



NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 29, No 25 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • DEC. 22, 2016-JAN. 4, 2017



INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS | PG. 4



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IN THE BRONX | PGS. 8-9

GJONAJ DECLARES RUN FOR COUNCIL

Candidacy could keep Assembly seat vacant for one year



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In Briggs Ave. Blaze**
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Comes to Kingsbridge
Heights Biz Strip**
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pg 14

Photo by Bob Kappstatter

ASSEMBLYMAN MARK GJONAJ announces a run for the New York City Council. His wife can be seen in the background.

By **DAVID CRUZ**

State Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj, whose 80th Assembly District edges into Norwood, has become the latest candidate to jump into the race for the City Council seat for the East Bronx.

Four others have already de-

clared a run in the Democratic Primary for the 13th Council District seat, which covers a portion of Norwood, as well as Throggs Neck, City Island, Morris Park, Country Club, Al-lerton and Pelham Parkway. The seat is now held by Councilman Jimmy Vacca, who is

term-limited.

The mudslinging has already begun, with one of Gjonaj's opponents charging that a Gjonaj win could leave the Assembly District without representation in Albany.

Standing before some 200 supporters that included some

of the Assembly district's movers and shakers at the Chipewa Democratic Club in Westchester Square, the Democratic Party candidate touted a platform of economic development, preserving and improving quality of life, and an-

(continued on page 15)

Vol. 29, No. 25

Norwood News is published bi-weekly on Thursdays by Mosholu Preservation Corporation (MPC)
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EDITORIAL

Evaluating Our Predictions of 2016

The *Norwood News* took a look back at 2016's first editorial, "Welcoming 2016 With Predictions on New Round of Stories," which forecasted stories for the next 12 months. With that, we look back on these predictions and what really happened:

Securing the Oval: 2015 saw more and more police making arrests at Williamsbridge Oval Park, a park frequented by hundreds daily. Fires tormented police for months, but have since subsided. That's a good thing. Safeguarding the park, a key source of entertainment for a largely working class community, is critical. If a populace fears a park, it will only signal a reduced quality of life. Police have been conducting patrols, and it's best they adhere to that practice.

Taking Out Gangs/Crews: Tip of the hat to the 52nd Precinct for taking out a massive gang at East 194th Street in August, an area where too many residents are still afraid to walk around at night. The apprehension of 39 gangbangers became a highlight for the Five-Two, inspiring its commanding officer to award some of the operation's officers with the "Take-down Award" at the 52nd Precinct Community Council's Fellowship Breakfast. The police won't say this, but more and more gangs/crews continue to lurk within the 52nd Precinct. They're in areas like Tracey Towers and within sections of Bedford Park south. It's only a matter of time before we hear of another arrest.

Kingsbridge Armory: This is perhaps a sore subject for Kingsbridge stakeholders, who thought the Kingsbridge Armory, which was intended for the world's largest ice skating center, would be shovel ready. Unfortunately, when lawyers get involved, in this case lawyers with the de Blasio administration, it becomes a mess. At the center of this dispute is whether ice center developers have the right financing in place to proceed with the first phase of

the project. The city doesn't think so despite all these assurances from developers that it does. And so it has, for the last year, remained at a standstill with no end in sight. It's a shame that the project, touted by Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. and given nominal praise by Mayor Bill de Blasio, is frozen. It's a bad pun, though there's no other way around it. It's too bad Diaz can't use his political juice to grease the wheels more.

Dec. 10, 2016 marked three years since the New York City Council voted in favor of the project. Since then, the Council, including the sitting Councilman for the district that overlaps with the Armory, Councilman Fernando Cabrera, has remained neutral on the matter, which is a shame. Perhaps 2017 will see a shift in tone.

Gentrification: The G-word remained a hot button issue in a borough undergoing changes. The South Bronx, specifically Mott Haven/Hunts Point was chief among those areas gentrified, according to estimates by the NYU Furman Center, a think tank group. Figures show rents have risen by 28 percent in the last 24 years, according to the Furman Center. Meantime, Norwood/Kingsbridge Heights have seen a 17.5 percent increase in the last 24 years, ranking the neighborhood as one of 15 neighborhoods seeing gentrification. All eyes are on the Jerome Avenue stretch, beginning at East 184th Street all the way down to East 167th Street. The idea of an improved neighborhood works, though not at the expense of removing its existing population, which settled in that neighborhood first. The de Blasio administration and the New York City Department of City Planning should constructively consider the people who have carved lives there and consider other forms of neighborhood improvement. Until then, the protests will continue.

