By DAVID CRUZ

The makeshift camp on a hilltop on East Mosholu Parkway North stood empty, and the circumstantial evidence of occupancy was clear: pillows, cookware, and empty gallons of water.

Residents say it’s an encampment for the homeless, a retreat for the night.

And should anyone be camped there at the predawn hours of Jan. 23, they will be among those counted by the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS). The agency, still attempting to find homes for the 62,000 homeless individuals, will once again conduct its annual Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE). It’s a federal mandate for DHS, which qualifies them for federal funds needed to reduce homelessness. DHS is now actively recruiting some 3,000 volunteers to take part in the one-night count.

This nighttime count, largely different from DHS’s own nightly count, attempts to get a snapshot on the state of street homelessness in the city. It also comes at a time of increased homeless-related complaints to 311 by those living within the communities of Norwood, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge Heights, Fordham, and University Heights.

For Norwood residents, (continued on page 15)
Cuomo Releases $108M Loan to Kingsbridge Ice Center Developers

By DAVID CRUZ

Governor Andrew Cuomo announced his administration will issue a $108 million loan to the beleaguered Kingsbridge National Ice Center (KNIC) project, once again jumpstarting a project that plunged into judicial turmoil last year.

The announcement came during Governor Cuomo’s roving State of the State address, this time held in Manhattan. There, Cuomo also announced $40 million in funding for Orchard Beach.

“We will invest in the Kingsbridge Armory and Orchard Beach for more desperately needed urban recreation opportunities,” Cuomo said in his speech.

Two state agencies, the Empire State Development Corporation and Public Authorities Control Board, had approved a $130 million loan to KNIC, funds that were needed to build the first phase of the project. The release of the funds was not possible until the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), the city’s real estate arm, released the lease to KNIC.

The projects have been universally cheered, though more so by Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., who’s linked the projects to his own future political ambitions. The news came a month before Diaz is expected to deliver his eighth State of the Borough address on Feb. 23.

In a statement, Diaz praised the decision while taking jabs at the de Blasio Administration for its “lack of partnership and enthusiasm” towards projects hailed by Bronx officials.

“Albany will allow [these projects] to prosper,” Diaz said in his statement. “We can only hope now that the administration will see the wisdom in bringing these projects to fruition.”

News of the funds release comes as a relief for KNIC, which experienced a setback last month when a Bronx judge dismissed a lawsuit filed by KNIC claiming the city breached its lease contract with the ice developers by not releasing a lease that remained in escrow while developers sought to secure funding.

The NYCEDC stood behind its decision over keeping the lease in escrow arguing that it was not comfortable in turning over the 99-year lease to a developer that did not have funds in hand. Attorneys for KNIC long argued that the state needed an active lease for it to release funds to KNIC.

Despite the ruling and the option of terminating the lease agreement, the NYCEDC said it would continue talks on keeping the project open.

Elected officials and community groups have been keeping an eye on developments.

State Senator Gustavo Rivera, a staunch proponent of the Armory, hailed the news “encouraging at a time when the future of this project is uncertain.” Among KNIC’s admirable qualities, Rivera notes, is agreeing to a Community Benefits Agreement, which guarantees jobs to Bronx residents while committing 50,000 square feet of community space.

Among the signers of the CBA is the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, which helped draft the document in 2013 following lengthy talks. In a statement, Alexis Francisco, a coalition member, argued that a dormant Armory “does nothing for our people, for the borough, or the city.”

An attorney representing KNIC declined to comment on Governor Cuomo’s announcement.

GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO speaks at his 2017 State of the State address at 1 World Trade Center on Jan. 9.

Photo by Kevin P. Coughlin/Office of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo

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: Community Relations/Long Term Planning & Economic Development Committee is on Jan. 19; and Website, Acknowledgment & Media Committee is on Jan. 25. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

There is no 52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL meeting in January.

