

As Quality of Life Returns, Building Owners Still Shrouded in Mystery

A SPECIAL REPORT

Editor's Note: This is the first of a Norwood News two-part special report that reveals how limited liability corporations often present a great challenge for tenants of a building seeking to know who it is they're paying rent to. Part two of this report, "Determining the Owner," will be published June 26.

BY DAVID CRUZ

As the city grapples to improve the housing stock with initiatives to preserve housing and provide equity, problems are at a near end for a four-story building in Bedford Park. But a burning question lingered.

Critical repairs are under way, albeit in baby steps for 3094 Villa Ave. The tenants underwent tough trials—living with no heat or hot water during two frigid winters, nights of hearing rodents scuttle along the walls, and the endless question that never went answered: Who owns the building? It's a mystery that arguably allowed the building to fall into disrepair.

"We're still clueless on it," said Antoinette Purcell, part of a group of tenants who've fought to regain basic amenities.

The building's neglect forced the city's Housing Preservation and Development agency to enroll the building into the Alternative Enforcement Program. The AEP, placing derelict properties under its care, has used thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds to cover the cost of repairs. Lack of repairs was enough for tenants



Photo by David Cruz

WITH AN EVASIVE and faceless LLC to be held accountable, tenants Antoinette Purcell (left) and Rosa Abreu (right) were powerless as 3094 Villa Ave. fell into disrepair.

to withhold rent, instead putting it in escrow, a legal practice, until repairs were made.

Several litigation suits soon followed, beginning with a foreclosure procedure involving Blue Whale Villa, a rent strike, action for repairs and a call to remove Christopher Marengo, the court-appointed receiver tasked to collect rent from tenants. With a rent strike, Marengo claimed he didn't have enough capital to make repairs.

But that endless question continued to surface: How can tenants hold an elusive owner accountable? Purcell has made educated guesses, sifting through paperwork, yet there has been no concrete answer.

In virtually all instances, limited liability corporations (LLCs) represent building owners. The legal maneuver adds a layer of protection for building owners and hours of confusion for tenants. In every legal matter for 3094 Villa Ave., court documents privatize the actual names of property owners.

The tenants' plight opens the question of how much legal protections LLCs receive and whether it undermines tenants' rights. The practice is quite common—building owners form LLCs to protect personal assets. The theory helps spur business, though names of building owners are withheld, serving as a key drawback for tenants and arguably the court system. Finding the identity of an owner is difficult, with tenants often spending hours poring through layers of paperwork. In some cases the name of the owner is never found.

Principals, representing one or more members of the LLCs, are chosen, though in many instances there is no listing of names on public documents. While articles of incorporation can be purchased from the New York State Department of State, the agency that oversees LLCs, bureaucracy mars the process. A request must first be filed by mail.

"It's especially frustrating, I think, when the corporate shells list some low-level super as the principal of the corporation," said Sadia Rahman, the attorney representing tenants at 3094 Villa Ave.

Navigating the housing court system often involves professional help, like Rahman. But in many instances, tenants are left with no court-appointed attorney while LLCs have an attorney on hand. The identity of the owner, however, is almost never revealed.

When it comes to repairs, attorneys typically file court papers against the LLC. But the LLC can flagrantly disregard the obligations under a court ruling, inspiring a motion for contempt of court.

"In theory, for a motion of contempt of court, one of the remedies involved is throwing somebody in jail until they comply," said Rahman. "If you don't know who's in charge of the LLC, it's really hard to hold somebody accountable."

HPD, tasked to ensure buildings are well maintained, can issue fines against the landlord. But landlords can indeed skirt fines since a fine often requires a party to arrive to court. Prison time can also be ordered against the owner, though it's considered a final straw.

"It's really putting them on notice about all the terrible conditions tenants are living in," said Rahman. "You can't throw an LLC in jail. I think that can become frustrating, especially to tenants who want to hold the individual accountable."



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Inquiring Photographer

By DAVID GREENE

This week we asked readers their thoughts on the illegal barbecuing sightings happening along Mosholu Parkway and whether they support a legally designated spot in Norwood.



When they are barbecuing, it doesn't smell very good inside the apartment. You know what I mean? They leave the garbage there sometimes and that brings the rats. It brings a lot of bad things, a lot of problems. They have other places to barbecue. This is not the place.

Julio Pacheco



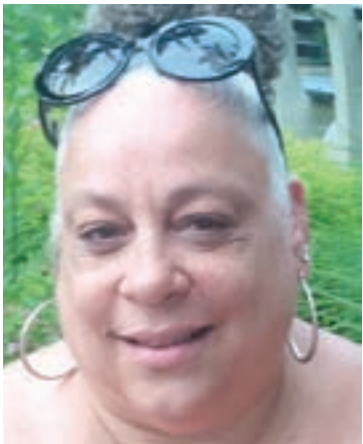
We don't want any barbecuing here. They come, they leave a mess, and they don't pick up after themselves. This is our park and they don't live around here because they come by car. I have seen it so many times. They shouldn't allow any barbecuing anywhere around here because the trees are here.

Florance Staley



Barbecuing is against the law. Mosholu Parkway is a parkway, not a park, and it is a part of the greenway. So if you want to barbecue, you need to go to Van Cortlandt Park where they have two different designated areas to barbecue. When you barbecue here you damage the roots of the trees, you damage the bark and damage the leaves. So all of this affects the health of the land. That's why we are against it.

