



NORWOOD NEWS

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LESSONS ON SCHOOL SEGREGATION | PG. 9

BATTLE SPROUTS AT RISSE GARDEN

Member challenges sanction at city-sponsored garden



Photo by Adi Talwar

ELIZABETH CARSON AT Risse Street Garden. Carson was sanctioned by the garden's steering committee, resulting in her garden beds removed.

By DAVID CRUZ

In the last five years, Elizabeth Carson has enjoyed cultivating her horticultural passions at Risse Street Garden, a tiny oasis insulated from the malaise of traffic at Jerome Avenue and Risse Street on the tip of Norwood.

She's proud to have put in the time. As a full-fledged volunteer gardener, Carson is entitled to

keys to the city-owned garden, allowing her time to work the landscape, tend to perennials and enjoy the therapeutic thrill of seeing the birth of plants.

But since last year, Carson's sense of tranquility at the garden has been disrupted by a war of words with fellow garden members whose steering committee voted to dramatically reduce her gardening privileges. Carson

views her punishment as illegitimate since the committee issuing the vote was short one member. Garden bylaws dictate all steering committee members must be present for a vote. Carson, steadfast, is unwilling to concede.

"I may not win, but I can't accept what's been done," she said.

The Risse Street Garden saga has also raised questions on the role played by GreenThumb, a

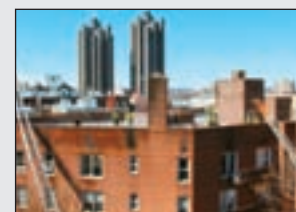
division of the New York City Department of Parks, which licenses the space to Risse Garden. GreenThumb mandates gardens create some organizational structure, which includes enacting bylaws.

And though the 28-year-old garden falls under GreenThumb, Carson says the garden's bylaws are played fast and loose with

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THE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL FOR
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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST**Jerome Avenue Approved for Massive Rezoning****By MARY MELLON**

After three years of back and forth talks, the Jerome Avenue Rezoning Plan was approved, opening the door for the rezoning of 92 blocks of Jerome Avenue, ushering in 4600 units of affordable housing, of which 1500 will be permanently affordable. The rezoning plan is the largest since the 1970s, and can jeopardize the neighborhood's existing automotive sector.

The plan represents a major win for City Council members Vanessa Gibson and Fernando Cabrera, whose districts cover the area to be rezoned. They believe rezoning will allow current residents to remain in place while adding to the stock of affordable housing.

The Jerome Avenue district will extend from McClellan to 184th streets, impacting the neighborhoods of Highbridge, Concourse, Mount Hope, University Heights and Morris Heights.

"This is an opportunity for the Bronx to get what it has rightfully deserved for decades and decades when no one gave a second glance to the Bronx," Gibson said minutes ahead of the March 22 vote. "We have not had a major investment like this."

The city will build two new elementary schools within those communities which are part of school districts 9 and 10. They will create a Southwest Bronx Housing Task Force that will preserve 2500 affordable units in the neighborhood over the next two years, and a preservation program to protect tenants from displacement, sustained by \$200,000 for tenant organizing. Because of the city's Manda-



Photo by David Cruz

THE JEROME AVENUE Rezoning Plan now jeopardizes existing automotive businesses like this one at 1707 Jerome Ave.

tory Inclusionary Housing program, developers who build along the Jerome Avenue corridor will also be required to set aside at least 25 percent of their new units for affordable housing. Ten percent of the developer's units will go to families earning 40 percent of the area median income, or \$34,360 for a family of three.

Talk of Jerome Avenue's rezoning began in 2015, a year after Mayor Bill de Blasio announced his Housing New York Plan, which sought to build or preserve 200,000 units of affordable housing. The city organized a number of visioning sessions, prompting Cabrera to call the process a "prototype for all future rezoning projects setting high standards for collaboration and community input" in prepared remarks ahead of the vote.

