

NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 28, No 12 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • JUNE 11-24, 2015



RENT LAWS:
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW | PG. 6



BRONX YOUTH HEARD:
STUDENTS FIND A VOICE, HAVE A SAY
PGS. 15-18

SPEED HUMP STALL ON HULL AVENUE

Delay caused by school construction at PS 56



Photo courtesy Jay Shuffield

THIS OVERTURNED VEHICLE lies in front of a construction site at PS 56. The crash happened on May 31.

By **DAVID CRUZ**

Though the city Department of Transportation has committed to installing a speed hump at a Norwood street where a driver lost control and slammed into three parked cars before turning over recently, just when it will be installed is another matter.

The accident happened on Hull Avenue near 207th Street, part of a designated

Neighborhood Slow Zone aimed at reducing accidents. And despite its designation, residents have waited over a year for the installation of a speed hump where the accident occurred. It would rest at the foot of PS 56, an elementary school where crews with the School Construction Authority (SCA) are currently building a \$27 million new wing at the school's Hull Avenue side.

A temporary barrier dividing pedestrians and drivers can be seen at the site, along with markings for a speed hump and a sign that reads "Speed Bump - 15 mph," yet no speed hump is present on the Hull Avenue side.

A DOT spokesperson said the agency has put the speed hump project on hold since "construction is in progress," resulting in delays. But the spokesperson said the agency

is considering an idea to work around the construction by working with the SCA to figure out a date to install the hump. If no resolution is found, residents may have to wait until after the school project's completion date of fall 2016.

Bumpy Road

The stall has been viewed as a bump in the road for
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Vol. 28, No. 12

Norwood News is published
bi-weekly on Thursdays by
Mosholu Preservation Corporation (MPC)
3400 Reservoir Oval East
Bronx, New York 10467
Phone: 718 324 4998
Fax: 718 324 2917
E-mail: norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org
Web.: www.norwoodnews.org

Publisher and Executive Director, MPC
Roberto S. Garcia

Deputy Director, MPC
Marcia Cameron

Editor-in-Chief, Norwood News
David Cruz

Accounts Receivable
Dawn McEvoy

Sales Representative
Vivian R. Carter

Proofreader
Judy Noy

Regular Contributors
David Greene, Adi Talwar

Interns
Jenny Sharp, Jasmine Gomez, Tatyana Turner

Contributors
Moses Bustos, Kimberly Jacobs

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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST



K2 Conference Answers Questions on Trending Problem

By **VIVIAN CARTER**

Community Board 7 formally took on an issue that no other city Board has taken on: the use of synthetic marijuana, commonly known as K2 or spice, pervading communities around the city.

On May 26, the first-ever forum became somewhat of a briefing, with experts from the medical and law enforcement fields informing an audience of roughly 100 people on the dangers of the trending drug.

The substance has created a bevy of problems in upper Manhattan and the Bronx, as users, mostly males in their 30s, have recently arrived to emergency rooms in increasing numbers, experiencing nausea, vomiting, high blood pressure, tremors and seizures. Dr. Ernest Patti, senior attending emergency room physician at St. Barnabas Hospital, a leading expert in treating K2 users suffering dangerous side effects, says there has been a 220 percent spike in emergency room visits due to the substance. Use of K2 causes stress to the heart and pulmonary system, leading to strokes and other health problems, said Patti.

Members of CB7, including chairwoman Adaline Walker-Santiago, learned of the dangers of K2 from local community activists. When they realized that K2 could be purchased openly in local shopping districts with virtually no legal consequences, they decided it was time to alert the public.

CB 7 reached out to medical professionals, law enforcement officials and regulatory agencies, assembling a panel with expertise in the field, to discuss a topic that Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson called “one of the more difficult criminal justice issues” his office faces. The difficulties arise, several panelists noted,



Photo by Moses Bustos

A FEATURED SPEAKER at the conference, Dr. Ernest Patti, senior attending physician in the St. Barnabas Hospital emergency room (right), discusses treatment of individuals suffering K2's side effects.

since manufacturers of K2 can change the drug's chemical makeup, adding ingredients that are currently not deemed illegal, such as rat poison. Other issues include loopholes on the drug's packaging, which read it's “not for human consumption.”

But one way authorities can remove packets of K2 from store shelves is by penalizing store owners who may not pay state taxes on cigarette sales. Under current law, K2 substances can be removed should business owners fail to collect and pay state cigarette taxes.

Patti spoke about the specific health risks and side effects of the substance, while Inspector Nilda Hofmann, the commanding officer of the 52nd Precinct, mentioned the law

enforcement concerns, reiterated by representatives of the Bronx D.A.'s Narcotics Bureau and the New York State Attorney General's office. Ricky Wong, Director of Community Affairs for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, focused on regulatory concerns about the substance.

The two individuals who did the most to make the conference happen were presented with certificates, including Aldo Rafael Perez, a neighborhood activist who was the driving force throughout, and CB7 Health & Hospitals Committee Chair Gloria Bent, who did the legwork to organize the details of the conference. *Additional reporting by Moses Bustos.*

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting on June 16 at 6:30 p.m. at the New York Botanical Garden Visitor Center Café (Note: The Board will go on hiatus until September). CB7 committee meetings 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 June 11; Housing/Land Use/Zoning & Senior Services on June 17; Education/Libraries on June 18; and Parks & Recreation on June 24. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

THE 52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL will meet on June 25 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Part of the Solution (POTS) 2759 Webster Ave. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

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By DAVID GREENE

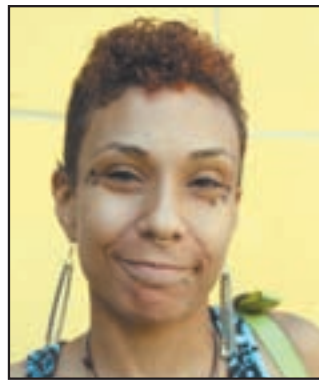


This week we asked readers to rate the performance of Mayor Bill de Blasio after a year and a half in office.



To me, I feel he's been trying. But he's not trying hard enough because everything he seems to do has a backlash and he always seems to be playing catch up, and you can't do that. He has to go with the flow with what's going on now. It's like he's going backwards. Immigration needs to be improved, we need more jobs, prices of things are going up and we can't afford anything. He must also listen to the people.

Paulette Gordon
West Fordham



It's a business, not even politics. People are a business to our elected officials, so I do not watch TV. I stay away from the radio because I don't need it. I can see in my everyday life what he is doing and what the rest of the government is doing for us, and that is absolutely nothing. He can do so much more for the people.

Lanessa Morales
Soundview



My opinion is that he can do much better, but I think he's moving from one side to the other. I don't know how to interpret that. A few things happened for him at the same time. He didn't do well with the NYPD protests because he was really against the police. I would give him a C.

Jesus Santana
Parkchester



He's a good man and I think he's done a decent job as mayor. I think he will do even better in his remaining time in office. Showing up to events on time might help.

