



NORWOOD NEWS

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**INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER;
THOUGHTS ON THE “BEEP” | PG. 4**



**NORWOOD NEWS' ONE-ON-ONE
WITH BP RUBEN DIAZ JR. | PGS. 10-11**

BEDFORD PARK MOM MISSING

Husband, wanted for questioning, living in Bangladesh since December



Photo by Adi Talwar

ADALINE WALKER-SANTIAGO (l), joins Mohammed Mujumder (second from left), one of several members of the Bronx's Bangladeshi community, calling on anyone with information on the disappearance of Mahfuza Rahman (insert), to come forward.

By **DAVID CRUZ**

Police have spent the last two weeks conducting an active search for a Bedford Park woman they say has been missing since December. Investigators have intensified the search after the woman's husband and 9-year-old daughter flew to his native Bangladesh a week after

the woman was reported missing.

Across the Bronx, members of the Bedford Park community are now demanding the husband, Mohammad Chowdury, show himself to answer questions about the whereabouts of his wife, Mahfuza Rahman, last seen on Dec. 8 at around

4:35 p.m.

Mohammed N. Mujumder, a lawyer immersed in the Bronx's Bangladeshi community in Soundview, spoke at a rally in front of Rahman and Chowdury's now abandoned home on East 198th Street in Bedford Park, and urged neighbors to go “door to door” to find Rahman.

“As a human being we have a social responsibility. If something happens to somebody, we should all speak up,” he said.

A member of Bronx Community Board 9, Mujumder was flanked by other residents of the Bangladeshi community, and Adaline Walker-Santiago, (continued on page 19)



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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Participatory Budgeting Ideas Identified, Now It's Your Turn

By JASMINE GOMEZ

Beginning the last week of March, residents living in the neighborhoods of Norwood, Bedford Park, Woodlawn and Riverdale will be able to vote on what community improvement projects will be added to their Council District's capital budget through Participatory Budgeting.

The process, whereby a member of the New York City Council offers residents the chance to decide how to spend \$1 million in capital funding, is approaching the final stretch of its process.

The office of Councilman Andrew Cohen, who once again hosted a Participatory Budgeting session, has released a voter guide that details the nature and prices of 12 projects that were vetted and are up for a vote.

The proposed projects, all falling within Cohen's 11th Council District, range from school improvements to renovations at neighborhood playgrounds and libraries. They include:

- Renovations to the basketball court at Wakefield Playground
- Renovations to the spray showers at Woodlawn Playground
- Improvements to the dog run at Hackett Park
- The installation of adult fitness equipment at Classic Playground
- The construction of a mini-skate park at Seton Park
- District wide bus countdown clocks
- The replacement of gym lockers at In-Tech Academy
- A technology upgrade for all schools in the district
- Renovations to the auditorium at PS 280/MS 80
- Installation of a HVAC system at Mosholu Library



Photo courtesy Office of Councilman Andrew Cohen

COUNCILMAN ANDREW COHEN (r), appearing at a CUNY Citizenship Now event that saw 100 citizenship applications processed at Tracey Towers March 12, is once again hosting Participatory Budgeting sessions.

- Installation of a HVAC system at Spuyten Duyvil Library
- The district wide installations of security cameras in the 47th, 50th, and 52nd precincts

Though some are content with many of the proposals chosen, one Bedford Park resident thinks there are not enough community proposals in the Bedford Park and Norwood neighborhoods while adding many of the new proposals are focused on institutions that received funds last year.

"We're frustrated because there are no community proposals on that list..." said Anthony Riviuccio, pointing to Mosholu Parkway once again overlooked for other proposals.

In group sessions held last year,

residents living in Cohen's district identified projects that were later vetted by city agencies.

Finalized projects will be voted on at several locations including Tracey Towers, Community Room B on March 30 and 31, the Mosholu Public Library at 285 E. 205th St. on March 28, 29, April 2, and the MMCC at 3450 DeKalb Ave. on March 26.

After the voting, Cohen will include the winning participatory projects in the spending budget he submits to the City Council's Finance Division.

Editor's Note: For more information, contact Councilman Andrew Cohen's Office at (718) 549-7300.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 committees are held on the following dates at the board office, 229A E. 204th St., at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Community Relations/LTP committee meets March 29; Economic Development committee meets March 29 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call the Board office at (718) 933-5650.

THE 52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL meets at the 52nd Precinct stationhouse, 3016 Webster Ave. from 7 to 9 p.m. on March 24. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

THE BEDFORD PARK LIVABLE NEIGHBORHOODS workshop will be held at PS 54, 2703 Webster Ave. between 195th and 197th streets on March 24 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, email ltprevents@gmail.com.

Raising Up 198th Street Via the Livable Neighborhoods Program

By WENDY JOAN BIDDLECOMBE

It's past 8 p.m. on a Friday night. But Samelys Lopez, chair of Community Board 7's Long Term Planning and Community Relations Committee and second vice-chair of the executive board, hits the 198th Street business corridor near the Grand Concourse hoping to entice neighbors to attend an upcoming event.

And it's not the regulars she's after, but residents who barely make it to community meetings or are simply disengaged. As far as Lopez is concerned, the marginally involved are the ones she seeks the most for a workshop event set for March 26.

"It'd be great to get some residents to come out to feel like they're plugged in to the larger community, and if they have issues, they'll know where to turn. This portion of the community has a lot of needs, and it's part of the education of the long term planning committee to learn what the issues are," Lopez said.

Lopez said that Bedford Park's Livable Neighborhoods Program workshop is an effort to demystify the language and process of urban planning, and enlighten residents about the resources



Photo by Wendy Joan Biddlecombe

SPREADING WORD ON the Bedford Park Livable Neighborhoods program is Samelys Lopez (pictured) hanging an event flier at a store on East 198th Street near the Grand Concourse.

available to them that could help turn their neighborhood preservation ideas into a reality. The workshop will also teach residents, businesses and others about economic development strategies and participatory budgeting—the process by which community members vote on how some capital funds are spent on local projects (for a full list of proposed projects, see story on page 2).

"It's about being able to understand the conversation," Lopez said. "Imag-

ine someone who doesn't speak the language, someone who is not civically engaged. Urban planning is a tool that can enact some real change."

The workshop is being planned by CB7, the Municipal Arts Society and the New York City Department of Small Business Services.

Lopez is heavily promoting the session along the 198th Street neighborhood in particular because of the lack of a merchants association, and what

she says is an uptick in violence in the area. Lopez said many attendees at community boards and other neighborhood meetings are regulars who have been involved for many years, and she'd like to see new faces.

Ammr Abisse, who has owned a clothing store on the block since 2001, said he's noticed the presence of drugs to be a major problem in the neighborhood. "The more that drugs are going on, the more the quality of the people is going down. A lot of people have moved," said Abisse.

Abisse told Lopez he'd invite one of his civic-minded employees to attend. Before going home, Lopez hangs bilingual fliers at several local businesses, and hands them to other neighbors she meets.