Those opposed to the plan have long said that the new affordable housing will not be as affordable to the existing population and that rezoning will spark gentrification. Community advocates worry that low-income tenants and the

numerous immigrant-owned auto shops along Jerome Avenue will be displaced. The Bronx Coalition for Community Vision, an activist group in favor of low-income housing requirements, attended the council vote. During the proceedings they erupted with chants of "The people, united, will never be defeated!" Video footage of the event reveals impassive faces from council members and even laughter as protesters were cleared from the room.

The city has made some concessions to address the opposition's concerns. The city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development is constructing a certificate of no-harassment program, which will require landlords to prove that they have not harassed current or former tenants into moving out of their apartments in the last five years in exchange for a green card. The city Department of Small Business Services will start a training program for auto workers, hire a workforce development coordinator to assist auto-related businesses, and implement \$1.5 million in grant money to help businesses that are displaced with relocation costs.

"The plan marks another milestone in the important progress we are making to build a fairer and more affordable New York City," said Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Editor's Note: Additional reporting by David Cruz. For more coverage of the Jerome Avenue Rezoning Plan, read the *Inquiring Photographer* on page 4.

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: Public Safety & Quality of Life Committee meets on April 3; Health & Hospitals Committee meets on April 3 at 7:30 p.m.; Environment & Sanitation Committee meets on April 4; Education, Youth & Libraries Committee meets on April 4 at 7:30 p.m.; Traffic & Transportation Committee meets on April 5; Veterans Committee meets on April 5 at 7:30 p.m.; Housing, Land Use & Zoning Committee meets on April 10; Parks & Recreation Committee meets on April 10 at 7:30 p.m.; Senior Services Committee meets on April 11; and the Executive Board Committee meets on April 12. For more information, call the board office at (718) 933-5650.

BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION meets on April 4 at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So., Apt.# B1, at 8 p.m. For more information, email bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.



Letters To The Editor

Eating Healthy the Better Choice

With three crippling Nor'easters battering our east coast in quick succession, we all look forward to March 20, first day of spring, balmy weather, and flowers in bloom.

It's also a superb occasion to replace animal foods on our menu with healthy, delicious, eco-friendly vegetables, legumes, grains, and fruits.

The shift towards healthy eating is everywhere. Fast-food chains like Chipotle, Quiznos, Starbucks, Subway, Taco Bell, and Wendy's all offer plant-based options. Major publications and popular websites tout vegan recipes.

Google CEO Eric Schmidt views replacement of meat by plant based protein as the world's #1 technical trend. The financial investment community

is betting on innovative start-ups, like Beyond Meat, or Impossible Foods. Even Tyson Foods' new CEO sees plant protein as meat industry's future.

Global Meat News reports that nearly half of consumers are reducing meat intake. Indeed, per capita red meat consumption has dropped by a whopping 25 percent in the past 40 years.

Every one of us can celebrate spring by checking out the rich collection of plant-based dinners and desserts in our supermarket's frozen food, dairy, and produce sections. An internet search on vegan foods brings rich rewards.

Niles Neusbaum
Williamsbridge resident

Opinion

Help Strengthen the State's Rent Laws, Senator Klein!

By **JUAN NUNEZ**

The Bronx is facing a huge housing crisis as rents are going up and poorer people of color and immigrant residents are being pushed out. It was this anxiety that led dozens of determined Bronx tenants and members of Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition to conclude their recent annual meeting on March 24, picketing outside New York State Senator Jeffrey Klein's campaign office in the Bronx, chanting "When tenants are under attack, what do we do? Stand up! Fight back!" This was the second consecutive annual meeting that Senator Klein was invited to attend and address concerns about high rents along with other issues, but declined to attend both times, leaving Bronx residents with no recourse but to go to the senator instead.

Essential progressive legislation necessary to strengthen rent and eviction protections for struggling Bronx residents who live in rent stabilized apartments are not finding the light of day in the current New York State Senate. Rent stabilization is a way to limit rent increases and keep our homes affordable. However, landlords in New York

City are taking advantage of two major loopholes in current rent stabilization laws; preferential rent and the vacancy bonus, essentially exploiting tenants. Exactly 266,279 New York City families live in a rent stabilized apartment with a preferential rent - a discount that can be taken away at lease renewal, leading to a sudden increase of hundreds of dollars. The vacancy bonus gives landlords a 20 percent increase in rent each time an apartment turns over, incentivizing harassment of long term tenants. There are rent bills that prevent this kind of exploitation, which the New York State Assembly has passed but the New York State Senate has yet to act upon.

