

NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 28, No 1 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • JANUARY 8-21, 2015



INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
FULFILLING NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS | PG. 4



YOUTH GET THEIR SAY:
BRONX YOUTH HEARD
FALL-WINTER EDITION | PGS. 7-11

VIOLENCE DOWN IN 52ND PRECINCT

Drug turf war near Fordham draws concern



Photo by Adi Talwar

SHE'S TAKING A BITE out of crime. Inspector Nilda Hofmann, commanding officer of the 52nd Precinct, helped bring the crime rate down slightly in 2014.

By BOB KAPPSTATTER

The year 2014 was one of pluses and minuses for the 52nd Precinct. But its commanding officer isn't complaining—or relaxing.

The precinct, covering Norwood, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge Heights and parts of Fordham and University Heights, saw a healthy

drop in what had already become record low numbers in murders and shootings, despite a nasty local drug war.

Among the city's 77 precincts, it ranked 7th in 2014 for major crime complaints – 2,193 – and 15th for overall crime reduction, which dropped 0.63 percent when compared to 2013. It also

ranked in the top 10 for robberies (4th), assaults (8th) and burglaries (6th) citywide.

Crushing Violent Crime

"As for 2014, when it comes to violent crime, we've done a very good job," said Inspector Nilda Hofmann. The 47-year-old commander took over the reins of the precinct in

early 2013 after running the 25th Precinct in East Harlem.

"We're down in murder almost 42 percent—seven versus 12 murders in 2013," said Hofmann.

Shootings were down to 28 versus 35 in 2013—a 20 percent drop and 68 percent dip from 1993, when the borough's drug

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Vol. 28, No. 1

Norwood News is published
bi-weekly on Thursdays by
Mosholu Preservation Corporation
3400 Reservoir Oval East
Bronx, New York 10467

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Forecasting the Norwood News Stories of 2015

The New Year is often marked with questions. For the *Norwood News*, our key question is this--what will the state of the north-west Bronx be on Dec. 31, 2015? To answer that, the *Norwood News* is turning to the past, examining last year's stories to predict some of this year's hot topics for the northwest Bronx:

A Meaningful Project Through Participatory Budgeting: The topic turned into a neighborhood buzzword for 2014, with curious residents engaged on the process championed by New York City Councilmembers Andrew Cohen and Ritchie Torres. Participatory budgeting gives direct power to the public how \$1 million, or 20 percent of a Councilmember's capital funds, should be spent. Monies are mandated to go to a lasting project following a lengthy, albeit bureaucratic, process. At the heart of this story is the winning project. Benches for Mosholu Parkway? A playground at a barren section of Decatur Avenue? Tree-lined streets along Webster Avenue? The other is whether participatory budgeting even works.

An Active Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval (FOTWO): The group that pushed for the re-opening of the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, traffic calming measures and an impending skateboard park was suddenly thrown a wrench following the departure of FOTWO's tenacious leader, Elisabeth von Uhl. These days, the park now sits without a vanguard. Who will step up for the volunteer post? So far, there haven't been any takers.

Renewing Rent Laws: In Albany, a battle brews over a package of rent laws set to expire on June 15 if the State Legislature

allows it. Should the laws expire, it could spell disaster for hundreds of thousands of Bronxites who rely on them to keep rents from skyrocketing. It could also derail Mayor Bill de Blasio's efforts to make New York City affordable to the working poor. And some Bronx lawmakers, all Democrats, have already been lobbying to keep the existing rent laws on the books, and strengthening them. Advocates have also mobilized, pressuring lawmakers to repeal the vacancy deregulation law, which lets landlords jack up rent for an empty unit, shrinking the affordable housing stock. But a Republican-controlled Senate could be their greatest adversary, who will likely side with desperate landlords looking to chip away

MONTEFIORE DELIVERS FIRST NEWBORN OF 2015



Photo courtesy Montefiore Medical Center

ONE SECOND PAST the stroke of midnight on Jan. 1, 2015, Angela Ortega gave birth to her baby son, Elias Zachary Ortega, at Montefiore Medical Center. Elias arrived into the world at 19.5 inches and weighed 7 pounds, 10 ounces. He is MMC's first newborn of 2015. Both mother and son are doing well.

at these protections.

A KNIC Groundbreaking: In an online editorial, we touched on what exactly is keeping developers for the Kingsbridge National Ice Center (KNIC) from having a groundbreaking. The lawsuits and internal conflict did slow things down, sure, but a symbolic groundbreaking can put everyone at ease. After all, it's now been 22 years since the historic castle has sat vacant, save for a sliver of weekend gatherings that showcase the potential for the building as an awesome venue. Now if the developers can get a handle on traffic...

Are there any we missed? If so, send your letters to dcruz@norwoodnews.org.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting on Jan. 20 at Kittay House, 2550 Webb Ave., at 6:30 p.m. CB7 committees are held on the following dates at the board office, 229A E. 204th St. at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Traffic & Transportation on Jan. 8; Environment & Sanitation on Jan. 13; Health & Hospital on Jan. 13 at 7:30 p.m.; Economic Development on Jan. 14; Community Relations/LTP on Jan. 14 at 7:30 p.m.; Education/Libraries & Youth Services on Jan. 15 and Housing/Land Use & Zoning on Jan. 21. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

Former Norwood Pastor, Beloved By Many, Laid to Rest

By DAVID GREENE

Hundreds braved a chilly winter morning to pack the pews at Sacred Heart Church three weeks ago to join Cardinal Timothy Dolan in saying goodbye to a revered priest who devoted 50 years to religious service. That included 14 years at The Shrine Church of Saint Ann's in Norwood.

