

NORWOOD NEWS

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**INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
SURVIVING SNOWMAGGEDON | PG. 4**



**NORWOOD'S WONDERLAND:
SNOW COVERAGE ON PGS. 8-9**

TENANTS TURN HEAT UP ON LANDLORD

Heat complaints spike after multi-billion dollar firm buys properties



Photo by Adi Talwar

3013 VALENTINE AVE. (pictured) at 202nd street, in Bedford Park, is part of a portfolio of properties purchased last year by The Related Companies. The building has experienced a drop in quality of life, according to tenants.

By DAVID CRUZ

The cluster of tenants chatted amongst themselves inside 3013 Valentine Ave., a seven-story building in Bedford Park. They stood inside the lobby decked in thick sweatshirts and layers, wondering just when sufficient heat will return to their apartments.

It's a new normal for these tenants. And in Pelham Parkway, five buildings endure similar heat conditions as 3013 Valentine Ave. The same goes for 12 other buildings in Bedford Park, five in Norwood, two in Kingsbridge Heights and Pelham Bay respectively, three in University

Heights and Edenwald, and one each in Fordham, Morrisania and Van Cortlandt Village.

Linking these buildings, and the thousands of tenants residing there, is The Related Cos., which purchased the buildings, 36 in all, for \$253 million last year. A multi-billion dollar

development firm with projects that include the Bronx Terminal Market mall and Equinox Fitness gym chain, The Related Cos. partnered with the city Pension Fund to purchase the properties.

A coalition of tenants, housing advocates and local Community Board 7 has

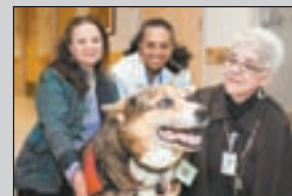
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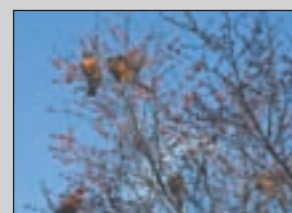
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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST



IDNYC Kicks Off at Bronx Library Center

By KIMBERLY JACOBS

As a way to promote the city's new municipal ID program dubbed IDNYC, a kickoff event was held at the Bronx Library Center at 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., the second most visited library in New York City behind the mid-Manhattan branch on 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

The Bronx Library Center will serve as a hub for residents to have their application appointment for the ID. Appointments can be made online at www.nyc.gov/idnyc, which includes a rundown of the proper documents needed to obtain the ID. Above all, proof of identity and residency (a bill, for example, qualifies as an acceptable document) are required. The city utilizes a point system to approve applicants for the free card - three documents verifying identification, one to prove New York residency.

At a news conference on Jan. 23, officials listed the benefits of having the card, largely intended for everyone regardless of immigration status, sex, or age. Officials talked of the program on pragmatic terms-having the proper identification in New York City. But many also listed its overall intent of creating a sense of proof of identity for those who don't have one.

"The simple fact is without an ID in this town or anywhere in America, you can be treated as a non-person, and everyone is a person," said Tony Marx, New York Public Library president.

This program has been largely targeted toward non-documented immigrants, but is open for every resident including homeless, seniors, LGBT, and those who don't drive.

"This is very much about solidifying and validating every New Yorker, having people come out of the shadows and being fully integrated into society, and into the fabric of our beautiful



Photo by Kimberly Jacobs

OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE THAT the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., will be the borough's main registration site for the city's new IDNYC program.

city," said Melissa Mark-Viverito, New York City Council Speaker, who lent support to the program launched several months ago by Mayor Bill de Blasio. Councilman Ritchie Torres, whose district overlaps with the Bronx Library Center, also touted the benefits.

The stigma in lacking proper ID has often kept residents from taking advantage of simple amenities such as opening a bank account. The ID clears that hurdle, said officials. They can also benefit from visiting over 30 cultural institutions around the five boroughs, free for one year, including the Bronx Zoo, the New York Botanical Garden, and Wave Hill Public Garden and Cultural Center. Along with visiting cultural institutions there are discounts for movie tickets along with health and

wellness centers. Cardholders can use the ID as a library card, and is honored as a form of identification by all city agencies and office buildings. The card is not valid for traveling or at federal agencies.