The NYPD and Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit will host TOGETHER AS ONE NYC on Jan. 26 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at Latino Pastoral Action Center, 14 W. 170th St., between Inwood Avenue and Plaza Drive. To RSVP, email Lorraine. Perez@nypd.org or Kimberly.Ford@nypd.org. For more information, call (718) 299-4503.
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This week we asked readers the one thing they would like to see President-Elect Donald Trump do and/or not do in his first year in office.

I would like to see him make America great as he said he wants to do. I don't want to see him take away Obamacare, unless he can replace it with something that's going to be more effective and will include more people. I'm hopeful, let's give him a chance.
Barbara Wadell-Steele
Mott Haven

I don't want him to deport any immigrants, because this city was made by immigrants. I'm afraid of Donald Trump because he's going to deport me. I'm facing deportation for selling two $5 bags of marijuana to two undercover officers and they put a gun to my head and nearly killed me in 1997.
Juan Guzman
Norwood

I would like to see Donald Trump bring the country together and not cause even more division between the different nationalities and races.
Steve Avallone
Bedford Park

I would like to see him make it a little easier for students to get to college. I would like to go to college but it's really expensive. The one thing I would not like him to do is continue this division we have in this country. We're at a point where half of America is against the other half. We shouldn't be divided, so he should work on ways to make that better.
Shania Pryce
University Heights

The one thing I would like to see him do is repeal Obamacare, the reason being I don't believe they have a plan to replace it with. There's 20,000 people who will lose their healthcare, and I think that's crazy.
Walter Pofeldt
Throgs Neck
Residents opposing a plan to rearrange trees along Mosholu Parkway secured a victory after Community Board 7’s Parks Committee voted down the plan, ending a yearlong question over whether the New York City Department of Parks (DOP) would move forward with a project that wasn’t well received.

Elizabeth Quaranta, president of Friends of Mosholu Parkland, an advocacy group for the lea, didn’t characterize CB7’s decision as a win, but an education for the Parks Department.

“This is really just doing the right thing for the environment and our future for Mosholu [Parkway],” Quaranta said via a Facebook chat. “I wouldn’t call it a win.”

During their meeting on Jan. 11, Community Board 7’s Parks Committee voted to keep the dogwood trees where they are while requesting the mulch around each tree be reduced. The committee heard from the DOP, which presented alternatives to the current placement of the dogwood trees. Estimates for the three projects ranged from $475,000 to $919,000.

Much of why Parks revisited the issue stemmed from rectifying perceived issues of community etiquette. The current Parks administration believed the agency bypassed CB7 for input in 2012 during initial talk of the project that eventually saw 200 dogwood trees planted at the thruway’s center mall. The project doubled as a sponge for excessive flooding while deterring residents from playing organized football or soccer games there.

When the project was first introduced, CB7 was not given the chance to formally offer input on the project, according to Barbara Stronczer, Parks Committee chair. Foresters for the DOP opted to simply gauge interest from residents who voiced opinions on the parkway’s overall appearance, according to Quaranta, who presented a petition that opposed removal.

Though the trees have been widely accepted, the presence of mulch around each of the trees drew criticism from Stronczer who opined the trees have darkened a parkway that’s largely green.

Commissioner for the Bronx Department of Parks, Carmen Rodriguez, warned that the second request can be “more complicated,” since the agency’s seeding machinery may not be equipped to plant seeds around the perimeter of trees.

The committee still hopes to see at least the parkway’s perimeters re-seeded. The full board is expected to vote on the matter sometime in February.
More than a dozen convicted sex offenders, with convictions that include the rape of a 10-year-old child, have moved within the confines of the 52nd Precinct.

Officers at the precinct, which covers the neighborhoods of Norwood, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge Heights, Fordham, and University Heights, were made aware of the move by probationary officers. Officers have since stopped by community meetings to alert residents.

Sex offenders are required to register their name on a database following their conviction and release. They must tell authorities they’ve moved to a new neighborhood each time, or possibly serve time.

The registry can be found at http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/nsor/. Users can browse the registry by the offender’s last name, county, or zip code, which then takes them to a listing of offenders. Profiles of each offender include a recent picture, current address, and their conviction. State law bars offenders from residing less than 1000 feet from schools and parks should they be on parole or on supervised release.

