



NORWOOD NEWS

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STAFFERS DEFEND MS 80 REPUTATION

Defense comes after story on conditions at Norwood middle school



Photo by Adi Talwar

JHS/MS 80 AT 149 E. Mosholu Pkwy. N. swirls with controversy following a published report depicting the school as a "hellhole."

By DAVID CRUZ

Despite a New York Post exposé detailing a history of problems at JHS/MS 80, teachers have come to the defense of their principal, embroiled in controversy. The New York City Department of Education is now investigating the school, a pledge already made by the New York City Council.

The teachers, five of whom

declined to give names to the *Norwood News*, spoke highly of principal Emmanuel Polanco and his ability to turn the school around.

Dayana Nuñez, a 14-year veteran of the school, praised Polanco's administrative performance and the school's performance. "They tell a little truth and expand it with a bunch of lies," said Nuñez.

"This school has been a transformation. A total transformation. Our classrooms are clean, our hallways are clean."

Nuñez, who teaches a total of 100 students for all of her three classes, pointed out Polanco's accessibility and upgrades in technology. Among them is equipping the school with laptops, which Nuñez said teachers can monitor at

any point.

Her defense comes amid a story by the *Post* detailing a history of problems at the school, relying on accounts from parents and teachers. They all put the school's blame on Polanco, who has allowed loyal staffers to threaten other teachers while covering up violent incidents at the school.

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Mosholu Preservation Corporation (MPC)

3400 Reservoir Oval East

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Phone: 718 324 4998

Fax: 718 324 2917

E-mail: norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org

Web.: www.norwoodnews.org

Publisher

Mosholu Preservation Corporation

Executive Director of MPC

Melissa Cebollero

Director of MPC

Jennifer Tausig

Editor-in-Chief, Norwood News

David Cruz, dcruz@norwoodnews.org

Accounts Receivable

Dawn McEvoy

Proofreader

Judy Noy

Intern

Sofia Mahairas

Contributor

Miriam Quinones, Reggie Francois

Regular Contributors

David Greene, Adi Talwar

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EDITORIAL

A Tale of Two JHSs 80

It's hard to tell what's really happening at JHS 80, a school that became fodder for the *New York Post* and touched off responses from legislators and the city Department of Education. The opinion piece submitted to the *Norwood News* about the school itself (see below) has generated more than 100 comments.

There's the one story where JHS 80, under the leadership of principal Em-

manuel Polanco, has been saved from academic ruin; then there's the story that describes JHS 80 as a "hellhole." That storyline has been emphasized by a \$2 million lawsuit against Polanco as described in the *Post*'s recent no-holds-barred article.

It's undeniable that we've fallen into a he-said-she-said story where the only way to determine what's really happening at the school is bonafide ev-

idence that will be presented as solid proof of a school in turmoil or redemption. But someone needs to stand up. At the moment, it's the teachers and students coming to the defense.

We encourage anyone with information to send an email to our editor, dcruz@norwoodnews.org, or call (718) 324-4998 to discuss the matter. One thing's for sure: we'll be keeping a closer eye on the school.

Opinion Standing Behind JHS 80

By ROSSE MARY SAVERY

As a sixth grade teacher at JHS/MS 80, I was deeply disheartened to see recent negative news stories that have attacked our students, staff and community. Our students are upset and hurt that they have been made to look like delinquents. Simply put, what has been written about MS 80 is false—if you take the time to talk to our students and teachers, it is easy to see that there are amazing opportunities and programs at our school.

Not only are teachers coming in prepared to provide the strongest academic experience possible, students are eager to learn each and every day.

Students are taught from a wide range of texts and materials, and constantly challenge themselves to reach the highest level of learning so they can grow and prepare themselves to attend the best high schools. We use digital tools in a variety of subjects, which has allowed our students to learn and practice from programs and lessons that were previously unavailable to them. The use of digital tools has served as an excellent way for students to share their work and provide feedback, which is one of the most successful learning practices we have implemented at MS 80.

The perseverance of our students and staff has translated to significant academic growth over

the last few years— chronic absenteeism has dropped, and proficiency in ELA and math among our students have grown 15 percentage points and seven percentage points since 2014. While just a few years ago MS 80 was considered a school that was struggling, we are now a school on the "Rise," and are transitioning out of the Department of Education's "Renewal Schools" program. Of course we have more work to do, but I know that we have the tools in place to allow for more success in the years ahead.