"To me, more than the tangible benefits that matters the most is the intangible value of a municipal ID. It's the sense of validation," said Torres. "That feeling of validation is the most gratifying part of this celebration."

Since the launch of this program on Jan. 15, roughly 60,000 people have signed up and over 100,000 have scheduled appointments. Demand has been so high, city officials are looking to streamline the process because the earliest appointment dates are in August.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 17 at Scott Towers, 3400 Paul 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: Public Safety & Quality of Life meets Feb. 5; Environment & Sanitation meets Feb. 10; Economic Development meets Feb. 11; Community Relations/Long Term Planning meets Feb. 11 at 7:30 p.m.; Traffic & Transportation meets Feb. 12; and Housing/Land Use & Zoning meets Feb. 18. For more information, call the Board office at (718) 933-5650.

Fordham Hill Shareholders Consider Lawsuit

By MICHAEL BROWN JR.

Tenants of a plush apartment complex in West Fordham are mulling a lawsuit against its board of directors, citing new fees illegally imposed by its Board president.

The tenants of Fordham Hill Owners Co-Operative have been locked in a bitter dispute with the Board of Directors since the middle of 2014 when its current president was voted for another term despite a lack of designated votes, or quorum, rendering the election and any subsequent decision-making invalid.

Shareholders were surprised to hear that Board president, Desiree Pilgrim-Hunter announced that the complex's cable fee would go up by \$30 and maintenance charges would rise by five percent. A chunk of shareholders, many of them senior citizens, live on a fixed income.

Meantime, long-term construction for its 60-year old buildings has stalled for over a year, inconveniencing tenant shareholders. Argo Real Estate has been managing the large cooperative for several years.

Frank Murillo, a tenant shareholder, has led the fight in obtaining



Photo courtesy Fordham Hill Owners Corp. Shareholders Derivative Suit Club
A CROWD OF shareholder tenants demonstrates outside Fordham Hill Oval Corp. demanding the ouster of Desiree Pilgrim-Hunter, the complex's Board president.

answers on the fee increases from the Board. Since January, Murillo has gathered fellow neighbors to demonstrate in front of the complex, waving signs that read "Argo= Incompetence, Corruption, Greed" and "Argo Out." Many were confused over the increases, which they believed had already been tacked onto monthly maintenance charges.

Chad Roeyer, a 20-year resident of Fordham Hill, joined the second protest on Jan. 10, declaring the no quo-

rum decree a bullying tactic and not in the best interest of shareholders. "People should be worried about losing status as a co-op," said Roeyer.

Many have also called for the ousting of Pilgrim-Hunter, who became the de facto Board president after lackluster voter turnout by shareholders. Many tenants who declined to be identified said Pilgrim-Hunter's reliance on indifferent shareholders has shielded her from anyone challenging her during any election. In previous years,

tenants were offered a breakdown over how many votes were needed to secure a quorum for the election. This year they weren't offered one.

In a letter from the Board of Directors, the Board claimed that the fee increase was justified because "the corporation faces extensive infrastructure repairs and upgrade expenses. Therefore, it is imperative that we build up the reserve fund to pay for these overdue and necessary capital projects. Otherwise, we will need to impose large, special assessments or borrow more money to pay for these repairs."

Murillo is not buying this, demanding that the Board open up the books and have a forensic auditor examine them since the Board "instituted these changes without a quorum." Many now suspect the Board imposed the extra fees to misappropriate funds. They were also curious on monies the Board borrowed to keep the buildings afloat. A separate audit was completed, though never released to shareholders.

"How they came up with this additional \$30 fee is unrealized....absolutely irrelevant, slipped in last minute," said Murillo.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers their thoughts on the Jan. 27 snowstorm that closed schools and shut down public transportation and how they coped with it.



