



# NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 29, No 3 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • FEBRUARY 4-17, 2016



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**WALKTHROUGH ON WEBSTER | PG. 10**



**INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:**  
**BRONX BLIZZARD | PG. 4**

## NYBG HOTEL TO BLOOM ON WEBSTER?

*Garden seeks proposals for mixed-use site, including hotel*



Photo by Adi Talwar

**THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN** will weigh options for mixed-used development at their property located at the corner of Webster Avenue and Bedford Park Boulevard.

**By DAVID CRUZ**

Five years in the making, the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) is moving forward with a plan to redevelop a parcel of property it owns on Webster Avenue, following through on its commitment to revamp

the still-underutilized stretch.

Come March 1, some potential ideas NYBG hopes to see include mixed-income residences for upwards of 300 units, 12,000-square-foot of retail space and a 125-room hotel. Or perhaps

all three.

"We would prioritize proposals that come back with a mix of all three," said Aaron Bouska, NYBG's vice president of government and community relations.

Officials with NYBG have tapped Cushman

and Wakefield to find a developer for 2868-2872 Webster Ave., a property NYBG has owned for 10 years. Found at the corner of Bedford Park Boulevard and Webster Avenue, the parcel is home to the Pioneer Supermar-

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Vol. 29, No. 3

Norwood News is published  
bi-weekly on Thursdays by

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Bronx, New York 10467

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# EDITORIAL

## The Politics of the Kingsbridge Armory

The Kingsbridge National Ice Center (KNIC) is edging close to actual construction at the Kingsbridge Armory, with progress in the form of the state's financial support towards the project.

Not much of a sound was heard about the Armory in 2015, though developers insisted plenty was going on behind the scenes. That's true, and credit could be due to the working relationship between Governor Andrew Cuomo and Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.

Since the early part of 2015, the pair has forged an ever-strengthening bond that's allowed Diaz to check off some items (though not yet achievements since certain projects haven't begun yet), laying the groundwork in time to run for higher office.

Cuomo oversees Empire State Development (ESD), the state's real estate and economic development board that recently approved part of a \$130 million construction loan to KNIC that was given final approval by the New York State Public Authorities Control Board, a barely known state panel. ESD's president is Howard Zemsky, appointed by Cuomo in January 2015. Zemsky is a Cuomo loyalist, donating consistently to the governor's campaigns.

In August 2015, the prospect of KNIC approaching the state for a loan was made possible. All this couldn't have happened had the allegiance between Cuomo and Diaz not been there. There's politics in everything, it seems, good or bad. What's unclear is what Cuomo gains from this. Perhaps an ally that weakens Mayor Bill de Blasio's overall sphere of influence in New York City politics.

Diaz was already a major downstate ally of Cuomo's, chosen as part of the governor's transition team in 2010. Diaz gained more state influence after another ally, Assem-

blyman Carl Heastie, ascended to Assembly Speaker, becoming a key power player in Albany.

Within the last year, Cuomo has kept an eye on the Bronx. Most recently, he came to the rescue for many projects Diaz has pushed in his agenda, including financing for four Metro-North stations in the East Bronx, a highly anticipated project. It's arguably a bigger harbinger of change for the Bronx, given the \$1 billion price tag and the positive aspects the rails typically can do for neighborhoods.

The latest advancement from the KNIC project once again places Diaz, a fond admirer of the project, as an effective non-legislator, getting by on influence and appeal to schmooze state lawmakers into eyeing the Bronx. He certainly has to extend a huge thanks to Cuomo for listening.

With the obligation met, what's keeping the New York City Economic Development Corporation from releasing the lease that's been in escrow for more than a year? KNIC cannot put a shovel on the ground until that stipulation is met.

EDC holds the cards. Holding EDC's cards is Mayor Bill de Blasio, whose fractured relationship with Cuomo has him developing a distant relationship with Diaz.

A check of archived transcripts and press releases from City Hall shows de Blasio has said little about the KNIC project since taking office. He inherited the impending ice center project from his predecessor, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who touted it as a profitable economic engine. That praise could have also been driven by Bloomberg's relationship with Kevin Parker, KNIC's founder. It seems de Blasio and Parker have little connection.

If de Blasio showed an inkling of interest in the project, he would convince the EDC to activate the 99-year



File Photo

**THE ARMORY STILL** sits vacant, a whopping 786 days after the New York City Council voted in favor to reconfigure it into an ice center.

lease today.

But this was not part of de Blasio's vision, so the project could have remained in limbo hell for years. He neither gains nor loses if the ice center is built. These days, the mayor has kept his eye on the national spotlight, raising it thanks to his involvement in the 2016 presidential race. Projects like this are not part of the agenda.

Political allegiances do something for communities who've yearned to see something built at the dormant Armory. But as of now, because of distrust and unmet assurances for transparency, activists in Kingsbridge Heights have grown testy with city and state legislators over little talks they've had with the neighborhood. Chatter over concerns of gentrification persists in a neighborhood that's working poor. Who will listen?

There is politics in everything, and politicians should definitely keep in mind that relationships go beyond those with legislators. They should extend to the communities and not just lawmakers.

## Public and Community Meetings

**COMMUNITY BOARD 7** will host its general board meeting Feb. 16 at 6:30 p.m. at the Bedford Park Senior Center, 243 E. 204th St. 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 Feb. 4; Education/Libraries & Youth Services Feb. 4 at 7:30 p.m.; Housing/Land Use Feb. 8; Environment & Sanitation Feb. 9; Senior Services Feb. 10; Parks & Recreation Feb. 10 at 7:15 p.m.; Traffic & Transportation Feb. 11; Veterans committee Feb. 11 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.



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**What Happens After You Submit an Application?** All applications will be reviewed upon receipt. Applicants who appear to meet the qualifications will be asked to bring identification and income documentation to the marketing office and will be subject to a background, housing court and credit check (FICO score of 580 or higher). Occupancy is estimated for April 2016.



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# INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE

**This week we asked readers about the city's response to the recent record-breaking blizzard, compared to last year's cleanup efforts.**



I guess it was better for what we got slapped with this year. Some places got like 20 inches, you know? It actually doesn't look too bad, it's only been a couple of days. I actually got an e-mail about helping out shoveling, so I do like the fact that they were reaching out to residents to help out.

**Kyante Adams**  
Hollis, Queens



For me it was fast enough, they did a good job. I remember last year, I think this year they did better. Last year was okay, but this year it was a little faster.