Sheila Sanchez



The smoke comes right into my apartment and I don't want to smell someone else's food. It's not right. Barbecuing should not be allowed in a residential area.

Brenda Taylor



I don't see anything wrong with barbecuing and if they make a spot, they should do it right here on East 205th Street.

Pete Hamilton

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Second Chances Found at Boricua College

BY BRITTNEY WILLIAMS

Brenda Rodriguez's life-changing moment came on Feb. 28, 2012. It was then she realized that having a college degree can be vital.

Now at 41 years old, Rodriguez is excited to be graduating from Boricua College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Resources on June 13. She'll receive the piece of paper that could have made a world of a difference for her if she hadn't dropped out 10 years ago.

Brenda finished Satellite High School in Longwood in 1992 and planned on going to Florida State University on scholarship. But when the fall semester came around, instead of moving into a dorm room, she found herself preparing to become a mother.

Two years later she started taking classes at Boricua College, but only stayed for three semesters after getting pregnant with her second child. At this point, her priorities changed. "My thing was to work, support my kids and be the best mom that I can be," she said.

She held a number of jobs and eventually became an operations manager for a telecommunications company where she stayed for six years until she received devastating news. The company was being taken over by another company and the new administration decided to let her go because she lacked that piece of paper—a college degree.

Realizing that not having a college education stunted her occupational progress, Rodriguez re-enrolled at Boricua College. The sacrifices were unexpected—six months of going to classes left her nearly penniless, with bills piling up. After almost losing her apartment, not being able to pay for health-care for her asthmatic son and being forced to find a temporary home for her children, she almost gave up.

As Rodriguez searched for a job to cover her expenses, she also tried seeking answers over her follies. Every door was shut in her face. Classes were becoming increasingly difficult, as her professors noticed. One professor told her how much potential she had and gave her the moral support she needed to keep going.

"I have to say Boricua College has really opened the doors for me," said Rodriguez. Those doors require keys, and the school certainly has those, boasts Abraham Cruz, vice president of Admissions and Enrollment Management for the school. "...[O]nce you open it, nobody can stop you," he said. Cruz has been a staple in the school for 36 years, having held a number of positions.

The college's founder and president, Dr. Victor G. Alicea, established the school in the '70s to concentrate on Puerto Rican and Latin students finishing their college education. The school has progressed and is more diverse with 500 students at its Bronx campus representing 11 different Hispanic groups as well as African-American and Caucasian backgrounds.

The bright, cream-colored campus is housed in a 14-story building with large windows, creating an open



Photo By David Cruz

BORICUA COLLEGE VICE PRESIDENT of Admissions and Enrollment Management Abraham Cruz stands with graduating senior Brenda Rodriguez by a banner promoting the school.

space that inspires a sense of vision for students. The building is settled at the epicenter of Melrose Commons, a newly-built affordable housing complex that will belong to the school's housing portfolio once the 30-year lease is satisfied.

The college offers associate's, bachelor's, and one-year master's degree programs and encourages students to take classes at their own pace. Since a lot of students are working adults, faculty members are very understanding and help students with creating a schedule that works for them.

"You don't have to leave the Bronx to get a quality higher education," said Cruz as he described the college's marketing campaign. The college frequently sets up a table at community events to let people know that an education opportunity is sitting right in their backyard.

Classes are modeled after Oxford University. Seats are laid out in a circular fashion, and taught in an intimate setting. As part of the curriculum, teachers regularly meet with students one on one to discuss progress and academics. Day and night classes are available along with parking and an after-school program for children of students. Being affordable, accessible and flexible are three factors that the college prides itself on.

"If we change the lives of the adults, the lives of the children of the adults will change as well," said Cruz. It's a reason why Boricua College's key major is Childhood Education. It seems fitting. After all, Rodriguez describes incoming students as joining an extended family. It's a reason why her 21-year-old son is also enrolled at the school.

"This is a community itself," said Rodriguez. She is now president of the student council and works at the col-

lege. After graduation, she plans to pursue a master's degree in business or human services field at Hunter College. "I want to build on the experiences I went

through," said Rodriguez. "I'm not only dreaming, I have a vision where people like myself can go somewhere to get help."

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Congressional Primary 2014 - Meet The Candidates

BY DAVID CRUZ

With the Congressional Primary set for June 24, the *Norwood News* spoke to the top three candidates in the 13th Congressional District over the issues mirroring the Bronx side of the district.

Congressman Charles Rangel: Holding the 13th CD for a Lifetime

In the 40 years Congressman Charles Rangel has chaired the seat in the 13th Congressional District, he's never had to look after the Bronx. That was until two years back when congressional lines changed. And in the last two years, Rangel looks to do something he's never done before: unify two boroughs through its consensus of shared problems.

"This one community is just separated by a river, but it's hardly separated by the needs for affordable housing, jobs, investment, immigration," said Rangel, in a phone interview with the *Norwood News*. "There's not one problem that I can think of that's not the same as the ones I've had over the years in this district."

Congressional district unifier is a new term for Rangel, the raspy-voiced legislator who rose to become chair of the promi-

nent House Ways and Means Committee before an ethics scandal hurt a sliver of his legacy. Rangel considers it an "asterisk" in his storied career.

Rangel, the incumbent, has since made the rounds throughout the borough, organizing job fairs, taking part in debates, and meeting with community leaders. He's been largely criticized in the borough for not having a congressional office, a problem he intends to fix by rolling out a mobile office this year. "Now that we do have the funds to do it, the presence will be now this year, a mobile office until we can find someone with an attractive offer for office space that makes sense," said Rangel, pegging the federal sequester as a reason for the office shortage.

