

NORWOOD NEWS

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**COMP. STRINGER MONITORS
THE RELATED COS. HEAT ISSUE | PGS. 2-3**



**INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
YOUR STATE OF THE BOROUGH | PG. 4**

DOE FUND COMING TO NORWOOD

\$29.5 Mil goes to fund mixed housing at major Norwood crossing



Photo by Jenny Sharp

IN TWO YEARS, The Doe Fund will turn this graffiti-laden property at 3100 Webster Ave. into an eight-story apartment building for HIV/AIDS sufferers and the working poor, concerning community stakeholders.

By DAVID CRUZ

The corner of East 204th Street and Webster Avenue serves as a kind of marquee gateway into Norwood and Bedford Park's small business community.

Along Webster Avenue, the once barren spur is waking up to a construction boom unseen in recent years, powered

by major rezoning in 2009 that encouraged residential and commercial property to some 80 blocks along the strip. North of East 204th is a bustling community of clothing shops and eateries, with merchants clinging a bit longer to reap the benefits of the rezoning and its new neighbors.

It's a critical crossroad for the neighborhood, a reason

why many stakeholders are wondering why The Doe Fund will build a \$29.5 million supportive/affordable housing project across from the retail strip, adding to a growing list of neighborhood housing projects designed for a special population. The Doe Fund, a nonprofit that primarily assists the formerly homeless, will house HIV/AIDS sufferers

along with the working poor.

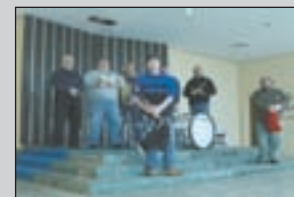
For many community activists, the supportive housing trend has become the norm, continuing a kind of tug of war between them and arriving developers.

What particularly troubles Barbara Stronczer, doubling as president of the Bedford Mosholu Community Associa-

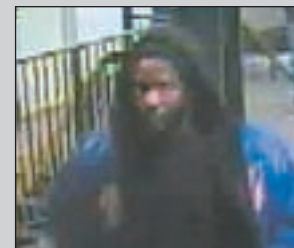
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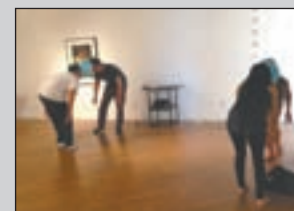
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Inside The Related

By DAVID CRUZ

When Sally Dunford, executive director of West Bronx Housing, learned a multi-billion dollar conglomerate snatched up a portfolio of Bronx buildings through a city deal, she began scratching her head.

On its surface, the portfolio of 36 properties, mainly from the northwest Bronx, was managed by Simply Better Apartment Homes. The buildings have since experienced a widespread heat problem that, while being addressed, has inconvenienced several thousand tenants during the coldest months of the year.

But there were more layers. Behind the management agency is the owner—The Related Companies—a real estate firm with assets that run between \$15 to \$22 billion.

But behind that is the New York City Pension Fund, a collection of retirement fund investments totaling \$160.7 billion. It was the Pension Fund that gave Related funds to purchase the portfolio for \$253 million. The funds were cleared by then Comptroller John Liu, and honored by current Comptroller Scott Stringer.

For Dunford, neither the city Buildings Department website nor the Housing Preservation and Development Department website listed the Pension Fund as the investor of the properties. She would learn that via news media.

Dunford, whose group serves as a watchdog for housing matters, spent months keeping track of heat complaints by tenants, who also endured days and nights of layering up in their homes, turning on their oven for heat or skipping showers.

And with issues that linger for the portfolio of buildings, Dunford suspects the investment was not in the



Photo by Adi Talwar

THIS CORNER BUILDING at 275 E. 201st St. and Briggs Avenue is owned by The Related Companies, one of 36 buildings the mega real estate firm purchased last year.

city's best financial interest. "I am surprised that [the city] is not doing their due diligence," she said. "They are allowing an investment in a company that's actually hurting some of their own members."

News of the widespread problem put a spotlight on the manner in which the New York Pension Fund screens its long-term investments, which include real estate deals. The Pension Fund is divided into five separate pensions for city employees, teachers, police officers, firefighters and retired Board of Education employees. In all, about 700,000 retirees and beneficiaries rely on the fund. Employees pay into their pension while employed with the city to help fund their retirement.

The New York City Comptroller's Office serves as the investment advisor and monitor of the funds, partnering with the office's Bureau of Asset Management to ensure any investment

can produce a healthy rate of return.

Strategizing

Investment strategies vary according to a consensus drawn by the Board of Trustees for each Pension Fund. Taken together, real estate deals fall under Real Assets, one of seven categories the funds invest in yearly. Currently, real estate investments represent \$5.8 billion or 3.5 percent of the city's total investment portfolio. It's a small sum compared to the \$60.4 billion in U.S. equity the Pension Funds invest.

But in recent years, the Pension Funds have upped its value of investments in Real Assets. A review of Real Assets in the last five years shows a steady percentage increase in performance.

Typically, the city publicly issues Requests for Proposal through the New York City Comptroller's office

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting on Tuesday, March 17 at Williamsbridge Oval Park, 3225 Reservoir Oval E., 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 March 5; Environment & Sanitation meets March 10; Health & Hospital meets March 10 at 7:30 p.m.; Senior Services meets March 11; Traffic & Transportation meets March 12; and Housing/Land Use & Zoning meets March 18. For more information, call the Board office at (718) 933-5650.

Cos. Pension Fund Deal

website. It offers a qualified real estate firm the chance to buy property utilizing city pension funds so long as their proposal is sound.