**Diallo Bocar**  
Norwood



I think it was a little bit better this year than last year, except for the fact that this year they opened the schools up a little too early because it was hard for the people to get around in the snow. At least last year they closed the schools down. They shut the trains down. I retired from the MTA driving trains and as far as getting around the city, I was kind of upset they shut the city down and were arresting people who were out. But drivers didn't get stuck as much as last year. I give them a B minus.

**Bruce Gilmore**  
Bedford Park



Last year it was rough. This year it was a little better, so far. They came through the smaller side streets. They actually came with smaller sanitation trucks and came down the side streets which I thought was real interesting and actually helpful for the people that live on side streets. So I think they did a pretty good job... so far.

**Miguel Lorenzo**  
Norwood



This year they did much better. They plowed the streets, there wasn't all that traffic congestion at St. Brendan's [Church], so the parents were able to bring their pre-K children to school this year better than last year. There wasn't a blockade. Last year we saw no plows. And I called 311 several times and there was a delay in response, but not this year. This year they did a much better job, for the one storm we've had so far. The Sanitation Committee at Community Board 7 included more snow plows this year. If we get more snowstorms, I think they will respond to these side streets like Hull Avenue, which got hit pretty hard last year.

**Sandra Pabon**  
Norwood

**Editor's Note:** Have an idea for an Inquiring Photographer question? Send suggestions to [dcruz@norwoodnews.org](mailto:dcruz@norwoodnews.org).

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# Young Public Servant Dons CB7 District Manager's Cap

By DAVID CRUZ

Even before Andrew Sandler was to officially become the new district manager for Community Board 7, his schedule was beset with meetings focusing on issues impacting the neighborhoods CB7 covers.

"I'm meeting, reading, and going to meetings," said Sandler, 29, who begins his first day as DM on Feb. 8. He represents the fourth district manager at the Board since 2012.

It's been a non-stop lead up to the job essentially tied to keeping the pulse of the Board's coverage area, namely Norwood, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge Heights, Fordham and University Heights. He's been doing his homework so far, even reading the City Charter to get a full understanding of his role. "I would think it would be a natural thing to do," said Sandler. "I want to know that I'm doing it right."

He was unanimously elected as the new DM at the Board's Jan. 19 general board meeting following two interviews. Since then, Sandler has put in time to meet with members and the Board's chair, Adaline Walker-Santiago. "We've been working together al-



Photo by David Cruz

**MEET THE NEW** Community Board 7 district manager, Andrew Sandler, filling the role left vacant for more than three months.

ready and he hasn't been on payroll," said Walker-Santiago.

A Bronx-bred native, Sandler grew up in Riverdale. He graduated from Manhattan College with a degree in political science after flirting with the idea of working as a comedian or working in film.

He interned at Congressman Eliot Engel's office, and later with former Councilman Oliver Koppell shortly after working on his campaign. Ap-

pointed director of community affairs, Sandler spent his time at Koppell's office haranguing city agencies on behalf of residents within Koppell's 11th Council District.

Sandler later worked for Koppell's predecessor, Councilman Andrew Cohen, working as the district's director of community affairs and constituent services, fielding calls and bringing community complaints to city agencies. His position bore some similari-

ties to that of a district manager, paid city administrators that often serve as go-betweens for the city and community members.

"I don't really feel like I'm moving on to a far off, distant land. It's pretty much in my wheelhouse already," said Sandler, who admits some aspects to his job will be a learning experience. He has laid out some priorities, which include an equitable spread of affordable housing across the board and pushing for the development of the Kingsbridge National Ice Center.

Sandler replaces Dustin Engelken, who resigned from the position after his wife received a job opportunity overseas. Many members claimed the timing of Engelken's resignation came as he developed a fractious relationship with current CB7 chair Walker-Santiago. Engelken had replaced Socrates Caba, who also resigned amid Board procedures he called "unsatisfactory." Engelken and Caba were on the job for less than 2 years before leaving.

But Sandler isn't dwelling on the Board's past. "I just want to move into the future," he said.

## Bronx Arts Ensemble Welcomes Interns


Three Lehman College business majors have been selected to join the Bronx Arts Ensemble (BAE) as interns for the spring 2016 term. The Lehman interns will be responsible for assisting in the management of BAE programs. The entrepreneurial, dynamic office environment exposes the interns to many aspects of arts administration, including but not limited to, marketing, program management, accounting and fundraising.

Lehman President Ricardo R. Fernandez commented: "I am delighted about this new initiative. Lehman and BAE have partnered in various artistic endeavors over the years. The partnership is now expanding into the business management realm and I am confident that these talented business majors will both contribute and learn during their stay at BAE."

In January, the nonprofit welcomed Lehman College students Oumar S. Berte and Kiara Garcia, and Lehman College graduate Fady H. Aroonsuck to the group.

Bronx Arts Ensemble is a New York based non-profit offering programs in arts-in-education at 40 Bronx public schools, as well as professional performances of classical/jazz concerts at multiple venues in the Bronx.

David Nussenbaum, executive director of BAE, launched the internship program in collaboration with Bascilia Toussaint, associate director in the Lehman Career Services Center. Nussenbaum commented: "I joined BAE in November and one of my initial observations was that BAE's extensive programs in performance and education lacked sufficient staff resource capacity. I also had a strong desire to add a Millennial dimension to our team, ingrained with social and mobile technology, and sensitive to the cultural and educational preferences of the new generation. Our Lehman interns bring to our office Millennial energy and innovation, not to mention excellent academic preparation and pride in working in their Bronx hometown. A win-win for all!"



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## 52nd Precinct Reels In Mailbox “Fishers”

By DAVID CRUZ

What a catch from the 52nd Precinct.

Officers have arrested three so-called “fishers” who targeted mailboxes in Bedford Park and Norwood in January.

“Fishers” get their name after feeding a bottle affixed with an adhesive and shoestring into a street mailbox. The glue works to hook any piece of mail that’s fished out of the box, allowing thieves to sift through letters filled with gift cards or personal checks that are later altered and cashed. The Five-Two caught wind of the crime after many reported their letters missing.

“We’ve had an increase in grand larcenies when it comes to people mailing their checks,” said Inspector Nilda Hofmann, the 52nd Precinct’s commanding officer, adding this has contributed to an increase in grand larcenies.