As for the double-digit unemployment rate in the Bronx, Rangel sees one way to

shave those numbers by building affordable housing using federal tax monies. "The most important thing is to make certain that we release the President's opportunity to tie in education with job opportunities," said Rangel, referencing President Obama's Pathways Back to Work Fund.

As for offering children of illegal immigrants the chance to complete school through the federal DREAM Act, Rangel believes it's a possibility it will be addressed during the summer so long as Tea Party Republicans remain at bay.

The Democratic Primary election is June 24, the day Rangel will either continue to seal his legacy, or be forced to hang it up come Dec. 31. Either way, Rangel admits, "There are so many things I'm proud of."



Sen. Adriano Espaillat - A Harbinger for Changing Political Tides in the 13th CD

State Senator Adriano Espaillat has spent the last two years regrouping since his narrow defeat from Congressman Charles Rangel in the 13th Congressional District. For the past two years, Espaillat has attempted to perfect his balancing act—juggling the tasks of a state senator representing Manhattan while assimilating in the Bronx. His time in the borough has been rewarded, given the endorsement of the Bronx political machine.

Like his rivals in the race, Espaillat has made Bronx appearances. At a recent campaign stop, Espaillat stood outside the Moshulu Parkway subway station on the 4 line, assisted by members of the Northwest Bronx Democrats to hand out pro-Espaillat fliers. A young man passed by, took a flier, and muttered, "That's the Dominican guy." Espaillat remains the de facto face of change of racial politics in the 13th Congressional District, which has historically

been African-American.

But Espaillat, who is Dominican-born, downplayed his ethnic roots in a phone interview with the *Norwood News*, instead pegging himself as a unifier.

"I'm optimistic that with a new vision and renewed commitment across the district with a diverse coalition I put together politically—from Jeff Dinowitz, to Melissa Mark-Viverito to Carl Heastie to Billy Thompson to Ruben Diaz Jr. to Mark Levine," said Espaillat, "I believe with all that I will be taken seriously in Washington."

Though he didn't cite specific issues plaguing the borough, he has seen the same problems at the Manhattan side of the 13th District engulfing the Bronx side. Of all the issues Espaillat intends to address on the federal level is the persistent jobless rate that's mostly impacted young Bronxites. To fix the problem, Espaillat looks to

drive up the local economy by expanding the Empowerment Zone program to the northwest Bronx. The program offers tax cuts of \$3,000 per resident employee to job creators. Espaillat wants small businesses to reap the benefits.

"I will double that tax credit for small businesses to be able to hire local folks, and companies will be able to write that off as a tax credit so that is important," said Espaillat in a phone interview with the *Norwood News*. "Small businesses are getting very little help."

Though not directly citing Rangel, Espaillat has pegged the failure of immigration reform on Congress.

The race is certainly a litmus test over whether the black voting bloc in the 13th Congressional District has been replaced by a multi-cultural shift. "The whole nation is paying attention to this race," said Espaillat, "if not the world."



Rev. Michael Walrond: A Clergyman Eyeing DC to Inspire Change

Though he's entered the race with scant experience from a legislative standpoint, Rev. Michael Walrond has arguably spent a decade preparing a run for Congress. He's been mostly on the other side of the 13th Congressional District, building a network of followers at First Corinthian Baptist Church in Harlem, where he's taken a parish that's morphed from 300 to 9000 folks in the past decade. The lesson there is strength in numbers, a tactic he looks to employ to resolve key nagging issues in the 13th CD, where roughly 20 percent of it rests in Norwood, Kingsbridge Heights, and portions of Fordham and University Heights.

"What I've talked about throughout this campaign is cross-sector collaboration to address the issues that confront the neighborhood," said Walrond, later adding, "This seat should be held by someone who's a visionary, and what does visionary mean? Someone who can bring people to-

gether around shared goals, shared aspirations, shared dreams to push this district forward."

And despite a watered down understanding of the borough, Walrond can easily spout uncomfortable statistics hurting the entire 13th Congressional District. He's used those figures to create solutions to issues, specifically the Bronx's 12 percent jobless rate, healthcare disparities and affordable housing crunch.

"You can't talk about poverty without the need for jobs," said Walrond, who's outlined a plan that creates jobs by investing in the borough's infrastructure. "If you invest a billion dollars, you have the capacity on average to create 13,500 jobs in this city," said Walrond, citing a report from the University of Massachusetts.

Walrond, should he be the victor of the 13th Congressional District, would ensure jobs are coupled with training. "We boost the economy and then you fight for the jobs

in the places and for the citizens who have been marginalized the most," said Walrond.

For a more expanded version, go to www.norwoodnews.org.

Support for Walrond is apparent, though largely in Harlem. While pro-Walrond campaign posters are plastered all over Harlem, considered Walrond and Rangel's base, they're rarely seen around the Bronx portion of the 13th CD.

Walrond understands the shifting political climate in the 13th Congressional District, once a stronghold for African-American lawmakers. Despite this, Walrond proposes there should not be a focus on racial politics, but a focus on new vitality needed for the district.

"To me I think we kind of need a new shift and a new direction, persons who have not been just great legislators but great leaders. And I think I've shown that for the past 18 years of my life."