"It's about establishing trust and a relationship," Lopez says on the canvassing.

Editor's Note: Bedford Park Livable Neighborhoods Training will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 26 at Public School 54. A light breakfast will be served. The event is free and open to the public, but RSVPs are required by emailing ltprevents@gmail.com or ordering a ticket at <http://bit.ly/1RheUzn>.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE

This week we asked readers their thoughts on Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.'s time in office, and asked them to name some of his successes or failures during his administration so far.



Well, so far he's been Borough President for more than four years. It must be more and he's done a lot of good things. He cleaned up the Bronx River and he's got us more housing. He's interested in that stuff, better living and better jobs for us. I think he's been a good borough president. I think he wants to accomplish a lot for the Bronx and for a man that grew up here, I think that he's learning from his upbringing and experience, so I think he's a good guy.

Raymond Basabe
Parkchester



I feel that Ruben Diaz, Jr. is a very good Borough President who's got a lot of stuff going on like the ice skating rink, the Bronx Day Festival that we have on Mosholu Parkway, and he helps a lot of people out. He's a good spokesman for the Bronx. I really can't say anything bad about him. A lot of people say bad stuff about people that might not be true, because no one is an angel. Other than that, I think he's a standup guy.

Adrian Cruz
Bedford Park



Ruben Diaz [Jr.] has been an outstanding person who's done a lot for the community. He's also very concerned about the community and I appreciate everything he's done for our community and also for the poor people. He's done a lot and his father as well. We have events like before school, and they give stuff to kids who can't afford book bags and notebooks and things like that. They provide that and it's free.

Daisy Cotto
Bedford Park



I see him on News 12 all the time saying he's going to get stuff done, but all he does is refer people to his office, but nothing ever gets done. Like the crime rate around here at the 52nd Precinct. There's police cameras everywhere and in the summer it gets crazy over here. When you call the police station, it takes them two hours to respond and you can be two blocks away. I don't see him making any difference with that or anything. The ice skating rink, when is that going to happen?

Najib Mena
Norwood



I can't really think of any accomplishments. I've heard his name but haven't really heard any of the things he's done for my community, and I've been living here for 24 years. I hear his name like here and there, but can't really say anything he's done. If he had anything to do with extending the sidewalk and making it longer, that's about the only change I can think of. The closing of a lot of small businesses in the area along Kingsbridge Road has been terrible. Because they've tripled the rents because of the skating rink, but I hear it's not going through or something like that.

Annette Wright
Kingsbridge

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

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Norwood Newser Heads To Syracuse U.

Jasmine Gomez, one of the longer-serving interns at the *Norwood News*, is bidding farewell to the community paper and hello to journalism grad school.

Her tenure ends a yearlong expedition into the world of community journalism, improving upon her craft while opening doors to other opportunities. Gomez, a Bronx native, was recently accepted to high-ranking Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications on a full scholarship. The *Norwood News* wants to publicly thank her for her contributions to the publication.

Gomez began at the *Norwood News* on the recommendation of an employee at Mosholu Preservation Corporation. She had graduated from Binghamton University in upstate New York two years before with a political science degree, later working at a law office. But she always maintained a keen interest in journalism. She joined the *Norwood News* to sharpen that skill, contributing three days a week.

Readers may have caught Gomez's byline in several news articles that included the state's expiring rent laws, illegal barbecues along Mosholu Parkway, and World Kidney Day (see page 9). In all, Gomez wrote 22 stories, took countless photos, performed a variety of newsroom tasks that included social media promotion, and became a part of the team.

From David Cruz, Melissa Cebolero, Judy Noy, Vivian Carter, Dawn McEvoy, Nohelia Aquino, Rebecca Daniele, Jane Corbett, Wendell Alexis, and Miosotis Muñoz, a goodbye and good luck to Jasmine Gomez.

(*Norwood News*)



JASMINE GOMEZ

Mosholu Pillars in Need of Long-Term Fixing



Photo by Daniela Beasley

DRIVING DOWN THIS stretch of Mosholu Parkway, damage to some of the pillars may not be evident, but closer inspection reveals fading, corrosion and breakdown of several pillars.

By DANIELA BEASLEY

The rock pillars spanning the length of the heavily traveled Mosholu Parkway provide character to the leafy roadways. But the pillars have gone without rehab or renovations since the late 1970s, and it's beginning to show.

The pillars have been a long-standing issue, made even more problematic since some pose a safety hazard, according to Barbara Stronczer, who doubles as president of the Bedford Mosholu Community Association and chairs Community Board 7's Parks Committee. "You notice the deterioration of the columns. Take a look at the bottom of those pillars. I'm concerned someone is going to get hurt,"

she said.

The pillars are interconnected via metal piping with a concrete foundation. They run along both sides of the parkway's southern tip, feeding into Southern Boulevard. Besides the normal wear and tear, cracks and discoloration, some pillars have huge chunks of rock missing from its base, creating gaping holes and jagged edges.

"They're dangerous for the kids," said Marilyn Villamar, a resident and owner of a local daycare center in Bedford Park. Villamar thinks it's imperative to fix these pillars not only "because they should just maintain it, but it's more cost-effective to fix them than let it get to this point."

Conversely, the cost of repair is

pricey. To replace just one of these pillars roughly comes to \$36,000, and according to Stronczer she approximates that 10 to 12 of these pillars, differing in severity, need some form of renovation.

Stronczer was hoping to see the funding listed in Councilman Andrew Cohen's participatory budgeting proposal, but it was not listed. CB7 district manager Andrew Sandler said at a recent parks committee meeting that he would like to lump the request with a larger request to fix the aging parkway.

A spokesman for the New York City Department of Parks said a capital project to restore the pillars is not planned or funded at this time.

Norwood's Pub-Man Celebrates 50 Years

A golden milestone was reached in Norwood last month.

Eamonn McDwyer celebrated 50 years at the helm of his business, McDwyer's Pub, at the corner of East 204th Street and Hull Avenue. Some bars in the Bronx have been under family ownership for longer, but McDwyer the barkeep says his is the only one that's been managed by the same person for five straight decades.

Known to regulars as "Eddie," (Eamonn is Gaelic for "Edward"), McDwyer presides over his low-key, friendly watering hole like a watchful grandfather. He moves slowly from one end of the bar to the other, topping off a Guinness at the tap, and mixing cocktails with

an expert hand. He stops along the way at the cash register—every barkeeper's sustenance, and on the flip side, a magnet for danger. Since he bought the bar in 1966, McDwyer has endured plenty. He's been pistol-whipped and shot in the shoulder during a dramatic daytime robbery. He walks holding a quad cane with his good shoulder, survivor of other health threats besides the criminals. He's a tough character.

Long after numerous taverns that formerly dotted the area have moved away or closed their doors, McDwyer says he is still committed to Norwood and looks forward to opening up every day. Let's toast his continued success!