After Superstorm Sandy, the city was intent on ensuring there was enough affordable housing given the storm's wave of destruction on shoreline communities. Related was awarded the RFP to purchase workforce housing, part of a broader \$500 million plan restore housing options in Sandy-battered neighborhoods. Related found that in SW Management, buildings in the northwest Bronx come mostly from working class communities.

A spokesman for Stringer said Related was awarded the investment management contract in December 2012. There were no specifics on how Related was vetted on the Comptroller's website, with no public documents readily available, leaving the process vague. The *Norwood News* filed a request through the Freedom of Information Act asking for specifics on their proposal to the city.

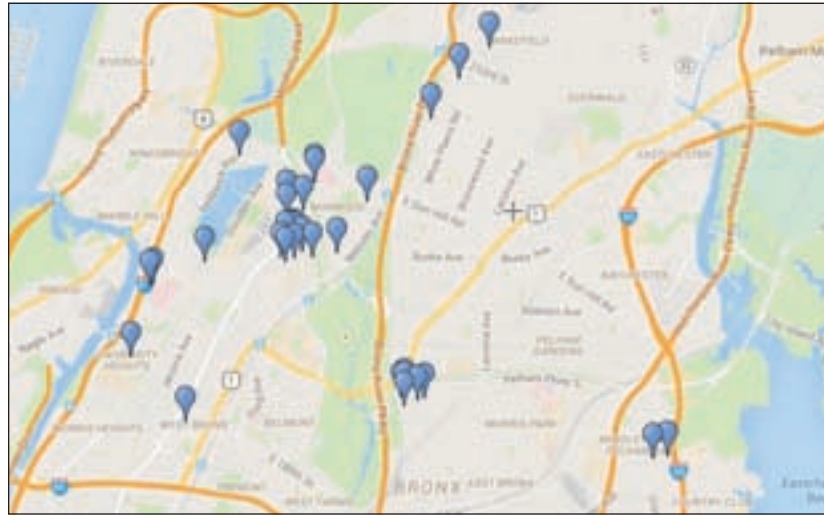


Image courtesy Scribble Maps/Google Maps

THIS MAP USING DATA collected by West Bronx Housing shows where properties owned by The Related Companies fall in the northwest Bronx.

Vetting Process

Normally, trustees for each of the Pension Funds review several factors on an investment before moving forward. That includes economic risk, targeted preferred returns, and performance, according to the Pen-

sion Funds website. The trustees then issue their recommendation to the Funds' respective advisor to execute the transaction.

In the case of Related, it's unclear what criteria the firm met, sparking a phone call and litany of questions from

Dunford to Stringer's office. "The question is: what did Related promise in their proposal?" asked Dunford.

Related has been in the real estate market for over four decades, owning 43,000 units citywide that have not been divested from its portfolio of affordable housing units. The company was initially known for buying multi-family housing for long-term investment, according to its website. Real estate assets total \$15 billion.

But an advantage for the city in business with a real estate firm is its ability to serve as a go-between for tenant/landlord disputes, a move Stringer's office made when it learned of heat complaint issues. Shortly after residents called Stringer's office to complain, staffers reached out to Related "to substantiate any problems."

"We are currently working with all parties to resolve any issues," Stringer said in a statement. But Stringer's office declined to explain if any contingencies are in place should a real estate investment deal go under, consequently putting tenants at risk.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE

On the heels of the Borough President's State of the Borough address, we asked readers what are some of the things the Bronx needs most.



We don't have very many Wendy's restaurants or even many supermarkets. I think we also need more daycare centers for kids and more parks for everyone.

--Roxana White, Bedford Park



I think we need a boat in the Hudson River to ferry people from the Bronx to Manhattan; we don't have that. I also think we need an express bus from the Bronx to Queens, I don't think they have that. I also think we need more movie theaters, a dine-in movie theater where you can eat and watch a movie. They have a lot of them in New Jersey and upstate New York. I have to travel far away because I can't do that here in the Bronx, they don't have it.

--Joy Pleasant, University Heights



I know the Bronx is underserved in everything. We don't have schools or arcades for children. The children don't even go to school in a regular building, they built a small building in the schoolyard... and it's not safe for children. There are a lot of things that aren't very nice. We also need a movie theater to entertain ourselves.

--Freweni Araia, Parkchester



The Bronx needs to work on education and needs more schools and after school programs and stuff like that. This school, P.S. 83, doesn't have anything. They used to have an after school program that I went to as a kid and it was free, but now it's very limited.

--Anibal Vargas, Morris Park



I think we need some movie theaters in the Bronx. We can watch at home but we need to go out and have more places to go, instead of always going downtown.

--Ali Algahim, Longwood

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

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In State of the Borough, Diaz Boasts Bronx on the Mend

By DAVID CRUZ

In a State of the Borough speech packed with pomp, ambition and proposals, Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. talked of the Bronx on the mend, powered by a list of accomplishments and tempered gravitas.

In his annual State of the Borough speech that encompassed his overarching master plan, Diaz offered a narrative of a Bronx leaning in the right direction, marked by rapid development throughout. In the 41-minute speech that earned 67 rounds of applause, Diaz spoke largely on the burgeoning business boom that continues in the borough.

“The Bronx has never been more open for business,” said Diaz. “If you’re looking to invest, the time is now.”

Successes have trickled down to Bronx residents who’ve now found jobs easily. It’s contributed to a five percent unemployment rate, the lowest in years.

Development served as a primary theme in his agenda-driven speech before a packed crowd at the new Bay Plaza shopping center in Baychester. The setting served as a symbolic reminder of some progress the borough



Photos by Jenny Sharp

BOROUGH PRESIDENT RUBEN Diaz Jr. (inset) looks at possibly decking several train yards in the Bronx, including one near Lehman College (pictured in background).

has seen in 2014, which also saw several other marquee projects lining up, including one from online grocer FreshDirect.