Business Beat - An Escape at the BID

BY DAVID CRUZ

Elvis Herrera works the room at Escape, the newest Latin lounge found in the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District, at 3489 Jerome Ave. In many ways, he owns the room. He pecks a kiss on a female guest, chuckles with another patron, or spends a few minutes sipping his drink while watching the Puerto Rican Day Parade televised.

By all accounts, Herrera is the guy who regulars gravitate toward, while kicking back for a few drinks on the chance to pause on their daily grind. And though his charismatic personality is Herrera's natural inclination, it's also the secret to his success. Many may or may not realize they're talking to the co-owner.

An International Eatery

The restaurant's name is fitting to the lounge. Entering the restaurant feels like one has stepped into a portal to Latin America. The front doors stretch out to reveal bamboo-covered walls, iron-wrought lighting, ceiling fans, bouncy salsa music and white clothed tables that serve as familiar elements to a Latin restaurant.

"It's like a little getaway," said Herrera, who's received positive feedback over his restaurant's opening.

The menu pays homage to Latin American dishes, 60 altogether, which range from Cuban to Mexican-style fare, all crafted by chef Juan Salerno. "We got the best food," said Herrera, having sampled them all. "I guarantee you that our food is the best."

Word of the restaurant's quality fare has spread throughout the BID, even garnering a rave review from Marcia Cameron, the executive director of the Jerome Gun-Hill BID. "The avocado is to die for!" emphasized Cameron, following a recent visit. The churrasco steak, a boneless cut of beef, is slowly morphing into Escape's signature dish.

The restaurant is one of the few high-end eateries in the working class community,



Photo by Adi Talwar

ELVIS HERRERA (right) glows as the co-owner of Escape, a new high-end Latin lounge located at 3489 Jerome Ave., in the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District.

where Latin cuisine is relegated to ready made. The prices are above average when compared to the other Latin eateries peppered around the BID. But they're justified. The food is prepared fresh, with a large portion of the menu dedicated to seafood entrees.

A High-End Eatery

Herrera, along with longtime friend and business partner Harold Richardson, opened the doors to Escape in April, after nine months of building. Richardson, the owner of Norwood Realty, has been a staple

in the BID community well before it formed.

Richardson and Herrera come from a network of Bronx restaurateurs that include Jimmy Rodriguez, the rising restaurant mogul of the Don Coqui franchise. It was Herrera, having once served as a successful loan officer for HSBC, who approved the seed loan to jumpstart Rodriguez's earlier venue, Jimmy's Bronx Cafe. The pair soon became best friends, with Rodriguez espousing his secrets to good restaurant management to Herrera.

"I just learned the concept of not just having good food, but also adding entertainment," said Herrera.

Guests have already sampled some of Escape's daily attractions that include valentine Mondays, comedy Tuesdays, ladies night Wednesdays, karaoke Thursdays and TGI Fridays. Over the weekends, brunch is regularly served.

Restaurant Reborn

Escape is Herrera's reincarnation of the short-lived eatery of the same name on Kingsbridge Road and Webb Avenue, which became a victim of its own success after the property owner attempted to raise his rent dramatically.

He found his second coming through Richardson, who sought to jazz up his property, once known as MD Café.

Herrera sought to do things right this time. His first foray into the business began with the X Bar, a nightclub in Fordham resting at the foot of the Major Deegan Expressway. The restaurant closed four years back to make way for a Dallas BBQ.

Opening and closing the restaurant served as a teachable moment for Herrera, realizing that an intimate setting with high-end food and personalized customer service proves to be an effective tool for success. "Customer service is key," said Herrera, ingraining the idiom that "everyone is special."

Changing Demographics

Though business is his forte, Herrera welcomes new restaurants to spread across the BID. The idea on the outset seems counterproductive, but Herrera views it as a chance to decrease the promotional output by allowing the idea of having newly established restaurants to speak for itself.

"I would love a Mexican restaurant next to me, an Italian restaurant. We're bringing more people into the community," said Herrera. "So it's less work for me."



Photo by Adi Talwar

JUAN SALERNO is the top chef at the Escape lounge, which recently opened at the Jerome-Gun Hill BID, grilling his sizzling churrasco steak.

Delays Surface For Kingsbridge Armory

(continued from page 1)

tained that his office is “confident that this greatly anticipated project will continue to move forward.”

What's at Stake

From a monetary standpoint, the project would bring \$1.3 billion in economic activity for the borough over the next 30 years. The \$345 million project also promised over 700 temporary construction jobs and over 200 permanent jobs that guarantees a \$10 living wage, a major benefit for a borough where much of its socioeconomic status remains working poor.

A Community Benefits Agreement, which would be activated once a lease is signed, would offer the surrounding neighborhoods \$1 million a year allocated to local nonprofits, free ice time for neighborhood youth, and 52,000 square feet of community space in the lower level of the castle.

Legal Issues

Legal troubles at the Armory surfaced last week, though the versions from each side vary. Richter, Wignell and Spiritos filed a suit in Manhattan Court on May 22 against Parker. Their attorney, Ernest Badway, seeks to have his clients assume control of KNIC, founded as a limited liability corporation that Parker's legal team formed to secure the deal. Parker filed a lawsuit a week later.

“We believe that we're the only parties in the project that can get this project done in an efficient manner,” Badway told the *Norwood News*.

In court papers, Badway noted that Rich-

ter and his colleagues volunteered their time hoping to be compensated with a partnership stake. One contribution, according to Badway, involved Richter finding the site for the project. Parker, according to Badway, initially scouted a site in Queens.