Well, this is officially my first snowstorm because I just moved to New York from Miami. I was expecting a really big shutdown with the trains not working and the next thing you know we get three inches of snow and everyone's outside enjoying themselves, so it's pretty much a free day.

--Caterin Guzman



I'm from New Jersey and I got stuck out here because I work in the city and the traffic was crazy and the buses to New Jersey were shutting down earlier, so I couldn't even get home and I stayed out here. I was expecting this huge storm and it turned out to be like nothing.

--Darlyn Presinal



We were looking forward to a few days off from work to play with the kids. I actually work at Montefiore, so I wasn't expecting it, but all non-essential clinical appointments were canceled, so I kind of feel bad that it turned out to not be so bad, because the patients missed their appointments. But it's nice to have a day with the kids and the family.

--Shuli Kulak



I don't think it was so big. It's just an average winter snowstorm and it's nice to have the day off and spend time with the kids. Everyone canceled yesterday, so we got a free day. I do think the media hyped up this storm. It's just another nice day of snow.

--Mark Smilow



It wasn't very bad. We were supposed to get like two or three feet but we didn't get that. I guess Mother Nature changed her mind. Sometimes the weather says one thing today, but tomorrow it says something else. You can't get a more accurate forecast; it's all up to God.

--Marilyn Zwingman

Editor's Note: Have an idea for an Inquiring Photographer question? Send suggestions to dcruz@norwoodnews.org.

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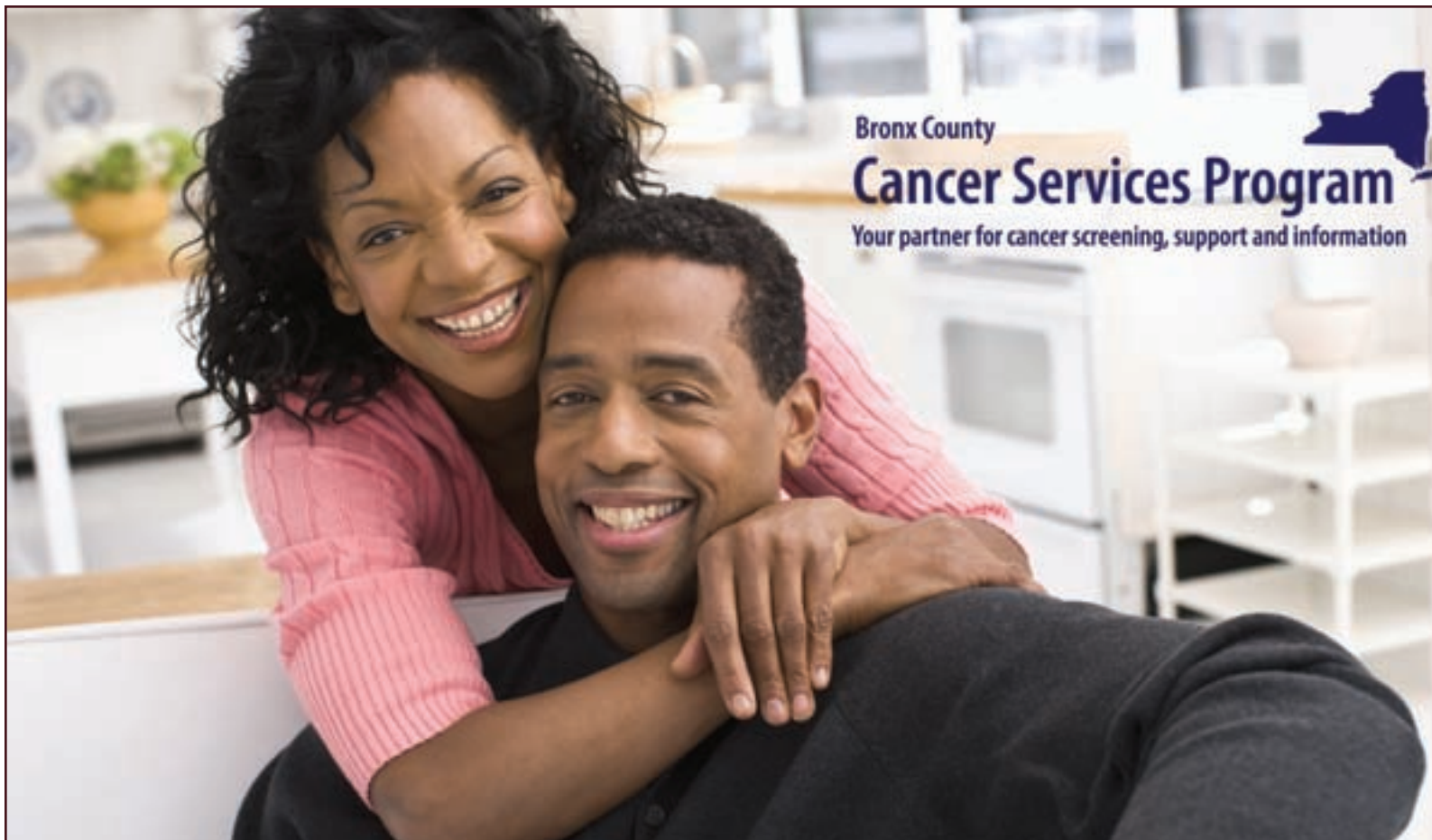
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North Bronx Lawmaker Ascends to Assembly Speaker