EAMONN MCDWYER

Women Making It in the Business World, Courtesy of WE Connect

By DAVID CRUZ

For Malla Haridat of Kingsbridge/Riverdale, establishing a business was a daunting experience the first time out. Luckily, there was a mentor, which she credits to have worked out some rookie mistakes.

"You really need people that have been there, done that, and could kind of show you where are your blind spots, where are your gaffes, to figure what do you need to do differently," said Haridat, owner of Moms and Daughters, a business management consulting firm.

Finding the right support can make or break a business, and for female business owners, that support has never been critical. It's one reason why a group of 17 women business owners from all backgrounds were chosen for Women Entrepreneurs Connect, or WE Connect, an initiative that allows them to impart their business acumen directly to beginner women business owners.

Part female empowerment, part

business management, the program was born from a need to close the gender gap in a male-dominated business world. The program is backed by City Hall and the New York City Small Business Services, which facilitates the free program.

"It's this interesting mix where all the women are from different industries, they're from different stages of their businesses," said Haridat. "[W]e share a common understanding of really what to do to make your business successful."

Strides have been made to close the gap, particularly in the Bronx, according to a recent report by the Center for an Urban Future. The Manhattan-based nonprofit think tank found women-owned businesses increased seven percent from 2007 to 2012 city-wide. In the Bronx, that gain is 53 percent in the last five years.

Haridat is one of two business maven who lives in the Bronx, the second being Wonder Lee of Pelham Bay, the business owner behind 123 Designs



Photo by David Cruz

MALLA HARIDAT, OWNER of Moms and Daughters, Inc., is one of 17 mentors for Women Entrepreneurs (WE) Connect.

Inc., makers of unique bow ties. "I started the new year getting paid to be me," said Lee. Mentors are paid what they call an honorarium of a thousand dollars for the year.

At a WE Connect Center in Fordham, female merchants are encouraged to explore several aspects to bet-

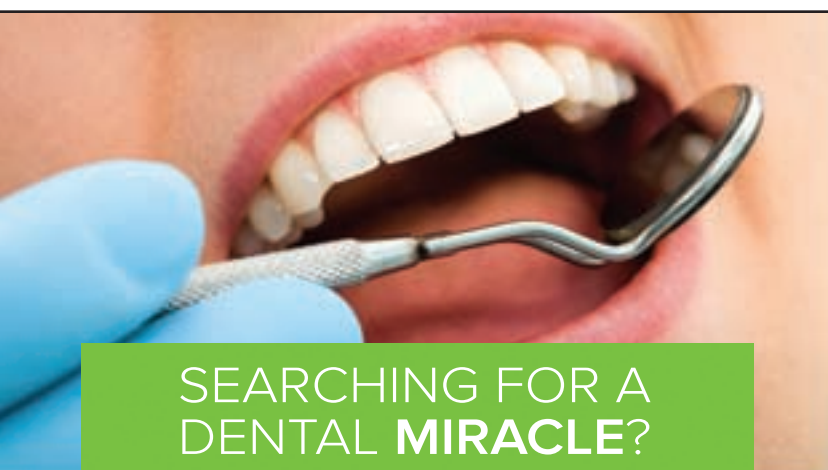
ter business management that include marketing, public relations, and spiritual guidance. Mentors are also available via weekly teleconference chats touching on subjects tailored to the business world. Haridat's specialty focuses on putting one's best self forward at networking events "in a way that's meaningful, that people will remember your story after the event."

But face time with a mentor goes beyond the centers and at special networking events that include a roundtable discussion touching on business-centered topics. The next WE Connect event takes place March 24 at the Bronx Museum of the Arts at 1040 Grand Concourse.

Haridat hopes one takeaway lesson women learn is to take risk, a gamble she said can be challenging for women, but worthwhile.

"You have to kind of get outside your comfort zone a little bit to really, really expand and do things in a way that it's not just this really wonderful small entity that you manage," said Haridat.

Editor's Note: To learn more about the program, go to the group's Facebook page, WENYC. Additional reporting by Daniela Beasley.



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Cardinal McCloskey Community Services Celebrates 70 Years of Service

At the end of World War II, thousands of rural poor, immigrants and refugees flooded New York City seeking a new life. Many who sought prosperity found themselves unemployed and in need of assistance. One of the long-lasting effects would be the displacement of thousands of children. In unprecedented numbers, New York City saw the rise of abandoned, neglected and homeless children.

In 1946, in response to this need, the Cardinal McCloskey School and Home for Children opened to care for homeless and neglected children. At the time the home could provide shelter and care to 240 children. Since those humble beginnings, Car-

dinal McCloskey Community Services (CMCS) has adapted and grown as the needs of the community have grown and changed.

The impact that CMCS has had in our Bronx communities has been profound as each year they now care for thousands of at-risk children and families in their foster care and prevention programs.

The services have broadened as the agency serves hundreds of individuals with developmental disabilities, providing homes and employment opportunities so that these adults can live more fulfilling and independent lives. Their Early Childhood Education Division is one of the largest pro-

viders of Head Start and UPK services in the Bronx.

CMCS is once again embarking on a new role as they are in the process of preparing an application to open a Charter School here in the Bronx.

CMCS is holding community meetings at their Tolentine Head Start location at 2331 University Ave. on March 21 and at their Holy Spirit Head Start location at 1960 University Ave. on March 22. Meetings will begin at 5 p.m. and childcare and refreshments will be provided. Please call (718) 402-0081, extension 227 or email info@CMCSCharter.org for more information.

Lights, Camera, Action At COVE Film Fest



Photo by Miriam Quinones

IT'S A WRAP. Film students from Community Organized with a Vision of Excellence (COVE) held its yearly film festival March 11 at Montefiore Medical Center's Grand Hall. Movie shorts were presented at the evening event with COVE participants (pictured) hailed for their directorial, writing and acting efforts. Next stop, Hollywood.

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Monte: Have a Heart, and Consider Donating

By JASMINE GOMEZ

Hospitals across the planet jointly celebrated World Kidney Day, and Montefiore Medical Center joined in on the action.

In recognition of the event, on March 10 Montefiore set up a table in the lobby of its Moses Campus with pamphlets, handouts, and giveaways that piqued interest on organ donation. Those who wished to sign up to join the kidney donor registry were also welcomed.

World Kidney Day is a global campaign aimed at providing awareness and information about kidney disease, its risk factors, preventive steps, and the importance of donating organs.

"It's really about loving your kidneys, taking care of your kidneys, and how to prevent new disease," said Leo Trevino, manager of organ/tissue donation for Montefiore.

Kidneys are regulatory organs responsible for filtering blood and creating urine, making them vi-

tal organs to a healthy human body. Health factors that include overconsumption of alcohol, dehydration, or abnormal blood flow to the organs can damage the kidneys, which could cause kidney failure.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, roughly 26 million American adults have kidney failure, with many unaware they're affected by it until a visit to the doctor. While dialysis is a common treatment procedure for kidney failure, an organ donation is often a permanent fix.