John Martinez
Bedford Park



I think he's doing okay as far as race relations and keeping the police a little leveled, he handled that well. As far as education, the schools are in bad shape, but I like what he did with pre-K. Overall I'd give him a C-plus. He's not doing the best. I thought he would do better because of everything he said before the election. He needs to focus on education and to try and get more jobs here, because there's no work out here in the community.

Alfredo Miranda
Norwood

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

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Shooting Spike Sparks Stop & Frisk Debate

By JASMINE GOMEZ

Councilman Andy King held his annual Gun Violence Rally outside the Evander Childs Campus on June 2 at a time when the northwest Bronx has seen a spike in shootings.

Gun violence incidents have happened on the outskirts of Bedford Park, where a 20-year-old Hispanic man was shot on May 22 just an hour before a street festival was to start. The shooting came on the same day as the fatal shooting of a 14-year-old boy on the Concourse. Both incidents were deemed gang-related. The Bedford Park incident happened within the borders of the 52nd Precinct, which has 12 reported shootings when compared to six the same time last year.

The shootings also come at a time when the city has eased up on stop and frisk, a police tactic that Mayor Bill de Blasio believed has placed a wedge between the NYPD and minority neighborhoods.

Stop and frisk incidents dropped to 46,000 recorded stops in 2014, down from 145,000 in 2013, according to a report by *The New York Times*.

At the King news conference, Erica Ford, co-chair of National Gun Violence Awareness Month, argued the limiting of stop and frisk has nothing to do with the upsurge in shootings. "We should stop saying stop and frisk stopped because it didn't stop. Crime is existing because it is the nature of our communities and poverty is on the rise, unemployment is on the rise,

the problems in schools are on the rise," said Ford.

Dr. Darrin Porcher, a professor at Pace University and Monroe College, said the stop and frisk reduction is just one aspect for the spike. "What we have now is you still have the same city that's being policed, but with a proportionately lower number of police officers that are doing the job," said Porcher, adding officers may feel intimidated making stops for fear of scrutiny or disciplinary action.

Other reasons for the increase in shootings can also be attributed to more cases of domestic violence, and gang culture, a topic de Blasio touched on in recent interviews.

Porcher, a former NYPD lieutenant, said the most useful tool in combating gun violence will be innovative technology, such as surveillance cameras in areas where people do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy or through equipment such as the ShotSpotter, a gun noise detection program.

King's approach towards easing this shooting spike is more funds for after school programs in hopes of deterring adolescents from crimes, noting that some of the recent shootings have been committed by underage gang members. "People want to join gangs because they want to be a part of something... but if you give them something positive to be a part of, you can deter a lot of this behavior," said King.



Photo by Jasmine Gomez

COUNCILMAN ANDY KING (at podium) stands alongside Erica Ford, co-chair of National Gun Violence Awareness Month; several students; and members of various communal organizations outside the Evander Childs Campus as he hosts his annual Anti-Gun Violence Rally.

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Rent Laws: What You Should Know

By **TATYANA TURNER**
and **JASMINE GOMEZ**

With current rent protection laws set to expire June 15, the debate over whether the laws should be renewed or strengthened has intensified in Albany, where the legislature is charged with drafting the rent laws. Tenants and Democratic elected officials are advocating to close loopholes in the current rent laws while calling for more housing options for the working and middle class. In the last few months, workshops by Bronx elected officials have sounded the alarm in making sure tenants know their rights.

With rent laws edging toward expiration, the *Norwood News* explored some of the more contentious laws that Albany legislators from both sides of the aisle have been fighting over:

Vacancy Decontrol

Perhaps one of the more controversial topics proponents of affordable housing want to eliminate is vacancy deregulation, which began back in 1971. Vacancy decontrol allows landlords to raise the rent of a stabilized apartment to market-rate prices should a stabilized tenant move out. This policy may sometimes lead to tenant abuse, as landlords may find schemes to remove stabilized tenants. The maximum stabilized rent runs \$2,500.

But one way around that happens, for instance, if a stabilized tenant edges closer to that threshold. So if a tenant who once paid \$2,300 in stabilized rent moves out, the landlord can legally raise the rent by 20 percent to a new leased tenant. This pushes the rent to \$2,760, resulting in a deregulated apartment.

According to the Metropolitan Council on Housing, vacancy decontrol has already led to the deregulation of 200,000 to 300,000 units.

Major Capital Improvement

A major capital improvement (MCI) allow for a rent increase for a rent-controlled or rent stabilized tenant by as much as six percent. Each MCI increase per project needs approval by the Division of Housing and Community Renewal.

A landlord must prove that the renovation benefits all tenants, meets



Photo by Tatyana Turner

BRONX HOUSING COURT (pictured) is a familiar channel many tenants have taken when dealing with scheming landlords.

all requirements in rent regulation, be used for preservation and maintenance, and must be used for capital repairs. Landlords then pass the cost on to tenants in the form of a rent increase, which can lead to a permanent hike if repairs continue.

The increase is determined by how much the landlord spends on improvements such as windows or appliances. Therefore, tenants will continue to get charged until the landlord is reimbursed. "You can pay for MCIs forever. A portion is given to each tenant while the rest is just profit for the landlord; rent goes up fairly steadily because of this," said Sally Dunford, executive director of West Bronx Housing.

Advocates are looking to have MCI eliminated altogether, arguing it's merely an excuse for landlords to raise rents.

421-a Program

The 421-a Affordable Housing Pro-

duction Program is a tax abatement program that began in 1971 to spur residential development across the city. Between 1971 and 2006, 421-a created over 100,000 new housing units and provided a tax exemption for new construction, resulting in a loss of \$300 million in city tax revenue, according to the Pratt Center for Community Development. Critics of 421-a have long argued it as an example of income inequality.

But in 2006, the incentive was significantly weakened after elected officials thought the program no longer necessary. The following year, changes were made to the incentive and landlords were forced to go through another process to receive 421-a benefits. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), which monitors the 421-a program, determines whether a building qualifies for the program based on certain criteria such as location, method of construc-

tion, and whether it would set aside affordable housing units.

Some legislators want the 421-a program weakened as some believe it's an archaic law created when residential development was stagnant in New York. Proponents of 421-a have lobbied lawmakers to strengthen the law as it can stem any new type of affordable housing that New York City has been fighting to preserve.

The Politics

Governor Andrew Cuomo is one of the deciding factors on whether rent protection laws should be strengthened. In an op-ed published in the *New York Daily News*, Cuomo pushed for improved rent laws by either eliminating vacancy decontrol or watering it down altogether. He also called for limiting "vacancy bonuses to ensure landlords aren't rewarded financially for schemes to force tenants out; make major capital improvements and individual apartment improvement surcharges that go away once recovered by landlords...."

Cuomo added that if new rent regulations are not passed by the end of this legislative session, he will call a special session until the regulations are passed.

Mayor Bill de Blasio has called on Albany to end vacancy decontrol, barring landlords from converting affordable housing into luxury apartments, while also calling for the end of permanent rent hikes landlords impose after making capital improvements to the dwelling.