The service for Reverend Monsignor Robert Michael Trainor, 83, was held Dec. 12, at his home parish for the last eight years, Sacred Heart Church in Melrose. Trainor, Pastor Emeritus for Saint Ann's, left the Bainbridge Avenue parish upon retirement to assist longtime friend Father Michael Sepp of Sacred Heart who subsequently passed away from cancer.

Many of the flock Trainor consoled, aided and prayed with over the years at Saint Ann's Church in Norwood and at Our Lady of Angels on Webb Avenue, were in attendance.

Unaware of Trainor's heart and blood pressure issues, one fellow priest recalled, "In the very last days of his life, he lived a schedule that would be tough on anyone half his



Photo by David Greene

CARDINAL TIM DOLAN leads a funeral ceremony for Reverend Monsignor Robert Michael Trainor, a former pastor of Saint Ann's Church, who died on Dec. 8.

age."

Alongside Trainor's casket, Dolan delivered remarks, telling the mourners that the Church "loved this man. We admired him and we'll miss him dearly." "May he rest in peace and may he pray for each and every one of

us," Dolan continued. "Robert, keep us in your prayers."

Trainor passed away in his sleep on Dec. 8. He served at Saint Ann's Church from 1992 until 2006. Even after he left Saint Ann's, Trainor remained active with the church, taking part in the

Feast of Saint Ann's during the summer, while routinely visiting parishioners at local hospitals and nursing homes. In some cases, Trainor would personally visit the homebound to offer prayer and meditation.

His death comes amid change for Saint Ann's Church, which is expected to close in August. The Archdiocese of New York said in November that St. Ann's Church will merge with the Church of Saint Brendan's on East 207th Street as part of major financial restructuring.

Ending on a celebratory note, dozens of children from Saint Ann's School marched through the streets of Norwood on Dec. 14, as part of the festivities surrounding the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, an event Trainor rarely missed.

According to his sister Joan Wildermann, Trainor was ordained in 1957 and named a monsignor in 1990. Wildermann remembered her brother "always wanted to be a priest."

Trainor, born and raised in Scarsdale, NY, was buried at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Hawthorne, NY.



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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



With the start of a new year, we asked readers what their New Year's resolutions are and their hopes for 2015.



My hope for 2015? For myself, and by extension, every human being, to make our walk with Jesus Christ stronger every day of the year. And to cradle and hold the children.

Irving Baker
Norwood



I'm hoping to stay out of trouble with people this year and to try and be more productive.

Robert Carroll
Norwood



In 2015 I hope to find a job that lets me spend quality time with my baby girl. I hope my family and I continue to enjoy good health. I would love to start college as well and if everything goes as planned, I will wed the man I love.

Camille Rivera
Norwood



For my New Year's resolution it's going to be a financial one—just trying to get out of debt, save money, and hopefully buy a house. I hope that gas prices continue to go down and people continue to get out of debt. Our economy is like the biggest thing haunting people nowadays.

Charmain Farrar
Parkchester



This year I quit smoking. I hope the new year brings a better life for everyone.

Mohammed Taher
Parkchester

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Bedford Park Artist Channels Touch of Picasso at Gallery

By DAVID CRUZ

Call him the Pablo Picasso of Bedford Park.

Persio Minier, a pony-tailed, award-winning artist hailing from the Dominican Republic, has made a career emulating the Spanish genius for decades. Since the beginning of 2014, he's showcased his work at a tiny Bedford Park art gallery that doubles as a speech therapy center.

At the moment, Minier is showcasing a series dubbed "Vestiges of Passion," a set of abstract pieces that total a fraction of his entire anthology of works. Minier's works hark back to that of Picasso, the famed impressionistic artist who broke artistic lines. Minier admits the comparison is by design.

"Picasso, above all, I identify with because he was very liberated in his approach," said Minier, 59. "He said even at 70 years old he was learning something. That means to tell me that for us who aren't geniuses, unlike Picasso, we'll always learn something. With art you never stop learning."

Minier spoke to the *Norwood News* from the Bedford Arts Center that



Photo by David Cruz

PERSIO MINIER STANDS alongside several works he crafted. They can be seen on exhibit at the Bedford Art Gallery at 234 E. 204th St..

sits on 234 E. 204th St. off the Grand Concourse, a quaint site for an artist whose works have been shown throughout the city, in parts of New Jersey, his native country, and a lobby around the corner from his Bedford Park home.

Minier's artistic drive began in the Dominican Republic, where he began painting at age 7. He first showcased his work at Club Quisqueya in Valverde Mao. He later moved to Santiago, Dominican Republic, where he enrolled in art classes in his teens before mov-

ing to New York City to immerse himself in the craft. He understood the risk of spending a lifetime as a starving artist.

"I wanted to educate myself in the vibrancy of art here," said Minier of New York City. "There's a lot of artists from parts of the world here."

He first lived in Manhattan before moving to Soundview and settling in Bedford Park.