The scheme was reported to have happened at night, prompting Hofmann to dispatch cops around mailboxes on the Grand Concourse, where thefts occurred.

For now, even while her cops have made arrests, Hofmann recommends anyone mailing a letter to walk to their nearest post office and mail it there.



Photo courtesy NYPD

**THIEVES USED THIS** contraption to fish out letters filled with personal checks and gift cards from U.S. mailboxes within the 52nd Precinct, according to police.

## Prayers Answered for Preacher, Thanks to Car Dealership

By JASMINE GOMEZ

When one car door closes, another one opens. At least this was the case for one Norwood pastor who received a car donation from a Fordham dealership after his van was stolen.

The 1997 Dodge minivan belonging to Pastor James Miller of the Good News Christian Church was filched from a parking spot near Reservoir Oval West on about Jan. 12.

The van was special because it was not only Miller’s personal van, but it was also used for his parish’s work that included charity missions such as coat drives and shuttling people to and from church.

Parishioners and friends of Miller launched an online campaign to spread awareness of Miller’s story and raise funds to purchase him a new van.

After reporting it stolen, investigators with the Bronx District Attorney’s office launched a search to find the vehicle that

was eventually found abandoned in the Clason’s Point section of the Bronx. In the midst of the search, employees of the Fordham Toyota dealership heard of the story through local media and started thinking of ways they could help a fellow Bronxite.

“His connection to the community made me want to be a part of it,” said Frank Greco, general manager of the Fordham Toyota Dealership. The team at the dealership decided they would donate a 2011 Toyota Sienna to Miller. “I felt this was very important to us.”

Overwhelmed by the support he received after his van was stolen and fighting back tears, Miller said the community “rose up to the occasion” on his behalf, going “beyond our wildest comprehension.” “I am very grateful,” said Miller. “People from the community and from the 52nd Precinct were so good to us.”



Photo by Jasmine Gomez

**A GODSEND FOR** Norwood pastor James Miller, sitting in his new donated van, courtesy of Fordham Toyota. Miller chats with Frank Greco, general manager of the dealership.

The original van, found with its rear seats missing and ignition popped off, was eventually scrapped after the insurance company deemed it un-drivable.

Miller’s first order of business with his new van is a mobile soup kitchen. “We’re able to connect with people in the neighborhood that way,” said Miller. “We need a vehicle to make that happen.”

## Have a “Heartseat” in Fordham

By JASMINE GOMEZ

An art installation once home at Times Square is now a part of the Fordham community through November 2016.

The abstract piece called “Heartseat” is on display at the corner of East Fordham Road and Webster Avenue, thanks to the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Fordham Road Business Improvement District (BID).

“Heartseat,” created by Marcelo Ertorteguy and Sara Valente, Venezuelan architects who founded their art group Stereotank, is part of a series of artwork that aims to “experiment with the common grounds between architecture, art, and sound.”

This is the BID’s second round of artwork found at its commercial corridor, considered the borough’s largest. The latest piece replaces Japanese artist Akihiro Ito’s sculpture “Tomorrow,” which found a permanent residence at the Andrew Freedman Home, a cultural venue on the Grand Concourse.

“Heartseat” is also a part of the DOT’s Art Program, where temporary



Photo by Miriam Quinn

**BID AND CITY OFFICIALS** take a “Heartseat” on the newest art installation in Fordham.

art installations ranging from sculptures and murals to performances are brought to New York City streets and plazas.

Ertorteguy and Valente will also

be available for group tours that will be scheduled through the Fordham BID’s office. For more information on “Heartseat,” the Fordham BID can be contacted at (718) 562-2104.

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# Norwood McDonald's Abruptly Closes After Nearly 40 Years

By DAVID GREENE

Residents and visitors to Jerome Avenue in Norwood were both shocked and saddened by the sudden closure of the local McDonald's restaurant in early January, closing the book on a business with plenty of neighborhood history.

It was on Friday, Jan. 8, when longtime resident Evelyn Perez noticed the establishment's sign was gone and the doors were locked of the once thriving business. Outside stood a handwritten sign reading, "No Food, Closed."

Alice Kulick, the property owner and chair of the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District (JGH-BID), said at a recent JGH-BID meeting that the restaurant owner "just closed up."

To many, the McDonald's restaurant at 3440 Jerome Ave. represented an eatery etched in the neighborhood's character, a slice-of-life locale most people thought would never close.

"McDonald's on Jerome [Avenue] was a place to take a time-out, sit and rest awhile while at the same time enjoying a small meal," said Perez. "I will greatly miss this particular Mc-



Photo by David Greene

**MCCLOSED. THIS EMPTY** storefront at 3440 Jerome Ave. is the former McDonald's which abruptly closed, stunning neighbors and passersby.

Donald's."

At the height of the Jan. 23 blizzard, Asaia Colbert stood dumbfounded as she pulled the door handle, but the door wouldn't budge. "I was here just last week and it's gone without notice, nothing?" asked Colbert, snow hitting her face. "Yes, I'm surprised, I wanted some food."

Should Colbert crave McDonald's in the future, the nearest ones are at

Bainbridge Avenue at 204th Street, and the other at Gun Hill Road and Webster Avenue. "[They're] pretty far... I'm not walking over there."

Longtime Van Cortlandt Park resident Steve Bobker fondly recalled the local McDonald's, saying, "I used to visit McDonald's with my dad in the 1970s." Also, Bobker would take his future wife on their first date to the local eatery. He jokes, "She's still mad at me

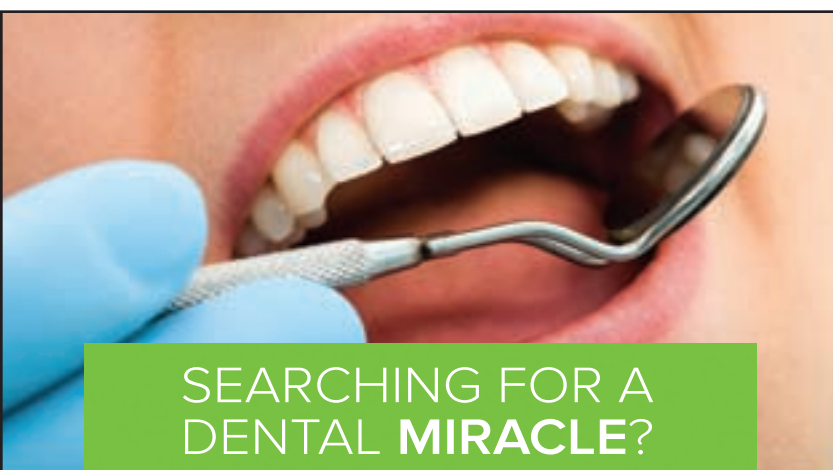
for that." "We're losing a tradition, a staple of the neighborhood. I will miss enjoying a cup of coffee and people-watching along Jerome Avenue."