But the typical waiting time for a compatible and available kidney is around five to seven years, and many die waiting for the lifesaving gift.

This was not the case for Elvin Olivera, who has been living with his donated liver and kidney for about 18 months, and has paid it forward by becoming an advocate and volunteer for organ donor sign-up drives.

"To receive this gift of life, it's awesome. It's somewhat difficult to put into words. There isn't enough words to express my appreciation for what [the donor's family had] done," said Olivera emotionally. "Even though I don't know them, I've never met them. I'll always be connected to them through these organs."

And Olivera is lucky to have been removed from the waiting list, since there are more people waiting on kidney donors than available kidneys.

"The list keeps growing," said Dr. Stuart Greenstein, director of Outreach and Development at the Montefiore Einstein Center for Transplantation. He said there are unintended benefits to joining the kidney donor registry. "When we evaluate someone who wants to be a live donor, many times it is picked up that they have kidney disease or some other disease," said Greenstein. "And by them coming forward to be a live donor, we can actually save their life."

And whether live or dead, Greenstein sees immense power in people offering the gift of donating. "It's the most extreme act of love you can do for somebody else. To give something of yourself to somebody else when you don't have to do it," he said.



Photo by Jasmine Gomez

GATHERED AROUND THE World Kidney Day awareness table are (l-r) Leo Trevino, manager of organ/tissue donation; Elvin Olivera, recipient of a kidney and liver transplant; Dr. Stuart Greenstein, director of Outreach and Development at the Montefiore Einstein Center for Transplantation; and Maureen Carroll, RN and lead clinical physician liaison at the Montefiore Einstein Center for Transplantation.

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Facets of Freilich Jewelers Found At Bay Plaza Mall



When Allan Freilich decided to close his legendary Norwood jewelry store at the end of last year, he told *The Norwood News* he was humbly grateful to his loyal customers for their support over the decades.

Less than three months later, Freilich has found a nearby jewelry store he is comfortable endorsing for referrals—Studio Jewelers at 2240 Bartow Ave., in the Bay Plaza Shopping Center. Customers who call the phone number for Freilich's Norwood store, (718) 798-1063, will now be ringing

Studio's.

Studio has been in business at Bay Plaza (right next to Modell's) for 25 years. Studio employs a multi-lingual staff of 11, including Millie Clavell of Freilich Jeweler's fame, and offers a fine selection of jewelry. Studio's staff performs expert repairs and the establishment offers another great convenience for customers—free parking in their lot.

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A Meeting With Borough

BP Reflects on Development, Drawing Prof

By DAVID CRUZ

His innuendos were obvious, if not passive aggressive.

But there he stood, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. spending 45 minutes in his seventh State of the Borough address chastising the de Blasio Administration for a number of perceived missteps. For political observers, it was a diatribe that once again stoked the burning question.

Does Mr. Diaz want to be mayor of New York City? Can he really run the city?

It's an elephant in the room nurtured by daily speculation from inquisitive media and its propensity for validation. Though coy on the prospect, Mr. Diaz hasn't stopped reporters from letting loose on his mayoral ambitions, a frequent question raised in each interview, including this one. In every instance, his answer is never as simple as yes or no.

"You guys would want me to say I want to be mayor, badly," said Mr. Diaz, chuckling inside his polished conference room, an ad hoc trophy center. "They like this. The media like this."

The public would have to wait until next year, or 2021 to figure it out.

Mr. Diaz undeniably relishes in the mayoral speculation that's become symbolic of the fantastic climb he, a homegrown Democrat who began as a messenger for the New York City Council at age 21, has made.

It was a recurring theme in a half hour interview with the *Norwood News*, allowing Mr. Diaz to underscore his lofty goal of attracting a lower middle class, chide Mayor Bill de Blasio's recent State of the City address, and reassure constituents he routinely travels the Bronx, even if his presence is seldom seen in communities such as Norwood (as of press time, the Borough President visited MS 80 for a meet and greet with volunteers from the Community Emergency Response Team).

"A lot of the issues that I think we've championed affect many of the residents. With that said, I know that it's important. I know that it means a lot, sometimes even more for people to see their elected official, and certainly the borough president," said Mr. Diaz, who

remained unclear over whether a town hall-style meeting would ever be in the cards for the working class community.

Settling into his seventh year as "Beep," Mr. Diaz has continued to play the Bronx up to curious developers inspiring the opposition's outspoken chant "The Bronx is not for sale." He's benefited from lower crime, boasted the Bronx's amenities, and even gotten the ear of New York Governor Andrew Cuomo. Just recently, Mr. Cuomo approved a plan for four Metro-North stations in the East Bronx.

For now, as the official line goes, he's quite comfortable being the borough president, admitting his intentions to run for re-election in 2017. But with politics, anything can change.

His current stop as borough president puts him in the pilot's seat, steering the destiny of a borough that's perpetually fallen behind in the categories of health, employment, quality of life, and education.

As borough president, Mr. Diaz's role is relatively limited. Though his office possesses a yearly pot filled with roughly \$9 million for capital projects, he's legislatively stymied, unable to enact any laws, only call on his "partners in government" to do so. By and large, borough presidents are seen as nominal politicians whose influence widely varies depending on how good they are at schmoozing.

For Mr. Diaz, a six-foot-tall clean-shaven Hispanic man, checking off his list of accomplishments was largely due to "sheer will, and just advocacy." But it's arguably his ability to charm that's allowed him to weaponize it, wooing over developers and skeptics who've come to reevaluate their positions on the Bronx.

Despite his legislative limitations, Mr. Diaz has crafted an agenda centralized to commercial and residential development, measured beacons of a prosperous Bronx. He's done so with help from his longtime right-hand man, Paul Del Duca, the bespectacled chief of staff and senior advisor who's molded many of Mr. Diaz's stances.

From the time Mr. Diaz was in office, \$9 billion has been pumped into Bronx projects that range from the enormous Bay Plaza Mall in Baychester to the Bedford Manor on Webster Avenue, coinciding with job growth, though admittedly at the low-paying end. The median salary of the Bronx still stands at \$34,284, still behind the rest of the city.

Development has ushered supportive housing, a residence specifically geared to a niche demographic that includes formerly homeless veterans, former drug addicts or HIV/AIDS sufferers.

The Bedford Manor was part affordable housing, where low-income tenants pay rent at a maximum 30 percent of their take home pay. Affordable rent guidelines are decided by a percentage of Area Median Income (AMI), a formula determined by salaries from New York City, Westchester and Rockland counties. The current AMI at 100 percent for a family of four is \$86,300.