These improvements are thanks to principal Emmanuel Polanco's leadership, and working under him has been the best experience an educator can ask for. Principal Polanco always offers his continued support and is responsive to the needs of teachers, students and their families. His open door policy provides everyone in the community the opportunity to chat, raise concerns, ask for help and share ideas. As a result, we have developed a culture of trust among teachers and staff at school. I know that I can seek out their advice and rely on them to help me work through any issues I am having in the classroom. I have personally grown tremendously as a teacher at MS 80 because principal Polanco empowers me to take risks in the classroom that encourage student growth and academic achievement.

Challenges exist at every school, but at MS 80 our mission is to ensure that we support and push one another as a family.

We work together as a community to address any issues of

academic development or misbehavior. This can take the form of a one-to-one talk, a parent phone call or meeting, or a quick check-in with students to get them back on track. Since we are a family, we don't pass judgment on one another. Instead, we band together during challenging times and work to build each other up.

None of the improvements at MS 80 would have been possible without our amazing students, who are working hard and pushing themselves beyond what many thought possible. It is completely irresponsible to generalize our students and defame their character, and what has been written and said about them could not be further from the truth.

I have had many deep and intense conversations these last few days with my students to console them and reassure them of their worth. While many of the young adults in our building face difficult odds, every day they bring a focus, determination and work ethic to class that is truly inspiring.

We will not let misinformation about our school stop us from continuing to thrive. Our students are amazing scholars who should be highlighted and celebrated for their accomplishments. Our teachers and staff work tirelessly to provide the best education possible. And our school is an amazing family that loves and cares for one another.

The future at MS 80 is bright, and I cannot wait to see what we are able to accomplish next.

Rosse Mary Savery is a teacher at JHS 80.

Staffers Defend MS 80 Reputation

(continued from page 1)

The report outlined several incidents of violence, including one where Polanco fought a student, according to one account made by a parent that was published in the article.

There was also an allegation of an incident where two eighth graders dropped a sixth grader on his head, leading school aides to hold off on calling the police. The New York Police Department says there have been no incidents reported to them.

Two teachers, who declined to give their name, said a parent of a child mentioned in the initial *Post* article was motivated to tell their story out of a “personal vendetta.” Conditions at the school were grossly exaggerated, they said.

A teacher’s aide, Jose Perez, said Polanco is “a great principal.”

Parents also expressed satisfaction with the school. Jose Espinosa, a parent of a student, said he has noticed conditions have gotten better since 2013.

The New York City Department of Education has launched an investigation into the incident.

“I was thinking about sending my daughter to this school next year, but I don’t see that happening right now,” said Mauro Morel, a parent of a seventh grader attending the school.

Telly Martinez, a parent of a seventh grader, said the school’s problems extend to the building itself. “Something needs to be done,” said Martinez. “The safety of our children is very important to us.”

A student, Carlos Martinez, said fighting does happen but should not define the entire student body. “Also we will get in fight but not all the time because we are not perfect kids and some point we will get upset.” Still, he concluded, “But one thing I know and everyone know is that we are not bad kids, and that we are all scholars.”

Carlos’s comments were written in response to an opinion piece (see page 2) written by Rosse Mary Savery, an ESL teacher at the school. Several dozen students also came in the school’s defense.

Sources told the *Norwood News* that officers from the local 52nd Precinct sat down with administrators on Jan. 8 to determine the safety of the school. The school has attempted to do some damage control by setting up a hastily organized 5 p.m. meeting on that day to discuss the allegations made.

Meantime, officials with the United



Photo by David Cruz

STUDENTS FROM JHS 80 exit the school grounds on Jan. 11 via the schoolyard.

Federation of Teachers (UFT), the union representing public school teachers, also met with staffers. A UFT rep held an open forum, gauging teachers on how they felt about the *Post*’s news story. In a statement, Richard Mantell, UFT vice president for middle schools, said the union “alerted the Department of Education to a slew of bad decisions by this particular principal.” “Some changes have been made but the bulk of our complaints are still outstanding. So we will continue to advocate,” said Mantell.

For the last few years the 6th-to-8th grade school has hit a slump, thanks to plummeting math and English test scores, according to documents reviewed by the *Norwood News*. The 2015-16 School Quality Snapshot report showed 14 percent of students passed the state English exam while 16 percent of students passed the state math exam. These marks fell well below the rest of the district and citywide English and math test rates, which showed 24 and 20 percent of the district passed the English and math tests respectively, while 37 and 32 percent of the city passed the state English and math tests respectively.

Polanco has been met with controversy before. In February 2013, he starred in a salacious music video dubbed “El Siki” that raised questions on whether his background makes him fit to be an administrator. Despite backlash, Polanco was allowed to keep his job, with the city standing by him for the last few years.