Photo by David Cruz

ASSEMBLYMAN CARL HEASTIE (c) flanked by the Bronx Delegation, thanks supporters at a political function for backing him for Assembly Speaker.

By **DAVID CRUZ**

Assemblyman Carl Heastie, the north Bronx legislator and leader of the borough's Democratic Committee, was voted in Tuesday as Assembly Speaker, replacing the disgraced Sheldon Silver, who resigned in late January.

Heastie's ascension came after two weeks of behind-the-scenes maneuvering from the Bronx delegation and to convince Assembly members to elect Heastie, fairly unknown outside of Bronx politics, making him Albany's first-ever Assembly Speaker from the Bronx, and more notably, the first-ever African-American Speaker.

Heastie is now the so-called third man in the room, primed to discuss the state budget and important legislation with Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo and Republican Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos. With Heastie in the room, it effectively changes the trajectory of the Bronx, which could see more state funding funneled into the borough.

"Shelly took care of his district quite well. I'm sure Carl will be taking care of the Bronx equally as well - within obvious limits," said Bob "Kappy" Kappstatter, former *New York Daily News* Bronx bureau chief and longtime borough political columnist. "And obviously, the Bronx will reap more benefits than it was reaping under Shelly Silver."

Heastie beat out a list of contenders from the boroughs and from upstate New York jockeyed for the position of Speaker, considered the third most powerful position in the State Legislature.

But critics of Heastie also see a man entrenched in the same notorious ways as Albany. Several editorial boards for major New York City newspapers have voiced concerns that Heastie is a carbon copy of Silver, who now faces several federal charges stemming from an alleged kickback scheme.

Eleanor Randolph, an editorial board member for the *New York Times*, wrote in a column that Heastie is a "bad choice," calling the scramble to pick Heastie as Speaker a "step backward, even for the notoriously backwards ways of Albany."

A *New York Daily News* editorial called Heastie a smart man, but cut from the same underhanded cloth

as Silver.

A trained accountant, Heastie arrived in Albany in 2000 after a stint at the New York City Comptroller's Office as a budget analyst. He serves the 83rd Assembly District covering Wakefield, Williamsbridge, Edenwald and Baychester. His legislative record is somewhat spotty. In his first year he sponsored four bills that did not pass. The number of sponsored bills grew to 35 during the 2011-2012 legislative session.

He was the lead sponsor of the enacted Wage Theft Prevention Act, that further penalized employers who deprive workers of proper wages.

But Heastie's finances have also been questioned, mainly \$23,000 in logged expenses, which ranks double the average legislator's, according to the *Daily News*. His last public filing showed \$21,000 to \$50,000 in credit card debt.