Sex offenders must stay on the registry for the rest of their lives.

-- David Cruz

NORWOOD RESIDENTS ARE confidently using this mailbox at the corner of East 207th Street and Perry Avenue after its swing flap was replaced with a slit cover to fend off so-called “fishing.” The scheme involved thieves feeding a lassoed bottle affixed with glue traps into the mailbox to fish out mail containing checks or gift cards. So far, this is one of three mailboxes with the new slit cover, with the second one found at the corner of East 207th Street and Decatur Avenue, and the third at the southeast corner of Jerome Avenue near Gun Hill Road. Mailboxes along East Gun Hill Road, between Jerome and Webster avenues, still have swing flaps, as do the other ones on Jerome Avenue between Gun Hill Road and Moshulu Parkway.

Photo by David Cruz

NYPD Nabs E-Bike Thief Suspect

Police have caught a suspect who made off with a deliveryman’s motorbike in early January.

The thief spotted the bike in front of Oscar’s Kitchen, a Dominican restaurant at 2618 Jerome Ave. by Kingsbridge Road, around 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 6, according to police from the 52nd Precinct. The suspect (right) was captured on video from a nearby store taking the electric bike that’s worth about $1300. After several days, the victim spotted a suspect and bike matching the description of the crime, and called the police. Cops were able to determine it was the bike after the victim showed a receipt containing an identification number that matched the bike.

Police had classified the crime as a grand larceny since the value of the bike is over $1000. Recent NYPD statistics show reported grand larceny cases dropped 50 percent, to six, compared to the 12 cases reported the same time in 2016.

Photo by David Cruz
By DAVID CRUZ

For 50 years, John McKee has lived the pious life in Norwood. He’s adamant about keeping it that way. But a misunderstanding has blunted that life.

Now McKee, 79, a retired plumber and devout member of St. Ann’s Church, is in the worst shape of his life following a stroke that’s rendered him frail and homebound. Notwithstanding his condition, the landlord wants to throw him out of his two-bedroom apartment on Perry Avenue. And there are no signs of letup from the landlord.

McKee, a skilled plumber who uses a walker to get by, considers himself a target of MK Realty Group LLC, the new landlord that bought the building. After all, McKee’s apartment is rent controlled, a growing rarity in New York City, with some 27,000 apartments ranked so. In cases across the city, landlords, fully aware of the financial gains, employ harassing tactics to root out rent-controlled tenants.

“I asked them, ‘What do you want to do? Kill me so you can get this apartment?’” McKee recalled, speaking to the Norwood News from his apartment. “Stop harassing me.”

McKee’s problems began following the stroke in April 2016. McKee, living in his apartment on the third floor of a six-story walkup for half a century, recuperated at several medical centers outside the Bronx. But representatives from the realty firm, who visited tenants shortly after buying the building, accused him of subletting the apartment to a caretaker, according to McKee. The caretaker, who never paid McKee any rent, eventually left, leaving McKee to care for himself alone despite a doctor’s order mandating he have 24-hour medical supervision.

“I’m worried he’s by himself. He should not be by himself,” Rita Milanesi, McKee’s daughter, said in a phone interview with the Norwood News.

For the better part of last year, McKee has endured several forms of harassment that included brazen phone calls to McKee’s doctor to determine his health status and a call to Milanesi’s home on Father’s Day.

A court case has since lingered despite an initial ruling that the case be dismissed, only for it to inexplicably be unlogged in the system. The case resulted in the landlord not cashing McKee’s rent checks. Meantime, the case continues to linger, with the landlord hiring an attorney from Gutman, Mintz, Baker & Sonnenfeldt, to represent them in Bronx Housing Court.

West Bronx Housing, a tenant advocacy group, has since stepped in to speak out on McKee’s behalf.

For all the phone calls and court appearances, McKee simply wants to resolve the matter outside of court by remaining in the apartment he’s called home since 1966. Not even a buyout will convince him to move out.