The issue has caught the attention

of Councilman Andrew Cohen, representing Norwood. In a statement, Cohen said, “These allegations are troubling and should be taken seriously. I’m reaching out to all parties involved to ensure the safety of students, teachers, and administrators.” A spokesperson for Cohen said the office did not receive any complaints from teachers or parents about conditions at the school.

Cohen’s remarks came a day after the New York City Council pledged to investigate the local middle school that’s been on the state’s Turnaround List for the last few years, qualifying it for some extra funding from the state. The city placed the school on its Renewal Schools list in 2015, qualifying the school for more money.

In an email to the *Norwood News*, Polanco called the *Post* story “disparaging.”

“When I started as principal at JHS

80, we were considered one of the lowest performing schools in the city,” Polanco wrote in a separate email. “In the last few years, thanks to the help of my dedicated staff and resources from the DOE, we have seen a significant turnaround in our performance. English and math proficiency rates are up, chronic absenteeism has decreased, and we are now transitioning out of the Renewal Schools program.”

Isabella Fretto, a student at MS 80, felt strongly about the allegations towards her school, saying, “I want to get into a good high school, but I might not be able to because of the bad things being said about MS 80.”

Additional reporting by Adi Talwar. Sofia Mahairas contributed to this article.

Editor’s Note: The next Community Education Council will meet on Jan. 18 at 3202 Steuben Ave.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



In light of news over JHS 80's performance, this week we asked readers their thoughts on the performance of local public schools in their neighborhoods.



I think the schools are great except for MS 80, which was known as a very difficult school back in the '80s when I attended. So I would love to see that improve--and that was in the papers a couple of days ago. My daughter goes to Bronx Dance Academy in Woodlawn; she loves the school, she loves the principal, Ms. Lopez. It's excellent and I see it every day with my child.

Rashida Reed-Gordon
Norwood



The school, which is PS 90, is pretty good. The teachers are tough on the kids; they just want to make sure that the kids learn and they give them lots and lots of homework. I know because my granddaughter and my grandson come home with lots of homework. On the holidays they have packages of homework and they had to make sure that homework was done before they get back to school. So it's good that they push the kids. You have Junior High School 22. It's kind of wild; and PS 35 is one of the best schools... 145 was closed, they weren't performing correctly and they shut it down.

Rose Perez
Morrisania



I think PS 8 is a very good school, I see it. They have after-school programs that are important. You want to help the kids, it keeps them off the streets and it helps them to learn. I've heard mixed things about MS 80, I mean I've seen it myself, just random disorder with kids running around. PS 8 is much more disciplined. If you're doing your job as a teacher, you have to keep your students in control. If they're running havoc all over the place and they're not in the yard, they're out in the street. They're out of control.

James Brannigan
Bedford Park



There has been a slight improvement at the Christopher Columbus High School campus this year, but the school has an effect on the neighborhood with frequent fights outside after school and from my sources, dysfunction within the school. There is a big, big leadership problem ever since the former principals of CIMS and Pelham Prep, which are two schools within the school, were fired. Until the local superintendent steps down, this issue will not improve. The Police (Department) is a stopgap measure; what you need is leadership that motivates staff and students and provides a welcoming, positive educational environment, and that's not what's being provided at Columbus.

Raphael Schweizer
Allerton



I'm the president of the Bronx High School Federation, so my insight is a little bit different than your average person who lives in one particular area of the Bronx. I have two children in charter school and two children in district public schools and where I have my children they are all really good schools that work very hard for the kids and they're all doing very well. But on the other side of that, there are a lot of children falling in the cracks and I don't necessarily want to blame the schools, but I would say it's more of a bureaucracy problem.

Pamela Stewart
Parkchester

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Suspect in Norwood Rape Arrested and Charged

By DAVID CRUZ

Police have arrested a registered sex offender accused of raping a 64-year-old woman after following her across Norwood.

Ugan Smith (below), 40, was arrested on Jan. 11, a day after police say he stalked the victim, following her to her apartment in the area of East Gun Hill Road and DeKalb Avenue at around 6:45 p.m. Smith, who lives in transitional housing managed by the Bronx Psychiatric Center, followed her all the way to her apartment, pushed her in it, and brutally raped her before saying, "I have a gun, and I am going to kill you and have sex with you," police say.

He then stole \$250 before fleeing. The victim was taken to a local hospital. The NYPD's Special Victims Unit investigated and caught the suspect. Smith was caught on video, with images circulating in the press.

He was charged with rape, robbery and burglary. He's been held on \$250,000 bond. Smith has a history of sex-related incidents, requiring him to register as a sex offender. He moved to the transitional home on March 1 from the nearby psychiatric center.