"From what I've read, the media is chasing whatever it can over Carl's spending," said Kappstatter, "but compared to Shelly and looking at other legislators' spending numbers, they seem to be pretty much nickel and dime stuff."

Heastie is expected to - if not already - resign his position as the leader of the Bronx Democratic County Committee, which offers a large election apparatus for political and judicial candidates.

Several potential candidates have been working behind-the-scenes to cobble support for the party leadership post, though at the moment Riverdale Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz, the party's second in the command, will serve as interim boss.

Elected officials have bounced around names that include Assemblyman Marcos Crespo of Soundview and Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda of Parkchester, though Kappstatter suspects party insiders may be looking beyond Bronx electeds (City Council members are barred from becoming the party chairman).

"While Jeff Dinowitz may have an inside track to the post, there's a lot of sentiment that the post should go to an Hispanic, and maybe even a non-elected," said Kappstatter. "It could even be a woman. How about that!"

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First Major Blizzard Not Exactly a Dud, but Norwood Expected Worse

By DAVID CRUZ

The city's first major snowstorm of the season did dump a batch of snow on the Bronx, but Norwood managed to bear the brunt.

Predictions estimated the 2015 blizzard on Jan. 27 would cripple the Bronx. Prior to the storm, officials stood firm the snow event would be historic, predicting as much as two feet of snow would cover the city.

"[We] got about half as much as what the projections had been or even under half as much," said Mayor Bill de Blasio at a news conference updating New Yorkers on the city's snow removal efforts.

Residents benefitted from Mosholu Parkway, a leafy spur that normally sees several hundred cars pass daily. The day after the storm, sleigh riding was the order of the day alongside the freeway, with neighborhood children sliding down the steep terrain, accompanied by friendly yelps.

Christine McNally, a Norwood neighbor, stood at the bottom of the hill as she instructed her grandchildren to keep their hands inside while sledding. McNally, a supervisor at the



Photo by David Cruz

DONNETTA REID SEALS off her vehicle with sheets of plastic ahead of the Bronx's first major snowstorm of the year

Home Depot in Baychester, admitted that pre-snow coverage was overblown, though she thanked the city for closing the schools, a decision the city barely takes lightly. "The call that they made for the schools to be closed was a good choice because of the snow. The driving and conditions would have made it hard for the kids," she said.

Some forewent the sledding for

some time to dig out. Modell and Carol Warren, a couple living in Norwood for 58 years, dusted off a layer of snow and ice that accumulated on their Volkswagon (see photo/caption #5 on page 9). The first major snowstorm wasn't terrible, they admitted. "The cleanup is pretty good," said Carol, a blue dustpan in her hand. "The roads were drivable."

On Rochambeau Avenue, José Guzman, a taxi driver living in Norwood, cleared his work taxi from a mountain of snow after the travel ban forced him off the streets. Assessing the amount of snow, Guzman thinks driving around will be impossible since some streets have not been completely plowed.

Along the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District, several stores were closed, with customers barely frequenting the open shops.

But it was business as usual for Eddie's Kosher Delicatessen on Bainbridge Avenue. Customers trickled in to the neighborhood deli for hot-off-the-grill food. Manager Kevin Sardanovic slumped behind the counter and shrugged off the latest snowstorm, noting "we've seen worse." His sister Nusreta, agreed. "The city kind of hyped it up."

A block up, Altagracia Reynoso, a four-year Norwood resident walking her dog Suzy towards Williamsbridge Oval Park, was glad the city heeded the warning despite the end result. "This is nature," said Reynoso. "No one can decide how it's going to turn out exactly."

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Snow Day!



2 **KEEPING THE BLOOD** flowing is José Guzman, a livery cab driver shoveling out his taxi buried in snow on Jan. 27 on Rochambeau Avenue.

Photo by David Cruz

3 **CLEANUP WAS THE** order of the day on Jan. 28, with snow removal workers clearing the bus stops along East Gun Hill Road.