Parker claims his former partners spoke out of turn when they expressed in a letter to the New York City Economic Development Corporation that Parker was too inexperienced to bring KNIC to fruition. Contrary to Richter's statement, Parker insists it was the EDC that suggested the Kingsbridge Armory to be the site for the ice rink in 2011, two years after he conceived the idea for the ice rink to answer what he saw as an ice shortage.

He assembled a team of advocates, which included former New York Rangers hockey player Mark Messier, to initiate the project. Richter soon brought Spiritos and Wignell to the project sometime after that.

“Our client believes defendants are interfering with the forward progress of this project to gain financial benefits to which they are not entitled,” said Parker's attorney, William A. Brewer III. Though Richter did spend time on the project, Parker never promised a partnership, according to Brewer.

Brewer continued, “We are confident the court will recognize the rights, responsibilities and limitations of the involved parties and, in so doing, allow Mr. Parker, the Economic Development Corporation, and the Bronx community to realize the vision upon which this transformative project was

founded.”

A Project in Limbo

Leases with the EDC have yet to be signed, putting the project in limbo. Badway said that regardless of lawsuits, Parker would still confront hurdles, mainly the \$345 million needed to build the project.

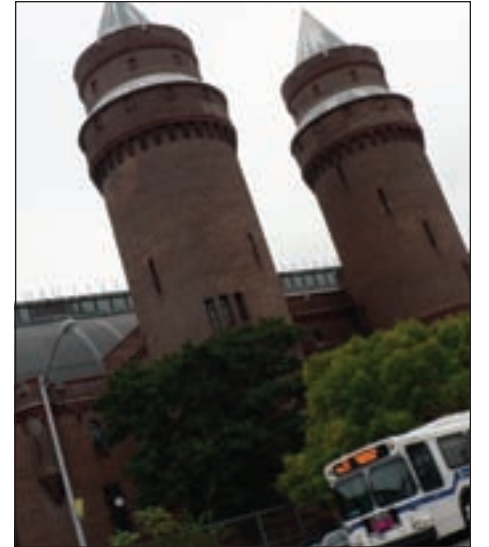
He's yet to secure the millions of dollars needed for the project, according to Badway. He added Richter and Wignell sought financing through the EB5 Program, which gives foreign investors Visas if the funds generate American jobs. Brewer insists that Parker has the funds needed to begin the project.

The EDC, serving as the city's real estate broker, has now launched a review of the project. Kate Blumm, a spokesperson with the EDC, insisted it is not a detriment to the project. “We are advancing contract negotiations to move forward with this transformative project,” said Blumm. “In our current view, there are no significant delays from the original timeline.”

Despite setbacks, many in Kingsbridge remain hopeful about the Kingsbridge National Ice Center and what it can signify for the borough.

“Over the last few years, KNIC Partners have been a strong partner in the effort to redevelop the Kingsbridge Armory,” said Adaline Walker-Santiago, Chair of Community Board 7. “While the current situation is unfortunate, we have every confidence that KNIC will deliver on their promises and that this project will be completed in a timely manner.”

Along the Kingsbridge Road commercial



File Photo

THE KINGSBRIDGE ARMORY stands strong, though still empty. The Armory would be the world's largest ice skating rink, though lawsuits and internal feuds are preventing that from moving forward for now.

strip, merchants have waited in anticipation for a project to occupy the massive castle. For Rosa Mejia, who owns La Nueva Cocina, she'll have to continue driving to New Jersey to ice skate. She is depending on the ice castle to prop up her restaurant. “It's good for business,” she said.

The parties are expected to meet June 23 at Bronx Supreme Court. Brewer will ask a judge to stop Richter, Wignell and Spiritos from continuing to represent themselves as part of KNIC as the suits progress.

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Vital
Stats

Umbrella Program to Shelter Bronx LGBTQ Community

BY RICHARD BUCEY

The Umbrella Program, an LGBTQ Program for Youth and Families that is operated by the Adolescent AIDS Program at Montefiore Medical Center, had their official launch on June 5 at the hospital's Tishman Center. The program is designed to offer comprehensive medical care and support for LGBTQ youth, and was developed as a response to the disparities in HIV healthcare among some Bronx communities.

Dr. Donna Futterman, working with the Adolescent AIDS Program, opened the presentation with an overview of the health challenges facing LGBTQ youth. When asked what she thought the reason was for the spike in HIV rates in the past two years, she offered a sobering response.

"Sadly, these young people don't have the terrifying image of the epidemic in the 1980s. So some people are not afraid of the virus," said Futterman. "On the flip side, others are so daunted by the stress of trying to remain negative that they give up and just assume that they will one day contract the virus. We simply need to ramp up our prevention efforts every five years for each new generation."

These prevention efforts are especially important in the Bronx which has

a troubled history with HIV, coupled with the highest infection rates in all five boroughs, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

The symposium's topics included managing the risk of HIV, later transitioning into presentations and talks over the social well-being of LGBTQ youth who have the highest rates of sexual activity, drug/alcohol use, and depression/suicidal thoughts, according to surveys presented during the forum. The surveys also showed that once a person's sexual identity is accepted by the family, those same risk factors revert to levels typically seen among adolescents.

Dr. Caitlin Ryan, Director of the Family Acceptance Project, spoke of the importance of familial acceptance for LGBTQ youth. Ryan outlined techniques for helping teens assist their families to accept their sexual identity, emphasizing the importance of family and retaining cultural identity. "...[W]e (social workers) know that taking adolescents away from their families is not the solution," said Ryan. She added that it is important to work in conjunction with cultural institutions such as churches rather than fight them.