“All the years I’ve been on this earth, I do what Jesus said—you settle out of court,” McKee said.

Still, the family is looking to sue on his behalf.

MK Realty Group LLC hired Superior Apartments Management, a management firm that oversees five buildings in the Bronx and one in Brooklyn. MK Realty Group LLC purchased the building from Mirbel Realty Corp. in July last year, according to financial records. The property has a total of 172 violations, according to the New York City Housing Preservation and Development agency.

Arianna Gonzalez-Abreu, an attorney for MK Realty Group LLC through Gutman, Mintz, Baker & Sonnenfeldt, was unavailable for comment by deadline despite numerous attempts to reach them.

MESS OF THE MONTH

NEIGHBORS ALERTED THE Norwood News to this home at 306 East 206th St. that’s become somewhat of a dumping ground with animal cages and cat litter buckets strewn about the three-story property. Records show the property is under foreclosure. An auction to buy the home is scheduled for Jan. 23. At the moment, it’s unclear whether the home is occupied.
A Restored Church in Fordham Heights Primes for a Homecoming

By DAVID CRUZ

A Pentecostal church that once laid in ashy ruins in Fordham Heights has been restored. And while it’s been nearly seven years since a fire tore through the church, for Bishop Ronald L. Bailey, the hope of returning home was worth the wait.

For Bailey, Love Gospel Assembly church’s commitment to the Bronx laid on firm ground and was forecast by the church’s late founder, Gerald Kaufman.

“[H]e prophesized that if we stay, God would stay; God will restore the Bronx and that we will literally see the bricks come back to His building,” Bailey said in an interview with the Norwood News from the church’s newly restored lower level.

So begins the journey to engage members of the church to reconsider joining again. Officials have now organized a Jan. 21 procession to re-dedicate the church to God, and tell followers who have left the church to come back. Bailey has spotted prior members from time to time, and tells them it’s okay to come “back home,” no questions asked. “This is the church they got saved in, this is the church they grew up in, this is the church that sometimes their parents came to, and we want them to know it’s homecoming,” Bailey said.

To see the multi-cultural church restored to its full glory would leave many thinking a four-alarm fire never tore through the three-story building on the Grand Concourse at East 183rd Street on July 25, 2010. Bailey was at home when he received the phone call explaining that the church went ablaze, gutted by a rush of waters that extinguished a fireball of flames. A portion of the roof also collapsed.

“This thing was in shambles. It was a wreck,” Bailey said.

The top-down renovations cost some $2 million, with restorations to its auditorium-like first floor, complete with pristine blue suede carpeting, a rebuilt balcony and an upgraded and audio-visual system. The church has been opened, though the New York City Buildings Department had only given the basement clearance to open, according to Bailey. Last month, the Buildings Department returned and lifted a vacate order on the first floor.

Finding the funds to rebuild meant sacrifices for the church. That included the selling of its adjacent property. While the church was being rebuilt, the organization became somewhat nomadic, moving from place to place. The accommodations were always pleasant, but Bailey always reminded himself that it wasn’t home.

In one tenure, the church found a room at MS 399, but were soon forced out after a state judge ruled church groups cannot practice in schools, regardless if they’re empty. The ruling has been upheld numerous times.

“God had given me a word and it became a mantra for us,” Bailey recalled. “It was that every setback only comes so we can make a comeback, and that was our mantra.”

With no regular house of worship, the church’s signature events were put on hold. That included the Love Kitchen, where church members feed the poor with humility and dignity two times a day. Bailey has longed for the days when he and his flock could give back.

But why stay? The church could have moved anywhere else, but its mission to help the impoverished in Fordham Heights remains a hallmark born from when it first opened its doors in 1970.

“We feel that the work is going to get started,” Bailey said.