A manager of a nearby business explained, "This neighborhood has a chance to survive, but when the big chain stores leave like this, it's not a good sign."

The McDonald's was owned by Peter and Lynn Samaha, proprietors who also owned the McDonald's at 1600 Bruckner Boulevard that suffered a serious fire on Jan. 15. They also owned another McDonald's in Yonkers, which also suffered from heavy fire damage last October.

In a statement through the McDonald's corporate headquarters in Oak Brook, IL., the couple offered no reason for the closure, stating that "It has been an honor to serve the neighborhood and we appreciate the support and cooperation of the local business community."

The statement added that "a number of our employees have accepted jobs at nearby McDonald's locations, and we wish them all the best."



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# NORWOOD NEWS

# BUSINESS MATTERS

Photo by David Cruz

**HOW TO RESHAPE** Webster Avenue remains a key question ever since rezoning took effect nearly five years ago. Pictured is Webster at the corner of East 205th Street.

## A Walk Along Webster Avenue, Still Under Construction

By **DAVID CRUZ**

In the last days of December, New York City Council members Andrew Cohen and Ritchie Torres toured Webster Avenue with a burning question in mind: What will it take to spur more commercial development along the avenue?

It has been seven years since a major push by community stakeholders ultimately resulted in the official rezoning of 80 blocks of Webster Avenue between East Gun Hill Road and Fordham Road, considered a key but underutilized artery of the Bronx.

New zoning laws in effect on Webster Avenue offer tax credits to developers who build affordable housing with a first floor storefront. The intent was a rebranding of Webster Avenue from a largely desolate area with pockets of automotive and small businesses into an eclectic neighborhood that builds upon the community's economy and character.

Yet, since updated rezoning went into effect, the pace of Webster Avenue's new frontier hasn't arrived as fast as its promoters would like. That may be because planners and politicians don't seem to know what to push for first: higher-income residents who'll flock to high-end stores? Or high-end stores that'll draw more higher-income residents?

Cohen and Torres, whose council districts jointly cover Webster Avenue, scheduled the stroll at the behest of community leaders eager to see more progress. The expedition became a fact-finding mission for the council members, and provided the impetus for them to try to get the rezoning effort moving again.

"This was a bit of a survey and temperature taking," said Cohen, who snapped photos of some blighted parts of Webster Avenue during his walk.

"Getting development there is going to take a push, but there are a lot of signs of interest there."

Since the tour, Cohen and Torres have begun plans for a public meeting with representatives from New York City Small Business Services and the New York City Economic Development Corporation, which championed Webster Avenue under its Vision Plan in 2013. The objective: To get various stakeholders in the area, including the Four Bronx Institutions Alliance (FBIA), made up of Montefiore Medical Center, Fordham University, the New York Botanical Garden, and The Bronx Zoo, to weigh in on what they see as the commercial needs of the neighborhood.

"Everyone has a stake in the area - residents, businesses, elected (officials), community boards and institutions - so it is up to all of us to work together to spur growth, new business and jobs," said Torres in a statement. "Ultimately, we want to ensure that all parties' interests are taken into consideration and acknowledged. Hopefully our efforts will spur interest from good developers and businesses."

Development often moves at a snail's pace, as investors weigh multi-million dollar deals, taking into account demographics, demand and construction costs.

"If you look at Long Island City, Williamsburg, Hudson Yards, when you look at these places when they were rezoned, it doesn't happen overnight, it takes time. There's a lot of things that have to fall into place for the domino effect to sort of materialize," said Scot Hirschfield, a vice president with Ariel Property Advisors, an investment sales firm that monitors real estate trends in the Bronx.

So far, residential development has led commercial development, with the

construction of The Bedford Manor, an eight-story mixed income residence at 2985-2987 Webster Ave. by The Stagg Group, a major real estate developer with properties across the Bronx. Its number of units are nearly all rented, with at least 50,000 people signing up for the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's housing lottery system.

Meanwhile, supportive housing properties from developers The Doe Fund and Concerned for Independent Living are under construction. Community Board 7 members aren't pleased, arguing that the neighborhood is over-saturated with such housing, which in turn may discourage future commercial development. Supportive housing sites are exempt from building storefronts, which could further slow commercial growth in the corridor.

That deterrent notwithstanding, property owners figure that conditions on Webster Avenue are beginning to turn. They've raised prices per square foot - with average price per square foot for multifamily properties in the Bronx increasing from \$116 in 2014 to \$148, a 21 percent increase.

Webster Avenue's appeal lies in part in the widely available lots and the tax credits under New York State's 421-a program, which requires developers to designate 20 percent of its units as affordable in exchange for property tax breaks. The Stagg Group, with sites scattered throughout the Bronx, took advantage of the program. This group now has another project in the early stages, Norwood Gardens, which would be built near 201st Street. But the banks, cafes and other high-end shops are still a missing part of the equation.

"The sellers of properties are asking higher prices so there is upward pressure, which of course creates a little bit of pause on the buying side," said

Adolfo Carrion, executive vice president of The Stagg Group and former Bronx borough president. "So the developer will say, 'Wait a minute I have to negotiate harder.'"

A report by Larisa Ortiz Associates, a commercial real estate think tank group, said Webster Avenue is losing \$142 million in so-called "retail leakage" - money for commercial goods that's being spent elsewhere. The 2014 report concluded that Webster Avenue is a corridor that should be known for its convenience shopping, allowing residents to buy general merchandise and frequent sit-down restaurants and bars.

At a recent Bedford Moshulu Community Association meeting, Daniel Cheveyo, a resident, suggested a strategy of pulling in prominent retail anchors. "[S]omething that's going to attract a lot of people and then they'll patronize all the small businesses around. Like a movie theater or a Trader Joe's, can be more attractive." Getting those anchor businesses on board, however, may be a tall order, in a neighborhood where the median household income rests at \$28,006.