The presentation also noted that social workers and doctors should never make



Photo courtesy Montefiore Medical Center

PRESENTERS AT UMBRELLA'S symposium include (l-r) Justin Toro, outreach coordinator, Montefiore Adolescent AIDS Program; Renee Reopell, LMSW, Montefiore Adolescent AIDS Program; Linda Wesp, NP, Montefiore Adolescent AIDS Program; Caitlin Ryan, PhD, director, Family Acceptance Project; Stephen Stafford, director of communications & special projects, Montefiore Adolescent AIDS Program; Jesse Milan, JD, fellow, Altarum Institute; Donna Futterman, MD, director, Montefiore Adolescent AIDS Program.

assumptions about a person's sexual identity. "A young lesbian might have a hard time articulating to her gynecologist why she isn't taking birth control. It is on healthcare professionals to ask the right questions," said Ryan.

Jesse Milan, a fellow at the Altarum Institute healthcare consulting nonprofit, concluded the symposium with a presentation entitled "Ending the HIV Epidemic among Young Gay Men." In it, he reported that New York City has excellent programs that offer cheap treatment for

managing the viral loads of those who are HIV positive. Those who are HIV negative are faced with steep costs when trying to acquire Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PREP), a medication designed to prevent the transmission of the virus.

Despite the relatively high rate of HIV in the Bronx, Futterman remains optimistic. "The Bronx is in the lead in a lot of ways. Many local organizations and communities, not only Montefiore, have stepped up to address this pressing issue."

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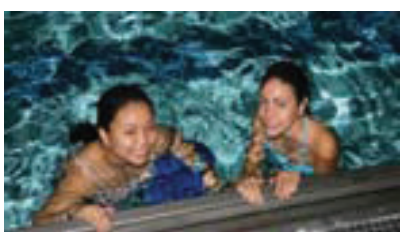
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Bill Proposed For Reservoir Access

(continued from page 1)

over a new capital project to repair the east wall of the reservoir. At the May 27 meeting of the Filtration Monitoring Committee (FMC), the bill had not been announced yet, and public access was the issue at hand.

Karen Argenti, an activist who opposed the plant for decades, asked the questions that clouded the community's minds when the work was first announced. "Why wasn't this work done simultaneously to the filtration plant?" she asked.

"I don't know the answer to that," Associate Commissioner Matthew Mahoney said.

"This is a major problem," Argenti said. "We want to walk around the reservoir. We were promised that we were going to have access."

Bob Fanuzzi, another activist who closely followed the filtration plant saga, had been planning a pilot access program, as promised by the public access report of 2010. "The reason why this is angering everybody is because it significantly put off the access which was contingent on the completion of the plant," he said. "That was the deal we've been working under. We feel that the DEP changed the deal right when it was about to expire."

If the legislation is successful, the community may not have to wait on the capital project to be completed, to gain access. The DEP has not released an expected completion date for the east wall. Dinowitz suspects construction will not

be completed by 2019, the date of access that the bill would grant.

"We came up with something far off enough to be realistic," Dinowitz said, in reference to their 2019 deadline. "It couldn't be tomorrow because it would take time to do all this. The work on the wall is going to happen inside the reservoir, and we want the outside of it. I don't believe that the work on the wall is in any way going to conflict with what we want to do. They may try to stop it and they may succeed. We're going to work hard to get it done."

Optimistic for City Cooperation

Dinowitz said he is hopeful that the new administration under Mayor Bill de Blasio will be willing to work with the community, and grant it what it wants and needs. He first wanted to introduce the bill in the 1990s but said it "languished."

Diaz is confident in a smooth legal process as well. He called it a "prime example of how good government can work, when everybody is working together." As an area that's long been idle and inaccessible to the community, Diaz called for a renewed focus on the JPR. "Many folks have fought so we can give this park back to the community and to have access to it," he said. "We heard from not just people in this community, but from Bronxites abroad and everyone can agree we need public access to the Jerome Park Reservoir."

Additional reporting by David Greene.



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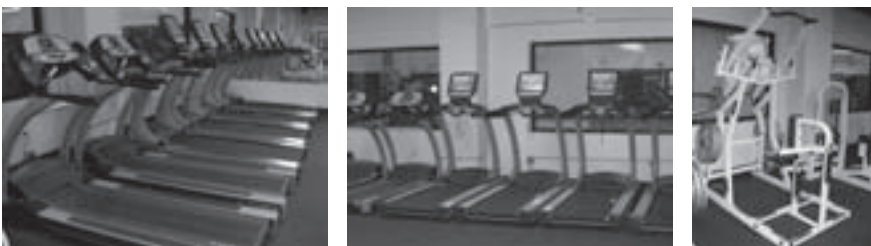
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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

Editor's Pick

Celebrate Summer at the Oval

The public is invited to Make Music New York's **free music festival** celebrating the first day of summer, June 21 from 4 to 6 p.m. at Williamsbridge Oval. Events include West African drumming by Bronx Community Charter School's graduating 5th graders, and rock by Fort Indy at 5 p.m., in front of the Rec Center. For more information, or to add to the show, call (646) 938-0557.