Our impetus for engaging Senator Klein on this issue is rooted in the critical role that the senator plays as the leader of the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC). Senator Klein has indicated time and again that he helped co-found the IDC as a way to pass progressive laws in a legislative chamber that historically has been unfriendly to progressive causes. The New York State Assembly has already passed several good pieces of rent reform legislation, but unless the State Senate brings these bills to the floor, they will die. In order to allay the fears and anxiety of Bronx tenants, Senator Klein can ask his ally, the Republican leader of the State Senate, to include these laws in the budget package this year and demonstrate his willingness to stand for progressive legislation.

Juan Nunez is vice president, board of directors for the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition.

Opinion

Take the NYC School Survey By March 29

By **GENEAL CHACON**

Every year, I take the New York School Survey to let my school know what really matters to me and I encourage Bronx families to participate too at nyschoolsurvey.org by Thursday, March 29.

I'm a proud public school parent, with kids at PS 277 and MS 223. I love my kids' schools, so I want to do everything I can to help them improve and partner with them to put my kids on a path to success. The NYC School Survey is an opportunity for parents like me to help my school understand where they're doing well and where they can improve. I can share feedback on issues that are very important to me, like:

- How I am treated as a parent when I come to the school,
- How my child's teachers involve me in their education, and
- The overall education my child receives.

The best leaders understand that all feedback is a request: stop doing this, start doing that, or continue doing what works. When I take the survey, I am asking my child's principal, teachers and

the school community to consider the experience of my child and family when they think about how to make our school better and make decisions about what to improve.

I encourage all parents who want to have a voice in their children's educational opportunities and successful outcomes to take the survey and be heard. Please take the 2018 NYC School survey at nyschoolsurvey.org by Thursday, March 29.

Geneal Chacon is a resident of the West Bronx, a parent of three public school students, a former Parent Association president and President's Council and School Leadership member at PS 277, and currently serves as the Bronx Borough President's representative on the Panel for Educational Policy.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked local residents their thoughts on the recent decision to rezone a large chunk of Jerome Avenue, a lofty plan that looks to bring 4000 units of affordable housing in the coming years



Before you rezone the area, where are the parking spaces going to be? You have no parking, the garages are filled, the schools are overcrowded. Before you start rezoning you need to come up with a cohesive plan. This is just taking the people who have been here for 20 or 30 years and throwing us to the sidelines and making it whatever the public policy is. They haven't thought about the people who have lived and worked here for a long time. For us it's unfair. You can't just bring in every new person in the world.

Victor DeRosa
Norwood



I'm for it, totally. We need to help the people. It's a good thing because rents are so expensive. The cost of living is out of control. I don't think it will really affect me, I don't have a car. Overall, I think it's a good thing.

Steve Bobker
Van Cortlandt Park South



Affordable housing isn't really affordable. Parking is going to get much worse and there's too many people here anyway. We're overloaded with people. Where will they build it, on top of another building? That's what I'm saying. And you have three kids and they give you two bedrooms and the bedrooms are two by four, so who could sleep. It's not affordable, no it's not.

Joan Carter
Bedford Park



I'm against that, why? Because it's crowded as it is already and rezoning 4000 individuals to this area, God only knows what kind of individuals we're talking about. Are we talking about affluent people or are we talking gentrification at its best and all of the prices on gas and food and small toiletries are going to shoot above? I don't know how it's going to turn out if you do this. It just doesn't make sense. If they continue to build here, you can say goodbye to our parks.