The incident ranks as the first reported rape that happened within the confines of the 52nd Precinct. Last year, there were a reported total number of 27 rapes, down from 28 in 2016.



Number of Chain Stores Grows in the Bronx Again

By REGGIE FRANCOIS

The Bronx has seen an increase in the number of chain stores in 2017, a sign of anticipated economic growth in the borough, according to a newly released report by a think tank group. The news is in lockstep with the rest of the city, which has seen its ninth consecutive year of growth in the number of national retailers and food establishments.

The report by the Center for Urban Future (CUF), a research group that focuses on the economy and infrastructure in New York City, found the number of Bronx stores rose by 1.8 percent. There were a total of 16 chain stores that opened in 2017, bringing the number of stores to 907. While a lot of the storefronts are fairly widespread, the increase is focused in the South Bronx area (neighborhoods with 10451 as their zip code). The 10467 and 10458 zip codes, which cover Norwood and Bedford Park respectively, saw only one chain store open.

"Going back 10 or 15 years ago, when chains started coming in big numbers to New York City, most of them started in Manhattan," said Christian González-Rivera, author of the 2017 report and a senior researcher at CUF. "As incomes rose in other boroughs, retailers realized there are potential markets in other boroughs. And



Image by Google Maps

METROPCS ONCE AGAIN expanded in the Bronx, having opened a location on Jerome Avenue between Moshulu Parkway and East Gun Hill Road.

basically the Bronx was the last of the boroughs to actually get that wave of growth."

MetroPCS dominated the Bronx with 98 locations. The CUF credits the cell phone chain's significant growth in the past decade to the wireless service chain's 2013 merger with T-Mobile. The cell phone store opened on Jerome Avenue between Moshulu Parkway and East Gun Hill Road in 2017. Across the city, Dunkin' Donuts led the way in the number of newly opened

chain stores, with 612 locations, up from 596 in 2016. Dunkin' Donuts came in second with 89 franchises and Subway third with 58 stores in the Bronx.

Although fast food chains have opened more in 2017, the report showed retailers that directly compete with online stores closed significantly since 2016. Chain pharmacies like Duane Reade/Walgreens, CVS and Rite Aid have lost 53 locations in 2016, leaving 588 locations across the city. Norwood's CVS Pharmacy at East Gun Hill Road and Perry Avenue closed last March. Meantime, Rite Aid leads in the Bronx with 36 locations. The pharmacy chain could see more locations in the future because of its pending acquisition by Duane Reade/Walgreens.

With several national retailers increasing presence across the Bronx, there is concern for local mom and pop stores in different neighborhoods.

"For some neighborhoods, some of these chains are the only retail in that area. So, for some neighborhoods, it is definitely going to be a welcome addition," said González-Rivera. "For others that have had small businesses that have been there for a long time, perhaps they're going to see increased competition from the national retailers."

Doe Fund Project to Open in May

By DEBORAH CRUZ

Two years after its proposal, a supportive/affordable housing residence in Norwood will be opening its doors later this year after unexpected delays. But the committee that heard the latest development is worried over whether there're guaranteed spots for current neighborhood residents.

At the Community Board 7 Housing/Land Use Meeting on Jan. 9, John McDonald, the COO of The Doe Fund, a non-profit group that's nearly built the \$29.5 million affordable housing unit at 3100 Webster Ave., outlined the project. He was joined by Amanda Septimo, head of PR for the project, who explained the issues surrounding the Webster Avenue residence.

"This was a former auto body repair shop. When we did our environmental studies report there were two tanks in the report. We cleaned the designated site. As we did our excavation, we found two more tanks that were not even shown and this

was after doing ground penetration," said McDonald, explaining the unexpected cleaning.

But just who would occupy the supportive/affordable units became a pointed discussion by the committee. As it stands, housing has become a quintessential issue in New York City, making affordable housing a greater commodity.

"We don't even have a promise that we will be able to get residents from CB7 into the building," Barbara Stroncz, a committee member, said. "And we have been able to get a promise from other developers before."

Septimo said the rules on supportive housing prevent them from offering a preference to those already living in the community.

"Other developers are dealing in different programs and so there are just different rules and different ways it has to happen because it is supportive housing," Septimo

said, mentioning that because they were dealing with the city Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) it was more complicated. "If this was a private development we would have more say. With that said we do have influence in the process."

In response, Septimo agreed with Jean Hill, the committee chair, to write a letter that may help tenants falling within Community Board 7 in the application process.

The plan outlined by McDonald projected the building would be completed by May 1 2018. The 82-unit building will have 41 units for those in need of supportive services and referred by the city Human Resources Administration. The other half of the units will be available via a lottery for those earning an annual income of \$40,000 to \$60,000. The monthly rents average \$900 to \$1200.