De Blasio is also advocating for the end of tax breaks for luxury condominiums or for developers who will not create affordable housing, should Albany not pass stronger rent regulation laws or impose a mansion tax.

The state Assembly has already passed a reform package that extends the current rent laws for four years, with the inclusion of reforms that allows for the preservation of affordable housing units. These reforms include eliminating vacancy decontrol and prohibiting rent hikes in vacant apartments.

Its so-called omnibus bill will likely clash with those by the State Senate, currently ruled by Republicans, who have long remained pro-landlord.

Briggs Avenue Wall to Receive Mural

By **KIMBERLY JACOBS**

In May, Samelys Lopez and the Bedford Mosholu Community Association received a \$1,000 grant to paint a graffiti mural on a blank wall across from PS 8 on Briggs Avenue at 202nd Street.

Lopez, a resident of Briggs Avenue, grew tired of seeing the grey-colored eyesore wall tagged by gangs. She decided to apply for the grant through Citizens Committee for New York City to bring beauty to her block.

"How cool would it be to do an art project there? Especially since it's already across the street from the school," recalled Lopez on the idea to create the mural.

But even before learning she won, Lopez was already vetting artists to paint the wall. She was referred to Lady K Fever, a Bronx resident and consultant for Bronx 200 Visual Arts Directory, a streamlined online listing of 200 professional visual artists who live or work in the Bronx. Fever ultimately agreed to help in the mural project.

"Fever has worked with a myriad of graffiti artists all around the city,



Photo by Kimberly Jacobs

THIS WALL AT a parking lot on Briggs Avenue at 202nd street is being primed for a graffiti mural courtesy of a grant secured by a community activist.

has the respect of many, and is extremely passionate about the art form and finding positive ways to bring art to public spaces," said Laura James, co-founder and executive director of BX200, who referred Lopez to Fever.

Lopez's vision includes the community involvement as a way of giving residents ownership and pride. Along with asking Fever to lead the mural project, Lopez and the Bedford Mosholu Community Association reached out to PS 8 so students can draft ideas

and participate.

"My vision is to get a couple of kids from the homeless shelter that's right up the block from the mural [location] so they can come volunteer and potentially even some of the kids that are doing the tagging," said Lopez.

Fever added, "I don't sign up for projects with people I don't believe are like-minded and Samelys has a beautiful vision and I'm looking forward to fulfilling it." Fever has been an artist for 24 years painting murals around

the Bronx (194th Street and Bainbridge Avenue), and is excited to work on this project. "...To be able to put together a mural with a bunch of different artists in this neighborhood would be something special," she said.

Both women love their community and see the creation of this mural as another way to bring beauty and pride to it. "I can't imagine living anywhere else because I feel like I have such a great community," said Lopez.

Lopez learned about the grant through research for her non-profit organization, Velo City, and looked into it for this specific mural project with the Bedford Mosholu Community Association. She hopes that others will apply for the grant to beautify their neighborhood too.

"The Citizens Committee for New York City Grant is really great in terms of providing technical assistance to local non-profit and civic organizations so they can beautify their neighborhood. They give it out to people that just want to do planting or art projects," said Lopez.

The mural is expected to be painted in July.

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2nd Annual Family Fitness Festival Set for June 27

By DAVID CRUZ

Community advocates and medical professionals are teaming up once again for the second annual Family Fitness Fun celebration.

Set to take place on June 27 at Williamsbridge Oval Park from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Family Fitness Festival aims to turn exercising and healthier lifestyles into a fun occasion. Its overarching goal looks to stem the trend of obesity, particularly among young people, said Dr. Tosan Oruwariye, a community pediatrician and one of the event's lead organizers.

"I would say over a third of my practice are obese children," said Oruwariye, adding that daily fun exercise is key to warding off the weight. "Many people lose weight not by drastic change; we do by changing things over time."

She's partnered with institutions such as Montefiore Medical Center, the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District (the commercial corridor that's home to more than 200 busi-

nesses), and the Mosholu Preservation Corporation (MPC), which publishes the *Norwood News*.

"Our goal is to increase awareness while engaging in physical activities to help Bronx families achieve better health outcomes," said Marcia Cameron, the executive director of the BID and deputy director of MPC, in a statement.

Some events include a boot camp demonstration, health education workshops, relay races, health screenings, and face painting.

The Bronx has earned an unfortunate reputation as a borough of overweight inhabitants, part of a long list of unhealthy conditions such as diabetes, which are linked to other health issues. Those disparities can lead to an unhealthy lifestyle that spreads from one family member to another, a reason why Oruwariye is gearing up the event for the whole family. "I find when you talk to one person you're really talking to the whole family," said Oruwariye.



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NYBG Exhibit Highlights Floral Side of Frida Kahlo

By JENNY SHARP

This is "our tribute to a great gardener who also happens to be a great artist" said Todd Forrest, vice president for Horticulture and Living Collections at the New York Botanical Garden on the recent Frida Kahlo exhibition, running through Nov. 1.

Forrest spoke pointedly and correctly about the show "FRIDA KAHLO: Art, Garden, Life," which blends Kahlo's art within a broader and more ambitious exploration of the woman and the botanical culture of her homeland of Mexico.

The exhibition, curated by Dr. Adriana Zavala, a professor at Tufts University and expert in Latin American art, can best be described as immersive and multifaceted. It is divided into two distinct parts: the botanical installation and the gallery installation.

The botanical aspect of the show is a masterful replication of Kahlo's garden at her villa in Mexico City, Mexico. Exotic tropical plants fill the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, surrounding the

visitor on all sides. Vibrant blue walls line the entry corridor, recalling the brilliant vivacity of Kahlo's Casa Azul or "Blue House." A large pyramidal structure, painted red, orange, and blue is placed in the heart of the main atrium, decorated with an assortment of colorful flowers and cacti. The use of color in this room is almost painterly, transporting the viewer to a tropical world far away from the Bronx.

The other major portion of the Frida Kahlo exhibition is a collection of more than a dozen paintings by the prolific artist on display in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library's Art Gallery. The paintings, while not the most famous of the Kahlo canon, share the thematic thread of the natural world. There are still life paintings of exotic fruits and vegetables, a portrait of American botanist Luther Burbank, and many self portraits of Kahlo surrounded by or even merging with nature. One painting, entitled "Roots," depicts Kahlo lying on the ground as stems, roots, and leaves protrude from



Photo by Jenny Sharp

THE WORKS OF FRIDA KAHLO, along with an ornate recreation of the late artist's floral villa in Mexico, is on display at the New York Botanical Garden.

a cavity within her chest. Here she is half woman, half plant, a visual embodiment of the exhibition which glorifies her knowledge and passion for botany as opposed to simply her artistic prowess.

It is clear that this show is not an art show. It is celebration of Mexican culture and horticulture through the lens of a prominent Mexican figure, who happens to be an incredibly famous artist. The curating team took the difficult task of creating a fluid, compre-

hensive show out of plants which are confined to the greenhouse and paintings which are confined to the gallery, and succeeded in connecting the two with all the additional interactive elements. When one enters the Gardens, there is an immediate sensation that the hustle of New York City is gone and has been replaced with a more tranquil, tropical way of life.