Those hopes may be met after the New York Botanical Garden announced it looks to re-purpose a parcel of land on Webster Avenue, with preferences for residential housing, retail space and possibly a hotel.

Cohen, like Hirschfield, thinks it will take time and a constellation of factors, to truly make over the neighborhood. "I don't think there's one single magic bullet that's going to suddenly transform Webster Avenue into the next Champs-Élysées of the Bronx in terms of making it into a shopping corridor," said Cohen. "But I think it's kind of a steady commitment to do whatever we can, when we can, to spur in the right direction."



# NYBG Hotel to Bloom on Webster Avenue?

(continued from page 1)

ket, Laundromat and Tequila Song restaurant.

The development ends a long run by NYBG to redevelop property it's owned for the past decade, adhering to a master plan to reconfigure Webster Avenue.

The avenue between East Gun Hill Road and Fordham Road was primarily a bastion for automotive companies until 2011, when the city rezoned 80 blocks of the corridor, opening opportunities for residential and commercial space. The rezoning coincided with a Vision Plan championed by the New York City Economic Development Corporation, which foresaw new amenities such as a hotel built along the corridor. Community Board 7, whose district overlaps with Webster Avenue, endorsed the rezoning via resolution.

NYBG has long held an interest in building a hotel at the location, seeing it as an economic driver for the neighborhood and borough. In one 2014 sustainable communities report by the New York City Department of City Planning, ideas of seeing a hotel in the area were explored for the Bedford Park/Fordham neighborhoods for quite some time. The hotel would work as an anchor that "could promote the area as a base to visit multiple attractions city-wide," according to the report.

Bouska admits there's no conceptual design for a hotel, but told the *Norwood News* it would be comparable to the Marriott Residence Inn that's now opened at the Hutchinson Metro Center in Pelham Bay/Morris Park.

A hotel could also serve as a boon to the many out-of-towners doing business at the neighborhood's surrounding institutions such as Montefiore Medical Center, Fordham University, The Bronx Zoo, and NYBG. Adding to Webster Avenue's potential appeal is its proximity to subways and the Metro North, which can take commuters between Manhattan and the Bronx.

"The community desperately wants a hotel in the area," said Jean Hill, chair of Community Board 7's Land Use/Housing

Committee, which vets upcoming development projects. "This can definitely elevate the community."

But frequent shoppers of the 24-hour market that takes up a good chunk of the property,

**"The community desperately wants a hotel in the area," said Jean Hill, chair of Community Board 7's Land Use/Housing Committee, which vets upcoming development projects. "This can definitely elevate the community."**

feared the market could close for good, turning the neighborhood into a supermarket desert.

"You know how many people go here?" asked Pedro Vasquez, a hurried shopper worried about the store's potential closure. "It's the best here. How you going to close it?"

"That is the only [supermarket] that's here," said Jose Perez of Bedford Park, living walking distance from Pioneer Supermarket. He's aware of Fine Fare Supermarket a quarter-mile south on Webster Avenue by 194th Street, but doubts he'll walk it. "Imagine how many blocks you have to walk that?" It's four and a half blocks.

Kendrick Wiggan, who's lived in the community for 17 years, conceded that the construction of a hotel is fine so long as the supermarket remains intact. "It won't bother me," said Wiggan.

But Jose Solano, a manager at the Pioneer Supermarket, called

the supermarket a major service to the community and to the Bronx as a whole, characterizing the potential closure to be a crime. "This benefits the Bronx more," said Solano, pointing to the supermarket.

NYBG had reached agreements with the laundry business and Tequila Song to vacate the property, but not with Pioneer Supermarket.

At one point, the Garden had tried to include the supermarket within its proposed, mixed-use site. Owners of the supermarket had even negotiated and agreed to "one very lucrative deal with the Garden to stay on the site as part of the new project, but [Pioneer] pulled out of the project at the last possible moment," said Bouska.

Now, any selected developer would be the one to negotiate the remaining lease with the supermarket or wait until the supermarket's lease expires to proceed with construction, which, at the earliest, could be in 2020.

"There's plenty of room for a supermarket, a hotel and residence," said Bouska, adding the "Garden has always thought the Pioneer Supermarket a good tenant that serves the needs of our community." It's one reason why NYBG officials worked "for over a year to keep the supermarket as the retail component of the new mixed-use project to be built on the site," said Bouska.

"We continue to wish the store owner every success in his business and hope that he will find a way to negotiate an arrangement with the developer," said Bouska.

As for the type of housing, Bouska hopes to see an "ecology" of mixed-use residences tailored to affordable and market rate residents. "It's healthier when you don't have all of one type of housing in the neighborhood," he said.

NYBG can re-build its property "as of right," requiring no clearances from city agencies before construction.

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**Mt.Sharon LLC** is pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted to fill vacancies and create a waiting list for affordable housing rental apartments under rehabilitation at **2432 University Avenue, 2085 Walton Avenue, and 3058 Bailey Avenue**. These buildings are being rehabilitated through the Low-Income Affordable Marketplace Program (LAMP) of the New York City Housing Development Corporation and the Participation Loan Program (PLP) of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. The size, rent and targeted income distribution for the apartments are as follows:

Apartment Size	Household Size*	Monthly Rent**	Total Annual Income Range*** Minimum - Maximum
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3 Bedrooms	3 4 5 6	\$1,247	\$44,640 - \$46,620 \$44,640 - \$51,780 \$44,640 - \$55,980 \$44,640 - \$60,120

\*Subject to occupancy criteria

\*\*Includes gas for heat, hot water and cooking, tenant responsible for electricity

\*\*\*Income guidelines subject to change

**Applicants will be required to meet income guidelines and additional selection criteria to qualify.**

Applications may be downloaded from:

[www.fordham-bedford.org](http://www.fordham-bedford.org)

Applications may also be requested in person or by mail\* from:

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\*If requesting by mail please include a self-addressed envelope.

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# At PS/MS 95 Spreading Nutrition Awareness, One Lesson at a Time

Wellness in the Schools, or WITS as it's known, is a non-profit organization that brings nutrition and other educational programs into the elementary and secondary levels as well as into colleges. One such participating institution, PS/MS 95X, the Shelia Mencher School, is blooming with greens, which are being eaten by the children on a routine basis now, a transformation from the days of high calorie, deleterious fat preferences at lunchtime.