Diaz touched on what lay ahead for the Bronx, including a film production company in Soundview, a massive freezer facility in Hunts Point, an expansion of the Hutchinson Metro Center campus and major development changes for the South Bronx waterfront.

He also announced an assessment of possibly decking several major train yards in the borough—149th Street by the Grand Concourse, Bedford Park Boulevard near Lehman College, and the yards by Riverdale and Kingsbridge—to spur more development. He even took a jab at Mayor Bill de Blasio, who eyed the borough of Queens for a decking plan. That proposal was later rejected by residents, and received little support from Albany.

“Mr. Mayor, if they’re not interested in Queens, why not try the Bronx,” said Diaz.

While projects have been completed, Diaz made little mention of any advancement within the Kingsbridge Armory, slated to be repurposed into a massive ice center. In his speech, Diaz mentioned the project is merely “progressing.” When asked to elaborate further in a news conference shortly after the speech, Diaz offered little insight aside from a court ruling that allowed the Kingsbridge National Ice Center project to advance.

But darker, more complicated issues were barely mentioned, including a heroin epidemic that continues to rage in the Bronx. In 2013, the borough saw the most heroin-related deaths of any other part of the city, a trend that exists primarily in central and south Bronx. Notwithstanding its decades-long problem, resolutions to fix the heroin crisis remain on the outskirts.

Still, the borough president suggested the Bronx’s better days are ahead, capping his speech with a “We can. And we will. Because we deserve it.”

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Bagpipers Evoke Irish Roots in Norwood

By **MONICA MELTON**

Every Tuesday, the whining sounds of bagpipes can be heard in a basement at St. Margaret's Church on Delafield Avenue. It's the sound heard-kenning back to Old Sod, where bagpipe music symbolized revelry and in many instances a warning to the enemy.

And behind the music is a sense of fraternity, a reason why Ken Corrigan of Norwood created the New York City Volunteer Firefighters Bagpipe Band, one of the few remaining Irish bagpipe bands in the Bronx that practices year round in the northwest Bronx.

Corrigan, a former police officer, volunteer at the Hartsdale Fire Company and instructor for the Department of Homeland Security, formed the band in 2011 alongside several musicians from Norwood. Corrigan is proud to add the title of drum major to his repertoire.

"The original concept of forming this band was to honor the fire service, both paid and volunteer, to honor the heritage and traditions and those who laid down their lives while in the performance of duty protecting the City of New York and abroad since



Photo by Monica Melton

THE BAGPIPERS BAND at St. Margaret's Church takes five for a group shot.

1648," said Corrigan.

That is exactly what the band has done since forming. Corrigan said the history around the songs his band plays comes from Scottish, Irish,

Welsh, British, Japanese, Spanish and even Jordanian roots.

The group certainly keeps with tradition, wearing the familiar plaid kilt at various parades and other functions. "When you put that kilt on, you're stepping into not only a worldwide fraternal organization, but you're stepping back into history," Corrigan said.

A history intermingled with music, service and defense. All sorts of songs are played on the bagpipes--"rebellion song, drinking songs," according to Corrigan. Early Irish, and British bagpipe songs were made as a call of war to scare the enemy. Corrigan said that fire departments, police departments and military organizations have adopted the tradition.

But with Norwood now a mix of minorities, the band reflects just a tinge of residents' heritage these days. Corrigan, for instance, grew up on Bainbridge Avenue, once the epicenter for Irish culture, with bars lining the strip during the 1970s. Not many remain, and Irish culture is seldom seen in Norwood, making bagpipers a Norwood rarity.

"It's been difficult to recruit," said Corrigan. "We put in ads on different websites and Facebook to get more members from Fordham to Connecticut."

And yet, the appeal to join the band goes beyond sharpening skills. Many band members said they've joined to honor members of defense services

skills. Each of the men in the eight-member band has volunteered their service either as an emergency medical technician, firefighter, or law enforcement officer. But many go beyond the stereotypical man of service.

Daniel Fink, the band's bagpipe major and instructor is a holistic physician who's been playing the pipes for more than 30 years. One of his students, the youngest member of band, Ciaran O'Rourke, 20, is a gourmet chef and is training to be a pilot. "I love this group," said O'Rourke. "It's a tight knit band of brothers and it's great."

"Big Joe" Gearity, the band's snare drummer and former electrical engineer expressed that the music is enjoyed by all. "My wife is from the Philippines and loves the music. She always comes out to see us play. She says the music is really bouncy."

The band which practices year round, will be playing in the March 15 St. Patrick's Day Parade in Throggs Neck and the Tartan Day Parade on April 11 starting on Sixth Avenue in Manhattan.

There is an open call for pipers and drummers to join the band, which is looking to expand. Musicians looking to join can visit the band's Facebook page. And yes, wearing the kilt is mandatory to events.

"It takes a real man to put on a kilt and walk the streets, you know," said Corrigan.

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At MMCC, Recreational Adventures Await

It may be cold outside, but things are warming up at the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC). Staffers are keeping busy planning for its spring programming, registering neighborhood kids for its swell of programs available for all ages.

March is the beginning of baseball season for boys and girls ages 4 ½ to 16 years old. The MMCC Boys & Girls Baseball and Softball League is taking registration with games slated for April. Parents are encouraged to sign up their little sluggers before the first pitch next month.

At the group's main headquarters in Norwood, Saturday classes are available for kids interested in basketball, ballet, hip-hop dance, karate, drama, cooking, weight training, tutoring in math and English, art, and gymnastics. MMCC offers SAT prep and computer classes as well as swimming lessons.