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Onstage

• The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Music by the NY Opera Forum**, June 14; and A Musical Tribute to the Music of Motown, June 21; both at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

• The Moshulu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers **Songs From the Beatles to Patsy Cline**, June 21 at 2 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

• Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W. presents **A Glorious Tribute to the King of Pop**, honoring Michael Jackson in a multi-media and live performance, June 21 from 8 to 10 p.m. (tickets are \$25 to \$45; \$10/under 12). For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

• Bronx Arts Ensemble presents **Three Billy Goats Gruff**, June 15 at 1 and 2:30 p.m., at the NY Botanical Garden, (\$6). Program is subject to change. For more information, call (718) 601-7399.

Events

• LaSorsa Auto Group, 3510 Webster Ave., will host a free **Dad's Night Out**, June 14 from 5 to 9 p.m. Events include BBQ-ing, rock climbing, silent auction, and World Cup Games. For more information, call (718) 283-4081.

• The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park presents the 4th celebration of the **Seven Wonders of VC Park**, June 12 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Events include hands-on activities as well as a tour around the lake. Finger foods and refreshments will be served. Meet at the VC Golf House (enter park at Bailey Avenue and VC Park South). For more information and to RSVP, call (718) 601-1460 or visit info@vancortlandt.org.

• Monroe College, 2501 Jerome Ave. holds an **Allied Health Career and Internship Expo**, specifically for Allied Health and Nursing students and graduates, to meet with potential employers, June 24 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., in King Hall's Mintz Auditorium. Refreshments will be served at 11 a.m. For more information, call (646) 393-8613 or (914) 740-6480.

• The COVE, 3418 Gates Place, presents Shotokan Karate Do world champion **Abdul "Aziz" Shihan**, Saturdays from 1 to 3 p.m. for ages 5 and up, to learn to defend and protect yourself (\$20/month; \$45/month for family of 3); **Zumba Classes**, Fridays 6:45 to 7:45 p.m. (\$20/month); and **Health and Beauty Workshops**, 3 to 6 p.m. for ages 13 and up (\$20/month; 10 slots only), to learn hair extension techniques. For more information, call Starr or Michelle at (718) 405-1312.

• The Fordham Road BID presents a **free outdoor movie**, "Frozen," on June 20 at 8:30 p.m. at Muller Park and Plaza at East Fordham Road and Creston Avenue. Bring a chair or a



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blanket. For more information, call (718) 562-2104.

• Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Arts Projects:** Mark Twain Garden Adventure, to join a scavenger hunt and make a booklet and adventure story, June 14 and 15; and Such Are Snakes, to learn about snakes and make one from recycled materials, then listen to singer at noon, June 21 and 22; both in WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled is **Nature Presentation: Snakes of NY**, to see them live and handle skins and other artifacts (call ext. 251 to reserve), June 22 at the WH House 1 and 2 p.m. Additional event includes: **The Sunroom Project** offers a series of events through Nov. 20 (call for a detailed schedule). Grounds admission is free Saturdays until noon all year, and free until noon Tuesdays in June. Glyndor Gallery **tours** take place Tuesdays and Saturdays at 2 p.m.; garden walks are held Tuesdays and Saturdays at 11 a.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. from the Perkins Visitor Center. For more information and a schedule of events, call (718) 549-3200.

Library Events

• The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents programs for adults including: **MS Word 2010 for Beginners:** June 19 at 2 p.m. (advance in-person registration required). Children can enjoy **Preschool Story Time at 11 a.m.:** June 12, 19 and 26; **Toddler Play Time at noon:** June 12, 19 and 26; **Family Time:** June 14 at 11 a.m.; and **Fish Book Making:** June 19 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 seniors and adults: **Knitting Circle:**

Thursdays at 3 p.m.; **Wii Program:** Tuesdays at 3 p.m.; **Beaded Jewelry** at 11 a.m.: June 12 and 26 (bring your own materials; advance in-person registration required); and **Introduction to Belly Dance:** June 14 at 3:30 p.m. Children can enjoy **Toddler Story Time** at 10:30 a.m.: June 12 and 19; and **Read Aloud Story Time** at 4 p.m.: June 16 and 23. Teens/young adults can attend **film:** "Back to the Future," June 14 at 1 p.m.; and **So Fresh and So Clean:** To make deodorant and body wash and learn about personal hygiene (materials are provided), June 18 at 3 p.m. Foreigners can attend **English Conversation Program:** (intermediate level, free), Tuesdays 6:30 to 8 p.m., June 17 and 24. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

• The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for kids: **Active Health at 4 p.m.:** (ages 5 to 12), yoga and zumba, June 13; **Toddler Story Time** at 11 a.m.: (ages 18 to 36 months), June 18 and 25; and **Children Sing and Celebrate Around the World:** (ages 3 to 12), sing, make music, and play instruments, June 20 at 3:30 p.m. For adults: **Exploring Cultures:** History of Baseball, June 19 at 2 p.m. For teens/young adults: **Teen Science:** June 12 at 4 p.m.; and **film:** June 19 at 4 p.m. For foreigners: **English Conversation Groups** at noon: June 16 and 23. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY TO ALL OUR DAD READERS!

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by June 16 for the next publication date of June 26.

Neighborhood Notes

Pride HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

Montefiore Medical Center's AIDS Center, 111 E. 210th St., holds its annual PRIDE HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on Saturday, June 21 from noon to 5 p.m. Events include free counseling, testing and blood pressure screenings, educational materials on HIV, musical performances, special guest speakers, and free raffles. For more information, call (718) 231-3296 ext. 23 or 21.