Under the leadership of Principal Serge Marshall Davis, the school is forward-thinking on issues of health improvement for children and the community. The program offers advanced educational experiences to encourage youngsters to enjoy the benefits of salutary food choices.

The multi-faceted program includes alternative school lunch menus, including a daily buffet of delicious healthy choices; "Café Days" in the cafeteria during all lunch periods, highlighting a vegetable with companion recipes; "Family Fun Fitness Night" and workshops for parents; etiquette classes for middle school students; a school-wide Wellness Committee with student leadership participation, and a tower garden.

What is a tower garden? Faculty Advisor Andrej Brchnel teaches that a green tower is a science-based, student-led project consisting of an updated hydroponic system, an upright structure called an aquaponic indoor gardening station, fed by a system of nutrients and hydration to nourish the plants.

Chef-in-residence Laurielle Clark holds in-class WITS labs which are demonstration lessons for elementary and middle school classes where students learn the organizational and safety skills necessary to assemble wholesome recipes from scratch and have the opportunity to eat what they prepare.

Marion Williams is the program manager, dedicated to promoting high standards of health in schoolchildren. She is often seen about, food cart in tow, displaying



Photo courtesy PS/MS 95

**STUDENTS AND STAFF** at PS/MS 95 pose with healthy nutritious food recommended by the Wellness in the Schools (WITS) organization.

the colors of the vegetable rainbow, ready for students to create, for example, "composed salads" to consume that day.

Student Council Advisor Andrea Faulkner supports the program at PS/MS 95X in its effort to inspire healthy eating, environmental awareness, and fitness as a way of life. Student Council Vice President and member of the Wellness Committee, eighth grader Aidah Masoud says she is grateful for the chance to interact with adults in a professional setting.

Classmate Cassidy Antwi is enthusiastic about the concepts of students keeping their bodies hardy, as well as caring about how to act responsibly. The wellness etiquette classes teach students table manners, how to use a cell phone mannerly, how to speak to parents, how to address people and interact with adults. She says her mother attended an Etiquette Party and happily told the family about the good habits the students are learning at school.

What have the students grown in the green garden tower? Kale, red lettuce, Swiss chard and hanging tomato vines are examples of the mouth-watering bounty that members of the school community have tasted -- and they want more!

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# Be Healthy

# 1,229

Number of residents in Norwood, Kingsbridge and Bedford Park who've died of some heart condition in 2014.

(Source: NYCDOH, Community Health Profiles)

Vital Stats

## Heart Healthy Month Begins With a Stroll at Montefiore Medical Center

With heart disease rated as the number one killer for residents in Norwood, Kingsbridge and Bedford Park, the Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart and Vascular Care is pumping out a month-long series of events calling attention to a healthy heart.

On Feb. 4, high ranking officials at Montefiore kicked off Heart Month activities at the Moses Campus in Norwood with a special ceremony that was followed by a group talk of the "Montefiore Mile," a designated indoor, one-mile track. At the Weiler Hospital of Montefiore Health System, employees kicked off their Heart Month events Feb. 2.

"Montefiore is a leader in providing innovative therapies and clinical best practices for adult and pediatric heart disease patients," said Robert Michler, M.D., professor and chairman, Department of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery at Montefiore, co-director of The Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart and Vascular Care and professor



Photo courtesy Montefiore Health System

**EMPLOYEES AT THE** Weiler Hospital of Montefiore Health System gear up for Heart Month events taking place around the campus all of February.

of cardiovascular and thoracic surgery at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. "We are passionate about Heart Month and helping people learn how important it is to lower risk of heart disease."

Montefiore's Heart Month program offers a wide variety of events in the Bronx and Westchester County, including heart healthy screenings, healthy eating and cooking demonstrations and

educational talks. Statistics from the New York City Department of Health show heart disease to have killed 1,229 people per 100,000 in Norwood, Bedford Park, and Kingsbridge.

"Prevention is key to being heart healthy—eating right, exercising regularly and working with doctors of personalized care plans can improve one's quality of life and longevity," said Mario

Garcia, M.D., chief, Division of Cardiology at Montefiore, co-director of The Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart and Vascular Care, and professor of medicine (cardiology) and radiology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. "It is never too late to try to improve your heart health through small and incremental lifestyle changes."

The Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart and Vascular Care offers a comprehensive approach to treating heart disease, including the most complex medical procedures; a tradition that began in 1957, when the medical center performed its first open-heart surgery. The Center continues to be a national leader in offering Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation, a procedure where a patient is strapped to a device that replaces carbon dioxide from a person's blood and de-oxygenates it.

A full schedule of Heart Month events can be found at [www.montefiore.org/heartmonth](http://www.montefiore.org/heartmonth).

(Source: Montefiore Medical Center)

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# Old Putnam Trail Plans Up for Community Review...Again

By VIVIAN R. CARTER

Wheeled vehicles powered by humans, not steam engines, may again be able to traverse the Old Putnam Trail in Van Cortlandt Park. But not anytime soon.

Two community boards are considering a controversial \$2.5 million proposal to redesign the trail by adding a 10-foot wide asphalt surface and 3-foot wide jogging trail. The trail, once the New York Central Railroad line, cuts through the center of Van Cortlandt Park, from its southern border, north to the city line with Yonkers.

In 2013, a plan to redo the trail was rejected by Community Board 8 of Riverdale/Kingsbridge. The park is designated as a "joint interest area" for that board and Community Body 7 and Community Board 12. CB12 is deferring to the other two boards to decide the issue.

The new proposal was presented by New York City Department of Parks to CB 8 Parks' committee at its meeting on Jan. 27. About 100 people packed the room to express their opinions, with members hearing from neighbors, en-



Rendering courtesy NYC Department of Parks

**THIS RENDERING SHOWS** how concrete piers would raise portions of the trail above tree roots.

vironmentalists, birders, hikers, bicyclists, and those in wheelchairs. The full board of CB 8 is expected to vote at its monthly meeting on Feb. 9. The following day, CB 7's Parks' committee will hear a similar presentation.

Key details of the redesign include a gently sloping, elevated asphalt surface that would curve to follow the rail bed, forcing bicyclists to slow down. Some of the trail would be raised on piers to

protect the roots of trees. The new plan would require 25 percent less site disturbance and 50 percent less excavation of parkland. A vegetated border along two-thirds of the trail's length would capture and filter stormwater runoff from the asphalt.