Mosholu Day Camp is gearing up for its camp season at Bear Mountain on Lake Cohasset. Boys and girls entering kindergarten to sixth grade can sign up for a camp experience that takes you to a more natural setting. Camp Sunshine serves 5- to 12-year-old campers with special needs. They are lined up with regular activities to give campers a true outdoor experience.

MMCC's Teen Trailways (also known as the so-called "camp on wheels") is available for campers from seventh to tenth grade. The campers travel daily to pools, beaches, state parks, museums and other recreational and educational facilities throughout the tri-state area. The program culminates in a fantastic three-night trip to Virginia Beach. Camp Elan, the camp for special needs teens, is integrated into the Teen Trailways' itinerary. Camp fees have been reduced, with average rates going for \$500 per camper with no extra charges, according to MMCC's organizers.

The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) has begun taking applications in March. Additional services for teens include an evening teen center, GED classes, out of school youth program, culinary cooking program, security certificate training, Family Choice (assisting families in choosing a high school for middle school students), and college bound programs.

For more information, stop by MMCC at 3450 DeKalb Ave. at the corner of East Gun Hill Road from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. The center is also open Saturdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-4000 ext. 0, or check out their website at www.mmcc.org.



Photo courtesy MMCC

THESE KIDS AT MMCC'S day camp revel at a chance for a cute photo, and perhaps making some lifelong friends.

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CRIME FILE

By DAVID CRUZ

52nd Pct. Has First Official Homicide

The 52nd Precinct's streak of zero murders ended following the death of a 52-year-old woman in Fordham. Police say the victim, identified as Delores Scott of midtown Manhattan, was found with stab wounds to her chest and back in front of 20 W. 190th St., a mentoring program office, on Feb. 19. She was rushed to St. Barnabas Hospital, but died the following day.

Following a description of a suspect, police would later arrest Brandi Simmons, charging him with assault, criminal possession of a weapon, and menacing. It's unclear what sparked the incident.

Subway Groper Strikes

The NYPD released a photo of a man wanted for inappropriately grabbing a 13-year-old girl on the morning of Jan. 28. A video still shows the suspect walking along the D/B platform of the Bedford



Image still courtesy NYPD

A VIDEO IMAGE captures this man wanted for stealing a car in broad daylight.

Park subway station the day of the incident.

Police describe the suspect as a male black, weighing 170 pounds and between 5' 7" and 5'

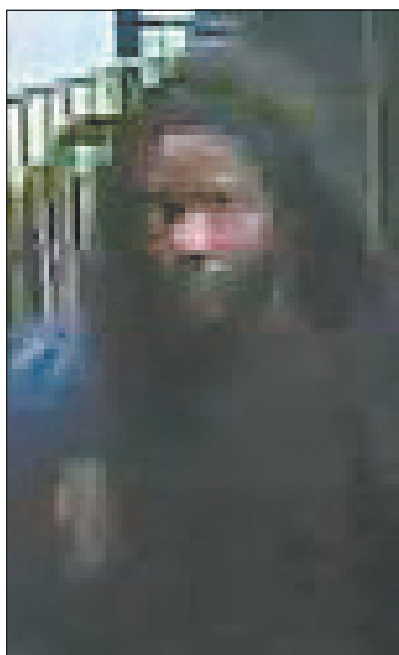


Image still courtesy NYPD

POLICE RELEASE A STILL of this suspect wanted for allegedly groping a teenage girl on Jan. 28.

10" wearing a blue Mets jacket with a black hooded sweatshirt underneath, grey sweatpants

and black sneakers.

The public is encouraged to call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-577-TIPS or texting their tips to 274637 (CRIMES). Calls are kept confidential.

Brazen Car Thief on the Run

Police in the Five-Two Precinct are on the hunt for a fugitive wanted in connection with a grand theft auto case on Feb. 15.

Police say the suspect got in the driver's seat of a 2005 Honda Odyssey that had been left running by the victim as he was doing business near 213 E. 198th St. at around 4:30 p.m. The suspect soon fled.

A description of the suspect was released. He's described as a male black wearing a green jacket with a fur hood, a grey knit hat, a grey hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans, black boots, and carrying a black bag.

The public is encouraged to call Crime Stoppers.

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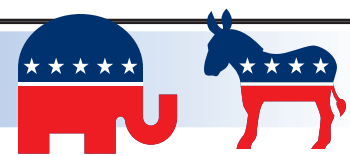
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THE BRONX BELTWAY

By DAVID CRUZ

County Leader Search

The Bronx Democratic County leader post remains vacant...for now.

As Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz keeps the seat warm as interim county leader, the Bronx Delegation is playing ping-pong over whether to go with Assemblyman Marcos Crespo, a Hispanic legislator and rising star within the Bronx party. Internal rumblings, and stories pegging unnamed sources, suggest that Crespo is next in line for the position.

Crespo has played his hand well these past few years, palling around with the Diaz Dynasty, Independent Democratic Conference Leader Senator Jeff Klein and Bronx Assemblyman doubling as Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, who left the county leader post when he rose to the coveted position of speaker last month. Crespo's political ambi-

tions go beyond assemblyman. He yearns to succeed Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., though he needs to bank on the county post to ensure his presence is noted. But his conservative voting record could work against him.

At a recent powwow filled with moneymen and political insiders, one anonymous legislator said Crespo's ascension is imminent. Legislators plan to meet sometime in the next two weeks to formally vote Crespo in for the gig. But said legislator also brushed off the position as nothing to sneeze at.

When noting that the last county leader became assembly speaker, said legislator shrugged off the connection as nothing more than a fluke. "Who would want the job of county leader?" they asked.

Dream Act a Fantasy?