Francisco Tirado
Norwood



What are they going to do with the residents already here, force them out? I mean I think it's great that people get a chance to occupy space that's not being used, if it's affordable because the rents are outrageous. But then again, if it becomes overcrowded and some people who come with low incomes, some of them come out of jail and some come from shelters and at some point the crime rate may go up. They should spread out the 4000 units all over the city. They should absolutely spread it out and not concentrate on one isolated area.

Randy Jewels
Bedford Park

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No One Seriously Injured In Norwood Blaze



Photo by David Cruz

A FIREFIGHTER ASSESSES the damage at an apartment on the sixth floor.

By DAVID CRUZ

Three people, including two firefighters, suffered minor injuries in a fire that displaced one family in a sixth-story apartment in the Norwood section of the Bronx. Three of the units on the sixth floor were seriously damaged by the blaze. About 25 crews responded to the fire.

The blaze happened on March 19 just before noon at 55 E. 208th St., between DeKalb and Kossuth avenues, sending families fleeing the building. Plumes of smoke billowed out the sixth floor for at least 45 minutes, according to one resident. Smoke odors could be picked up for at least a quarter mile.

"It looks like a possible plumber's torch on the fifth floor--lit a fire which got into the large space un-

derneath the roof and the top floor ceiling. Spread very rapidly," said FDNY chief Joseph Saccente, adding the fire started at the "pipes between the kitchen and the bathroom."

Several floors down, resident Marina Zaprianova frantically searched for several of her rescue cats that jumped from her apartment. At least five of them were found.

The city Department of Buildings issued a partial vacate order, mandating that residents in 15 apartments along the building's A, B, and C lines be emptied. Meantime, Con Edison turned off the gas.

Editor's Note: The Norwood News produced a video package on this fire. It can be found on www.norwoodnews.org.



Photo by David Cruz

FDNY CREWS ON the roof of 55 E. 208th St.

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Fund Set for Norwood Student Who Died in Belmont Blaze

By DAVID GREENE

A special fund created to help the family of the late MS 80 student who died in a horrific fire in Belmont has so far to date raised \$5,000 and hopes to raise a total of \$15,000.

Jordan Conde (pictured below), 14, was a 7th grader at the Norwood school. According to the posting by an unknown author, "Jordan was the class clown that everybody loved," adding, "(Jordan) was able to attract everyone's attention in the entire school."

The blaze broke out on the first floor of an apartment building at 2381 Hoffman St. at 1:30 a.m. on March 5, where the Conde family lived on the second floor. The fire killed Jordan and his unidentified stepfather, who were trapped by the flames inside the apartment. More than a dozen others were injured.

Those donating to the fund left heartfelt messages for the surviving family members. Teacher Miriam Rivera wrote, "Jordan was also my student in the second grade. My heart is broken. My prayers are with his family." She added, "I will never forget him and the laughter we shared. God bless you Jordan, see you later!"

The fund will help cover the cost of the \$6,000 funeral handled by the John J. Fox & Sons Funeral home in Bedford Park. Leftover funds will go to Jordan's mother and sister who suffered serious injuries in the fire as well as losing all of the family's personal possessions.

Those wishing to donate can log on to the website at:

<https://www.youcaring.com/jordancondebriannacondeevlynconde-1129566>.



BID to Unveil "Norwood Column"...And It Needs Your Help

By NIALL RIDGLEY

What's your favorite food? Where do you like to hang out? The Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District (BID) wants to pick your brain for answers to these questions, and others, as part of an art installation slated for placement this spring.

The installation, a project, between the BID and the city Department of Transportation (DOT), in the shape of a column, will display posters with quotes solicited from the community. It will be located at the intersection of the Grand Concourse and Mosholu Parkway, one of several gateways into Norwood's commercial strip.

Jenny Hung was commissioned to design the project, dubbed the "Norwood Column," which involves posters to be updated every eight weeks, rotating her collection to feature residents' answers to new sets of questions.

The BID promotes some 200 shopkeepers in the area running along Jerome Avenue between East Mosholu Parkway North and East Gun Hill Road, and along East Gun Hill Road between Jerome and Webster avenues. Ingrained in its mission is beautifying the area in hopes of making the shopping corridor attractive to shoppers. The installation hopes to accomplish just this.