And with Bronx developers building more affordable units at a lower AMI, retaining

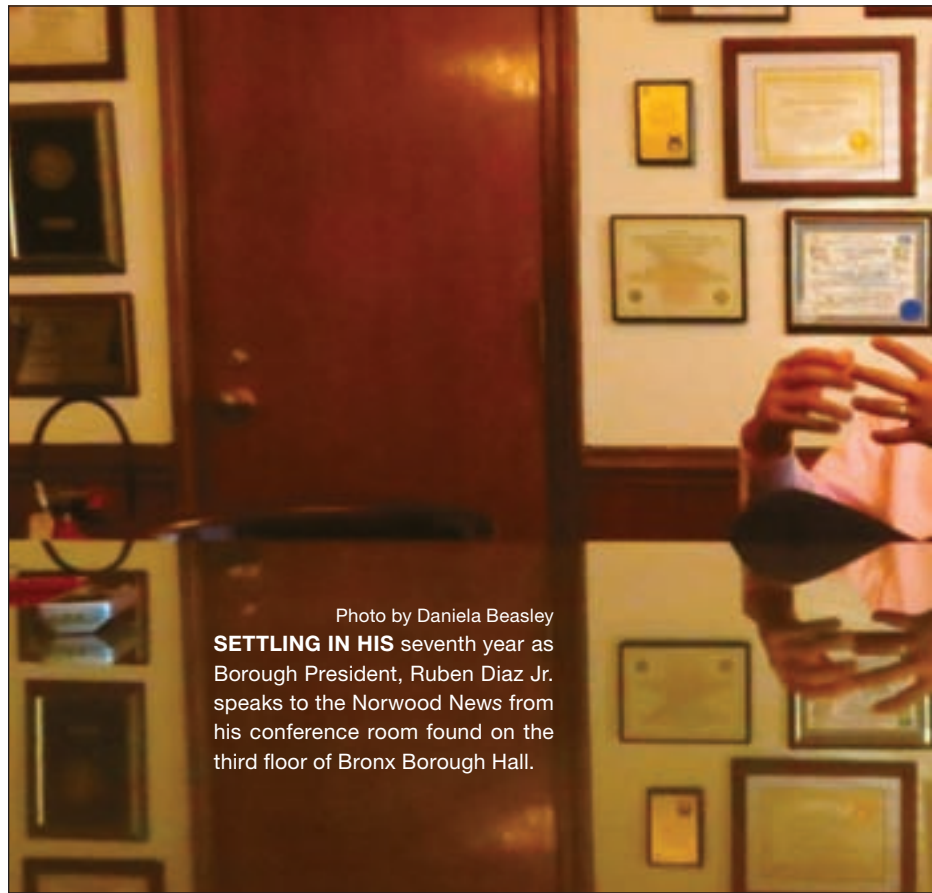


Photo by Daniela Beasley
SETTLING IN HIS seventh year as Borough President, Ruben Diaz Jr. speaks to the *Norwood News* from his conference room found on the third floor of Bronx Borough Hall.



Photo by Miriam Quinones
"I KNOW IT means a lot, sometimes even more, for people to see their elected official, and certainly the borough president," said Mr. Diaz, seen here greeting a guest at the Greek Heritage Celebration on March 9.



File Photo

AMONG THE LATEST proposals Mr. Diaz is lobbying for is a plan to platform Bedford Park's Concourse Yards to serve as the foundation for mixed-use development.

well-off professionals edging into the middle class becomes the challenge, said Mr. Diaz, using a hypothetical example of a young professional settling in the Bronx.

"Hopefully, I'm going to start with \$60, \$70, \$80,000 a year. That already puts them at 100 percent of AMI. So when you're talking about 50 percent of AMI, they're out of that picture," said Mr. Diaz. "You certainly can't buy a home in Pelham Bay or Throggs Neck."

A middle class exists in the Bronx, though it's overpowered by working class and work-

ing poor.

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center classifies a middle class family of four in New York City to earn a minimum of \$70,000 a year. The U.S. Census projects over 30 percent of married homes in the Bronx are above that middle class threshold.

It's one reason why Mr. Diaz eyes the northern section of Webster Avenue, an arterial roadway cutting through Norwood, Bedford Park, and Fordham as a harbinger for a burgeoning middle class. Considered by Mr.

President Ruben Diaz Jr.

Professional Workers, and Mayoral Ambivalence



Photo by Daniela Beasley

BOROUGH PRESIDENT RUBEN Diaz Jr. (l) talks to Norwood News editor-in-chief David Cruz (r) over a variety of Bronx-related topics.

Diaz as a “good parallel to the Grand Concourse,” once ranked a bastion of class and upward mobility, Webster Avenue has enjoyed a swell of attention from developers since it was rezoned in 2011.

Fourteen rezoning efforts have happened under the Diaz administration, which offers an advisory vote during its public review process. Since then, Webster Avenue has ushered in residential developments paired with supportive housing, creating a dichotomous landscape. Mr. Diaz, who stressed he’s “supportive of supportive housing,” cautioned Webster Avenue developers to “be mindful that to

start new development on Webster with supportive housing may scare off potential developers...”

Among the projects in the planning stages is a hotel proposed by the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) that would be built at the corner of Webster Avenue and Bedford Park Boulevard, which the Garden owns. NYBG is currently weighing proposals by developers, who would likely adhere to NYBG’s desire for a mixed-use development, including a hotel. The property is currently occupied by a Pioneer Supermarket. The proposal has riled local

residents who greatly depend on the supermarket given its proximity. Residents admit they would have little opposition should a developer build above the supermarket.

And despite community opposition, Mr. Diaz simply stated he supports a hotel, leaving it at that. He would later say in a follow-up statement he is “supportive of the RFP and we look forward to examining the responses.”

Mr. Diaz, perhaps having the foresight to sense backlash from groups in favor of affordable housing at even lower AMI, was quick to re-emphasize his stance on Mayor de Blasio’s affordable housing plan that would see 80,000 new units of affordable housing across the city, a move Mr. Diaz continually stressed as conceptually admirable but flawed in its execution.

“Are we in a race to get to ten million residents in the city?” asked Mr. Diaz. “I don’t think that should be the case.”

Still, many of Mr. Diaz’s successes, including his involvement in the reconfiguration of the Kingsbridge Armory into an ice skating center, remain waiting (as of press time, it had been 827 days since the New York City Council approved the project). The Kingsbridge National Ice Center, for instance, has languished in delays for the last year, an unanticipated setback given the internal legal feud between principals and developers.

Mr. Diaz, who, unlike in previous years, did not mention the project in his State of the Bronx address, blamed the holdup on the de Blasio Administration, saying the “city has to be more accommodating.” His criticism of the de Blasio Administration once again took center stage.

Notwithstanding Mayor de Blasio’s decision to hold his third State of the City address in the Bronx (Mr. de Blasio has made only six official stops to the Bronx this year, compared to 1 in Staten Island, 25 in Brooklyn, 8 in Queens, and 46 in Manhattan), the content of how much attention he paid to the Bronx didn’t exactly impress

Mr. Diaz, who attended the speech.