The Doe Fund is also building a site at 3188 Villa Ave.

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. 30; and Website, Acknowledgment & Media Committee is on Jan. 31. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

THE 52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL meets on Jan. 25 at 7 p.m. at the 52nd Precinct, 3016 Webster Ave. For more information, call the 52nd Precinct Community Affairs Office at (718) 220-5824.

Crime Drops in the 52nd Pct., But Now Embroiled in Scandal

By DAVID CRUZ

The 52nd Precinct saw a double-digit drop in crime in 2017, following a citywide decrease in crime for a fourth consecutive year. But an investigation into how the number of gun arrests increased is under way.

The Five-Two covers Norwood, Bedford Park, Fordham, Kingsbridge Heights and University Heights. Preliminary crime statistics publicly available show the precinct filed 1,789 crimes under the seven major crime categories tracked by the NYPD in 2017, as opposed to 2,096 in 2016. The seven major crimes include murder, rape, robbery, felony assault, burglary, grand larceny, and grand larceny auto. The numbers translate to a 14.65 percent drop in crime within the northwest Bronx precinct. Deputy Inspector Peter Fiorillo serves as commanding officer.

Burglary within the Five-Two's borders saw the biggest drop in 2017, with 169 reported crimes against 272 reported in 2016, translating to a 37 percent dive. Grand larceny, thefts where the value of an item exceeds \$100, was the only category that saw an uptick in crime, with a .5 percent increase.

The news comes as the Police Department completes its first full year implementing the Neighborhood Coordination Officer program (NCO), where two officers are exclusively embedded within a community instead of going on radio runs. NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill, considered the program's architect when he served as Chief of Department, has long championed the initiative.

"Neighborhood policing is a game changer," said O'Neill at a Jan. 5 news conference that ran through the numbers. "It's established in 56 of our 77 precincts as of this month and in all nine of our Housing Bureau police service areas. We're essentially restoring the role of patrol cop to problem solver."

Much of an NCO's responsibilities involve attending community meetings to familiarize themselves with residents living within their assigned sector. The strategy has helped them pinpoint neighborhood issues at a faster clip. Officers have also begun hosting so-called Safety Summit meetings.

Under O'Neill, the murder rate across New York City dropped to 290, the lowest since record keeping by the NYPD began in 1939. In 2016 there were a reported 335 murders. Across the city there were fewer robberies, burglaries, and grand theft auto cases police had to



File photo by David Greene

A MAN LANDS in cuffs by 52nd Precinct officers after being accused of shoplifting at Duane Reade pharmacy in Kingsbridge Heights on Dec. 16.

work on since the CompStat began in 1990.

But the Bronx District Attorney's Office confirmed it's investigating cases at the Five-Two where cops tricked suspects into admitting where a gun was concealed in exchange for not receiving the charge. Officers would backpedal on the deal and file a gun charge against the suspect, breaking the law.

The development, first reported by the *Daily News*, has apparently impacted firearms cases where prosecutors offered tempting plea deals. Officers could see reassignments or perhaps departmental charges.

Overall, gun arrests tripled from 2016 to 2017. There were a total of 139 gun arrests in 2017, up from 89 in 2016, a 56 percent gain.

Tricking suspects into giving up guns apparently stretches back decades, according to a police source.

"Back in the '70s and '80s, illegal searches were done all the time, and nobody gave a crap, but it is not legal. It's called perjury, and it's a felony," said a retired sergeant who pounded a beat in the South Bronx back then. "Today, you're jeopardizing your livelihood and possibly your freedom to make an arrest based upon false facts."

"I always told my officers it's not worth it; you can go to jail. If that's the way the system legally requires things,

let the felon go free. Somebody else will collar him legit the next time."

At a swearing-in ceremony for new police recruits, O'Neill said the Bronx

District Attorney's office has "been in contact with our Internal Affairs."

Additional reporting by Bob Kappstatter.

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PARRANDA IN KINGSBRIDGE

Photos by Adi Talwar

Bronx residents grabbed their trusty tambourines and wiry guiros and took to the streets throughout Kingsbridge Heights for the annual Parranda on Jan. 13. Parranda is a walking musical celebration originating in Afro-Caribbean countries, including Puerto Rico, capping the holiday season. Event sponsors included the Kingsbridge Road Merchants Association, Divine Pharmacy and Texas Chicken.



BOMBAYO, PARRANDA'S MASTER of ceremonies (c, holding a tar, a hand held drum), leads residents from St. James Park, the event's first stop, to the streets of Kingsbridge Heights.