For more information and tickets to "FRIDA KAHLO: Art, Garden, Life," visit www.nybg.org.

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FEGS' Bronx Programs Transferred to The Jewish Board

Federation Employment & Guidance Services (FEGS) of Norwood, now bankrupt, will keep its social services programs going, after transferring them to the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services for \$75 million. New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH), primary provider of licenses and contracts for the programs, authorized the transfer.

The Jewish Board, in existence for more than 140 years, currently helps over 5,880 clients in the Bronx (and 35,000 citywide) to live as independently as possible, through care management services, mental health clinics, preventive services, emergency shelter for survivors of domestic violence, supportive housing, apartment treatment programs for adults with mental illness, and adolescent residential services.

Local programs to be transferred include: Burnside Residence, Burnside Avenue; White Plains Community Residence, White Plains Road; Kingsbridge Road Community Residence, Kingsbridge Road; Bronx Supported Apartment and Permanent Housing (scattered-site); Bronx Clinic, Jerome Avenue, and Bronx Personalized Recovery Oriented Services, Jerome Avenue. The FEGS sites, employing nearly 800 people (most of whom have been offered employment by The Jewish Board), serve over 8,000 clients citywide, and encompass 850 apartments, six mental health clinics, and three day programs serving adults with mental illness.

PASSAGES

John (Johnny) B. Castro died peacefully on Monday, April 27, 2015 of congestive heart failure, in the comfort of his own home with his loving family by his side. Born in the Bronx on April 28, 1951, he was the son of Juan B. ("Nano Bauta") Castro and Hortensia Gomez. Apart from attending Clinton High School and completing several correspondence courses on spiritual subjects, John was a self-taught poet and musician. He played percussion and saxophone in several salsa bands around New York State, penning several original compositions and publishing his work. He was widely read, amassing an impressive personal library of books and artwork. Among other topics, he studied politics, technology, genetic engineering, and world religions.

He worked variously as a law clerk and data entry specialist but suffered from a series of chronic health conditions beginning in 1992. Though his early life was punctuated by drug addiction and incarceration, and he was plagued by illness in his later years, Johnny remained vibrant: he was filled with life, music, words, and humor, and he was the lynchpin of his tightly knit family.

Johnny loved being a father and grandfather, and he looked forward to spending time every day with his wife of 43 years, Jenny.

John is survived by Jenny, along with their children, Diana Castro Tierney and her husband Jus-



tin Tierney of Millburn, NJ; Athena Castro-Lewandowski and her husband Michael Lewandowski of West Chazy, NY; and daughter Shakti Castro, of the Bronx, NY. He is predeceased by his father and one daughter, Destiny Esmeralda Castro.

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Westchester Square BID Enters Fourth Year With Bounty of Success

By DAVID CRUZ

On a recent afternoon in May, a prospective business owner toured the Westchester Square Business Improvement District, one of nine Bronx business corridors where special property taxes finance cleaning and marketing services at the behest of merchants.

The gentleman, a chef by trade, spent three hours strolling up and down the cone-shaped strip, home to some 160 establishments. The streets were bustling, graffiti was scant and the vibe showed signs the neighborhood was a kind of a new frontier, a place for the business owner to grow.

“He said ‘I spent three hours in the neighborhood that I knew nothing about and I see how it’s up and coming, and I want to move in before it gets to that point,’” recalled Lisa Sorin, the BID’s executive director. “So it’s exciting that somebody else is seeing what the team and the Board of Directors saw way before I got here.”

It’s that kind of exchange Sorin hopes can elevate the borough’s youngest BID as one of the more happening corridors. This past year appears to have laid the groundwork towards that goal.

A Borough Main Street

Framed as the Main Street of the Bronx, the Westchester Square BID mixes mom and pop ventures such as One Westchester Square Florist and Pinky Nails with regional outlets, creating an intimate feel that’s tangible to the working class neighborhood that overlaps it. One minute a customer can grab some Latin fare at El Bohio Restaurant, the next they can upgrade their eyeglasses at MetroOptics.

“In my eyes, in my vision, I see a tree-lined street, I see cafes, I see bookstores, I see art stores,” said Sorin. “So there’s a theme that accidentally, intentionally has happened for Westchester Square, and it’s fitting really nicely.”

Sorin has essentially been a virtual business merchant who’s understaffed but driven. The past year, she was able to notch a few successes, juggling tasks that included pedestrian safety as part of the city’s Vision Zero initiative, small business education workshops and the undertaking of an upcoming, yearly street festival showcasing the BID’s offerings. These larger tasks coincide with small-scale projects such as calendars and cards that market the BID.



Photo courtesy Department of Small Business Services

SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES Commissioner Maria Torres-Springer (l) and Lisa Sorin (c), executive director of the Westchester Square BID, speak with the assistant manager of a store at the BID (r).

Of course, there is the day to day. One of those responsibilities is Sorin’s daily walk around the BID, a ritual that includes chatting with clerks, spotting any issues city agencies should be aware of, or even stopping by as a customer. Yes, Sorin is not only an executive director, but she’s also a customer, frequenting ABC Super Store, for some knickknacks.

Foot traffic fuels Westchester Square’s business corridor, doubling as a transit hub (eight buses and one subway) to thousands of commuters who cross the BID. A chunk of the foot traffic comes largely from students at Herbert H. Lehman High School, and employees at the Hutchinson Metro Center, an office campus that’s home to Mercy College, Montefiore Medical Center and a recently opened Marriott Residence Inn.

Geography certainly plays a part in a BID. For Westchester Square, the area encircles some family-friendly attractions that include Owen Dolen Park and the Huntington Library which will be complemented with a new 12,000-square-foot library.

Because of constant foot traffic, Sorin placed pedestrian safety high on her agenda. This past year, she collaborated with the New York City Department of Transportation to create crosswalks and medians near Lane Avenue, a five-point intersection running parallel to East Tremont Avenue and Williamsbridge Road. The street that’s deemed something of a gateway to the BID was once a risky roadway for pedestrians, who gambled each



Photo by Adi Talwar

LISA SORIN HAS SERVED as the executive director of the Westchester Square Business Improvement District since its inception in May 2012.

time they crossed the street. This created little business flow for retailers who relied on pedestrians to frequent their establishments. With street improvements, Sorin has noticed an uptick in business.

Another added layer of safety was the installation of high-tech surveillance cameras funded through Assemblyman Michael Benedetto, who earmarked capital monies in 2009 for the project that’ll see a total of 14 cameras across the BID. The installation is seen by Sorin as an effective marketing tool, creating a sense of security business owners seek.

She recently hosted The Department of Small Business Services, a New York City agency that oversees BIDs, for an announcement that aids small businesses in avoiding

heavy regulatory fines.

A Fair to Remember

Of course, the BID not only works hard, it plays hard. On June 20, the BID will hold its seventh annual Fair @The Square, a bazaar-like event complete with BID merchants, street food and outdoor activities. (See “Editor’s Pick” in Out & About on page 22.)