Election Races: The election race presented plenty of surprises on the federal

level, where the United States now plunges into a Trump presidency that will long be remembered as its most shocking. Trump did not win the popular vote; that went to his opponent, Hillary Clinton, a candidate with so many skeletons in her political closet that it cost her the election. The president-elect is coming into the White House with no political skeletons, but give him time. On a local federal level, 2016 saw Congressman Charles Rangel retire after 46 years in office. Rangel didn't pay too much attention to the Bronx portion of his 13th Congressional District, which did hurt him when backing Assemblyman Keith Wright to replace him. Wright, the presumptive frontrunner, had lost to state Senator Adriano Espaillat. This led Espaillat to becoming Congress's first Dominican-born legislator and reflecting a demographics shift in the majority of the district.

On the state level, other races went to the predicted winner. Assemblyman Jose Rivera, whose participation is at times sporadic, once again secured a victory. He faced a formidable opponent in Ischia Bravo, clinching more votes than any Rivera opponent. We missed our prediction that Rivera will give up his seat for his daughter, former Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera, but then again, Rivera hasn't entered his new term yet.

On the other hand, the *Norwood News* was on point when it predicted a tamer Albany due to the removal of Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos. Tip of the hat to US Attorney Preet Bharara, who stood up to take out the political trash.

So why did we go backwards? The answer: to look forward. In some ways 2016 was a year best described as "two steps forward, one step back." While there was progress on some fronts, others were just too complicated to proceed. For the Bronx to keep moving forward, it should begin taking risks. We'll leave it to the reader to decide on those risks.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 committee meetings are held on the following dates at the board office, 229 E. 204th St., at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Executive Committee meets on Jan. 3; Public Safety & Quality of Life Committee meets on Jan. 5; and Education, Youth & Libraries Committee meets on Jan. 3 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION meets Wednesday, Jan. 4, at 8 p.m. at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So. (Apt. B1). For more information, email the group at bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers their New Year's resolutions and hopes and wishes for 2017.



I'm trying to quit smoking and make more money, if I can find a better job. I signed up with the Emergency Response Team for the snow removal with the Department of Sanitation and that pays \$18 an hour. I hope that the situation with global warming gets resolved, because this weather we've been having is crazy. It's cold when it should be hot and hot when it should be cold.

George Morales
Morris Park



My hopes for 2017 is to do better than I did in 2016. I'm going to start a new job, so career-wise I'm going to be doing much better. Hopefully the country moves forward and not backwards and [president-elect] Donald Trump proves he's not the big mess-up that people think he is, so I'm optimistic.

Joseph Gardella
Bedford Park



My New Year's resolution is to eat better, the same resolution I make every year. And for 2017, I just hope that we can come together as a nation because we are deeply divided and we need to come together.

Linda Eversley
Bedford Park



[M]y New Year's resolution is to go to the gym more and read all of the Harry Potter books. My hopes for 2017 include finishing my degree at Bronx Community College and start a career in nursing.

Carmen Sanchez
Bedford Park



This year my gifts are being focused on items that will bring equity to my dear ones, such as exercise equipment, electronic gadgets and artwork. To all my friends in northern Manhattan and the Bronx, I wish that we all stay strong mentally as well as physically in 2017. Since we are going into a very difficult phase in our American history, God bless America!

Rafael Gomez Luna
Washington Heights

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Manhunt Continues for Norwood Deli Bandits

By DAVID GREENE

Detectives continue to search for the two brazen bandits who robbed a deli at gunpoint in Norwood on Dec. 6, clearing out the cash register of nearly \$2,000.

The gunmen forced two employees and a customer of Express Deli at 3226 Bainbridge Ave. to the back of the store, taking their cellphones before making their getaway north of Bainbridge Avenue. No injuries were reported.

Detectives continue to view surveillance video for clues, and forensics experts continue to look at a glove left at the scene by one of the assailants.

Police described the two suspects as black males, each wearing black hooded jackets and black pants.

According to store employees, this was the first time the store had been robbed since it first opened in 2005. Omar, an employee, explained, "It was my cousin and another worker who works overnight. They were very shaken up because [the thieves] had their guns on them." "I think they were young kids from the neighborhood. They came in like they knew us already. They seemed to know where everything was inside the store."

The employees claimed police never followed up after the initial report and were surprised when several television news crews showed up two days later, shortly after police released the surveillance video.

Anyone with any information on the pair is asked to call Crime Stoppers at 1 (800) 577-TIPS. All calls are confidential.



Image courtesy NYPD

SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE SHOWS

one of the crooks involved in the nighttime robbery that occurred on Dec. 6 at a Bainbridge Avenue deli.