THIS INSTRUCTOR WITH Tami Co. Dancing in Kingsbridge Heights (c) teaches some serious dance moves to these young dancers inside St. James Recreation Center.



SAMELYS LOPEZ, LEAD organizer of the event (c), accompanied by other revelers, stops by Mirador Latino Café and Restaurant in Kingsbridge Heights, in full party mode.



THIS MAN SNAPS a quick selfie as Parranda participants march down West Kingsbridge Road past the Kingsbridge Armory (background).



THIS PATRON AT this Spanish eatery enjoys his meal as a crowd of Parranda partygoers brings some holiday cheer.



GLORIA BENT (C) IS well into the Parranda spirit, striking her tambourine inside the Poe Park Visitor Center, surrounded by other participants.

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State Sen. Jeff Klein Accused by Former Staffer of Forcible Kissing

By DAVID CRUZ

A state investigative body is looking into claims Bronx State Senator Jeff Klein, leader of the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), forcibly kissed a former employee in 2015.

The former staffer, Erica Vladimer, told the *Huffington Post* that the incident happened on April 1, 2015 at an Albany bar. Klein and his staffers were celebrating the passage of the New York State budget, according to the report. Vladimer and Klein then exited the bar to smoke a cigarette.

"All of a sudden there was a hand on the back of my head and he shoved his tongue down my throat," Vladimer said in her interview with the *HuffPost*. "In my head it lasted forever. I don't think it lasted even three seconds."

The Joint Commission of Public Ethics is now investigating the claim.

Vladimer, who worked for Klein as a policy analyst and counsel, resigned from the job a month later. A spokeswoman told several publications that Vladimer was planning on leaving well before the alleged incident occurred. Vladimer told the *HuffPost* she kept silent about the alleged incident out of shame. Her first thoughts, she said, was hoping that Klein's longtime girlfriend and IDC colleague, state senator Dianne Savino, who was present at the bar but not outside it when the alleged incident occurred, did not see the kiss.

Two weeks before the story broke, Vladimer had approached state senator Liz Krueger, an outspoken supporter of women's rights, to tell her about the alleged incident. Krueger, a Democrat, told *The New York Times* she found Vladimer's story credible.



SENATOR JEFF KLEIN

Before the article published, Klein organized a news conference where he denied the charges, saying he hired an attorney to investigate the matter. The lawyers from the Manhattan law firm of Loeb & Loeb insist that Klein and Vladimer were in full view outside the bar given the size of the

windows. He has no plans of stepping down as the influential leader of the Independent Democratic Conference, a group of eight Democrats who caucus with senate Republicans.

A memo circulated by Klein's attorneys to the media states that, "Of the female staff members we interviewed at the Independent Democratic Conference, none reported ever having felt uncomfortable, unsafe or threatened by Sen. Klein. They noted that Sen. Klein has been at the forefront of equal rights for women, hired many women in the past, given them senior roles, opportunities and significant responsibilities, and has maintained a safe work environment for female staff." Days later, a letter signed by 23 female supporters of Klein circulated, calling Klein an honorable man.

This is the first time Klein

has ever been accused of sexual assault since taking office as an Assemblyman representing Bedford Park in 1994.

The issue caught the attention of Governor Andrew Cuomo, who is attempting to pass stricter policies on sexual harassment. He said in a statement that, "Every allegation of sexual misconduct must be taken seriously. I agree with Senator Klein and with Senator Krueger that this disturbing situation should be investigated, and I believe it should be done immediately and independently."

At a small rally outside Klein's office in Morris Park on Jan. 12, opponents of Klein scorched the senator for attempting to discredit Vladimer. "If he deserves the benefit of the doubt, so does she," said Dominique Shuminova, a co-chair of Progressive Women of Pelham.

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HEALTH CHECK

Avoiding Winter Weight Gain

By ARYCELIS D. SEGURA

Winter is coming, and it can pack an unhealthy punch. With the change in weather and less hours of daylight, it's no wonder we're at risk for weight gain. No worries! We can all survive the wintry spell by trying a few things to combat weight gain and other unhealthy behaviors that winter can expose:

Tip 1: Maintain, don't gain.

Make this your winter-months saying. Work to maintain your weight through the winter so when the weather improves, you'll be ahead of the game and won't have to worry about losing your winter weight. One healthy behavior that can help is to track your food and

physical activity.

Tip 2: Warm up from the inside out.

Adding soup to your diet could help prevent weight gain. Stick with broth-based soups loaded with vegetables, high fiber lentils and lean proteins. When possible, make your soup at home to help reduce the amount of sodium or buy low-sodium versions when possible.