Photo by Jenny Sharp

1 **WITH SCHOOLS CLOSED** the day after the blizzard, this young Norwood resident takes advantage of the free day by hanging 10 on Mosholu Parkway North's slushy terrain.

Photo by David Cruz

4 **RESIDENTS ARE BUNDLED UP** outside the 205th Street D train station as the first flakes of the season's major blizzard fall.

Photo by David Cruz

5 **CAROL WARREN** (right) takes out the old dustpan and brush to clear out snow debris from her Volkswagen, with help from husband Modell (left).

Photo by David Cruz

Be Healthy

62

**Percentage of U.S.
homes that own a pet.**
(Source: National Center for Health Research)

Vital
Stats

Montefiore Medical Center in Search of a Few Good Dogs

By ROSE ITZCOVITZ

Montefiore Medical Center is on the hunt for dogs. The pups' requirement—must love humans.

The hospital is slated to train local qualified canines to show their unconditional affection to patients through a new pet therapy program that initiators say will benefit patients, hospital employees, and the dogs themselves.

Montefiore has now scheduled screenings of the dogs for Feb. 10 and 17. As of press time, over a dozen dogs have been registered for an assessment.

George Berger, the dog trainer who will turn the applicants—dogs and owners—into certified therapy teams, said that roughly 35 percent of applicants typically make the cut. "The dogs must really like people," Berger said in an email, adding that dogs must understand commands.

Selected dogs and owners will undergo a five-week training and final exam, with classes all funded by the hospital. While volunteering at the hospital, dogs must be bathed and their vaccinations must be up to date.

Leslie Bank, Montefiore's director of customer service, first experienced the benefits of animal-assisted therapy when she launched a similar program at her former Connecticut job. Bank once witnessed a child too afraid to get out of bed after surgery. But Bank said



Photo courtesy Montefiore Medical Center

SPIRIT THE DOG (front center) is on the job, volunteering as a therapy dog for Montefiore Medical Center. He stands alongside Leslie Bank (right), director of Customer Service for Montefiore, Spirit's owner (left) and a Montefiore physician (back center).

once a therapy dog was introduced to her, and jumped off her bed, she forgot her fears and immediately followed the dog. "It suspended that whole sick thing, that whole scary thing," she said.

At Montefiore, Bank teamed with Sherri Oustalet,

a social worker in palliative care, a unit specializing in improving quality of life for seriously ill patients. Bank drafted a policy for what she and Oustalet are now calling Patient Enhancement Therapy Medics.

While pet therapy has been around for centuries in various forms, it's been gaining a following in hospitals recently.

A study released last month by the Continuum Cancer Centers of New York found that the social and emotional well-being of cancer patients undergoing treatment significantly improved after experiencing pet therapy, despite the expected declines in physical and functional well-being.

Bank says that patients are selected based on their affinity toward dogs. If one roommate wants a dog visit, but the other does not or is allergic, the visit can happen in another room, as long as the patient is mobile enough to relocate.

Some Norwood residents say they'd have no problem giving up their free time for the cause. Chris Ramos, 45, says he's seen the benefits of therapy dogs on patients and would gladly give time with his four-year-old mix, Traven. "I thought of doing it just because it's good for them and it's good for public service," he said.

Interested applicants can call (718) 920-4943.

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BP DIAZ JR. VISITS HOLY LAND



Photo courtesy Bronx Borough President's Office

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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Flea Market Donations Sought

The Bedford Mosholu Community Association, 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So., Apt. B1 lobby floor, seeks donations of new and used items (excluding clothing) for its flea market. Donations can be brought to the office on Feb. 18 and 25 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., Feb. 28 from 1:30 to 4 p.m., and March 4 from 7:30 to 9 p.m. For more information, call (718) 367-2230.

Snow Removal Employment

The City needs temporary snow removal laborers for major snowstorms. Workers must be at least 18 years old and eligible to work in the U.S. Those interested can register at any District Sanitation Garage from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Saturday. For more detailed information, visit www.nyc.gov.