“There’s something for everyone,” said Sorin.

Owen Dolen Park will be seen as the main stage for a rotation of musical headliners that include the bands Just Nutz and FDR Drive, and singers Sierra Nelson, Damian King and Brenda K. Starr.

Securing Its Identity

The long search for its identity continues amid economic changes for the borough, where the commercial makeup has shifted to a growing number of major malls that have opened within the last year. On the outskirts of neighboring Throggs Neck is the Target Mall, which was initially viewed to have endangered the BID’s business. But Sorin soon noticed any conflict was nil, realizing the BID’s ambitions veered away from attracting big box retailers, opting instead for a hub of small businesses.

“Westchester Square is the type of place where you go when you need that item,” said Sorin. “Big stores come and go. Your small shops, your mom and pop shops, your downtown districts, your walk the sidewalk and window shop is what we have here.”

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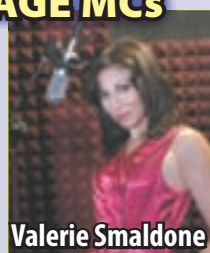
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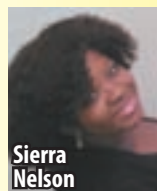
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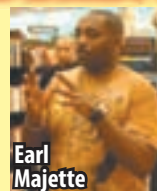
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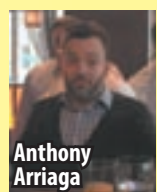
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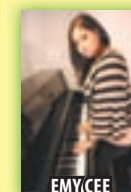
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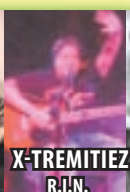
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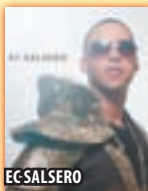
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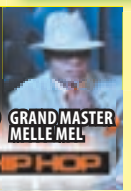
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Bronx Youth Heard

The Sneaker Habit That's Costing Teens

MEDELIN CUEVAS



Many teenagers in high school wear popular shoe brands. Those include Nike, Adidas and Converse. But among the more sought after pairs is the Nike Air Jordan, long considered the popular shoe of choice. An average pair runs between \$120 and \$300, roughly the same price as a college textbook.

And while the “sneakerhead” subculture is dominating a teen’s life, some have found it’s replaced the need to use money for college tuition, favoring the hottest trend over a path to education.

Its popularity is widespread in the Bronx, where the debut of the latest pair of Jordans often becomes an event, with teens waiting outside a store prior to its opening.

Nick Reyes, 16, a self-described sneakerhead living in the Bronx, said he “wouldn’t even think about saving my money for college tuition.” Told about the long term effects, Nick admitted he’d “have to double think that

because sneakers are a short term thing, college tuition isn’t.”

College tuition in New York City is increasing tremendously. In 2014, CUNY tuition cost about an average of \$4,800 in community colleges and \$6,330 in four year colleges. That’s about the cost of 24 to 30 pairs of Air Jordans. College debt has increasingly risen over the years, according to The Institute for College Access and Success, college education thinktank. In 2012, average student debt across the country was \$29,400, up 25 percent from 2008 when average student loan debt was \$23,450.

Another teen, Julie Melendez, who attends a Catholic high school, said, “Jordans are very popular. It’s like a trend.” Genesis Campos, 15, not currently an owner of Jordans, added, “I never bought a pair, but, it has definitely caught my eye. It’s because of the popularity.”

Buying sneakers has become an addiction for a majority of Bronx teens. Instead of using sneakers as something to walk or run in, they have become a collector’s item.

“They’re spending like \$200 to \$300 on sneakers when they should save that money for college,” said Waly Wade, a



Photo by Medelin Cuevas

THIS TEEN CHECKS out this large display of sneakers at a Bronx shoe store.

Bronx teen. “Most of these teens don’t even buy them to wear them; they buy it to fit into the standards.”

The need for sneakers can be so intense that students often wait at shoe stores overnight for a new shipment to come in the next morning. At Hyperactive, a shoe store located on Hunts

Point, the store manager who went by Sadikou said, “I tend to do a raffle in order to keep the cool in the store. But I think it’s a win-win situation; we get their money which is put into the business and the customers get the sneakers they want. It’s not bad that we’re doing this.”

Questioning One’s Faith Often Leads With Tough Decisions

ANGELINNA VERAS



Jada Cuveras is a teen attending the Academy of Mount St. Ursula High School, an all-girls Catholic school in Bedford Park, who doesn’t believe that God truly loves us all. “I think He has favorites and chooses who to care for and love,” Jada said when asked about her faith, which she admits is at an all-time low.

It seems that attending a Catholic

school has not helped her faith at all. “I’m grateful, but I also think He has favorites like the people who are wealthy and are in good health,” Jada said.

And in some cases, the loss of faith, or the ability to question it, has become a key moment of soul searching for young people who’ve always been taught a higher power was among them. But experiences, and the world around them, often make them stop and think.

J. Patrick Hornbeck II, a professor of theology from Fordham University, argued a catholic God does not have favorites. “When there are two people

in a hospital tragically suffering from a fatal illness and one spontaneously recovers while the other does not, does that mean that God is more on the side of the one who is cured?” asked Hornbeck. “Many theologians today would answer no: that would contradict what most Christians, Jews, and Muslims believe about God’s love for all God’s creation.”

For now, the trend across the country has seen a shift in young people leaving their childhood faith behind. A Pew Research study in 2011 found two-thirds of unaffiliated Catholics “left their childhood faith because they

stopped believing in its teachings.”

Rachael Angeles is another non-believer of God. She said she doesn’t continue to believe in God because “I wasn’t there to see who He was. There is no such thing as power that’s like magic.” Rachael also feels that the bible is just “another book.”

Rachael was part of the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, a process that converts adults to Catholicism. She backed out after realizing her beliefs were not genuine. Rachael is deciding to leave the Academy of Mount St. Ursula High School because of her doubts.

Bronx School Students Turn Down School Lunch for Junk Food

**LIZIE
MENSAH**



They starve. They eat chips. They drink soda and embrace the sweet life of junk food. It is all they want. But, for some students, it's their only option since they're exposed to, in their opinion, the unappealing school lunch that they couldn't help but turn down. This often creates the un-nutritious cycle that can follow a teen to adulthood.

For some students, school lunch isn't that bad. But for others, the disgust for school lunch is real. That's the case for Jada Colon, 15, a current freshman at the Academy of Mount St. Ursula (AMSU) High School. Jumbo size Hershey drops, birthday cake M&M's, multiple packs of Hi-Chew and mango-flavored Arizona Iced Tea usually makes up her lunch on days when unappetizing school lunch is served at her school. But for her, it's her only choice since she's unwilling to eat school lunch that is not worth eating. "All I want to do is tie them up and make them eat the food that they give us," Jada said of the food servers. "I don't like it."

"School lunch is disgusting," said Nyasha Francis, another AMSU student. "It has no spices. It's an atrocious thing," she said.