Minier has dabbled in other art forms that include modern art pieces that make a political, environmental and social statement. At the gallery, one of his works comprised of toy soldiers, plants and a green-colored water jug with a U.S. dollar taped to it symbolize the Dominican Republic's propensity to favor mineral mining over the environment, he said.

For Minier, there's always a statement to make about art. There's also enough passion in him to last two lifetimes. "If I were to reincarnate," said Minier, "I'd still be an artist."

Editor's Note: Those interested in visiting the gallery can contact Minier at (347) 666-5703.

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

Andy King

"Our Perseverance In The Future,
Lies In The Resiliency Of Our Past"
-CM King

Happy 2015!

As we enter this new year, I pray 2015 presents golden opportunities for you and your loved ones and new reasons to give thanks to God. And remember,

"People Pay Attention To People Who Participate"
Council Member Andy L. King

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Bronx Youth Heard

Without a Computer, Homework Extra Tough

DAISY TORRES



Tyrone Tyler Thomas often rushes to complete his homework that requires a computer. It's not to make time for his PS3 game console or hang out with his friends. It was because he was short on time.

The only place he could complete his computer mandated homework is at the school computer lab. He didn't have a computer at home and he couldn't afford another failing grade on his report card for turning in a handwritten assignment when the teacher required it to be typed.

"I felt so stuck sometimes because I had to get an assignment done and I didn't have enough time," said Tyrone, 17, a student at Hostos Lincoln Academy of Science. He had often spent his after school time from 2:20 to 4 p.m. at the school computer lab to complete homework that was required to be typed.

Yet despite a study by former New York City Comptroller John Liu showing that one-third of Bronx homes lack any Internet access or computers, some

teachers still expect computer assignments be done on time and to their specifications-not handwritten.

"If we get homework on the computer and I don't complete it on time, it will not be accepted and I will get a zero on the assignment, which takes out a lot of points," said Shaamar Love-lace Cole, 17.

A classmate of Tyrone's, Shaamar does not have a computer at his home or even Internet access. He is one of the many students who struggle to complete computer mandated homework.

But not everyone thinks that computer access is the main issue. "Some people are just too lazy to get off their phones and locate a public library around them," said Latoya A. Crum-



Photo by Daisy Torres

TYRONE TYLER THOMAS poses with computer he received as a gift from teacher F. Michael Guldal (right). The laptop is a lifesaver for Tyrone, who lacked a computer, making homework assignments difficult to complete.

Ewing, 14, a student at Hostos Lincoln Academy of Science.

"It's totally unfair that teachers require students to complete computer assignments no matter what," said Tiffany Prentis, 34, a guidance counselor at MS 162 in the South Bronx. "That could have been the week that the computer chose to break down."

Liu's report found that 37 percent of Bronx homes have no Internet or computer access.

"Teachers should set up a time during the week to take the whole class together to complete the computerized assignment," said Prentis.

Middle school teacher Elaine Blocker likes her assignments typed since they are neater and easier to read. "Give me my stuff!" is what she's

often known to say to her 8th grade students at MS 390 in Burnside. "They have a school computer lab, a public library, and laptops in their school and they want to tell me that they can't get my essays typed? They have more than enough resources and time," said Blocker.

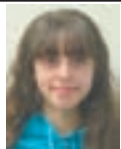
However, there are a few teachers who understand the financial struggles some families have. Technology teacher F. Michael Guldal, 45, known by students as Mr. G., generously gave his personal laptop to Tyrone to keep as a gift. "Mr. G just saw me staying in late to complete a homework assignment on the computer and just asked if I had a computer to work on at home," recalled Tyrone. "When I told him 'no,' he said he might just be able to help me. I'm really grateful."

Guldal gives students computer work as a way to prepare them for college. "In college they won't accept any handwritten work," he said.

For students who don't have computers at home, but do have phones, Guldal makes completing assignments easier. "I set up Google Drive for them on their phones so they can type there and save it. All they have to is clean it up at a computer at school," he said.

For Teens, Parenting Styles Can Be Found in the Streets

KARINA CABAN



While there are several places throughout the Bronx where young adults can learn how to become better parents, the neighborhood streets are often the most obvious place parenting education can be found.

Interviews with Bronx teens show that daily interactions on the sidewalk, in the subway and at the

local bodega offer a view of the challenges and rewards of parenting. "It's always chaotic where I live," said David Hawkins, 17, who attends Metropolitan High School. "I see little kids being pushed to the side by their parents and [heard about kids being] beaten to death."

David understands it is not easy being a parent but doesn't think negative behavior is acceptable. "I think it's bad parenting," he said.

But not all exchanges are negative.

"An autistic child ran up to me for some chips," said Ashley Vargas,

16, a student at Metropolitan High School. "His mother apologized to me, lecturing her child on why that's inappropriate. The mother of the autistic child said, 'No baby, you have to be careful because that makes some people feel uncomfortable.'"

These interactions have affected how some Bronx teens see their future as a parent.

"If I ever had kids in the future and if they are disrespectful, I would hit them," Cindy Osorio, 17, said. "But if they feel uncomfortable and out of place I'll probably talk to

them."

Another student at Metropolitan who asked not to be identified, said, "What I've learned from bad parents is to not harshly discipline my child, but encourage them to understand where they come from."

The Bronx is trying to help people be better parents with how to educate and take care of a child. Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. is helping dads by involving them in a program called "Fatherhood Taking Action." For more information, follow the program on Twitter at @BronxFTA.