In Albany, one of the more contentious debates in the State Leg-

islature will be how the Dream Act is voted. Assembly Democrats (which also include Bronx Assembly Democrats) drew first blood, voting for the Dream Act 81 to 42. The measure would give state-funded college assistance to children of illegal immigrants. It would also be a boon to the estimated 250,000 illegal immigrants in the Bronx.

Lawmakers voted for the bill outside Governor Andrew Cuomo's \$141.6 billion budget, which ties the Dream Act to the Education Investment Tax Credit. The measure would give tax breaks to business owners who help fund college scholarships. Cuomo's plan makes the measures dependent on each other, a move opposed by Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, a Democrat, and Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, a Republican.

Thinking emotionally is Heastie, who put the measure to the floor as a "standalone bill." But Cuomo made his move logically, having already included it in the state budget that's to be voted on in late May.

Cuomo has support on this from both sides of the Senate aisle, including Senator Ruben Diaz Sr., who believes Democrats should take one for the team. "I am afraid that by voting for it separately--and not as the Governor wanted it to be voted on with the Education Investment Tax Credit--neither will have a chance to become a reality this year," said Diaz in his weekly newsletter.

De Blasio and Heastie

Normally, statements from politicians reacting to a bill's passage are par for the course—everyone wants to have a say on major legislation. Mayor de Blasio's comments of the Dream Act specifically single out Heastie for putting the bill to the floor.

De Blasio, a political strategist at heart, hopes to publically play nice with Heastie. After all, with de Blasio's uneasy relationship with Cuomo, and former Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver facing federal corruption charges, de Blasio desperately needs an ally

in Albany, even if he ingratiates himself tangibly.

State of the Borough

As usual, there was plenty of flair at the State of the Borough address, and substance. New ideas were kicked around by Diaz, such as a lofty plan to deck three exterior train yards to encourage more housing. Wonder what the MTA engineers have to say about that.

One interesting note is word of the Kingsbridge Armory, which Diaz essentially said was "progressing," a vague observation that fueled questions from several Bronx reporters following the 41-minute speech. After the speech, Diaz emphasized little over the project when repeatedly asked by a gaggle of reporters. One source indicated that the lack of news coming from the mega project is just a veneer—plenty of activity is apparently happening behind the scenes. But a 2017 start date? Hard to believe that would happen at this stage.

Diaz also flexed his renewed influence in Albany by suggesting Heastie ensure funding is secured for the four Metro-North stations in the East Bronx corridor. Would not look good if Heastie drops the ball on that.

WABC-TV Forum

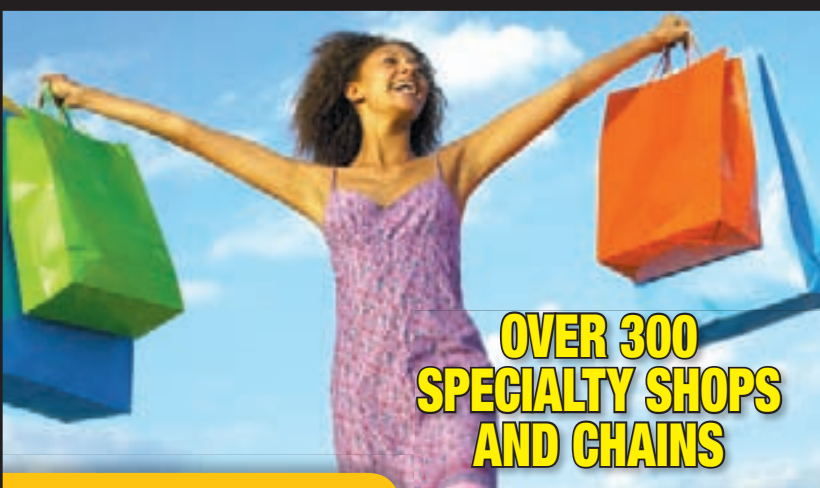
Veering from politics to New York media, the *Norwood News* finds it fascinating that WABC-TV, known for covering the Bronx more than its competitors (except News 12 the Bronx), hosted a forum that solicited thoughts from Bronxites over what news they'd like to see covered.

It's akin to a survey, with some WABC-TV heavy hitters on hand to hear what viewers think are issues that are ignored. This kind of market research has never been this pronounced in the Bronx, and an interesting sign the borough is not written off.

A WABC-TV flack noted this is the third time the storied station has scheduled Town Hall style meetings in the borough since 2010.

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NORWOOD NEWS SNAPSHOTS



Photo courtesy Miriam Quinn

MEMBERS OF THE Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval Park show off their photo gallery at the annual Bronx Parks Speak Up at Lehman College on Feb. 28. This year's theme focused on park equality with presentations given by Public Art in Parks, Youth and Community Boards and The Bronx and Its Lack of Waterfront Access.



Photo courtesy Community Board 7

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 honored five neighborhood students with New York Yankees Youth Leadership Awards for going above and beyond in the district. Each student picked up a \$750 check and a guest spot invite to a Yankee Stadium pre-game to be held sometime during the baseball season. They've pledged 50 hours of community service. Big congratulations to recipients holding up awards. They share their moment with loved ones.



Photo courtesy Councilman Andrew Cohen's Office

COUNCILMAN ANDREW COHEN takes a moment to pray at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Israel, a trip he took in his official capacity in late February. Cohen traveled to the holy city with members of the New York City Council Delegation for a weeklong trip hosted by the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York. Legislators from New York and Israel shared ideas to reinforce their ties.



Photo courtesy Councilman Andy King's Office

DOZENS OF BRONX RESIDENTS in need of a helping hand stood in line for a donated coat courtesy of Councilman Andy King's Office, which scheduled a coat giveaway. Residents from King's 12th District stopped by his office Feb. 22 for a winter coat that will help them through the frigid winter season.