“[W]hat in the State of the City address did he say was huge for the Bronx?” asked Mr. Diaz, turning to his director of communications, John Desio. “What did he say? Power blast streets? Two health centers? Come on.”

The criticism was marginally balanced with credit given for some noble initiatives Mr. de Blasio has accomplished in his tenure. Universal pre-K has made it possible for 4-year-olds to gain an academic head start, while the city’s economy continues to boom.

Mr. Diaz’s serious run for mayor would have to come with a heavier campaign war chest, which stands at \$651,000, according to filings. It’s half as much as Mr. de Blasio’s, whose campaign worth rests at \$1.1 million. But beating both is City Comptroller Scott Stringer, another mayoral hopeful, who has raised \$1.3 million for the 2017 elections.

Should Mr. Diaz run, the Bronx would have to shed some of its issues to build upon Mr. Diaz’s position as an effective leader.

And that includes ensuring crime remains low. So far, overall crimes have increased in every Bronx police precinct except the 44th Precinct in the South Bronx, as of press time. Though the Bronx has “put its foot on the throat of extremely violent crime,” robberies and petty theft have contributed to a noticeable spike.

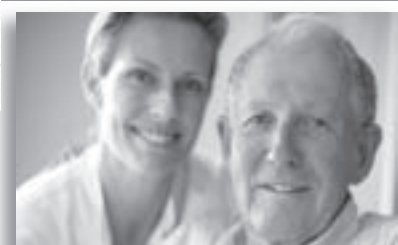
But Mr. Diaz shrugged off the numbers, knowing it’ll do little to stem outside interest in the borough.

He justified his position following a closed-door meeting with the New York City Economic Development Corporation to discuss an undisclosed project. Mr. Diaz didn’t say much, except the “amount of interest [in the Bronx] is phenomenal,” notwithstanding crime.

“While we have our issues, and we’re going to do more to reduce overall crime, I don’t see that stopping the level of interest at all,” said Mr. Diaz. “At all.”



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Bx. County Dems Back Wright for Congress

The Bronx Democratic County Committee has officially endorsed Assemblyman Keith Wright, a Democrat representing Harlem, in the hugely crowded race for the 13th Congressional District, a seat long held by Congressman Charles Rangel.

BDCC's chair, Assemblyman Marcos Crespo, said Wright "will fight for our families, advocate for our needs, and speak up for our community." Wright, who attended high school in the Bronx, has made little campaign stops in the borough, focusing mainly on Manhattan's side of the 13th Congressional District, which covers 80 percent of the district. The rest covers the northwest Bronx, including Norwood. Wright hasn't won the complete support of Bronx Democratic lawmakers, including New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, who threw her support to state Senator Adriano Espaillat. Assemblyman Victor Pichardo and state Senator Gustavo Rivera also supported Espaillat, whose latest run for the Congressional makes it his third.

The heavily crowded field of candidates include career politician Adam Clayton Powell, former U.S. Ambassador for International Religious Freedom Suzan Johnson Cook, Mike Gallagher, state Sen. Bill Perkins, former teacher Guillermo Lianares, and Pastor Clyde Williams. Rangel, who will retire when his term expires in 2017, also backed Wright.

Some political observers told the Norwood News the endorsement was arranged over a year ago when Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie made a run for Assembly Speaker. Wright also made a run, but withdrew on the promise BDCC would back him for Congress. Assemblyman Marcos Crespo, chair of BDCC, did not return comment.

--David Cruz

13th Congressional Candidate Stumps at Tracey Towers



Photo courtesy Campaign for Suzan Johnson Cook

FORMER AMBASSADOR SUZAN JOHNSON COOK, running to succeed Congressman Charles Rangel of the 13th Congressional District, holds a meet and greet at Tracey Towers. Cook was previously a US Ambassador for Religious Freedom at large, a domestic policy adviser to former President Bill Clinton and is now the only female candidate running for this seat in Congress.

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Going Blue, for a Good Cause, at the Fordham BID

By DAVID CRUZ

Shades of blue have been spotted at one of the borough's largest commercial stretches.

They come in the form of posters hung at more than two dozen businesses across the Fordham Road Business Improvement District reminding men and women over the age of 50 to get screened for colorectal cancer, an illness common in that age bracket. The campaign, dubbed "Fordham Road Goes Blue Campaign," coincides with March's Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. The BID is the only commercial district to adopt the program.

"It wasn't asking [businesses] for money. It's going out and asking them 'please help us raise awareness for this and help us get the word out,'" said Daniel Bernstein, who doubles as deputy director of the Fordham BID and chair of the Bronx chapter for the American Cancer Society (ACS).

Bernstein's involvement is personal—his parents died of cancer when he was young. "That's why I'm here," said Bernstein of his involvement.

The awareness movement also correlates with the national "80 By 2018" campaign, with the lofty goal of boosting cancer screening rates by 80 percent by the year 2018. Should the campaign prove successful, it could stymie some 277,000 new cases of colorectal cancer across the United States.

With an estimated 80,000 commuters and shoppers crisscrossing the Fordham Road Business Improvement District, the largest in the Bronx, an awareness campaign was certainly advantageous for ACS.

Colorectal cancer attacks the colon. Symptoms usually include rectal bleeding, weight loss and changes

in bowel habits. A colonoscopy, the best way to screen for cancer in the colon, is considered the best way to detect any cancerous tumors. The same-day procedure is also "well tolerated," according to Dr. Michael Polcino, director of colorectal surgery at St. Barnabas. Usually, the procedure involves looking at the "entire inside of the colon."

"And what they see in the lining, it's call the mucosa, if there's any growth or any abnormal lesions. In that time you argue whether you should remove them or biopsy them to see if they are cancer," said Polcino.

Easy screenings could likely have helped increase the rate of colonoscopies by 66 percent within the last

decade, according to statistics published by the New York City Department of Health. Still, despite colorectal cancer deemed very treatable via surgery or chemotherapy, it's considered the second deadliest cancer.

For now, eating enough vegetables, exercising regularly, and living a smoke-free lifestyle can keep the cancer at bay.



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Photo by David Cruz

FIGHTING CANCER AT the Fordham Road Business Improvement District, with help from the American Cancer Society and other partners.



Chinese Food Deliverymen Targeted on Grand Concourse

By DAVID GREENE

Five deliverymen from local Chinese takeout restaurants have been robbed at the same Bedford Park block on the Grand Concourse since December, highlighting the oft dangerous work deliverymen take on.

In the latest incident, a deliveryman from the Ka Wah Chinese Restaurant on Valentine Avenue was robbed at knifepoint inside 2894 Grand Concourse on March 4. The owner said this was his second deliveryman robbed in the past two weeks.

Recalling a similar account at the same building as another victim, the deliveryman explained, “When I got to the fifth floor, I was ringing the bell, but no one opened the door, so I called again. They came up from downstairs, two big guys with big knives.”

The victim reported that both men wore masks and spoke in a Spanish accent, both placing their weapons at the young man’s abdomen and taking food, \$150 in cash, and the victim’s cell phone.