Nagging Welfare Perceptions Result in Shame for Recipients

**BRITTNEY
HERRERA**



Even though roughly half of Bronx families are supported by welfare, the stigma on relying on public assistance persists, with many recipients bearing the brunt of presumption.

“Some people’s perceptions of me being on EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) is that I am abusing my EBT,” said Jennifer Barona, 24, a single mother in the Bronx. “It feels very overwhelming.”

Welfare helps her take care of her two toddlers, but she doesn’t feel good about her situation. “The first time when I was in the waiting office, I was pregnant with my first toddler. There was a lot of ghetto people and I felt out of place,” said Barona.

The same went for Gabriela Aguilera, 20, who often feels “so low”



A LOOK INSIDE an office for those seeking public assistance. Statistics show half of Bronx families rely on some type of government aid.

when entering a welfare office.

“It is a place where people with no financial stability go to get assistance for their needs,” she said.

Figures from the U.S. Census Bureau show that at least 49 percent of Bronx families are on welfare. From 2007 to 2010, the number of people on

welfare in the Bronx increased by 18 percent.

Citywide, welfare fraud indeed occurs. The city’s Investigation, Revenue and Enforcement Administration, tasked to investigate welfare abuses, recouped \$28.7 million in inappropriate payments to the

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2013, according to the most available statistics.

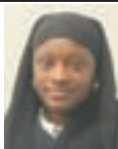
Teens pick up their parents’ discomfort of pleading for help. Yadira, 17, whose last name was withheld for fear her friends would know her family’s on welfare, said young people are unaware of shame families feel in applying for welfare. “It is a little embarrassing, and teenagers are very immature nowadays with situations like this” Yadira said.

On the other hand, there are people who do not see welfare as necessarily a bad thing. Mauricio Berrios, 19, has a father who is on welfare. Though it doesn’t directly affect him, Berrios noted he “would feel comfortable because the way I see it is as an extra helping hand.”

But that doesn’t help Barona who said she often hears plenty of assumptions about welfare recipients. “Some stereotypes that I hear is ghetto, lazy, trashy people,” she said. “I am just a regular person from the borough of the Bronx.”

School Cell Phone Ban Calls for Better Days, Say Students

**MAMASA
DUKURAY**



After years of cell phones prohibited in New York City public schools, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced plans on lifting the city Department of Education (DOE) policy.

Though it’s unclear when the change becomes effective, several students have already welcomed the news.

Isetou Jawara, a student at Valindus Preparatory Academy in Claremont, said she will enjoy lunch more since she would feel she was truly “on break.” “If students are given a bit more freedom with phones, things would be better,” she said.

Lunchrooms aren’t the only place where cell phones can be useful, but can also be incorporated in classrooms.

Patrick Callahan, a high school science teacher at Bronx Center for Science and Mathematics in Mor-

risania, said phones “should play more of a role.” “Smart phones are basically like a computer and can be effective to carry around,” he said. “For example, tomorrow I will be taking students on a field trip and they will be using phones to identify trees.”

Callahan noted that once cell phones are allowed, he would only permit students to use them for specific activities. For now, students must either leave their phone at home or shell out one dollar to have them secured in trucks during the school day.

But some students are not eager for the cell phone freedom. “Changing the cell phone policy will affect my education negatively because I won’t pay attention as much,” said Tega Odjegba, a junior at the Bronx Center for Science and Mathematics, adding phones should only be used during emergencies.

According to Pew Research Center, statistics taken in 2012 showed 78 percent of teens owned cell phones. Of that percentage, 37 per-



Photo by Mamasa Dukuray

CELL PHONE PROHIBITION at schools sparked an industry of cell phone storage truck companies such as this pictured. But the days could be numbered for this service, following a plan by the de Blasio administration to lift the cell phone ban policy.

cent of those teens owned smart phones. The smart phone did play a role in an incident where some students from Stuyvesant High School cheated on a test with it in 2012.

Fatou Dukuray, a senior at Marie Curie High School said. “Students

can’t be trusted with cell phones because when students say that they are studying, they can be on social media or some sort.”

The DOE did not respond on when the cell phone ban will be lifted.

Gloves Before Books, a Young Boxer's Gamble

NICHOLAS ROBINSON



Daniel Martinez, 17, a senior from the Academy for Scholarship and Entrepreneurship in Edenwald, wouldn't mind dropping out of high school to pursue his sports career as a boxer.

He wants to be the greatest of all time. And so far, on weekdays, he's invested the time, beginning his training regiment at 4 p.m. until he goes to sleep, and on weekends he trains longer.

As for an alternative plan should things go south, Daniel would rather not think about that. "If I had a backup plan, that means there would be a thought in my mind that I would fail," he said.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association was unable to provide statistics over how many student boxers make it to a professional level. It did provide data on student athletes transitioning to professional sports. The numbers were low. According to the NCAA, just 0.3 percent of players in men's basketball, 0.9 percent of football players, 0.5 percent of baseball players and 0.4 percent of men's ice hockey players go pro.

Steve Leone, a coach at the Academy for Scholarship and Entrepreneurship, prefers student athletes be more realistic about their plans. "They should plan for not being an athlete and go to college," he said. "High school students can tell when they're not going to be elite."

But for Daniel, his boxing career comes first. "It's a validation of life and myself. Everything that comes with it in my specific situation, I won't fail because of it," he said.