Editor’s Note: Love Gospel Assembly is located at 2323 Grand Concourse at the corner of East 183rd Street.
By DAVID CRUZ

At the corner of Kingsbridge Road and Jerome Avenue, amid snow, onlookers were attracted to the sounds of tambourines clanging and drumbeats popping from a roving band of residents in Kingsbridge Heights celebrating the Caribbean-born holiday of parranda. The holiday, usually celebrated during the Christmas season in the Caribbean, saw participants singing lively songs throughout Kingsbridge Heights, a largely minority neighborhood that’s home to Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. The island of Puerto Rico is known to celebrate parranda yearly.

Jose Ortiz, a.k.a. Dr. Drum of BombaYo Culture En Vivo, a music group, led the charge with help from Samelys Lopez, a community activist; Miriam Quinones, a freelance photographer; Urban Prophets; Community Board 7 members; and members of the Kingsbridge Road Merchant Association.

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As we ring in the New Year and wish all a prosperous and healthy 2017, hundreds of families with loved ones behind bars could face the prospect of not knowing if their mother or father, brother or sister, son or daughter has died in a New York State prison.

For instance, Lonnie Hamilton, an inmate at Marcy Correctional Facility, died in March 2016 without his family knowing. His father said in media reports that he only realized his son had died after he decided to look for his prison address on the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision’s (DOCCS) website. It was listed there that Hamilton was deceased.

Leonard Strickland was a prisoner at Clinton Correctional Facility in 2010. Media reports highlight that he allegedly died after an alteration with guards. Strickland was buried in the Clinton Correctional Cemetery in October 2010. His mother, who resided in Brooklyn at the time, was not provided with any information regarding how her son died. Mrs. Strickland only learned of her son’s death after a prison chaplain called a local Brooklyn, N.Y minister who informed the family.

Hamilton was buried before an autopsy was performed or reason for his death offered. For Strickland, his mother was told that his death was under investigation and no cause of death could be offered. In 2013 alone, there were 142 deaths in New York State prisons, a 23 percent increase from the prior year. Nationally, the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ (BJS) found that the number of state prisoner deaths actually increased by four percent in 2013 to 3,479.

Because DOCCS investigations are often not complete for some time, many family members may wait months or even years before hearing word that their loved one has died being offered a preliminary cause of death or even being notified that their family member – an inmate in custody – has died. This unfortunately happens to many families across New York State. According to DOCCS, there were a total of 501 inmate deaths during the four year period from 2009-2012.

In New York, DOCCS says that it is responsible for the confinement and habilitation of the 52,000 individuals under custody held at 54 state facilities. This included Lonnie Hamilton and Leonard Strickland. Their families weren’t allowed the luxury to grieve their death prior to their burial.

The fact is if a family has a loved one in custody, it could take up to 12 to 18 months before any details are offered to their next of kin regarding the circumstances of their death. Now, through a new law signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo which I have authored, DOCCS will be required to be responsive to the next of kin in the event that a loved one or family member passes away behind bars. This includes additional information regarding the circumstances surrounding their passing – including an original preliminary death certificate.

Latoya Joyner represents the 77th Assembly District in the Bronx.
$50K Gift to MMCC

WITH CHILDREN BY their side, officials hold up a $50,000 check awarded to Mosholu Montefiore Community Center that’s been earmarked for scholarships allocated to at-risk youth looking to complete an advanced certificate training program and other costs. Sharing in the celebration is (l-r) John P. McGann, Chief Administrative Officer, Bank Leumi; Avner Mendelson, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Leumi; MMCC Chief Executive Officer Rita Santelia; Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.; MMCC educational advisor Jeff Coopersmith; MMCC Director of Development Laurie Meltzer Bandremer; and Jaya Bateman Nahmiyas, Associate Director, UJA-Federation of New York.

SNAP Recipients Can Buy Groceries Online

Online grocery purchases are now a possibility for food stamp recipients, thanks to a pilot program.

The program allows recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to buy SNAP-approved food from FreshDirect and Amazon. Lobbying efforts from the Bronx Borough President’s Office and federal legislators convinced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to widen the acceptable food outlets SNAP benefits can take advantage of as a way to improve access to affordable food in areas where food deserts are the norm in the Bronx. It also gives a revenue boost to FreshDirect and Amazon. SNAP benefits come in a reloadable debit card that’s replenished monthly by the USDA. Each card has an ID number that can be used to purchase SNAP-approved items online.