Photo courtesy Jemma Hussey

THE GREATER BRONX Chapter of the Links Inc. assembled "survival kits" for the nation of Haiti to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the country's devastating 2010 earthquake. (L-r) DeDra Polite, Jean Smith, Bernice Asamoah, Carol Malcolm Charles, Marcia Cameron, Cynthia Ngombe, Rita Etchie, Gwendolyn Roundtree Evans, Nicole Graham McCathern help cobble relief supplies that include toiletries and other personal care items.



Photo by David Greene

RESIDENTS IN THE BRONX have set up makeshift homes for these stray cats spotted off the Grand Concourse in Norwood on Feb. 16. Concerned residents used discarded storage bins to provide shelter to these felines, who also received some dry food to make it through the winter.

SCHOOL BRIEFS

Letter Writing Exercise Pushes Students to Think Globally

By JENNY SHARP

Teachers and students at Norwood's P.S. 94 are thinking creatively to promote both writing and global awareness. For the school's third grade class, students are seeing a true blending of the two thanks to a mixed-media project.

The class recently completed a two-month project that paired an in-depth study of Kenya's water crisis with a unit on persuasive letter writing. The third graders learned the science behind a water shortage and gained a more empathetic understanding by looking at how it affects the Kenyan people. It was an exercise that was part activism, debating and writing.

The third graders then wrote letters addressed to the Norwood community that raised awareness about the crisis. Some students also made posters to illustrate the information, combining computer graphics with hand-made visual and digital art.

"I learned that a lot of people die from diseases that they get from dirty water and that the Kenyan government doesn't



Photo by Adi Talwar

THIS CLASS OF third graders at PS 94 Kings College School learned about the importance of funneling drinking water to Kenya through a January writing project. Teacher Nicole Zippo is in the back row (2nd from right), and assistant teacher Maggie Stallone is at far left.

really even have a lot of money to spend on clean water," said Abdullah Zidan at P.S. 94.

The students then turned their findings into action, concluding the project with a fundraiser. The profits of which were donated to "The Water Project," a non-profit that provides Sub-Saharan Africa with easier access to clean water.

The project demonstrated a significant shift in P.S. 94's curriculum strategy, now edging towards a greater combination of subjects and content thanks to the more rigid Common Core standards.

"The idea behind it was to integrate social studies more into our reading and writing units," said Nicole Zippo, a third grade teacher at P.S. 94 who received a

broad topical directive from the school's curriculum coach, Marana Lombard. Zippo later tailored the project to her class.

"It's a way for us to get the content in and for the kids to authentically use the content," said Lombardo. "They're not just learning facts."

The long form, interdisciplinary format for this project is also a way for teachers to personalize their curriculum while still adhering Common to Core.

"I think Ms. Zippo is a really good example of taking the common core learning standards which people think is so rigid" said Lombardo. "They took what they had to do with the content they were given and molded it into something meaningful and engaging for their students."

And why isolate academic subjects when the students themselves expressed varied passions they would roll into one. "I want to be three things when I grow up" said third grader McKenzie Parris-Law. "I want to be an artist because I really love to draw and a singer and a dancer because I like to move around."

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(Source: World Health Organization)

Vital Stats

New Cardiac Care Unit Caps Montefiore's Heart Awareness Month

The Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart and Vascular Care celebrated the grand opening of the newly renovated cardiac care unit located on the Moses Campus, capping a month that spread awareness on the importance of keeping a healthy heart.

From heart transplants to *Left Ventricular Assist Device* implantation, this unit provides 24-hour comprehensive healthcare management to patients with the most complex cardiovascular conditions. The remodeling of this structure results in a 50 percent increase in patient beds. The unit now houses a total of 12 beds.

Dr. Mario Garcia, who heads the Cardiology Division and co-directs the Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart and Vascular Care, was joined by Dr. Stephen Safyer, president and CEO of Montefiore Health System, to cut the ceremonial red ribbon for the clinic on Feb. 25. The unit is just part of the large number of cardiac care centers at Montefiore Medical Center's vast network of hospitals throughout the Bronx.

At an event kicking off Heart Month at Montefiore, Garcia emphasized the importance of daily exercise to ward off bad cholesterol stored in the



Photo courtesy Joe Vericker/Montefiore Medical Center
(LEFT TO RIGHT) Mario Garcia, M.D., chief, Division of Cardiology, and co-director, Montefiore-Einstein Center for Heart and Vascular Care; James Scheuer, M.D., chairman and professor emeritus, Cardiology; Steven M. Safyer, M.D., president and CEO; and Daniel Sims, M.D., director of the Moses Cardiac Care Unit; cut the ribbon for the new Moses Cardiac Care Unit at Montefiore Medical Center.

human body. The buildup of cholesterol can restrict blood to flow properly, resulting in complications to the heart.

Currently, the Bronx ranks six in New York State with severe heart conditions that include angina, coronary artery disease, and heart attack. Throughout the world, heart disease remains the leading cause of death due largely to the various forms of heart disease. Hispanics and African-Americans, who represent a significant demographic in the Bronx, are prone to heart disease. Some warning signs include chest pains or discomfort in the arms, back, neck, jaw or upper stomach, labored breathing, nausea, lightheadedness or cold sweats.

For more than 50 years, the Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart and Vascular Care has been at the forefront of treating heart disease. It is a tradition that began with Montefiore's first open-heart surgery in 1957, the implantation of the world's first trans-venous cardiac pacemaker in 1958, and the development of trans-telephonic pacemaker monitoring in the 1970s.