As for college, Daniel intends to stay local for the sake of training. "But if I do go to college, I'd like to go to Fordham so I can stay where I live so I can continue going to the boxing gym I go to," he said.

Bronx Youth Heard Highlights



Photo courtesy Leah Moses

THE CLASS OF Bronx Youth Heard stands with Lewis Dodley, evening anchor of NY1, the news station that covers the city, including the Bronx. Students traveled to Manhattan's Meat Packing District to tour the newsroom on Dec. 18. Special thanks to Leah Moses, Manager of Business Development for Time Warner Channel News & Local Programming, and Erin Clarke, NY1's Bronx reporter, who generously offered time to speak with students and show how a live newsroom works.



Bronx Youth Heard

Photo by David Cruz

LEARNING THE ROPES of an on-field reporter are (l-r) Mamasa Dukuray and Briana Anderson, who stopped by the Bronx General Post Office in Mott Haven to pepper residents with some on-the-spot interviewing. This was their first time heading out to the streets to sharpen their interviewing skills, which came in handy when crafting their news stories.

Bronx Youth Heard

Vol. 8, No. 1

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Bronx Youth Heard is a publication of the Bronx Youth Journalism Initiative, published twice a year in the *Norwood News*.

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The Bronx Youth Journalism Initiative is a free journalism program for Bronx high school students, run by the *Norwood News* with support from New York City Councilman Fernando Cabrera, and The Simon Bolívar Foundation, and in collaboration with CUNY's College Now program at Hostos Community College.

Classrooms Write Off Cursive, but It Remains a Requirement

**BRIANA
ANDERSON**



The lost art of letter writing may be followed by the art of cursive in New York City public schools. In an age that celebrates digital know-how over old school traditions, legible handwriting is often overlooked in schools while lessons in cursive writing is all but ignored in many classrooms.

Aaron Reid, 16, a student at DeWitt Clinton High School in Norwood, called cursive “a waste of time.” “Why do we need cursive when nowadays typing and print is the new penmanship?” he asked.

But Joshua Corder, 15, a student at Harry S. Truman High School in Baychester, hopes to acquire the skills of a penman. “I see a purpose in learning cursive because it’s going to come in handy when choosing an occupation,” he said.

Mariam Magassouba, 15, a fellow student at Truman, agreed that cursive “makes me look more professional, something I’m shooting for.”

Cursive is not completely out of the picture. The skill remains a requirement when signing legal documents, applications, or medical forms. For students, the skill comes in handy during the chal-

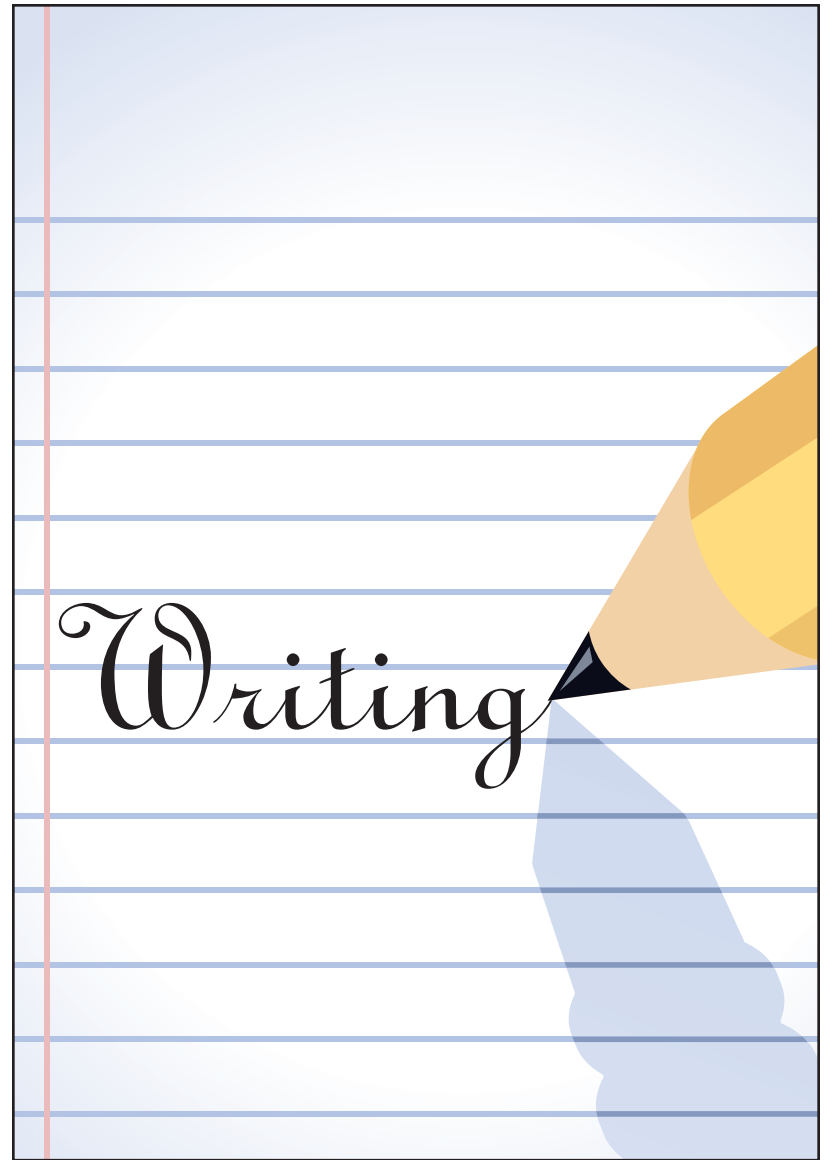
lenging, and time consuming 48 questions in the PSAT and SAT, where writing a pledge promising they’ll uphold a moral standard when taking the test must be written in cursive.