When asked if he fears going into buildings since the incident he re-



Photo by David Greene

CHINESE FOOD DELIVERYMEN have become the incessant target of thieves along the Grand Concourse.

plied, “I think about it sometimes,” but has to earn a living.

A co-owner of Mei Mei Chinese Restaurant at 2831 Grand Concourse, who declined to use his name for this article, said his driver was robbed at the same building on Feb. 28, adding that the driver, a relative, was punched in the face and robbed by two masked assailants as a third waited on the stairs below. The co-owner said a fourth suspect, a female, placed the bogus order.

The thieves escaped with the \$37.50 food order as well as a second food order, totaling \$50 in food and \$130 in cash.

Feeling the police have turned their backs on the Chinese food delivery business, the co-owner claimed, “The police told us not to deliver there anymore, but the people won’t come down to meet the driver.”

Another co-owner claimed the crooks called back the following night.

“We had their number,” she said, taking the order and quickly calling police. “But the police didn’t call back until 4 a.m. the next morning,” long after a delivery driver from the Double Dragon Restaurant on Jerome Avenue was robbed of food and \$200 in cash on Feb. 29 at the same building.

The co-owner of Mei Mei’s, who also owns the Hong Kong Kitchen on East 198th Street, also claimed after being robbed, her driver watched as the suspects ran into an apartment on the third-floor. “The police are doing nothing, you can ask the people there. The police are called there every day,” she said.

The owners of the Lucky Star Chinese Takeout at 145 W. Kingsbridge Rd. confirmed that one of his deliverymen was robbed on the street in early December. The suspect fled into 2890 Grand Concourse.

The NYPD has not yet responded to a request for comment on these pattern robberies, but detectives from the 52nd Precinct are said to be aware of it and are currently working on all of the recent incidents that have been reported. Going Blue, for a Good Cause,

NORWOOD NEWS

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Police Search for Starbucks Thief

By NOAH BERMAN

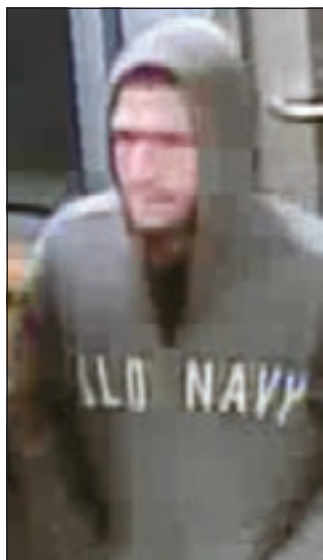
Police are looking for a suspect (pictured) who robbed a Starbucks in Marble Hill on March 9.

At around 9:40 p.m., 20 minutes before the coffee shop was about to close, the would-be robber entered the establishment, approached a clerk at the counter, and demanded that they give him money, according to the 52nd Precinct.

Despite already having asked the clerk for money, the suspect was impatient, and went for a do-it-yourself approach. Brandishing a gun from his pocket, the perpetrator reached over the counter to steal money directly from the register.

After taking an unknown sum, the thief immediately fled. Captured on video, he was seen wearing a hooded Old Navy sweatshirt. No one was injured, and all of the occupants left the

store physically unscathed. The police are seeking information about the incident and ask anyone with any information to call the CrimeStoppers hotline at (800) 577-TIPS (8477). They can also go on the CrimeStoppers website at nypdcrimestoppers.com to report a tip.



Buzzing About the Bronx

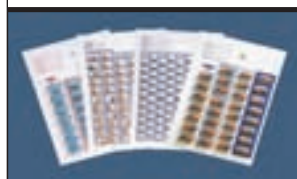


Photo by Jasmine Gomez

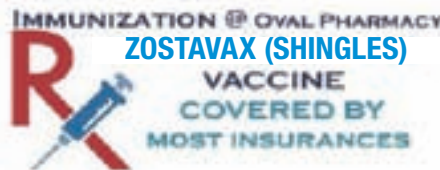
THE NORWOOD NEWS' editor-in-chief, David Cruz (center), was a guest at BronxNet's newest talk show, Bronx Buzz with host Gary Axelbank (left). Be sure to check it out on www.bronxnet.org in the coming days and hear about Norwood News stories highlighted in the show. Cruz was joined by Joe Hirsch (right), editor of the Mott Haven Herald and Hunts Point Express. Worth watching.



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"Save Easter" Mission

Victorious Warriors III Inc., a nonprofit football club, is looking for financial assistance for their "Save Easter" project that services the Crystal Place Shelter in Ferry Point. The group is asking for \$10.00 or more per child, as well as coloring books, puzzles, new or used stuffed animals, etc., to make Easter a great holiday for the kids. For more information or to make a tax-deductible donation, please call Diana Diffut, president

of Victorious Warriors III Inc. at (917) 476-3458 or (718) 518-0367 ext. 260.

Self Defense Program

The NYC Department of Parks offers a Martial Arts – Self Defense Program for all ages at the St. James recreation Center, 2530 Jerome Ave., for beginners on Mondays, and for advanced and beginners on Wednesdays, both from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Uniform and registration fee required. For more information or to register, call (347) 867-0995.

Golden Age Senior Program

St. James Recreation Center, 2530 Jerome Ave., offers a Golden Age Senior Program Mondays to Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Center membership is required. Activities include games, sports and fitness, health, computer classes, and more. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/parks.

Free Tax Services

Councilman Ritchie Torres hosts free tax preparation services for Bronx residents at his office, 573 E. Fordham Rd., from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., every day except Thursdays and Sundays; Mondays till 7 p.m. For more information or to make an appointment with a tax preparer, call (718) 842-8100.

The Eastchester Library, 1385 E. Gun Hill Rd., hosts free tax services for anyone earning \$62,000 or less, 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 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 Fri-

day from 3 to 6 p.m. For more information, call Crystal Reyes, College Access Coordinator, at (718) 584-0515 ext. 243.

SYEP 2016

The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) offers applications for 2016 through April 15 for ages 14 to 24. Participants are selected by lottery. For more information, call 311 or (800) 246-4646 or visit www.nyc.gov/dycd.

Foreclosure Prevention

The Northwest Bronx Resource Center, 2715 Bainbridge Ave., hosts a foreclosure prevention workshop every first and third Thursday of each month from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Speak to a specialist from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to learn how to stay in your home. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (718) 933-2539.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Egg Hunt at the Oval

The Williamsbridge Oval hosts a free Spring Egg Hunt on March 19 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. for kids ages 3 to 6 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and ages 7 to 11 from noon to 1 p.m. Additional events include relay races, carnival games, a visit from the Easter bunny, and more. For more information, call (718) 543-8672 or visit nyc.gov/parks.