Photo courtesy Jimmy Velez

FIREFIGHTERS BATTLE A blaze at a home in Bedford Park on Dec. 13.

Elderly Woman, Seven Firefighters Injured In Briggs Avenue Blaze

By DAVID GREENE

The holidays didn't fare well for a home destroyed by a raging fire that left eight people, including an elderly woman and seven firefighters injured in Bedford Park.

Fire and rescue personnel were dispatched to the two and-a-half story home at 2854 Briggs Avenue, at East 198th Street in Bedford Park at 11:15 a.m. on Dec. 13.

The fire quickly spread to an adjacent home at 2856 Briggs Ave.

According to area resident, Jimmy Velez, who snapped several photos of the scene on his cellphone, claimed there was a delay of several minutes before firefighters could get water on the fire.

"They thought the fire was coming from a different house, because the smoke was coming from the back," Velez said.

Witnessing the injured being removed from the home, Velez recalled, "They pulled out seven firefighters who got hurt and then they brought out the old lady," adding that the victim was

not seriously injured.

The FDNY reported that the fire was brought under control at 1:22 p.m. and all of the injured were removed to area hospitals. None of the injuries were considered life threatening.

Officials reported 170 mem-

bers from 40 units battled the blaze that destroyed both homes. Firefighters also rescued several cats from one of the properties.

The American Red Cross of Greater New York assisted at least 10 people from five families who were displaced by the fire.



Photo courtesy Jimmy Velez

FIREFIGHTERS KNOCK OUT the blaze in Bedford Park properties at 1:22 p.m. on Dec. 13, some two hours after it was first reported.



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Traveling to Kingsbridge Heights Biz Strip, Bklyn. Councilman Finds Pattern of Neglect

By DEBORAH CRUZ

A group of business owners gathered in front of Capitol Diner on Kingsbridge Road and Jerome Avenue, to discuss an ongoing heat issues involving six businesses on West Kingsbridge Road. The conversation soon went around the corner, to Com Tam Ninh Kiev, a local Vietnamese eatery also dealing with a landlord issue.

The meeting was organized by the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, where organizers brought Brooklyn Councilman Robert E. Cornegy Jr., into the conversation. It made sense. Though from Brooklyn, Cornegy is chair of the Small Business Committee. For more than an hour, organizers heard from business owners' continued fight for equity from their landlords.

Carlos Nieves, the longtime owner of Flowers by Carlos on Kingsbridge Road and Morris Avenue, sat in the Vietnamese restaurant waiting for the Commercial Tenant Help Event. As a business owner he had faced injustice when a new landlord bought the property five years ago, and doubled his rent. Additionally, he kept Nieves without a lease fivesince then. Recently, the landlord increased his rent again by 34 percent of his already doubled rent. "I'm ready to go out, my landlord just hiked up my rent so that's it," said Nieves. Unfortunately, he is not the only business who has rent issues with his landlord.

Councilman Robert E. Cornegy, Council Member of District 36 in Brooklyn and Chair of the Small Business Committee, led the discussion where many of the present tenants told him the issues they have had with their landlords. "It is against the law for a landlord to withhold essential services," said the Councilman. "Before [laws] would only protect housing tenants. Now it goes for small business owners as well."

Many business owners have faced harassment, and neglect from the landlords. "There are holes in the ceiling that have been there for a very long time," Lucila Savedraa., owner of Lucy Flower Shop, told the Councilman when sharing her problems. "There has been no hot water since



Photo by Deborah Cruz

BROOKLYN COUNCILMAN ROBERT Cornegy Jr. (second from left), chair of the Committee on Small Business, hears from distressed merchants in Kingsbridge Heights.

"I first began there 26 years ago," she said Savedraa.

"When we try to negotiate the lease, they try to manipulate a sense of getting extra money from us if we want to stay," said Christian Ramos, owner of a shoe repair shop. "We want to stay and every time we are going to renew the lease we have to prepare some money on the side." The Councilman quickly informed Ramos that it was what he was facing was extortion.

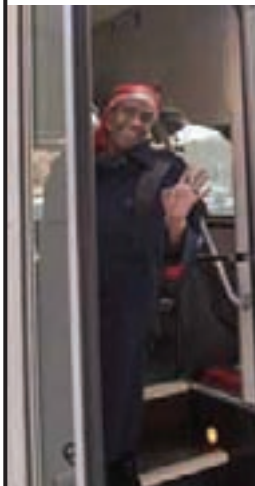
"I have my little box of savings for when the time comes to renew my lease," Ramos said.

Most of the business owners that had come to the meeting have not had their lease renewed for years while some have a month-to-month lease, scared that at any moment they could be kicked out.