Free Legal Clinic

Councilman Ritchie Torres and the Urban Justice Center's Domestic Violence Project present free legal consultations on Feb. 13 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Torres' district office, 573 E. Fordham Rd. Topics include child support/custody/visitations, and orders of protection. Appointments are required. For more information, call (718) 842-8100.

Free Tax Preparation

Free tax preparation is available from VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program) at the following locations: 1) Councilman Ritchie Torres' office, 573 E. Fordham Rd., Tuesdays through Saturdays during tax season. Photo ID and Social Security card are required. For detailed information and to schedule a required appointment, call (718) 842-8100; 2) Ridgewood Savings Bank hosts tax prep sessions from 9:45 a.m. to 4 p.m.

at 3445 Jerome Ave. on Feb. 8 (718-881-3430) and at 4101 White Plains Rd. on Feb. 21 (718-882-0440). Call in advance for details on requirements and eligibility, and required appointment.

Donate Blood

St. Brendan's Church will host its annual Weekend After the Super Bowl Blood Drive on Feb. 8 at the St. Brendan's School cafeteria, 268 E. 207th St. from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 881-5313.

Financial Workshop

University Neighborhood Housing Program will host free Getting Ahead Financial Education Workshops, Thursdays, Feb. 5, 12, 19 and 26 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Concourse House, 2751 Grand Concourse. Topics include handling wage garnish-

ments, debt collectors, credit cards, and student loans. For more information and to RSVP, call (718) 933-2539.

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.bronx-boropres.nyc.gov.

Dog Therapy

Montefiore Medical Center is recruiting and training therapy dog teams to comfort patients. Free 20-minute aptitude evaluations will take place on Feb. 10 at 6:30 p.m. Human and dog teams that qualify can enroll in the hospital's comprehensive training and preparation classes. For more information, call (718) 920-4943.

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

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Valentine's Day With Peter Pan

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Peter Pan** featuring the Traveling Lantern Theatre, Feb. 14 at 2 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Onstage

• Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd., Pelham Bay Park, presents **The Musicians of the Crimson Menagerie Valentine's Day Concert**, featuring classical music, Feb. 14 at 7 p.m. (\$20). For more information and to register, call (718) 885-1461.

• Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents **La Casa de la Salsa**, featuring India and Ismael Miranda, Feb. 7 (tickets are \$50 to \$65); and **Orquesta Sinfónica del Estado de Mexico**, Feb. 14 (tickets are \$25 to \$35; \$10/12 and under); both at 8 p.m. For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

• The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Songs of Freedom and Inspiration**, featuring Cody Childs & The Ladies of Soul performing gospel, soul and folk, Feb. 7 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

• The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), presents **Afronaughtica**: a pianist and singer duo performing Latin and jazz, Feb. 13 at 2 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

Events

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

• BronxWorks, BronxNet and the Bronx Polar Bears host **Plunge**

Against Homelessness at Orchard Beach on Feb. 14 to spread awareness on homelessness. Participants can donate gloves, hats, and socks even if they opt against the plunge. For more information, visit <http://www.bronxworks.org/dip-against-homelessness>.

• Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Arts Projects**: Nature-Mask Papermaking - A Wave Hill at 50 Anniversary Program, to make and decorate handmade paper masks from natural fibers, then parade them for a forest carnival, Feb. 7 and 8; and I Heart Pollinators, to make flowerful Valentine's Day cards, Feb. 14 and 15; both in WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. 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.

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); and **Toddler Play Time at noon**: (ages 18 to 36 months); both on Feb. 5, 12 and 19; **Hands-On Projects**: (ages 7 to 12): **Heart Butterfly Making**: Feb. 5 at 4 p.m.; **Valentine Card Making**: Feb. 8 at 2 p.m.; **Jewelry Box Making**: Feb. 15 at 2 p.m.; and **Animal Mask Making**: Feb. 19 at 4 p.m.; **film**: Feb. 8 and 15 at 3:30 p.m.; and **Family Time**: (ages 3 to 6), reading aloud and crafts, Feb. 14 at 11 a.m. (preregistration required). For adults, there is **Internet for Beginners**: (prerequisite: computer basics), Feb. 5 at 2 p.m.; and **MS Word 2010 for Beginners**: Feb. 6 at 2 p.m. (advance in-person registration required). For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