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. said the program will put New York State “at the intersection of health, technology, and business.”

—David Cruz

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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.

HELP WANTED
Bronx Community Board 8 is seeking a district manager. Please view the full job description at www.nyc.gov/bxcb8. Email cover letter and resume to CB8resumes@gmail.com. Or mail to Bronx CB8 Search Committee, 5676 Riverdale Ave., Suite 100, Bronx, NY 10471. Email or postmark no later than Feb. 17, 2017. Bronx Community Board 8 is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

NOTICE
The first meeting of the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District Board of Directors will be held on Tuesday, January 31, 2017 at 6 p.m. at Mosholu Preservation Corporation, 3400 Reservoir Oval East. All are welcome. Please call (718) 324-4946 to RSVP by January 25, 2017.
Volunteers Sought to Count Homeless
The Department of Homeless Services seeks volunteers to count the number of street homeless on Jan. 23 from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. as part of the annual Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE). Data collected is to help individuals move from the streets to a safe environment. For more information and to volunteer, visit www.nyc.gov/hope to register.

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. For more information and to apply, call (718) 590-3914 or visit bronxboropres.nyc.gov.

Free Tax Filing Service
Free income tax preparation for qualifying residents is available at University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP) on select Wednesdays and Saturdays starting Feb. 1 through Apr. 18 by appointment only. Tax preparers can also review your credit report, provide financial advice, and freeze your rent. Must have all tax documents available before meeting with tax preparer. To learn the qualifications and to schedule an appointment, call (718) 933-2539 or www.unhp.org.

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 an 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.

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, Mosholu 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.

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.

Online Grocers Accept SNAP
New York recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can now purchase groceries online through Amazon and FreshDirect as part of a federally-funded program. For more information, contact your SNAP provider.

The Cardinal McCloskey Community Charter School
Please join us at our Community Meeting to discuss the proposed Cardinal McCloskey Community Charter School.
EDITOR’S PICK

Women: Defend Yourselves!

All females ages 10 and over can join free Women’s Self Defense Workshops at the Williamsbridge Oval, Sundays through Feb. 19 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Learn self defense moves and discuss the threats faced by females. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

Onstage

Lehman College’s Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents a Reunion of Salsa concert, Jan. 21 at 8 p.m. Tickets are $50 to $125/VIP. VIP includes pre-concert wine and hors d’oeuvres reception at 6:30 p.m. and the best seats in the house. For more information and to RSVP, call (718) 960-8833.

The Bronx Arts Ensemble presents the Ted Rosenthal Jazz Trio, Jan. 21 at 8 p.m., at the Riverdale Y , 5625 Arlington Ave. For more information, call (718) 601-7399.

Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents the following for children:

- Performances and readings of his works;
- Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse (at Kingsbridge Road), presents the following for children:
  - Fourth Annual Whimsical Winter Wonder…Exhibition, Jan. 20 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and repeats Tuesdays through Saturdays through Jan. 28;
  - Edgar Allan Poe Birthday Bash, Jan. 21 from noon to 5 p.m., featuring Edgar Allan Poe Birthday Bash, 28;

And more:

- The New York Botanical Garden presents for children, the Evergreen Express, through Jan. 22, 10 a.m. to 4:30 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, 11 a.m., 1:30 and 3:30 p.m., through Jan. 22, a sing-along ride including professional photos offered. For more information or a detailed schedule, call (718) 882-8700.

The NYPD and Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit invite the public to Together as One. Join police, clergy, community members, youth and business leaders for a special interfaith service. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP by Jan. 20 to Lorraine. Perez@nypd.org or Kimberly.Ford@nypd.org. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypd.org.