"What I'm seeing that it is less about individual stores and more about this being a pattern," said Cornegy Jr. "There is a pattern of neglect and to some degree of harassment."

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Christmas

1

The Bronx stands aglow in holiday tree lightings and other Yuletide events this holiday season. *The Norwood News* captured some events throughout.

Photo courtesy Serviam Gardens

(1) SERVIAM GARDENS, A senior home in Bedford Park, lit up its Christmas tree on Dec. 8 to awesome fanfare.

Photo by Miriam Quinones

(2) SANTA CLAUS AND one of his many helpers wave to the camera as they trekked Webster Avenue as part of the 52nd Precinct's flotilla presentation on Dec. 13.

Photo courtesy Montefiore Health System

(3) MEMBERS OF FDNY Engine 62/Ladder Co. 32 and Santa Claus share a moment with patients at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore, hospital-bound during the holiday seasons. New York's Bravest donated toys and other gifts to the kids.

Photo courtesy Aquinas High School

(4) AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL students sing at the annual Christmas Concert dubbed Comfort & Joy. The choir was joined by the String Orchestra and the Dancers at the concert in Dec. 9.

Photo by Christine Owusu-Ampaw

(5) SANTA CLAUS WAVES to onlookers while on a flotilla chugging down Webster Avenue on Dec. 13. The flotilla was organized by the 52nd Precinct Community Council.

Photo by David Cruz

(6) SANTA CLAUS JOINS members of Community Board 7 for a Christmas tree lighting celebration on Dec. 7 along Mosholu Parkway at Bainbridge Avenue.

Photo by Miriam Quinones

(7) OFFICERS FROM THE 52nd Precinct join Santa Claus and some of his helpers during a flotilla march on Dec. 13 on Webster Avenue by Mosholu Parkway.

Photo courtesy White Plains Road/East 233rd Street Merchants Association

(8) ORGANIZERS WITH THE White Plains Road/East 233rd Street Merchants Association, join elected officials Councilman Andy King, Congressman Eliot Engel and state Senator-Elect Jamaal Bailey, for a photo moment at the merchant group's tree lighting and toy giveaway event on Dec. 12.

Photo courtesy Office of the Bronx Borough President

(9) BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT Ruben Diaz Jr. (left) joins Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus at the annual holiday tree lighting ceremony on Dec. 8.

Photo by David Cruz

(10) A LITTLE GIRL stares with wonder at the Christmas tree lit along Mosholu Parkway at Bainbridge Avenue on Dec. 7 courtesy of Community Board 7.

5

2

7

in the Bronx



3



4



6



8



9



10

Zipline Coming To the Bronx

The days of traveling outside the Bronx for a ziplining excursion are no more.

The Bronx Zoo plans to install the borough's only zipline, according to DNAinfo. The 45-foot high zipline will run across the Bronx River from an elevated west bank tower to a lower tower.

Ziplining is an extremely rare experience in the city, with only the borough of Queens having a permanent site for this activity.

The Bronx Zoo is expected to have the zipline up and running by spring 2017.

—David Cruz

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Doing Business With the City



Photo by Daniela Beasley

A REP WITH New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) (left) helps a local merchant become certified to contract with the City at an open house held at Lehman College, contributing to the City's goal of having 9,000 minority and woman-owned businesses certified to do business with the City by 2019. The \$16 billion in contracts committed to these businesses is backed by Mayor Bill de Blasio's Office of Minority, Woman-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) and the SBS.

Waiting for Santa



Photo by Miriam Quinones

NEIGHBORHOOD PARENTS AND their kids brave the snow and the temperatures as they wait for their one-on-one conversation with Santa Claus, who made an appearance at Leroy Pharmacy at 314 E. 204th St. for the 6th annual Santa Comes to Town holiday event on Dec. 17. The East 204th Street/Bainbridge Avenue Merchants Association, Mosholu Preservation Corporation (publishers of the Norwood News), LaSorsa Chevrolet Buick, and Foodtown were among the sponsors for the toy giveaway event, which served as a giveback to the community.

With No Signed Leases, Norwood Tenants Had Little Recourse

By DANIELA BEASLEY

Tenants are displaced by landlords using unsavory and sometimes illegal tactics all over the Bronx, oftentimes because the tenants are unaware of the value in having concrete lease agreements when renting an apartment.

But in other cases, a change in management of a building leaves the new landlord cleaning up the messes of the previous one. In the case of Rebecca Smith, Paula Matheson, and Haskell Shabi neither the tenant nor landlord regulations could rectify their situation and ended in two evictions and an investment turned into a money pit.