Tip 3: Out S.M.A.R.T. Old Man Winter.

One area that's often overlooked is planning and goal-setting. This can make a big difference between success and failure. A simple way to begin creating both short- and

long-term goals is to remember to make your goals S.M.A.R.T. this means:

S – Specific: Create goals as clearly as possible: include the what, when, and how.

M – Measurable: How will you measure your goal? A form of measurement will give you feedback and help with accountability.

A – Attainable: It's more helpful that the goal is doable and be real about what you plan to do.

R – Relevant: Define goals that are most important to you. This will increase the chances that you'll figure out ways to make them happen.

T – Time-bound: Set a target date this will prevent goals from being overtaken by the day-to-day stressors.

Arycelis D. Segura, MA, CHES, CDE works for Montefiore Health System's Office of Community & Population Health.

Mosholu Library Gets Children's Librarians

Finally! Two children's librarians are officially on the job at the Mosholu Public Library, library officials confirmed. Nicole Figueroa and Katie Loucks started on Dec. 26 and Jan. 8 respectively. Both are full-time librarians, according to the New York Public Library. Officials plan to hold a community meet-and-greet on Feb. 12 from 3 to 6 p.m. at the library, 285 E. 205th St.

—David Cruz

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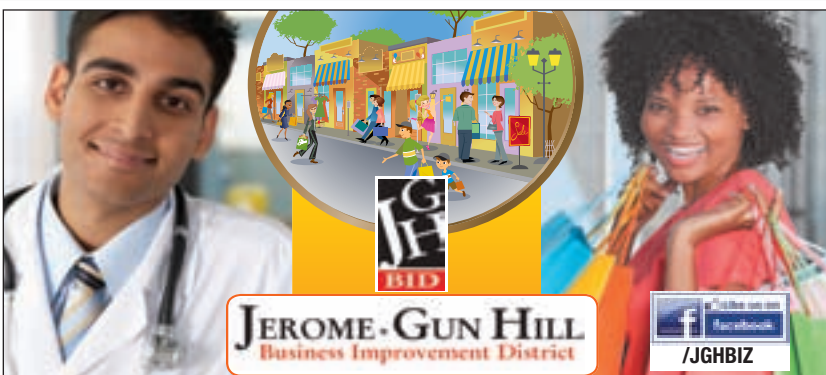
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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Become Civically Engaged

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. encourages New Yorkers to become more civically engaged as part of the "Hour New York Challenge." Those interested take a pledge to dedicate at least one hour each month throughout 2018. Activities include attending community board meetings, volunteering with a nonprofit, and generally being a more informed and active citizen to improve neighborhoods. For more information, call (718) 590-3543.

Catholic Schools Open Houses

Bronx Catholic elementary schools are holding "Touring Tuesdays" open houses: Jan. 30, Feb. 13, March 13 and April 24 from 9 to 11 a.m. or by appointment. Local schools are: St. Brendan School, 268 E. 207th St.; Our Lady of Refuge School, 2708 Briggs Ave.; and St. Philip Neri School, 3031 Grand Concourse. Grades are pre-K through 8th. Tour the school, learn about the admissions process, and meet with the principal, faculty and students. For more information, to RSVP, or schedule an appointment, call (646) 794-2885.

Apply to Local 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. 9. For more information and to apply, call (718) 590-3913 or visit bronxboropres.nyc.gov/community-boards/.

Paid Time Off

The Paid Family Leave policy is now in effect in New York State and is eligible for parents after a baby's birth and for caretakers of a family member. In 2018, full-time employees who work 20 or more hours a week and have been at their pres-

ent job for at least 26 weeks or more qualifies to take up to eight weeks paid time off at 50 percent of their average weekly wage. Part-time employees with a regular schedule of less than 20 hours a week can apply for Paid Family Leave after working 175 days for their employer. The program will be fully phased in for four years. For more information, call (844) 337-6303.

Heating Assistance

Sign up to receive free heating assistance through the New York State Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). Eligible households can receive assistance of up to \$725. A family of four with a yearly income of \$53,482 can still qualify for help. For more information about eligibility, and to sign up, call (212) 331-3126.

Bronx Photo Club

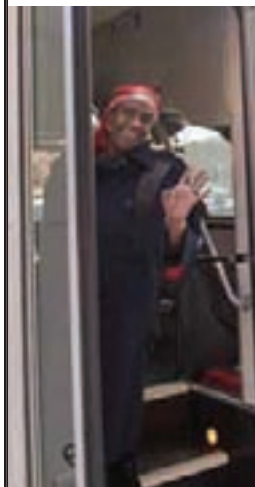
The Bronx Photographic Society (formerly the New York Botanical/Zoological Photographic Society) meets bimonthly at Fordham University Prep School on the Fordham University Campus, 441 E. Fordham Rd., room 327 or 329 starting at 9:45 a.m. as follows: Jan. 20, Feb. 3 and 17, March 3 and 17, April 14 and 21, and May 5 and 12. For more information, call (718) 543-3115.