Another student also vented their frustration with school lunch, saying that they felt they "would rather eat prison food than school food because I feel like it's totally better." "It [school food] has no flavor whatsoever," said the student, who asked for anonymity. "I wish they would eat it and see if they like it."

Other students said that school lunch looked fake, was unappealing and lacked flavor. "Who makes chicken that's pink inside?" asked Jada.

Similarly, Bronx freshman Jeniah Villanueva also said that school lunch was not edible and lacked taste. Like Jada, Jeniah also brought her own food to school because she, too, hated school lunch.

But these students can also be

doing themselves a favor. A 2014 study by the University of Michigan Health System in Ann Arbor found that students who ate school lunches are more likely to be obese or overweight, at 38.2 percent versus 24.7 percent of students who don't eat school lunch.

The rejection of school lunch has caused these students to suffer from "side effects" such as headaches. Jeniah admitted that she gets headaches on the days that she is unable to bring food for herself. Not only do they suffer from headaches, but not eating food alone can make them irritable. "I usually get angry when I don't eat," said Jada.

The rejection of school lunch has also caused students to engage in bad eating habits, which have negatively affected their health. "I buy chips, lots of chips," Sophia Coconi admitted.

"My button popped while I was eating" said Jada. "I have been gaining weight."

When asked if they were concerned about the negative effect that their food habits have had on them, students responded eagerly.

"See, when I don't eat and when I get angry, I bring my anger out on the teachers," said Jada. "I'm pretty sure they don't want me in detention."

Bronx Youth Heard Visits WNYC



Photo by David Cruz

STUDENTS FROM BRONX YOUTH HEARD stop by WNYC 93.9 FM on their last day of the session. Here, News Editor Patricia Willens (right) shows *BYH* students around its Manhattan radio station on May 7.



Photo courtesy Patricia Willens

BRONX YOUTH HEARD students taking part in the tour at WNYC 93.9 FM include (l-r) Pamela Ventura, Michelae Grant, Kezia Boateng, Lizie Mensah, Imani Maliti and Medelin Cuevas. They stand with David Cruz, editor-in-chief of the *Norwood News* and program director for *Bronx Youth Heard*. (Not Pictured: Angelica Sanchez, Angelinna Veras, and Julie Eve Melendez.)

Bronx Youth Heard

Vol. 8, No. 2

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

Reporters

Medelin Cuevas Imani Maliti Lizie Mensah
Angelica Sanchez Pamela Ventura Angelinna Veras

Program Director

David Cruz

Program Coordinator

Katina Paron

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.

Fighting With Parents: a Phase Marking the Start of Adolescence

**PAMELA
VENTURA**



About three years ago, Rubi Ventura, 13, went out with her friends. She claims her curfew was set for 10 p.m., though she arrived home at midnight. According to her, the trains were delayed. As soon as she gets home her mother is up waiting for her. That's when it started.

Soon a war of words ignited. They could not agree on anything and it only got worse. "We don't have a close connection," said Rubi. "We're always fighting. She doesn't understand me."

The kind of argument that is commonplace in Bronx households--adolescents reaching an age of independence as parents exercise authority. As teens grow and begin making decisions, parents have a hard time coping with this. The most common problem is that teens tend to

say that their parents do not understand them, distancing themselves while only leading to more arguments.

As children begin to grow up and become teenagers, it becomes common that some may simply test the waters, which can often lead to immense arguments. Andrew Echevarria, a 16-year-old from the Bronx, tested any presumed independence when he was in his freshman year in high school. "My mother and I got into this big argument when I got home late. I had to make up a lie because I knew if I would've told her the truth I would've gotten into way more trouble."

Complicated issues, like dating, can cause even bigger arguments. Rosanna Munoz, a 16-year-old teen, experienced this firsthand when she told her parents she wanted to start dating. "My mom wasn't so strict about it. She did have a problem at first but after she met my boyfriend, everything was cool," said Rosanna. "My dad, on the other hand,

created a scene. He was really overprotective. My mom had to have a long conversation with him and he eventually came around when he realized my boyfriend was a nice guy."

The source of these issues and how to resolve them can take time. Kristin A. Perret, Ph.D., staff psychologist at Montefiore Health System, said teens undergo change, which can cause tension and anxiety both for parents as well as teens.

Arguments seem to increase around this age because teens experience many physiological changes that cause mood swings, low self-esteem, and increased fatigue. Fights can also be caused by rehashing previous situations instead of communicating and addressing problems when they are noted. Parents seem to not apologize after arguments even if they are wrong because they are used to being authoritative. It can be hard to adjust when teens are becoming adults and their parents' author-

ity is decreasing.

"...It is important to keep in mind that each person has their own 'truth.' It is important to be open, listen to each other's perspectives and look for ways to compromise," said Perret. "A teen is filled with curiosity and needs independence. It is important to be an active listener so that your teen continues to seek you out for advice, rather than closing the door to communication for fear of judgment."

Often, rules can help ease an argument. Perret recommends both sides try not to raise their voice, keep a calm tone, avoid interrupting, and understanding the other side. If it comes down to apologizing, Perret said it's better never to "rehash the argument."

"An apology can be seen as taking accountability for your part in the issue and working toward minimizing the reoccurrence of the same problem in the future by changing behavior," she said.

Even at All-Girls Schools, Females Become Foes and Abandon Sisterhood

**IMANI
MALITI**



Last year, Nyasha Francis, 14, attending the Academy of Mount St. Ursula High School, an all-girls school, was in a school-wide spelling bee. She ultimately won against all her peers from the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. When she returned to class, her female teacher exclaimed, "Wow! You're the top girl in the school."

But the compliment drew aggression from her friend, a female student who went to the same school. It dragged her down, particularly since the hostility came from a friend she admired.

This ongoing problem often can play out among rivaling fe-

male teens, particularly when they become the only competition. Factions form, and anything from academics to image become a lightning rod for arguments.

It is common for young females to stare one another up and down and focus on the exterior: clothes, shoes, and face. It's one reason why females can see each other as competitors, fighting despite a longtime campaign for unity.

In a Florida State University study led by Jon Maner and James McNulty, researchers found that a majority of women's testosterone levels, linked to a rise in aggression and competition, increased when they smelled T-shirts recently worn by other females. Just by smelling the scent of another female, women felt as if they had to compete.

At the Academy of Mount St.

Ursula High School, according to student Leilani Aviles, going to an all-girls school often breeds competition. After all, it's the only demographic within the school. "I feel as if certain people are afraid of being seen as the weakest link so they try to make themselves out to be better than what they are, or try to be better than the person next to them. If not, then it becomes about you and your team or you and yourself," said Leilani, 14.

Some students at AMSU believe that females abandon sisterhood because of the conflict competition creates. In Nyasha's point of view, same-sex competition is an intricate "tournament" that vies for men's approval. This can result in aggressive rivalries that do nothing but break an already fragile sisterhood. A common example

is a fight between two girls dating the same boy.