The defunct rail line (known as "Old Put") carried passengers and freight from New York City to Brewster from the 1870s until the late 1950s.

From the Yonkers line north, Westchester County converted the former railroad bed into two paved, protected routes (South County and North County Trailways) extending continuously for over 35 miles to Yorktown Heights, connecting with a 12-mile extension to Brewster at the county line. Trails were completed by 2014.

The 1.25-mile Van Cortlandt Park trail section is now hard dirt surrounded by wetlands, 40-year-old trees, shrubs, birds and mammals. Hikers and mountain bikers use it regularly, but travel is difficult for those in wheelchairs. After a heavy rain, the trail becomes virtually impassable.

Under the plan, some railroad ties laded with creosote, considered toxic, will remain in place, to avoid further spread of toxins. Environmental concerns about creosote and asphalt runoff must be adequately addressed for the Department of Environmental Conservation to issue permits allowing work to begin.

If community board approval occurs, Parks hopes to apply for permits by summer 2016.



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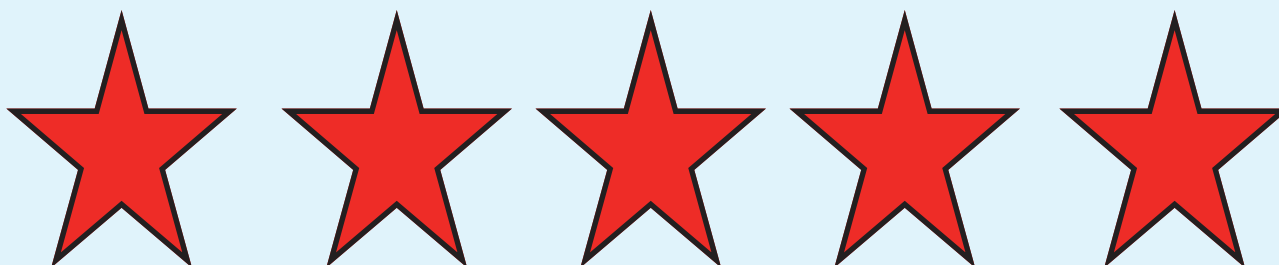




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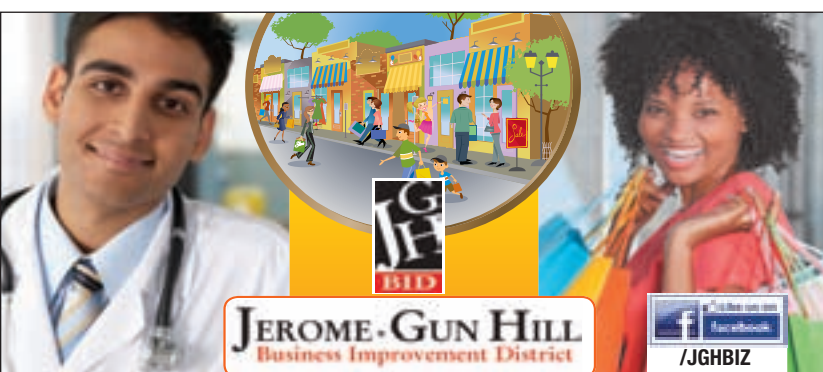
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## NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

### Blood Drive

St. Brendan's Church, 333 E. 206th St. presents the annual "After Super Bowl Blood Drive" on Feb. 14 at 10 a.m., in the rectory. Donors are required to eat a full meal and drink plenty of water before donating. For more information, call (718) 547-6655.

### BMCA Seeks

#### Flea Market Donations

The Bedford Mosholu Community Association is accepting donations for its annual flea market set for March 5. Bring new and used items (except clothes) to 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So., apt. B1 (lobby floor) on Wednesdays, Feb. 17 and 24 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., Feb. 27 from 1:30 to 4 p.m., and March 2 from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

### Scholarship Opportunity

The National Puerto Rican Day Parade, Inc. is offering a total of \$120,000 in college scholarships to applicants of Puerto Rican descent between the ages of 17 and 25. Application deadline has been extended to Feb. 15. For more information including requirements, necessary documents, and to apply, go to [www.nprdpinc.org](http://www.nprdpinc.org).

### Free Tax Services

Free tax services for anyone earning \$62,000 or less are available at the Eastchester Library,

1385 E. Gun Hill Rd., Thursdays through April 7 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Spanish-speaking volunteers will be available. For more information, additional sites, and what to bring, call (718) 653-3292.

### Free Music Program

The Middle School Jazz Academy at Lincoln Center in Manhattan seeks Bronx middle school students interested in afterschool, instrumental jazz instruction. Qualifying applicants will be awarded full scholarships, learning in a group setting or one-on-one. To apply, go to [jazz.org](http://jazz.org). Application deadline is March 1. For more information, call (212) 258-9922.

### Crazy for Composting

The New York Botanical Garden presents Crazy for Composting, Feb. 13 from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m. at the Garden's Watson Educational Building. For more information, call (718) 817-8543.

### Free Tutoring

Sistas & Brothers United, 103 E. 196th St., 3rd fl., offers free tutoring for students ages 12 to 21 in the subjects of math, history, English, and science, Monday through Friday from 3 to 6 p.m. For more information, call Crystal Reyes, College Access Coordinator, at (718) 584-0515 ext. 243.

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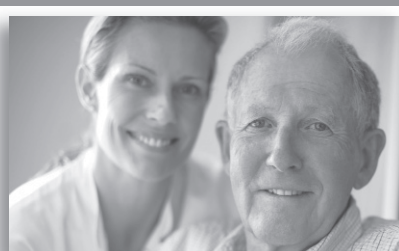
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# Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

## EDITOR'S PICK

### For the Hot-Blooded

The public is invited to join the Bronx Polar Bears for a dip in the brisk waters of Orchard Beach, Feb. 6 at 11 a.m. Soup will be served to participants at 12:30 p.m. BronxWorks offers transportation pickup outside the #6 Pelham Bay subway station at 10:30 a.m. Bring new gloves, socks, hats or scarves to donate to BronxWorks homeless services program or drop them off through 5 p.m. Feb. 12 at Bronxnet Television, Lehman College Campus, 2790 Goulden Ave., Carman Hall room C19B. For more information and additional drop-off locations, visit [www.bronxnet.org](http://www.bronxnet.org).