The property, 3176 Bainbridge Ave., was once owned by Benedict (Benny) Walsh, who also owned a building in Brooklyn. Walsh not only disregarded all complaints made by Smith, Matheson and other tenants, but allegedly had been evicting tenants from their apartments without offering a reason, according to interviews with tenants. There wasn't even a written eviction notice and didn't allow the tenants enough time to find other living arrangements.

"When I moved in, I was aware the landlord didn't give me a lease, but I didn't know that it was an unregulated building," Smith said. "I wasn't necessarily concerned about the lease because in the beginning I did trust the landlord."

However shortly into her 10-year stay, Smith grew accustomed to being without basic essential services that most landlords are supposed to provide such as heat and hot water. In all of her time there, her ceiling was leaking in four different places. To get by, she used buckets all around her apartment to keep it from flooding. Despite that, she still stayed because the rent was cheap.

"We had no privacy," said Matheson. "When I went to work, these three men were in my apartment and Benny said they were workers fixing things in my apartment, but nothing had changed and then my toilet was broken."



Photo by David Cruz

THE HANDFUL OF TENANTS who once lived at 3176 Bainbridge Ave. under prior management have since moved.

Matheson once had a lease at the building, but didn't get a renewal for 2016. Which was when Walsh began the process of evicting Smith, Matheson and other tenants.

"The landlord can choose to give you a lease or not," explained Sally Dunford, the executive director of West Bronx Housing. "Tenants in these cases have the right to due process only." Due process, in this case, means that tenants cannot be locked out, have their things displaced by the landlord, or have services disconnected.

In May, Walsh informed the tenants that he had sold the building to Haskell Shabi, transferred all of their deposits to him and left Shabi's name and contact information before leaving.

"The landlord before me did not fix their boilers for nine years. I fixed all of their boilers, tended to all of their complaints, and I was very respectful of [Smith and Matheson]. And I did everything legally," Shabi told the *Norwood News*.

When Shabi bought the building, tenants didn't have leases, opening the door for Shabi to legally evict them. And with the amount of rent that he knew he could get for the apartments ver-

sus what Smith and Matheson were paying, he chose to evict. Shabi explained that this action was needed in order to turn a

profit on his investment in the building, otherwise he would be losing money.

"It was a Catch-22 situation. The repairs were finally done, but of no benefit to me," Smith said. "When everything was fixed, he said, 'I've done my part, now you do yours,' as in he wanted me to get out."

Matheson claims Shabi used more forceful tactics to get her out of her apartment. "He would harass me and call late at night trying to get me out of the apartment," she said.

Both Smith and Matheson have since moved out and into new apartments. However the search for apartments was not easy and both wish they were still living on Bainbridge Avenue.

Shabi has contacted Smith to return her security deposit, but won't be giving Matheson her deposit back. Legally, Shabi can keep the security deposit given the \$8,000 in repairs he made to Matheson's former apartment, claiming the conditions went beyond normal wear and tear.

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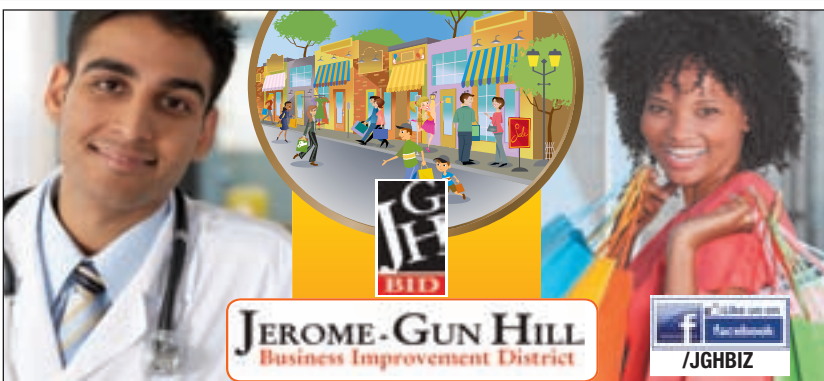


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Senior Center Director – Mosholu Montefiore Community Center seeks an experienced Program Director to run its Ft. Independence Senior Center. Duties include: maintaining oversight of daily congregational meal program, teaching group activities, marketing/promoting the center, conducting new member intakes, supervising staff, etc. A BA degree in Human Services or a related field and 3-5 years of relevant experience required. A NYC Food Handler's Certificate is preferred. We offer a competitive salary and benefits. Submit resume and cover letter including salary requirements to: jobs@mmcc.org.