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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

DYCD Application

NYC's Department of Youth and Community Development is accepting applications for the 2015 Summer Youth Employment Program through April 10. SYEP is available for young people ages 14 to 24 with up to six weeks of entry-level experience at worksites in the city. Participants are selected by lottery for the program, which runs from July 6 through Aug. 15 and are compensated for their work. Worksites interested in providing jobs have until May 16 to apply. For more information, call 311 or DYCD Youth Connect at (800) 246-4646.

Poe Cottage Adds Hours

The Edgar Allan Poe Cottage, 2640 Grand Concourse, is now open two extra days during the week-Thursdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in addition to its weekend hours. An audio tour is available by calling (718) 971-2156. For more information, call the Bronx Historical Society at (718) 881-8900.

Senior Affordability Survey

The Independent Democratic Conference is looking for senior citizens to take its Affordability Survey. Respondents can express their opinions on utility costs, senior housing options, and other topics. To take the survey, visit https://www.survey-monkey.com/s/senior_affordability_survey.

Free Tax Preparation

Free tax preparation is available from VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program) at 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.

Grant Opportunity

We Are The Bronx (WATB) is offering an opportunity for grants for Bronx-based groups dealing with

community organizing, planning, and development, and health and wellness. Applications are due by April 1 at 5 p.m. For more information and to apply, go to <http://wearethebronx.org/grant/>.

VC Park Internships

Van Cortlandt Park is offering summer teen trail crew internships to youth ages 14 to 18. Interns are required to do physical trail work outdoors in various conditions throughout the summer. Training and job readiness will be provided. Program runs from July 6 to Aug. 20, Mondays to Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Participants will be paid on a bi-weekly basis. Applications are due by May 21. For more detailed information, contact john@vancortlandt.org.

MMCC Activities

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave., offers a range of activities for children ages 4 1/2 to young adults. For more in-

formation, visit the center weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. or Saturdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-4000 ext. 0.

Gjonaj Mobile Office

Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj's mobile office van is open Wednesdays from noon to 4 p.m. at the corner of East 204th Street and Bainbridge Avenue for constituents to voice community concerns. For more information, call (718) 409-0109.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

BMCA Flea Market

The public is invited to a flea market sponsored by the Bedford Mosholu Community Association at St. Mary's Orthodox Church, 360 E. Bedford Pk. Blvd. (at Decatur Avenue), on March 7 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 584-1900.

Onstage

- The Riverdale YM-YWHA, 5625 Arlington Ave. (off Riverdale Avenue and 256th Street), presents **The Sound of Music**, March 7 at 8 p.m., March 8 at 3 p.m., March 12 at 7 p.m., March 14 at 9 p.m. and March 15 at 2 and 6:30 p.m. (tickets are \$20/adults; \$12/seniors/students if purchased online at www.RiverdaleRisingStars.com/soundofmusic; or \$22/adults; \$14/seniors/students if purchased at the door). For more information, call (800) 838-3006 and select option 1.
- Albert Einstein Symphony Orchestra will perform **classical music** at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine's Robbins Auditorium, Forchheimer Building, 1300 Morris Pk. Ave., March 15 at 3 p.m. Contributions are suggested. For more information, visit einsteinorch.tripod.com.
- The Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd., Pelham Bay Park, presents **SIRE Baroque**, March 15 at 4:30 p.m., to celebrate Women's History Month. Featured will be an all-female ensemble performing Siren Songs. For more information, call (718) 885-1461.
- Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents **Forever Freestyle 9**, March 7 at 8 p.m., featuring live artists performing Latin-flavored '80s dance music (tickets are \$55 to \$100); and **Romeo and Juliet**, March 15 at 4 p.m., performed by the Moscow Festival Ballet (tickets are \$25 to \$45; \$10/12 and under). For more information, call (718) 960-8833.
- The Pregones Theatre, 571-575 Walton Ave. (between 149th and 150th streets), presents **March Is Music 2015**, featuring a number of headliners performing a variety of music throughout the month. Included are **Underground System** on March 7 and **NY Tango Sextet** on March 14, both at 8 p.m. (tickets are \$24/advance; \$40/door); and free piano concerts by **Nelson Ojeda** on March 8 and **Ariacne Trujillo** on March 15, both at 3 p.m. Also scheduled free is Meet the Artist Matinee on March 13 at 1:30 p.m.: **NY Tango Sextet**. For more information and to reserve, call (718) 585-1202 or visit www.pregonesprtt.org.

- The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **On the Case: Christie Mysteries**: featuring performers and music accompaniment, March 14 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Events

- The Williamsbridge Oval offers free activities including **Tiny Prints** (ages 5 and younger) featuring play, yoga and art; **Shape Up Family Fitness**, featuring aerobics; and **Family Fun Night**, featuring use of game room and arts and crafts. For more information and a detailed schedule, call (718) 543-8672.
- Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse (165th Street), presents free **First Friday**, March 6, 6 to 10 p.m., **La Santa Cecilia**, winners of the 2014 Grammy Award for Best Latin Rock Album. Event features guided tours of the galleries and art making workshop for kids. Concert begins at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.
- Community Board Athletic Leadership League (C-BALL) presents free **NYPD vs Community**, March 7, at the Madison Sq. Boys & Girls Club, 1665 Hoe Ave. (corner of East 173rd Street), adult female game at 1:30 p.m.; adult male game at 3 p.m. Events include cooking class from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.; live music, performances, celebrities, giveaways, and more. For more information, call (718) 583-7017 ext. 150.
- Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Arts Projects**: Tree-Ring Mandalas, to create a mandala with a unique ring for each of your years, March 7 and 8; and Stylish Seed Pots, to create a plant by decorating a pot with beads, ribbons and more, and adding soil, a seed and water, March 14 and 15; both in WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also featured is a concert, March 15 at 2 p.m. in the WH House: **Ray Vega Latin Jazz Quintet**, featuring Latin Jazz, (tickets are \$28; \$15/ages 8 to 18; \$22/member; \$12/member child; registration is required at www.wavehill.org or at the Perkins Visitor Center). 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.