## Onstage

Lehman College's Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents **Polish Baltic Philharmonic Orchestra** performing classical music, Feb. 14 at 4 p.m., in the Concert Hall (tickets are \$25 to \$35); and **Love in Salsa & Merengue**, Feb. 20 at 8 p.m., featuring three singers celebrating Valentine's Day (tickets are \$50 to \$65). Programs are subject to change. For more information and program details, call (718) 960-8833.

Theatre for the New City presents **Songs of the Harlem River**, to honor Harlem

Renaissance playwrights and poets, featuring five one-act plays and poetry and music of the 1920s, Feb. 6 at 2:30 p.m. at the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. For more information, call (212) 254-1109.

The Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., presents **Harriet Tubman Herself**, a one-woman show, followed by a Q&A and meet and greet, Feb. 6 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), presents **Hasan Bakr**, percussionist, singer and composer, Feb. 6 at 2 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.



THEATRE FOR THE New City will perform *Songs of the Harlem River* on Feb. 6.

The School of American Ballet presents **The Beauty of Ballet**, free with a required ticket, Feb. 20 at 2 p.m. at the Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture, 450 Grand Concourse (149th Street), featuring students dancing classical ballet. No reservations required. Tickets may be picked up at box office on day of event beginning at noon; first come, first served seating begins at 1:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 518-4455

free admission to its exhibits. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

## Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents the following events for children: **Hands-on Projects at 4 p.m.:** (ages 7 to 12; in-person preregistration required), Valentine's Card Making, Feb. 4; Heart Animal Making, Feb. 11; and Color Paint Friendship Hand Making, Feb. 18; and **Family Time:** (ages 3 to 6; preregistration required), reading aloud and crafts, Feb. 13 at 11 a.m. Teens/young adults can attend **From the Neck Up:** to create miniature busts using fire or self-hardening clay, Feb. 4 at 4 p.m. Adults can join **Microsoft Word 2010 for Beginners:** Feb. 8 at 2 p.m. (in person advance registration required). For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org).

The Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Craft Corner:** (ages 5 to 12), to express creativity through crafts, Feb. 17 at 4 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy **film:** "Minions," Feb. 6 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can attend: **Free Computer Classes:** to learn email and basic computer information, Wednesdays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for kids: **Afternoon Arts:** (ages 5 to 12), art projects, Feb. 10 at 4 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy **Art Club:** to draw or paint (materials provided), Feb. 9 at 4:30 p.m. Adults can attend **Computer Basics at noon:** Feb. 4, 11 and 18; and **Film Tasting:** to sample film titles of a variety of genres, Feb. 10 at 11 a.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

**NOTE:** Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to [norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org](mailto:norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org), and should be received by Feb. 8 for the next publication date of Feb. 18.

## Events

The Church of the Holy Nativity, 3061 Bainbridge Avenue (204th Street), presents its **12th Annual Evening of Dining & Poetry Reading, etc.,** Feb. 19 at 7:30 p.m., including dinner, drinks, poetry and surprises (\$20/donation). For more information, call (718) 652-5853.

The New York Botanical Garden presents **Bronx Green-Up** (info: (718) 817-8026) and **NYC Compost Project** (info: (718) 817-8543), Feb. 20 from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Lehman College, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W. Preregistration is recommended. Call for more information.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects:** Painted Papers and the Stories of Eric Carle, to hear stories, then make bright and colorful images, Feb. 6 and 7; and Heart Papermaking, to use paper pulp and make a handmade paper with ribbons and rosebuds for Valentine's Day cards, Feb. 13 and 14; 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.

## Exhibits

The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse (between 161st and 164th streets), presents a **Winter Open House**, Feb. 10 from 6 to 8 p.m., and



File Photo

**THE BRONX POLAR BEARS** are coming out of hibernation Feb. 6 and heading to Orchard Beach for their annual swim.



# New Program Helps Young Bronxites Revive Woodlawn Cemetery's Crypts

By WENDY JOAN BIDDLECOMBE

Recently, Luis Cruz worked inside Woodlawn Cemetery's workshop at East 233rd Street to re-attach an angel's head that had fallen off a 19th century monument years earlier.

Later, students from Bronx International High School in the South Bronx searched the snow-covered grounds for a missing piece of that angel's wing after failing to locate it behind the shop's somewhat creepy pile of broken faces, arms and other stone extremities.

The students are part of the Woodlawn Preservation Training Program, which has been working since the summer to restore monuments on the 400-acre landmark cemetery that would otherwise have gone unrepaired. "We didn't have anyone on staff trained to do this," said Susan Olsen, the cemetery's historian. "Now we can respond to damage and start to catch up."

With 150,000 monuments in the historic cemetery that was founded in 1863, Olsen said preservation is a "never-ending job."

Cruz, 20, is one of three apprentices selected from a pool of 12 interns that worked in the cemetery over the sum-



Photo by Wendy Joan Biddlecombe  
**LUIS CRUZ (L) HELPS** Robert Cappiello (r), Woodlawn Cemetery's resident craftsman, in re-attaching the head on an angel from a damaged 19th century monument.

mer.

"We weren't really sure what we could expect out of the kids, or how much they were going to learn. They did great," said Resident Craftsman Robert Cappiello, who has been training the students in the program.

The students learned how to clean different kinds of cemetery stone, re-point and assess damage, and were certified in scaffolding and OSHA so they

can work on other projects. Four of the interns not selected as apprentices are already working in the field.

"This is teaching me to take care, go really slow, look around and see everything," said Cruz, an engineering student at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. "

Cruz said his favorite project has been a boat-shaped monument that commemorates Isidor Straus, who died

when the Titanic sank.

The interns' main project over the summer was restoring the Gracie monument, which commemorates the shipping and merchant family that built what is now Gracie Mansion, the mayor's official home, and is one of the most visited sites at Woodlawn.

Olsen said she was "compelled" to pick a high-profile monument, and said Gracie was selected because it's "very basic" and does not have a family or endowment to care for it.

Beyond the work on individual monuments, the cemetery hopes that working on the final resting places will spark students' interest in preserving the historic cemetery, and by extension, the borough's history, and training young people to meet the demand for skilled workers.

"There aren't enough people trained to do this work, and there are jobs out there," Olsen said. "Does the Bronx have a big preservation movement? No we don't. Are we working on it? Yes we are."

The program is expected to last for two years, and has already received \$600,000 in funding.

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- ☐ Form 1095A (if applicable)
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