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF Sage Logistics, LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 10/11/2016. Office location: Bronx County. SSNY has been designated as agent upon whom process against it may be served. The Post Office address to which the SSNY shall mail a copy of any process against the LLC served upon him/her is: 2255 Cruger Avenue, Apt. 2E, Bronx, N.Y. 10467, which is also the principal business location. Purpose: any lawful act or activity.



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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Tax Preparers Registration

The 2017 tax preparer online registration is available on the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance website, www.tax.ny.gov. Preparers who are paid to prepare at least one tax return in a year must be at least 18 years old, be a high school graduate, take four hours of annual continuing education, and take a 16-hour basic tax course for those who've been professionally preparing NYS returns for less than three years. For more information, log on to www.tax.ny.gov.

Free Composting

Repurpose food by bringing it to Lehman College's Food Scrap Drop-Off location, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., Mondays from 8 to 10 a.m. when school is in session. The goal is to reduce the amount of compostable waste that goes into landfills. For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

Drug Treatment Help

Those struggling from drug ad-

diction can log on to FindAddiction-Treatment.ny.gov to find up-to-date information on available treatment beds, outpatient services and opioid treatment programs anywhere in New York State. To learn more, call the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services toll free at (877) 846-7369.

Apply to a Community Board

Applications for placement into a local community board are available. City residents who qualify must either reside, work or have a professional or other significant interest in the Bronx. Applications are open to anyone as young as 16 years old. Deadline for application submission is Feb. 3, 2017. Interested applicants can log on to bronxboropres.nyc.gov, or call (718) 590-3914.

Holiday Shopping Tax Break

A public service reminder to shoppers: All clothing and footwear items sold for less than \$110 in NYC are exempt from nearly nine percent

of state and local sales tax, according to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance.

Coat Drive

New York Cares is running its annual coat drive for individuals to donate gently used, freshly laundered coats through Dec. 31. Coats may be dropped off at your nearest police station. For more information and locations, visit newyorkcares.org/coats.

Snow Laborers Sought

NYC seeks emergency snow laborers to help remove snow and ice from bus stops, step streets, and other locations throughout the city this winter. Interested applicants must be at least 18, eligible to work in the USA and capable of performing heavy physical labor. Registration is at the DOT garage, Bronx Yard, Moshulu Avenue and Broadway (Van Cortlandt Park), weekdays from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Bring two small photos (1-1/2" square), original and copy of two

forms of ID, and SS card or Tax ID number. Hourly salary is \$15; and \$22.50 after 40 hours are worked in a week.

Apply to Kindergarten

Applications are now available for Kindergarten at New York City public schools for children born in 2012. Parents can apply by calling (718) 935-2400, online at schools.nyc.gov/applyonline, or by visiting the Department of Education's Family Welcome Center at 1 Fordham Plaza, 7th floor (this site is for families enrolling their children into school districts 7, 9, and 10). The application deadline is Jan. 13.

Bias Reporting Hotline

Residents who have experienced bias-motivated threats, harassment or discrimination are encouraged to call Division of Human Rights' toll-free hotline at (888) 392-3644 weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. To report a crime or fear for your safety, call 911 immediately.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

More Holiday Events

The Van Cortlandt Jewish Center, 3880 Sedgwick Ave., presents free Chanukah Celebration, Dec. 27 at 7:15 p.m. featuring pianist, latkes and jelly donuts, a raffle for adults and games and prizes for children. For more information, call (718) 884-6105.

The public is invited to a free Parkchester Annual Kwanzaa Celebration, Dec. 30 from 4 to 9 p.m. at St. Helena's Church, 1315 Olmstead Ave. Free food will be served. Please bring handcraft or educational children's gifts and games (books or toys). For more information, call (718) 409-5253 or (347) 525-4943.

Events

The New York Botanical Garden presents the **Holiday Train Show** exhibition in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, through Jan. 16, featuring numerous NYC landmarks made from plant parts and large-scale model trains. New this year is the Coney Island roller coaster. Also scheduled is **Bar Car Nights**, 7 to 10 p.m., through Jan. 14 (call for schedule), for adults 21+ which includes street performers, ice sculpting demonstrations, stilt walking and a dance theatre. The Pine Tree Cafe hosts musicians (\$25/members; \$35/non members, advance tickets recommended). For children, there is **Evergreen Express**, through Jan. 22, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., in the Everett Children's Adventure Garden, to explore plant parts, make crafts, create a train puppet, join a musical marching parade, and more. Also, there is **All Aboard With Thomas & Friends**, Dec. 31 to Jan. 22, a sing-along ride including professional photos offered. In addition, there are **afternoon tours** on the holiday weekend (meet at the Reflecting Pool at the Leon Levy Visitor Center). For

more information or a detailed schedule, call (718) 817-8700.

Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents the following for children: **Hands-On Projects at 4 p.m.:** (ages 7 to 12; preregistration required), Santa and Snowman Making, Dec. 22; and Fingerprint Book Making, Dec. 20. Adults can attend **Chess:** Dec. 23, 4 to 6 p.m. (chess set provided). For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nysl.org.

The Moshulu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children ages 3 to 12: **Life Sized Candy Land:** super sized game, crafts, and eat candy, Dec. 30 at 3 p.m.; **Winterfest:** crafts and games, Dec. 31 at 4 p.m.; and **Art Wall:** display your artwork or take them home (coloring pages will be provided). Adults can enjoy: **Free Computer Classes:** to learn email and basic computer information, Wednesdays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.; and **Knitting Circle:** Thursdays at 3 p.m. For



File Photo

CLOSE OUT THE year with scheduled programming at the Moshulu Public Library (pictured).

more information, call (718) 882-8239.

For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for children: **Kids Get Active Fridays at 3 p.m.:** (ages 5 to 12), dance moves on the Wii game console, Dec. 23 and 30. Adults can attend **Computer Basics at noon:** Dec. 22 and 29.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Dec. 26 for the next publication date of Jan 5, 2017.

CORRECTION

In our previous issue's Inquiring Photographer asking where shoppers would buy their holiday gifts, the 5th photo was of Angel Seymore of Kingsbridge, with the incorrect quote. The correct statement is as follows:

I don't have my complete list, but I'm working on it. I do most of my shopping in the stores. I have a hard time getting deliveries to my building from the post office. I like that visiting stores there's no waiting for delivery. I will visit Best Buy and P.C. Richards and Toys R Us. I will visit Fordham Road and the Game Stop at Fordham [Road] and Webster [Avenue]. They are having good deals this year.

The *Norwood News* regrets the error.



Photo courtesy Van Cortlandt Jewish Center

CELEBRATE THE FESTIVAL of lights at the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center on Dec. 27 for the annual Chanukah Celebration (see Editor's Pick for more information).

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Gjonaj Declares Run for Council

(continued from page 1)

swering the needs of an overburdened middle class in the district, home to some of the more socially conservative neighborhoods.

"The needs of this community have been overwhelmingly local issues," Gjonaj said at his campaign kickoff event on Monday, Dec. 12. "Talking about real local issues, like Rodman's Neck in City Island has overstayed its welcome, talking about issues where we need additional law enforcement, where we want to not only preserve our quality of life and our safety, but improve it and make it better."

State Assembly members are paid significantly less than Council members - \$79,500, plus per diem and travel expenses, and no member items. They are, however, allowed to hold outside jobs. The City Council recently voted itself a 32 percent pay raise, from \$112,500 to \$148,000. Council members also receive discretionary funds.

Gjonaj is allowed to keep his Assembly seat while running for the Council.

The 80th Assembly District stretches into the east Bronx neighborhoods of Morris Park and Pelham Parkway, where Gjonaj draws most of his support. He also maintains a strong presence in the Norwood area on the fringe of his assembly district. His C.A.R.E.S. bus, used for constituent services, was recently present at East 204th Street by Bainbridge Avenue. Meantime, Gjonaj has used his personal monies to either host or sponsor events around the neighborhood, garnering enough support to win a third term to the Assembly this year.

With Gjonaj entering the race, the possibility of an un-represented 80th Assembly District in 2018 does exist, said John Doyle, another challenger in the Democratic Primary for the council seat. Doyle argued that Governor Andrew Cuomo has not ordered a special election in cases where state legislators vacate a seat mid-term for a Council seat since 2013. "If Mark Gjonaj wins this seat there's a chance they'll have no voice, the people that live in the 80th Assembly District," Doyle told the Norwood News. "That's a risk you shouldn't ask them to take."

Cuomo hasn't fully ignored requests for special elections, but he doesn't call them regularly.

Doyle, a communications director for the New York City Health & Hospitals Corp., was the second to enter the race. A grassroots advocate who's worked in previous campaigns and as community affairs director for state Senator Jeff Klein (who's backing Gjonaj), Doyle's base lies within City Island.

"I want to bring a new form of representation to the district," Doyle said. "I want to make sure people get a say in how their tax dollars are spent. I want to do town hall meetings in every com-

munity every year to promote direct accountability."

The New York City Campaign Finance Board ranked Doyle as the lead recipient for small contributions for the 2017 election cycle. Thus far, Doyle has raised \$33,835.93. Candidates who opt for the program receive 6-to-1 in matching funds, with certain contribution limits. Gjonaj, on the other hand, said he has no intention of utilizing public monies for his Council run, opting instead to use private contributions.