"I think that whole 'Oh he's my man blah blah let's fight now,' that's so petty," says Nyasha. "You guys are fighting each other for having feelings for him, but the common factor is him. I don't see you yelling at him and punching him in the face."

But unlike Nyasha, Leilani believes that the competition is a struggle for women's approval of one another. By competing, one may get the respect, acceptance, or fondness of a clique, said Leilani.

According to Jasmine Herbert, 15, all females are capable of achieving anything they set their mind to. They should not have to put each other down, to raise themselves up. "Girls fight to be known," said Jasmine.

The Dangers of Online Teen Dating

**ANGELICA
SANCHEZ**



Maryanne DeJesus started dating at age 11. That was five years ago. But Maryanne, now 16, learned a lesson: "Don't start dating online," she said. "Online dating is dangerous because the person you're actually talking to can actually be way older than you."

In many cases, the start of teen dating comes somewhat with a learning curve--teens may simply not know what they are getting themselves into.

Statistics show five percent of on-line sex predators pretend to be teenagers, according to Online Safety Site, a group that offers outreach in how to protect oneself from the Internet. Pimps often cruise around the Internet, striking up conversations with young girls and boys, only to abduct them from their homes or off the streets.

But some teens find that dating online is more convenient than actually going out into the real world. Most teens call them "partners in crime" or

"my other half." Actually going out and meeting someone new is better than not knowing who is behind the screen. Are parents on their child's back wondering what they are doing online? Dating online comes with many different consequences, especially for teens who will give out the wrong information.

Dahlia Hughes, 15, thinks trust is not the right thing to do or feel in a relationship while dating online. "Trust is a very dangerous inaccurate word and that applies to dating of any sort. Just because you're dating someone does not mean you know them inside and out. The person you simply can be talking to online can become your predator," said Dahlia.

Other teens may feel that dating online is based on "catfish," a practice where someone takes on a different name and persona over the Internet. Jared Anderson feels that being "catfished" is a huge part of dating online.

Teen dating online is more reliable for others such as one Bronx teen who went by Nelson. "Yes, I do think teens dating online is a reliable resource for finding new love." He finds that dating online is way easier than getting rejected in person.

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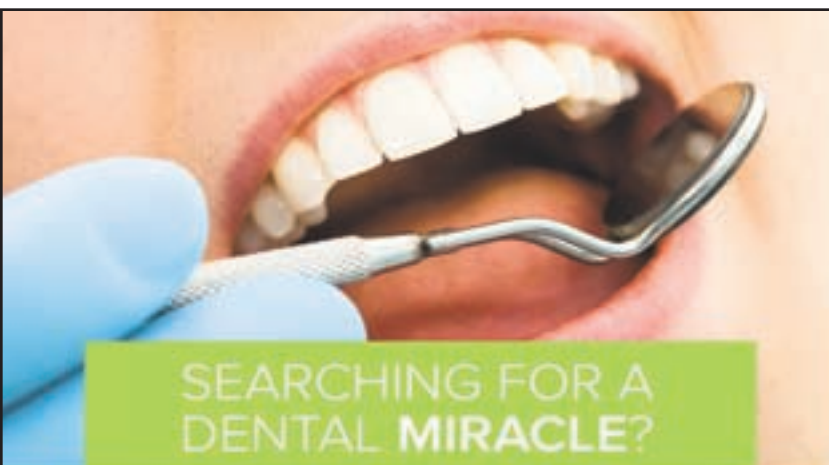
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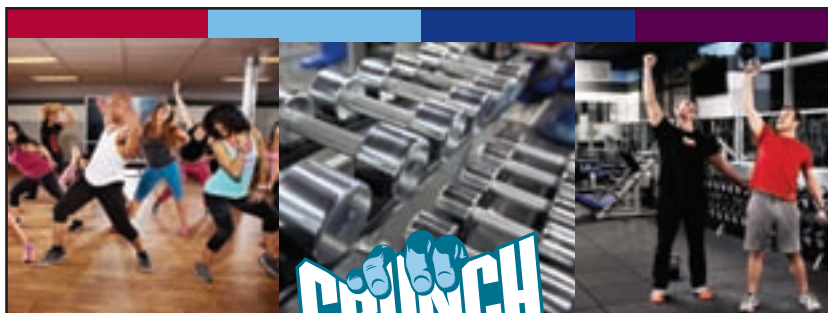
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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Veterans Pre-Career Fair Forum

Veterans and their families can access multiple community resources in the auditorium at the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., June 12 from 6 to 8 p.m. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, call (718) 579-4260.

Community Resource Fair

Our Lady of Refuge Church Parish Center, 290 E. 196th St., (between Briggs and Bainbridge avenues) holds an Immigration & Financial Services Fair offering free immigration, legal, credit and banking help, June 14 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. There will be assistance with ESL, citizenship and financial classes, benefit screening, health insurance enrollment, and more. Also included will be workshops, giveaways and food free while supplies last. For more information

or to RSVP, call (718) 718-933-2539 or visit www.unhp.org.

Homebuyer Seminar

The Concourse House, 2751 Grand Concourse, hosts a First-time Homebuyer Seminar, June 18 from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Learn steps to buying a home and getting a mortgage. For more information, call (718) 933-539 or visit www.unhp.org.

Immigrant Business Session

Immigrant business owners are welcome to attend this free four-hour workshop, June 23 from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. Learn to create an exit strategy and plan for the future of your enterprises and for your families. Topics include exit and transitioning, selling or transferring ownership, and how to increase the value of your business.

For more information, call (718) 579-4260.

Small Business Workshops

Monroe College School of Business and Operation HOPE host free small business development workshops Wednesdays through July 29 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the college's Ustin Hall, 2375 Jerome Ave. (184th Street). Participants will learn how to start a business, build a business plan, and look for funding. For more information or to register, call (201) 381-8798 or email pedro.barry@operationhope.org.

Free Legal Help

Free legal services are available at the office of Councilman Andy King, 940 E. Gun Hill Rd., Fridays through June 26. Legal consultations include criminal, NYCHA, tenant/landlord, public assistance, wills, healthcare

proxies, contract disputes, family law issues, and civil litigations. For more information and to schedule an appointment, call (718) 684-5509.

Healthcare & Benefits Screening

The Northwest Bronx Resource Center is offering help for several services: healthcare enrollment and benefits screening every Monday and SeedCo will help with healthcare applications, benefits (SNAP, WIC, etc.), finding free and low-cost healthcare, finding a doctor and other programs. Community Service Society is available to assist with applying and/or questions regarding benefits, including SNAP, WIC, Disability, etc. For more information, call (718) 933-2539 or email Jumelia@unhp.org.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Annual Fair at Westchester Square

The Westchester Square Merchants Association presents its free 7th annual Fair @ the Square, June 20 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. (rain or shine) along the streets of Westchester Square between St. Raymond and Westchester avenues. Events include an all-day concert series featuring a variety of music with host and performers, plus both an adult and kid Elvis impersonator. Also featured will be art, an MTA antique bus, a kids' activity area offering face painting and arts and crafts, an FDNY smokehouse and antique fire engine, rock wall, games, exhibits and other activities for the entire family, and vendors displaying their wares. One of the many sponsors includes our very own Norwood News. For more information, call (718) 395-1932 or (917) 583-2075 or visit www.WSBID.org.