NCB Public Forum

North Central Bronx Hospital, 3424 Kosuth Ave., 17th floor, holds a public forum on Wednesday, June 18 at 6:30 p.m. on updates concerning the return of maternity services this fall. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, call (917) 213-6028.

Career Workshop

Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj presents a Career Workshop, June 18 from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Bronx House, 990 Pelham Pkwy., So. Learn about interviewing skills, job searches, resume building/writing, cover letters, and more. Bring copies of your resume. RSVP by June 16. For more information, call (718) 409-0109.

Tour Van Cortlandt Lake

The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park invites

the public to visit the park, June 12 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Events include hands-on activities and a tour around the lake. Meet at the VC Golf House (enter park at Bailey Avenue and VC Park South). For more information, call (718) 601-1553.

BronxNet Internships

BronxNet has openings for summer internships to its public access television program *OPEN 2.0* for high school students. For more information, call (718) 960-8769 or marisa@bronxnet.org.

MMCC Day Camp Visits

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center offers tours of its summer day camps at Harriman State Park on Saturday, June 14 at 1 p.m. To register and for more information and trip details and costs, call (718) 882-4000.

Tribute To Ibrahim Gonzalez

Epiphany Lutheran Church, 3061 Bainbridge Ave., presents a Tribute to Ibrahim Gonzalez, June 13 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Events include a Latin Jazz concert, prayers, and a tribute video. For more information call (718) 652-6839.

Perry Avenue Family Medical & Rehab Center

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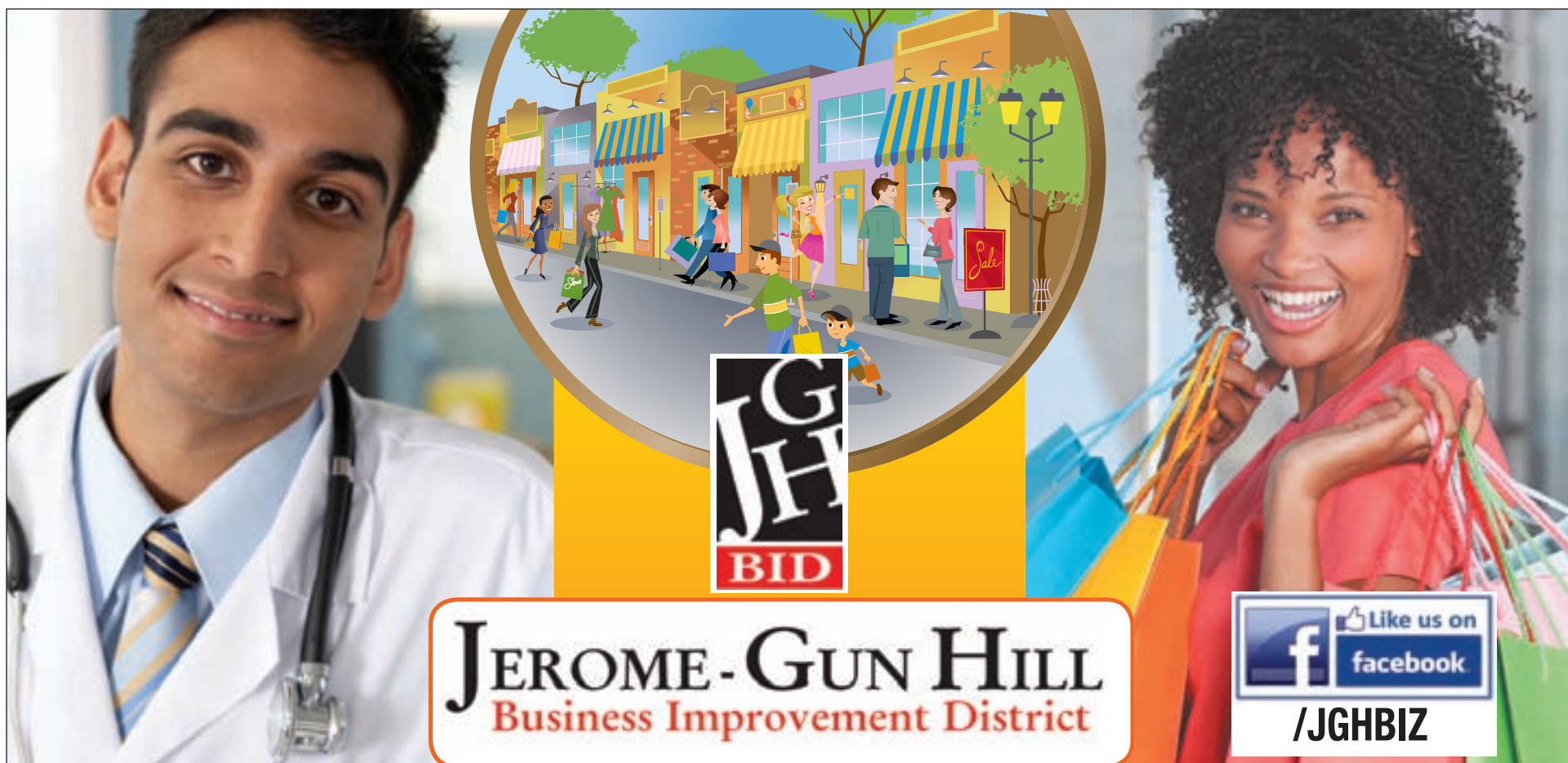
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