Monies aside, the two would still need support from the Bronx Democratic County Committee (BDCC), whose backing would bring financial support and manpower for canvassing and get-out-the-vote events. Democratic County leader and Assemblyman Marcos Crespo was absent from the Gjonaj announcement, and did not return a call for comment. He reportedly has told associates he is not quite ready to make a decision, "waiting for the dust to settle," before he throws his support to a candidate. County support is not always a guarantee of winning.

Despite BDCC support, Assemblyman Keith Wright lost his candidacy for the 13th Congressional District to now Congressman-elect Adriano Espaillat. Even Gjonaj, who won against former Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera in a hotly-contested Assembly race did not have County support.

Meanwhile, Vacca is supporting Marjorie Velazquez, District Leader for the 82nd Assembly District and wife of his former chief of staff, Jeff Lynch.

"I've seen firsthand Marjorie's energy and dedication to our community, and I know that she will be a strong voice for Bronx families," Vacca said in a statement announcing his support. "Marjorie will be a forward-looking, effective advocate for our children and seniors in the City Council. I will be hitting the campaign trail in the coming months to talk with voters about Marjorie and do everything I can to support her candidacy."

Grooming candidates is not new to Vacca. The most high-profile employee to come out of Vacca's office is Councilman Ritchie Torres of the 15th Council District.

"I definitely like to build on Jimmy [Vacca's] legacy," said Velazquez. "This is a man who has dedicated most of his life to public service."

Velazquez' platform includes improvements to education, public housing and fixing what amounts to a "transit desert" in the East Bronx. The de Blasio administration is set to expand ferry service from the Bronx to Manhattan to help ease long commutes for locals.

"We have ferry service going to Soundview, why not extend it into our district?" Velazquez asked. "You can do it at Ferry Point Park. There are various areas in the district where you could to-



Images courtesy of individual campaigns

OTHER CANDIDATES in the race for the 13th Council District include (clockwise from top right) John Marano, Marjorie Velazquez, Alex Gomez, and John Doyle.

tally put ferry service."

Velazquez hopes to fix what she called a gender gap in the City Council, which now has 13 female legislators among its 51 members. "The presidential election highlighted that there is a need for more women in leadership positions, not only in government, but also in different areas of their life," she said.

Should she win, Velazquez will be the first Latina Council member representing the 13th Council District.

Other candidates include John Marano, a retired police officer and firefighter and former chair of Bronx Community Board 10, whose borders mainly overlap with the 13th Council District. Marano was unavailable to speak to the Norwood News. On his website, he underscored a platform that intends to improve the quality of life for residents. "We need more police officers assigned to our precincts, PSA (Housing) and Transit units," Marano said. "I will fight to hire more police officers, and bring them to our neighborhoods in the Bronx."

Marano also pledged to improve conditions at buildings owned by the New York City Housing Authority, which he says needs to be further "inspected on a regular basis." Poor conditions in the building, he says, "need to be corrected in a timely manner."

The quality of life theme is a mantra for Alex Gomez, the first to declare a run to replace Vacca for the seat. A program director for Phipps Neighborhood

House, a social services non-profit, Gomez sees the need for more jobs for summer youth, the ability for young people to learn a trade before graduating high school, and a universal childcare program akin to Mayor Bill de Blasio's Universal Pre-K program.

"[De Blasio] left a gap with the individuals [with children] between the ages of one and four, who have to pay maybe 40 to 50 percent of their salary to find childcare that's not affordable. And I think the city should provide some sort of a voucher system where people can get affordable childcare based on their salary, on a sliding scale that maybe goes back to the era of Franklin Delano Roosevelt where childcare centers were popping up left and right because of the war," Gomez told the Norwood News. "But now we need these childcare facilities because we do have a large working community."

Gomez is aware he's the fringe candidate in a field largely dominated by insiders who've dipped in and out of BDCC's orbit. A meeting with Crespo in April 2015 supported that view. "He [Crespo] blatantly told me, 'No, we don't want an outsider. We want someone who has paid their dues to work themselves, and who has proven themselves. And we would support someone of our own group before we would someone outside the establishment.' And those were his words to me," Gomez said.

Additional reporting by Bob Kappstatter.



JEROME-GUN HILL
Business Improvement District

A woman with brown hair, wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt under a black vest, is smiling and holding several shopping bags. She is positioned in front of a large, white, curved structure that resembles a snowdrift. Above her, there are festive holiday decorations including green pine branches, gold and red striped candles, gold pinecones, and red and white striped candy canes. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white with bokeh light effects.

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