Onstage

Lehman College's Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents salsa legends, **Ismael Miranda** and **Andy Montanez**, March 19 at 8 p.m. (tickets: \$50 to \$65); **Lehman College & Community Band**, performing classic and modern works, March 20 at 2 p.m. in the Lovinger Theatre (free); and **Dru Hill**, March 26 at 8 p.m. (tickets \$55 to \$85). Programs are subject to change. For more information and program details, call (718) 960-8833.

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Bronx Symphony String Quartet & Friends** (string instrument students from the Bronx, members of the UpbeatNYC

Children's Orchestra and the Celia Cruz H.S. Orchestra), March 26 at 2:30 p.m., performing music of Robert Schumann. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Hostos Community College's Center for the Arts & Culture, 450 Grand Concourse (149th Street), presents **En el Tiempo de las Mariposas (In the Time of the Butterflies)**, March 29 at 2 and 7 p.m., in the Repertory Theatre, in Spanish with English subtitles (info: (718) 518-4455); and **Tito Puente Legacy Project: The History of Latin Jazz Part VI**, through April 30, at 11 a.m. in the Longwood Art Gallery (info: (718) 518-6656); (both free; tickets are required and must be picked up at box office); and **La Gringa**, March 18

Photo courtesy Hostos Community College Center for Arts and Culture
YOU WON'T REGRET seeing the History of Latin Jazz Part VI, a tribute to Tito Puente's Legacy, playing through April 30.

at 7:40 p.m., in the Repertory Theatre (\$15; \$5/students and under 18). For more information, call (718) 518-4455 or visit www.hostoscenter.org.

Events

The NYC Department of Parks invites the public to a free performance of Shakespeare's **Romeo and Juliet**, presented across NYC by the Public Theatre's Mobile Unit. Norwood's show is at Williamsbridge Oval on April 2 at 1 p.m. For more information and required RSVP, email sarah.bishow@parks.nyc.gov.

NYS Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj invites the public to his **Health & Wellness Fair**, March 18 from 4 to 7 p.m. at MS 80, 149 E. Mosholu Pkwy., N. Events include free demos and giveaways, healthcare facilities and providers, and nutrition and fitness information. For more information, call (718) 409-0109.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Little Plants, Big Prints, to make large-scale prints from construction paper, March 19 and 20; and Three-Ring Mandalas, to create your own mandala using your own life with special papers and natural materials, March 26 and 27; both in WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also offered: **Concert**, featuring pianist performing classical music, March 20 at 2 p.m. in Armor Hall (tickets: \$28; \$22/members; \$15/ages 8 to 18; \$12/members). 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 ext. 251.

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; pre-registration required), Animal Mask Making, March 17, Funny Bunny Basket Making, March 24; and Baby Animal Book Making, March 31; **The**

Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: (ages 3 to 12), play presented by the Traveling Lantern, March 19 at 2 p.m.; and **Goldfish Observation**: (ages 7 to 11; preregistration required), March 29 at 4 p.m. Adults can enjoy: **film**: "Tender Mercies," March 19 at 2:30 p.m.; and **Computer Basics**: March 29 at 2 p.m. Teens/young adults can attend: **SAT Verbal/Writing**: to review ways to improve their score while doing practice problems and learning new strategies, March 23 at 4 p.m.; and **film**: "He Named Me Malala," March 31 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

The Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **St. Patrick's Day Scavenger Hunt**: (ages 5 to 14), to search for clues and win prizes, March 17 from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; **Read to Succeed - Dr. Seuss Celebration**: (ages 0 to 12 years), interactive musical delivering the performing arts in creative, hands-on musical experiences, March 18 at 3:30 p.m.; and **Build Your Own Bird Feeder**: (ages 5 to 12), to learn about science while helping the local wildlife, March 22 at 3:30 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **film**: "In the Heart of the Sea," March 26 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: **Kids Get Active Fridays at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), to enjoy dance and zumba, March 18 and 25; **Kids' Pajama Party**: (ages 18 months to 12 years; registration required), to create a craft and participate in read-alouds, March 21 at 6 p.m. Adults can attend **Computer Basics at noon**: March 17, 24 and 31. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by March 21 for the next publication date of March 31.



File Photo/Adi Talwar

COME TO THE free Spring Egg Hunt on March 19 for relay races, carnival games and more.

Bedford Park Mother Missing, Police Look to Question Husband

(continued from page 1)

chair of Community Board 7. "We want everyone to take the posters and post it," said Walker-Santiago, holding up a missing person poster featuring a smiling Rahman. "She's a very attractive, only 30-year-old woman with a young daughter. And we do not know to this day what happened."

Police spent more than a week zeroing in on the couple's abandoned one-family home. On March 6, a cadre of investigators, officers and a cadaver dog spent the day combing through the home off Jerome Avenue. It had been empty except for stacks of mail left unattended for months. Inside, police found the second floor bedroom freshly painted and major flooding in the basement. In front of the home was a mound of dirt neighbors said was dug up by police.

Rahman, a nurse at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan, was reported missing by the hospital's security team Dec. 8 after Rahman did not report in for work. They had gone to the home that week and were told by Chowdury that his wife abruptly left to her native Bangladesh after learning her parents were in an accident. He told hospital police Rahman would be back in March. When she was expected for work, she didn't show. That's when the hospital notified the 52nd Precinct, where officers rushed to the home, broke the door down and found nothing.

"The last time I seen the husband was Dec. 15, and he told me, 'watch my house because I got to go to my country,'" said John Garcia, a next-door neighbor who told the *Norwood News* he barely spoke to the family.

But Chowdury's story of an "accident" was a ruse, according to police, who were later told by Rahman's parents that he and his daughter took a one-stop flight to Bangladesh to look for her. He has since not responded to calls from the police. He is not considered a suspect at this point, though he is wanted for questioning.

A report by the *New York Daily News* said Rahman had booked a flight in December and would return Feb. 2, which was later changed to May 2, though authorities have no proof she left the country.

Bangladesh, part of the subcontinent of India, has extradition laws, giving outside authorities the chance to haul fugitives back to the U.S. Though Chowdury fled to Bangladesh, it's unclear what part of the country he settled in.

"We simply need a destination to go and find him," said Mujumder.

Police spent the weekend of March

5 excavating the front side of the home, with a police dog brought in for help. Nothing turned up. The police have since left the house, though they sealed the front door, conforming to standard protocol.

Neighbors along the block knew little about the couple, who would be seen shopping at the local C-Town Supermarket on the same block. There was nothing amiss, according to neighbors, who

all said the family seemed unassuming and usually kept to themselves.

At the rally, Walker-Santiago called on neighbors to be compelled to call even if there's a slight possibility it could help the police. "If you are a resident, her friend, a staff member, a neighbor in this community who saw her, heard from her or may know something, would you please pick up the phone and call the precinct?" asked Walker-Santiago.



Photo courtesy NYPD

MOHAMMAD CHOWDURY

The Cardinal McCloskey Community Charter School

Please visit us at www.CMCSCharter.org for more information, to sign our petition and to provide your input on our survey form.



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