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 258th Street (Van Cortlandt Park), weekdays from 9 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. For more information and locations, call 311.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Sweet-Toothers Invited

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., invites teens and young adults to its **Chocolate Cake and a Book** event, Jan. 27 at 4 p.m. Guests will be treated to cake in addition to a free book. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Onstage

Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents **Hasta Siempre**, featuring Luis "Perico" Ortiz, performing salsa music, celebrating his 55th anniversary, Jan. 20 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$50 to \$65; \$100/VIP (which includes pre-concert reception including hors d'oeuvres and drinks at 6:30 p.m.). For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

Lehman Center's Concert Hall, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W. presents **La Belle: Lost in the World of Automaton**, Jan. 28 at 4 p.m., by the Imago Theater, inspired by the original Beauty and the Beast story. Tickets: \$25; \$10/ages to 12 years/seniors. For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

The Bronx Arts Ensemble presents clarinetist **Paquito D'Rivera** performing classical music with piano and singer at Horace Mann Recital Hall, 231 W. 246th St., Riverdale, followed by refreshments, Jan. 28 at 2 p.m. Tickets for this fundraiser to support BAE students are \$125. For more information, call (718) 601-7399.

Events

Mosholu Montefiore Senior Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave. offers seniors an eight-week **dance workshop**, Latin Rhythms, Music and Dances From Around the World, at 10 a.m., Mondays through March: Jan. 22, 29, Feb. 5, 12, 26, March 5, 12 and 19. Register in advance or just show up. The course culminates in a revue. For more information, call

(718) 798-6601.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Living Sculpture, to create a sculpture using plant parts, Jan. 20 and 21; and Painted Papers and the Stories of Eric Carte, to hear stories, then use hand painted papers to form bright and colorful images, Jan. 27 and 28; both in the WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Grounds admission is free until noon Saturdays and Tuesdays all year. For more information and a schedule of events including tours and walks, call (718) 549-3200.

Exhibits

The Bronx County Historical Society presents **What Lies Beneath -- Cemeteries of the Bronx**, through April 8, at the Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street), For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse (at 165th Street), presents **Gordon Matta-Clark: Anarchitect**, and **Susannah Ray: A Further Shore**, both through April 8. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

Lehman College Art Gallery, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents free, **Dark and Stormy Night Gothic Influence in Contemporary Art**, Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., through Feb. 10. For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for children: **Hands-on Projects**: (ages

5 to 12; preregistration required), Dinosaur Book Making, Jan. 18 and Pencil Holder Making, Jan. 25, both at 4 p.m.; and People Craft Making, Jan. 21 and Mittens Craft Making, Jan. 28, both at 3:30 p.m. Adults can attend: **film**: "Witness for the Prosecution," Jan. 20 at 2:30 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: **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), crafts, Jan. 19 and 26; **Toddler Bilingual Storytime**: (ages 18 to 36 months), librarian will read, sing and play songs in English and Spanish, Jan. 22 at 3 p.m. and Jan. 29 and 30 at 10:30 a.m.; **STEM: Kids Science at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), Jan. 23 and 30; **Read Aloud**: (ages 5 to 12), listen to a story followed by crafts, Jan. 24 at 3 p.m. and Jan. 31 at 3:45 p.m.; and **Toddler Storytime**: (18 to 36 months), stories, songs, fingerplays, and crafts, Jan. 25 at 10:30 a.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **Craft-eens! at 3:30 p.m.**: Crafts on Wednesdays, (all materials are provided), Jan. 24 and 31; and **film**: "The Last Knight," Jan. 27 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can attend: **Winter Crafts**: Jan. 24 at 3 p.m.; and **Knitting Circle**: Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for the entire family: **Family Movie Day**: Jan. 27 at 2 p.m. 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 Jan. 22 for the next publication date of Feb. 1.



Photo courtesy Lehman Center for the Performing Arts
LUIS "PERICO" ORTIZ will perform at Lehman Center for the Performing Arts on Jan. 20 at 8 p.m. (see under Onstage for more information).

Bronx Braves Blizzard



Photo by Miriam Quinones

SOMETIMES YOU JUST have to run. The gusty snowstorm on Jan. 4 made for some scurrying by these three residents getting around Bedford Park Boulevard. A full spread of photos can be found on www.norwoodnews.org.

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