And there is at least one legislator who wants to ensure cursive is etched back into the curriculum. Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz of the 81st Assembly District in the northwest Bronx is preparing a bill that will require cursive writing in the New York City curriculum.

The Bronx Borough President’s Office is a fan of cursive, too. “It is better to learn script and not use it, than to have to use it and not know how,” said John DeSio, a spokesman for Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. “It’s not worth being at disadvantage to something nowadays.”

Research from the University of Washington suggests learning cursive may help with self-control issues. Middlesex University, an institution in Great Britain, found that cursive might help with dyslexia.

Cursive is still common in other parts of the world. Christina Park, 16, a student at Truman H.S., learned the skill in Jamaica when she was in the sixth grade. “It needs to be enforced because many careers call for it,” she said.



File photo

CURSIVE, ALSO KNOWN as script, is dying a slow death, taught less frequently in the classroom.

Does Class Size Matter? Students Think ‘Meh’

**SAD
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A 2014 survey by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) found that reducing class size is a “top priority” for parents. But for some middle school students, concerns for class size vary dramatically.

DOE statistics show that the number of students per class have decreased slightly, to 26.8 students from 26.7. And though reducing class size is still key to the

DOE’s long-term agenda, some students and teachers didn’t see the difference.

At West Farms’ PS 214 middle school, Trinity Haynes, 13, has an eighth grade class comprised of 34 students. “In a smaller class, the teacher gives more attention to you and there is less noise than in a larger classroom,” said Trinity. But she sees no parallel to class size and student achievement. “It just really doesn’t matter.”

Melissa Maehara, 40, is a teacher at PS 214 who instructs the large class. But she’s seen the other side of the coin, having taught smaller classes made up of

13 students. “In a larger class, it is much easier to lose students [in the work], but it seemed students were more affected by motivation than class size,” she said.

Brian Mills, a humanities teacher who instructs the eighth grade at PS 214, said student performance depends on how driven a student is. “You have some students who are independent and can work in large classes and others that can’t,” he said.

Mehbub Rohit, another eighth grader at PS 214, agreed. Despite being transferred from a school with a smaller class size, Mehbub said he prefers “big class sizes

because you can better associate and help each other whereas in a smaller classroom you’ll feel more lonely.”

Mehbub added he has many friends and is more open to the people around him because of the large class. And although statistics conclude that class size decreases student performance, he stood strong in his words. “I kind of like my classmates,” he said. “This class made me who I am.”

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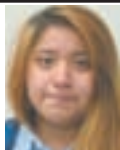
Percentage of teens who will experience depression by age 18.
(Source: National Alliance on Mental Health)

Vital Stats

Bronx *Youth* Heard EDITION

Depressed Teens Seek Comfort Beyond Medication

JESSICA
MENESES



Arsenis, a Bronx resident living on Intervale Avenue, has been battling depression since she was 13. That was four years ago. These days her depression makes her “fall into a rut very often and think about death.” But instead of popping a pill or talking to a doctor when she feels bad, Arsenis routinely picks up a pen.

She used to be on medication, though its effects left her “trained to think that it fixes your problems when it actually doesn’t, it makes you worse.” Now she

“writes stories to try to prevent any bad thoughts from popping into her head.”

For Bronx teens with depression who find anti-depressants don’t work, there are alternatives available. They include sites like Comunilife in Belmont, a community-based health service that regularly offers art and music therapy exclusively to Latina teens from ages 12 to 17. According to its website, art therapy treatment is intended to build “self-esteem, ethical behavior, compassion, integrity, patience, respect, responsibility, and social consciousness.” The process is intended to visualize the trauma and talk about it later on.

Dr. Susan Weinstein, a child psychiatrist assistant professor

at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center, recommends teens who have been diagnosed with depression seek professional help.

“Treatment for depression varies based on the severity of symptoms,” she said. “Patients with mild to moderate depression often do best with talk therapy alone. This can include formal therapy with a social worker, psychologist or psychiatrist, or less formal options such as speaking regularly with a school counselor or religious leader.”

This approach worked for Rosa G., a student at Metropolitan High School in Longwood whose last name was withheld for privacy reasons. When she

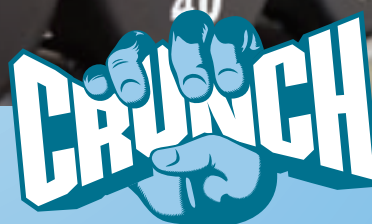
was first prescribed medication for her depression, she didn’t like the drug’s side effects that included diarrhea or headaches. She also didn’t feel comfortable taking the pills. “Pills got me more crazier,” she said. So she started going to support groups. These groups taught her to “wake up and be grateful for the things you have.” “My therapist says I’m not depressed anymore and I feel happy now,” Rosa said. “When I feel sad I start distracting myself.”