Onstage

- The Longwood Art Gallery at Hostos Community College, 450 Grand Concourse, presents **Bobby Gonzalez**, performing readings and songs, free, June 19 at 6 p.m. Required tickets can be reserved or picked up at the box office M-F 1 to 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 518-4455 or visit hostoscenter.org.
- The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Ivo Tirado's Latin Jazz Element Sextet in Concert**, June 13; and **Latin Jazz Concert**, featuring Papo Pepin Quartet, June 20; both at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nysl.org.
- The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), presents **Los Mas Valientes**, performing Latin jazz, salsa, and more, June 13 at noon. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

Events

- The New York Botanical Garden presents **Canciones de Mi Padre (Songs of My Father)**, concert featuring Mexican folk songs performed by various performers and a full mariachi band. Mexican BBQ food truck will sell dinner, and a free beer is included with your ticket (\$30/member; \$40/non member), June 20 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Bring picnic blanket. For more information, call (718) 817-8700 or visit nybg.org.
- Friends of Van Cortlandt Park presents **Picnic Supper and Concert** in VC Park, featuring the New York Philharmonic, June 23 at 6 p.m. Tickets start at \$100. For more information, visit www.vancortlandt.org.
- DeWitt Clinton H. S., 100 W. Moshulu Pkwy. So., presents **Health Fair**, June 20 from 3 to 6 p.m. Learn about fitness, nutrition, domestic violence, and a variety of health issues. Snacks will be provided. For more information, call (718) 543-1000.
- Kingdom Life Temple, Fellowship Hall,

3030 Jerome Ave., presents its **Annual Community Health & Finance Summit**, June 13 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Events include free dental and health screenings, women's wellness, diet and nutrition seminars, personal finance coaching, and more. There will be free health snacks and beverages. For more information, call (347) 767-5508 or (914) 843-1091.

• Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Luminous Paper Lanterns, to cut shapes from colored paper, then make a papier-mache lantern, June 13 and 14; and Big Hand, Little Hand, to use plaster of Paris to recreate a replica of your hand and one of your family members, June 20 and 21; 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 June 11, 18 and 25; **Hands-On Projects** (ages 7 to 12): Fish Making: June 11, and Visor Hat Making, June 24, both at 4 p.m.; **Family Time**: (ages 3 to 5; preregistration required), reading aloud and crafts, June 13 at 11 a.m.; **The Sword in the Stone**: (ages 5 to 12), presented by the Traveling Lantern Theatre Company, June 13 at 2 p.m.; and **Big Top Science**: (ages 5 to 12), science circus featuring chemistry and physics demonstrations, June 20 at 2 p.m. For adults, there is **MS Word 2010 for Beginners**: June 15 at 2 p.m. (advance, in-person registration required); and **Learn to Type**: Become familiar with the computer keyboard, June 24 at 2 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nysl.org.
- The Moshulu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Toddler Story Time**:

(ages 18 to 36 months), songs and rhymes, June 11, 18 and 25 at 10:30 a.m.; and **The Super Hero in All of Us**: (ages 18 months to 12 years), Presto Pete and Incredible Chris invite the audience to perform feats similar to the fictional superheroes we all know, June 12 at 3:30 p.m. Adults can enjoy: **Film**: "American Sniper," June 20 at 2 p.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: **Get Active Fridays**: (ages 5 to 12), dance and zumba, June 12 at 3 p.m.; **Program in**

a Box: Crayfish Investigation: (ages 5 to 12), to learn if crayfish prefer light or dark, June 12 at 3 p.m.; and **Kids Pajama Party**: (ages 18 months to 12 years), read aloud and create a craft, June 15 at 6 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY TO ALL OUR DAD READERS!

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by June 15 for the next publication date of June 25.



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Speed Hump Stall on Hull Avenue

(continued from page 1)

transportation advocates who have long harangued city officials to consider expediting a hump to keep heavy-footed drivers at bay.

"It's not like they wouldn't fix a manhole or fix an electrical fire, and they wouldn't fix a pothole because there's construction going on," said Elisabeth von Uhl, a mother of a 3-year-old who heard the crash. "To me it seems like they could've coordinated a day where DOT could've brought out their equipment to put in the speed hump."

The majority of Norwood is deemed a Neighborhood Slow Zone by the DOT. The designation was made last year coinciding with Mayor Bill de Blasio's launch of Vision Zero, which aims to eliminate fatal car crashes by 2020. Von Uhl, along with elected officials and Community Board 7 claimed victory in the program, mandating drivers cruise at a maximum of 20 miles per hour. Some criteria Norwood cleared for a Slow Zone included strong community input, two schools, and five pre-k, head start and day care centers. They also took into account

the number of injuries per year, at 11.8, and four severe injuries/fatalities per road mile.

Hull Avenue is one of those slow zone roadways, though drivers must go 15 miles per hour because of its proximity to PS 56. The DOT has installed separate speed humps and signs along Hull Avenue, near East Gun Hill Road and East 209th Street and between East 205th and East 207th streets.

The Accident

The accident happened on Hull Avenue just before East 207th Street on a rainy May 31. Video surveillance from a home on Hull Avenue shows a vehicle hurtling down that street. Witnesses said the vehicle sideswiped a car before slamming into a parked BMW, which hit another car before overturning. The BMW belonged to Solaris Columbus, who ironically was the one who pulled the driver from the passenger side of the tipped vehicle, along with von Uhl's husband, Jay Shuffield, after popping the deployed airbag. The driver was not charged by police, angering von Uhl, who thought they should have been hit with a speed

charge.

"A car doesn't flip over going 20 miles per hour," said von Uhl, who's pressed elected officials in getting a speed hump installed. "You're not going to ricochet off three cars."

A Hectic Hull Avenue

Columbus, a Bronx native now living in Westchester County, was visiting her family when the crash happened. Previously, she lived on Hull Avenue with her family, who routinely spot cars jetting down the neighborhood that's home to small children. "These cops that want to give speeding tickets, they might as well just park up the block at the corner (Hull Avenue/207th Street) and they'll get a good speeding ticket because they'll do anything to catch that light at the corner," said Columbus, a New York

City lifeguard and mother of a 4-year-old. "Speeding is a major issue on that block."

Hull Avenue has long been considered a kind of straight shot for drivers who can pick up speed towards several traffic lights. Traffic accidents are minimal, though Columbus warns that on any given day there, "it takes one car to really hurt someone."

Days after the accident, von Uhl sat outside her Hull Avenue home seeing motorists drive by. She counted 11 cars "gunning the engine" of their cars, racing for the light, an indication the speed issue isn't going away. She hopes the city reacts sooner instead of waiting for school construction to end. "I don't think that's how a big, urban city can work though," said von Uhl, "especially one that's just adopted Vision Zero."



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