The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for children: Kids Get Active Fridays at 2:45 p.m.: (ages 5 to 12), dance moves on the Wii game console, Jan. 20 and 27; and Preschool Story Time and Craft at 11:15 a.m.: (ages 3 to 5), featuring books, puppetry, dramatics, crafts and flannel boards, Jan. 19 and 26. Adults can attend Computer Basics at noon: Jan. 19 and 26. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

The Bronx County Historical Society presents a free illustrated lecture presentation, Edgar Allan Poe at Fordham, featuring Poe’s experience living in the Bronx, at the Bronx Library Center, 301 E. Kingsbridge Rd., Jan. 21 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4257.

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), Paper Plate Arctic Fox Making, Jan. 19; and Circle Penguin Making, Jan. 26. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Library Events

- Hands-On Projects at 4 p.m.: (ages 7 to 12; preregistration required), Paper Plate Arctic Fox Making, Jan. 19; and Circle Penguin Making, Jan. 26. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Jan. 23 for the next publication date of Feb. 2, 2017.
Counting the Homeless

(continued from page 1)

the signs of a burgeoning homeless population are not solid. Defining the homeless can be a tough call to make, a reason why DHS conducts the count between midnight and 4 a.m., the time most homeless settle in for the night. To be among those counted involves folks who are simply out in the street and not taking shelter in a subway, for instance.

Across the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District, a commercial strip including Jerome Avenue in Norwood, shop employees who spoke to the Norwood News found that even those found to be sleeping on benches, may very well just be there for the day and go home to a supportive housing site.

“There’s a distinction between homeless that live out on the street or homeless, but in a shelter,” Sabrina Diaz, an employee of Gig Pharmacy on Jerome Avenue, said. “I know a few people in shelters, but homeless, but in a shelter,” Salazar said. By the time DHS personnel arrived, the purported homeless person had left.”

Jose Paulino, who works at Wine & Liquor on Jerome Avenue, has spotted plenty of panhandlers throughout the commercial strip, but he notes there’s “no way to tell.” “They’re still always asking for money outside so they could be really homeless or just getting the money,” Paulino said.

Though the verdict is still out, the number of 311 calls made for homeless-related matters has significantly increased. While 2014 and 2015 saw 10 and 17 311 complaints respectively, there were 108 complaints filed in 2016. Most of the 2014 calls were related to the DHS Advantage Program, a defunct state-funded program where New Yorkers on the edge of becoming homeless would have a portion of their rent paid by the city so long as they were employed.

It’s unclear the nature of 311 calls made for homeless-related matters, though several locations where the bulk of the calls were made came from an adult day care center and Burlington Coat Factor, both on Webster Avenue. Some 25 percent of the complaints were identified as occurring near a park or playground.

Getting Ready to Count

Mariela Salazar, former chief of staff to Bronx Councilwoman Annabel Palma and now works at Montefiore Medical Center, took part in the count in 2015.

She was equipped with a map of the district she volunteered to count in, assigned a group, and escorted by a police officer who had an idea of where the homeless sleep for the night.

“If you see a homeless person, you can speak to them and then you try to connect the services so that if you see a homeless person, there’s a van that can pick them up and take them to a shelter if they want to go,” Salazar said.

Making contact can pose challenges. In one interaction, Salazar remembered speaking to an individual who appeared to be homeless but was too intoxicated to say one way or the other. “It was a little difficult to actually get clear answers from him,” Salazar said. By the time DHS personnel arrived, the purported homeless person had left.”

Last year’s count showed a 12 percent decline in the number of street homeless when compared to the year before. For the Bronx, there was a 38 percent drop in the number of street homeless when compared to the year before, figures largely disputed by homeless advocates who’ve questioned the timing and method of the count.

“Nobody who has spent more than 30 seconds walking through the city would believe that street homelessness has declined in the past year – let alone by double digits. It simply defies credibility,” President & CEO Mary Brosnahan for Coalition for the Homeless, said, arguing that a one-night count does little to get a clear picture.

Results of the count will take several months to be released.

Additional reporting by Daniela Beasley.

Editor’s Note: More information on how to participate in the count can be found in Neighborhood Notes on page 13.

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