Exhibits

- Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse, presents exhibition **Bronx Speaks: Making Place**, through March 8. There will be a free art workshop for kids on March 8 from noon to 4 p.m. For more information and a detailed schedule, 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); and **Toddler Play Time at noon**: (ages 18 to 36 months); both on March 5, 12 and 19; **Hands-On Projects at 4 p.m.**: (ages 7 to 12): **Pot of Gold Making**: March 5; and **Caterpillar Bookmark Making**: March 19; **film**: March 8 at 3:30 p.m.; **Family Time**: (ages 3 to 6; preregistration required), March 14 at 11 a.m.; and **Sbongiseni Duma**: Singer/dancer and musicians perform music from Africa, March 15 at 2 p.m. For adults, there is **MS Word for Beginners**: (in-person registration required), March 9 at 2 p.m.; **film**: "Riding My Way Back," March 12 at 11 a.m.; **Advanced MS Word 2010**: March 12 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: **Winter With Bilingual Birdies: Spanish**: (ages from birth to 12 years), live music, dance parties, and theatre-based games (instruments are provided), March 10 and 17 at 11 a.m. For teens/young adults, there is **Bead-tastic!**: Make beads from fabric (all materials provided), March 14 at 3 p.m. Adults can enjoy **Jewelry Club at 11 a.m.**: bring your own materials to create original jewelry, March 5 and 19; 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**: (ages 5 to 12), dance and zumba, March 6 at 4 p.m.; and **Kids' Pajama Party**: (ages 18 months to 12 years), crafts and read-alouds, March 16 at 6 p.m. For teens/young adults, there is **World Beat ad Percussion**: Create your own lyrics and music, March 17 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

Public Service Announcement

- **Daylight Saving Time Begins**: Turn clocks one hour ahead on March 8 at 2 a.m.

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

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Doe Fund Coming to Norwood

(continued from page 1)

tion as member of Community Board 7, was not so much the proposal, but its location. "The site is an anchor for the 204th Street merchant strip," said Stronczer. "I feel that The Doe Fund should have chosen a better site."

Some would say Stronczer is the neighborhood historian and diplomatic watchdog. She was there when the Fund, known as a reputable provider, pushed for a similar project in 2007. That project never happened, with the Fund later selling its original space on East Gun Hill Road and Webster Avenue to Concerned for Independent Living, now building a supportive housing site there, said Stronczer.

This time, The Doe Fund purchased the property of 3100 Webster Ave. to build Webster Green—a \$29.5 million, eight-story supportive/affordable home. Governor Andrew Cuomo, a proponent of supportive housing, recently gave The Doe Fund \$6.5 million for the project.

Webster Green will house 41 supportive and 41 affordable units. An on-site super will occupy a first floor, two-bedroom apartment while 36 studios, 15 one-bedrooms and 30 two-bedroom

apartments will be available, said Alexander Horwitz, a spokesman for The Doe Fund. In-house services for The Doe Fund's clients were unavailable.

But unlike most of the new properties on Webster Avenue, The Doe Fund is exempt from building a storefront, a caveat to the 2009 rezoning. "Setting aside large portions of the footprint for commercial or retail space would reduce space available for the affordable/supportive units," said Horwitz. "And the need is great."

This hasn't sat well with Marcia Cameron, deputy director of the Moshulu Preservation Corporation, who sees supportive housing as working against the overarching Webster Avenue Vision Plan developed by the Four Bronx Institution Alliance comprised of Montefiore Medical Center, Fordham University, The New York Botanical Garden and Bronx Zoo. "If Webster Avenue has a large percentage of supportive housing, this will result in a proliferation of 99 cent stores, thus creating a poor retail mix," said Cameron in an email.

One new property that aligns with the vision plan is The Bedford Manor, built by The Stagg Group. Former

Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion, serving as the firm's executive vice president, noted that a well-run building is what counts. "If you run a good building whether it's high income, middle income or low income people, it's good for the neighborhood," said Carrion.

In many instances, CB7 has remained a staunch opponent of oversaturated supportive housing. Like many previous plans, The Doe Fund project flies above CB7, an advisory board powerless to halt any project it deems unworthy.

"Community Board 7 has been generous and is willing to do their fair share to shelter people with mental health issues," said Councilman Andrew Cohen, whose district covers Norwood. "But new housing on Webster must also enhance the community and strike the right balance between the need of the city to house people with special needs and supporting the community's desire for amenities consistent with a high quality of life in the neighborhood."

But George T. McDonald, The Doe Fund's founder and president, dismissed fears the clientele will drag

the neighborhood and property values down. "[P]roperty values for homeowners are likely to increase more after a supportive housing development is built, which means a development like this has value for the Norwood community as a whole, not just for those who need this type of housing," said McDonald in a statement.

At the building abutting the lot at 3100 Webster, tenants sided with The Doe Fund, shrugging off concerns for its supportive housing population. Around the corner, Delfina Sinto, a mother babysitting several of her neighbors' children, said housing options are scant. "They have the right to live there because there are many people living in the parks," said Sinto, pointing to nearby Allerton Ballfields.

Another neighbor, Yanirssa Perez, 25, agreed that folks such as the formerly homeless are entitled to live their lives. "Everyone needs a home," said Perez, who moved into the neighborhood seven months ago from Williamsbridge, Brooklyn. "If they're supervised, it would be okay."

Construction is expected to begin sometime this summer with a fall 2017 opening.

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