In cases where medication is necessary, Weinstein recommends patients stick with meds for “at least six months after symptoms get better before considering stopping medication to reduce risk of relapse.”

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TRIP

Mount Airy Casino: Poconos, Pennsylvania. Sunday, Jan. 25. Depart from East 163rd Street and Southern Boulevard, Bronx, at 9 a.m. For more information, please contact Eddie at (718) 757-5485.



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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

BP Seeks CB Applicants

The Borough President's office is currently accepting applications for membership to local Community Boards. The submission deadline is Feb. 6. For more information, call (718) 590-3914 or visit www.bronxboropres.nyc.gov.

DOS Christmas Tree Pickup

NYC Parks Department hosts Treecycle at MulchFest, Jan. 10 and 11 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at citywide locations. Remove lights and decorations and bring your tree for recycling through Jan. 11. Patrons may have free mulch available at each chipping site with free bags provided or bring your own bag. Residents may also leave their trees for DOS pickup through Jan. 16 for recycling. For more information and a list of sites, visit www.nycgovparks.org/highlights/festivals/mulchfest.

Parking Calendars

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz offers copies of the NYC 2015 Parking Calendar to residents at his district office, 3107 Kingsbridge Ave. For more information, call (718) 796-5345.

Meet and Greet/Affordable Healthcare Sign-Up

City Council Member Andy King hosts an open house and meet and greet at his district offices, 940 E. Gun Hill Rd. and 135 Einstein Loop, Room 44, in Co-Op City, on Jan. 15 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. King will also be hosting a free sign-up session for the Affordable Care Act on Jan. 23 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at both district offices. For more information, call (718) 684-5509.

To submit news, email dcruz@norwoodnews.org, subject line "Neighborhood Notes."

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Free Family Fun

The entire family is welcome to attend the free **Burdetsky Family Circus** at the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., Jan. 10 at 2:30 p.m., including a performing dog. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Onstage

• Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Road, Pelham Bay Park, presents **Classical Guitarist Jay Kauffman**, Jan. 11 at 4:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20. For more information, call (718) 885-1461.

• The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Mariachi Real de Mexico in Concert**, Jan. 17 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Events

• Bronx Recreation's **4th Annual Winterfest** will be held at the Williamsbridge Oval, Jan. 31 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free activities include hockey, football, adventure games, arts and crafts, performers, giveaways and hot cocoa. Families can enter the **Recycled Snowman Contest** to create a snowman out of recycled materials. Prizes will be awarded. Entries should be dropped off at the Oval Jan. 28 to 30. Additional free Oval activities include fitness classes, children's activities, and family fun night to use game room. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

• Van Cortlandt Jewish Center, 3880 Sedgwick Ave., presents **Monthly Breakfast Lecture Series**, Jan. 11 at 10 a.m. followed by lecture at 10:30 a.m. Guest Gary Axelbank will discuss Jerome Park Reservoir update. Free admission. For more information, call (718) 884-6105.

• Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Arts Projects**: Hibernator's Den, to listen to tales, then make furry animals, Jan. 10 and 11; and Freedom Quilts, to learn about African-American quilts, then make a tapestry design

and quilt, Jan. 17 and 18; both in WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also presented is **Concert With the Parker Quartet** featuring chamber music in the WH House, Jan. 11 at 2 p.m. (online registration required at www.wavehill.org or at the Perkins Visitor Center; \$28; \$15/ages 8 to 18; \$22/member; \$12/member child). Grounds admission is free until noon Saturdays and Tuesdays all year. For more information and a schedule of events including tours and walks, call (718) 549-3200.

• The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse (165th Street), features its **Holiday Pop-Up Shop**, through Jan. 15, featuring accessories, home goods, handbags, and more for the season. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

• New York Botanical Garden holds its **Holiday Train Show** through Jan. 19 which includes over 20 large-scale model railway trains and trolleys traversing nearly a quarter-mile of track, and hands-on activities for children; **Holiday A Cappella**, Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. through Jan. 18; and **All Aboard With Thomas & Friends**, to join a sing-along mini performance adventure (bring camera for photo ops), through Jan. 25. For more information and a schedule, call (718) 817-8700.

Exhibits

The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse, presents **Beyond the Supersquare**, featuring a variety of artwork, through Jan. 11. For more detailed information, call (718) 681-6000.

Library Events

• The Bronx Library Center, 310

E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for children: **Preschool Story Time at 11 a.m.**: (ages 3 to 5 years), Jan. 8, 15 and 22; **Toddler Play Time at noon**: (ages 18 to 36 months), Jan. 8, 15 and 22; **Penguin Making**: (ages 7 to 12), hands-on projects, Jan. 8 at 4 p.m.; **Family Time**: (ages 3 to 6; preregistration required), reading aloud and crafts, Jan. 10 at 11 a.m.; **Abracadabra**: (ages 4 to 8), hand tricks and comedy, followed by a hands-on workshop in magic, Jan. 10 at 2 p.m.; **Computer Technology for Children**: (ages 7 to 12) learn basic skills, Jan. 15 at 4 p.m. (preregistration required); and **Snowflake Making**: (ages 7 to 12), hands-on project, Jan. 22 at 4 p.m. For teens/young adults, there is **Music and Math Educational Concert**: includes hands-on activities, Jan. 8 at 4 p.m. For adults, there is **MS Word for Beginners**: to learn basics, Jan. 13 at 2 p.m. (in-person registration required); **Advanced MS Word**: Jan. 16 at 2 p.m. (in-person registration required); and **Mini Career Fair for Job Seekers**: come prepared with copies of updated resume, professional attire and a pen, Jan. 21 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (718) 579-4260. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