• The Mosholu 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, Feb. 5 and 12; and **Read Aloud Story Time**: (ages 3 to 6), Feb. 9 at 4 p.m. Adults can enjoy **Jewelry Club at 11 a.m.**: bring your own materials to create original jewelry, Feb. 5, 12 and 19; **Langston Hughes**: one-man show by actor David Mills presenting dramatic rendition of Hughes' poems

and short stories, Feb. 6 at 2:30 p.m.; and **Knitting Circle**: Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Feb. 9 for the next publication date of Feb. 19.



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Tenants Turn Heat Up on Landlord

(continued from page 1)

now led the charge in addressing the problem. They've in turn enlisted the help of elected officials and other tenants at various buildings, hoping to reverse the trend.

For now, tenants in the Valentine Avenue building have gotten creative to get by. One resident routinely wears a jacket inside their apartment. Another takes a gamble by regularly turning on their oven as an alternative heat source. Some sleep with extra layers that include a winter hat. For newborn infants, double blankets and fleeces are in order. With no hot water, many resort to boiling several pans to shower. In many cases, some just skip a shower.

These residents are not used to complaining (many of them asked for anonymity), but their mobilization efforts signaled the severity of the systemic issue.

"I invited management to come over and sleep in my house to enjoy the stay and the cold," said one tenant. "They didn't take up my offer."

Residents in 20 apartments at 3013 Valentine Ave. have filed a total of 94 heat complaints to the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), according to numbers compiled by West Bronx Housing, a housing advocacy group based in Bedford Park. In all, roughly 1200 heat complaints have been by tenants at the properties. Executive Director of West Bronx Housing, Sally Dunford, emphasized that the number of heat complaints is not as important as the number of people who filed complaints.

"At 2780 University Ave., there were 115 calls since the beginning of heating season from 26 different apartments. That's 25 percent of the people who've taken the step of calling the city and complaining," said Dunford.

Dunford's efforts in finding solutions have been almost obsessive. She's tracked the volume of complaints daily, sifting through the city's HPD website to log new numbers. Her staffers have visited the Valentine Avenue building nu-

merous times, encouraging more tenants to voice complaints. Above all, she hopes management and tenants put their heads together for some resolve.

A spokesperson for Simply Better Apartment Homes (SBAH), a subsidiary management company of The Related Cos. to oversee the properties, challenged the tenants' assertions that it's negligent. A spokesperson for the company said they "have made numerous improvements to the buildings that average nearly 80-years-old." That included \$20 million in upgrades to its boilers and heat sensors.

Heat Sensors

Tenants have pointed to the new programmable heat sensors on the top floors at 3013 which have been installed in other buildings, as one source of the waffling heat. The sensors monitor the temperature in apartments. Should temperatures dip, it would send a signal to activate the building's boiler.

But tenants complained the sensors can trigger a false reading since it picks up a variety of heat-related sources such as an open oven or an electrical heater. In-

deed, the sensors' placement can produce a false reading, according to Heat-Timer Corp., which manufactures them. Through a case study, Heat-Timer Corp. revealed it's "easy to fool a sensor."

The SBAH spokesperson disputed tenants' claims of having no heat or hot water, saying management has "not found the sensors to be reading incorrectly," adding temperatures are "well above the legal requirement."

The spokesperson noted that complaints have been dismissed as unfounded after an inspection from HPD finds nothing. Tenants argue that HPD often calls the super or landlord ahead of a visit, inadvertently giving the super enough time to fix the problem. An HPD spokesperson did not return an email seeking an explanation.

The new normal continues at Valentine Avenue, though one tenant, Elsa Ocasio, who's experiencing a mold issue, said she's unsure how much more she can take. "I wish I knew about this," said Ocasio. "I would've stayed where I was."

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