• The Moshulu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Toddler Story Time at 10:30 a.m.**: (ages 18 to 36 months), stories, songs, and rhymes, Jan. 8, 15 and 22; and **Story Time Read Aloud**: (ages 4 to 6), Jan. 12 at 4 p.m. Teens/young adults can attend **Get Fresh**: Make a gelatin air freshener for your gym bag, locker or bedroom (all materials provided), Jan. 9 at 3 p.m. Adults can enjoy **Jewelry Club**: bring your own materials to create original jewelry, Jan. 8, 15 and 22 at 11 a.m.; and **Knitting Circle**: Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

• The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for kids: **Kids Get Active at 4 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12); dance and zumba, Jan. 9 and 16; and **Toddler Time at 11 a.m.**: (for ages 18 to 36 months), stories, songs, and nursery rhymes, Jan. 4 and 21. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Jan. 12 for the next publication date of Jan. 22.



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Crime Drops Slightly in 52nd Precinct

(continued from page 1)

epidemic raged. "One person shot is too many, but one of our goals is to bring down our shootings and homicides."

For Hofmann, lowering local crime is both professional and personal. "My passion to the 5-2 is because I was raised here on Decatur Avenue, where a lot of our issues are now. I graduated from Walton High School. My mission is to make sure my officers and the community is safe at the end of the day," said Hofmann.

She's also made an effort for community outreach. She routinely stops by the 52nd Precinct Community Council meetings held monthly, updating residents on major crime. She's also introduced Grandmothers Love Over Violence (L.O.V.), a support group for grandmothers who raise their grandchildren whose parents are imprisoned or drug addicted. In August, Hofmann was visible at the precinct's National Night Out festivities.

Targeting Hotspots

With help from NYPD Narcotics and Gang units, Hofmann is targeting "a couple of the crews who are terrorizing our neighborhoods." That includes robberies, she added, noting it's a primary way of making money. "That and drugs," she said.

The north end of University Heights, between 183rd Street and Fordham Road, is one of the precinct's prime crime spots, with one murder and most of the precinct's shootings happening there last year.

In Fordham's 194th Street from Valentine to Webster avenues, "a particular crew has been battling with established drug dealers to take over their turf," Hofmann said. To deal with it, she shifted half of her local Operation Impact (rookies teamed with veterans who flood problem areas) to patrol there. "It's one of our toughest neighborhoods," she noted, "while Kingsbridge Heights, Bedford Park, Norwood--those are our least problematic areas."

"What I also notice in those neighborhoods, you have the most organized groups that are very involved with us - The Jerome-Gun Hill BID, the Bedford-Moshulu Community Association, 204th Street that's forming a BID, Williamsbridge Oval. That's the difference, where you have a community that's very involved."

Indeed, the precinct has worked closely with Marcia Cameron, execu-

tive director of the Jerome-Gun Hill BID, to install surveillance cameras along the commercial strip. The cameras, funded by Councilman Andrew Cohen, would have been a boon for the BID. Burglaries were up 4.2 percent, from 356 to 371, the BID taking a hit "big time," said Hofmann. "Numerous stores have been getting hit through their rooftops. 'We believe it's mostly a professional crew who go in, with gloves, and immediately cut the security camera wire.'"

Grand larceny, involving theft of over \$1,000 in money or property, dropped 4.6 percent, from 737 incidents to 703, with Hofmann noting a large number of cases involved bank and credit card fraud - "and it's very difficult to police that."

Other Crime Categories

As for other major crime categories, robberies dropped seven percent last year, from 473 in 2013 to 440, "because we put the officers where we see the problem," said Hofmann. The cell phone of choice for robbers, she noted, has gone from iPhones to Samsungs.

Rapes - which she noted "many of those involve people who are known to each other" - jumped 3.8 percent, from 26 to 27 last year.

Felony assaults took a hefty 12 percent jump, from 484 to 542, with Hofmann saying many of them are domestic cases.

"With strangulation now being part of a legal assault charge, we've seen an increase, with hands around the neck," she said. "Unfortunately, we have seen an increase in domestic violence. We want to see people report domestic violence, especially in the Hispanic and immigrant communities."

One bright spot was grand larceny auto, with a 13.4 percent drop in stolen vehicles from 119 in 2013 to 103 last year.

And even in her nearly two years at the precinct, Hofmann has won hearts and minds. Community Board 7 Chair Adaline Walker-Santiago had high praise for Hofmann for the work she and her officers are doing. "She's always out there, giving her cell phone number to everybody, Walker-Santiago said. "We stay very close in touch. Whenever anything happens, she has her officers call me directly."

Bob Kappstatter is a guest contributor to the Norwood News.

Crime Stats Comparison

Crime	2014	2013	%Change
Murder	7	12	-41.7%
Rape	27	26	3.8%
Robbery	440	473	-7.0%
Fel. Assault	542	484	12.0%
Burglary	371	356	4.2%
Gr. Larceny	703	737	-4.6%
GLA	103	119	-13.4%
Shooting Vic.	28	35	-20.0%
Shooting Inc.	24	31	-22.6%

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