Hung beat out all other proposals because of her installation's focus on community reflection, with her inclusion of community extending even to the typography in which the community's thoughts



Photo by Niall Ridgley

FUTURE LOCATION OF the "Norwood Column" art installation at the Grand Concourse and Mosholu Parkway.

will be presented.

In an interview with the *Norwood News*, Jennifer Tausig, executive director of the BID, said Hung will model the posters' typography off the unique lettering styles found at commercial signs around Norwood businesses. "These are all letters that are reflected in the Norwood community, like that's Bronx Sports, that's Big G Deli," Tausig said, showing an example of the letters chosen. "[Hung] wants to use familiar typography to make the different posters."

Tausig said the artwork will be up for 11 months, with a rotating theme updated every six weeks. "So we came up with six sort-of themes with questions that we

want responses from the community for. These are things like favorite foods, favorite places, favorite people – you know our leaders in the community, and sort of people's visions."

"We are hopeful that the community will see value in it and want to be a part of it... It's art reflective of the community for people who are working here, living here, visiting here," Tausig added.

Community members looking to submit responses are encouraged to follow the link to a submission form available online through the BID's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/jghbid/> or at their Instagram at @jeromegunhill-bid.

New Gallery at Kittay House



Photo by Miriam Quinones

KITTY FABRICO (L) with her husband Steve and curator Victoria Marin (c), attend the Kittay House gallery exhibit opening featuring artworks painted by Kitty. The exhibit, dubbed "Shades of Dark and Light – Fine Portraits of People and Nature," opened at the Kittay House, a senior home in Kingsbridge Heights, on March 20. It celebrated the work of the 86-year-old artist, a Holocaust survivor. The display was made possible from a grant by Councilman Fernando Cabrera, who represents the district.



How Seniors Can Spring To a Healthier Season

By MONTEFIORE DIAMOND CARE

Spring is a time when there are lots of fresh fruits and vegetables available. Make sure to eat a wide variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, and take advantage of all the produce that is in season to try healthy and delicious recipes!

Spring Cleaning

Spring is always a good time to clear away winter clutter.

In your home, make sure to keep walkways and hallways clear and try to cut down on clutter in your home to help avoid falls. It is always a good idea to wipe away any dust that has built up and to get fresh air by opening windows. Spring is also a good

time to check the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. However, do not try to use a ladder or move heavy furniture or other objects on your own; always ask for help.

In your garden or outside of your home, be careful of and make sure to report and address any uneven, unstable, or broken pavement or stairs that may have occurred during the winter. Also, be aware of any tree limbs, branches, roots, or stumps that may have fallen or been exposed during the winter. And always ask for help!

Exercise

It is a great idea to take advantage of the warmer weather and spend

some time outside in the fresh air and sunshine. Spring is a great time to go for a walk or do other outdoor activities. When spending time outside, make sure to remember a few key safety tips:

Always make sure to wear the proper footwear when doing any exercise, especially outdoors. Sneakers or shoes with rubber soles are the best and safest option to help provide proper support and prevent slips and falls on uneven or slippery ground. Also make sure to wear the proper clothing.

Although it is usually warm in the spring, the weather can be changeable. Wear clothes in lightweight fabrics and light colors that have a looser fit; these will help prevent you from getting too hot. But also make sure to bring a lightweight jacket with you in case it gets cold. Wearing layers is ideal in case the temperature changes.

Make sure to stay hydrated and drink plenty of water when the weather gets warmer, especially if you are doing any outdoor activity.

Make sure to always wear sunscreen when doing any outdoor activity, even when it is cloudy! Sunscreen with SPF between 30 and 50 will keep you protected from harmful UV rays. Also, remember to continually reapply every few hours.

Editor's Note: *Montefiore Diamond Care is a health plan that helps Medicaid recipients in the Bronx and Westchester areas who suffer from a long-term illness to live safely and independently in their own homes. The plan offers services such as home care, audiology, dental care, vision care, personal assistance, adult day care, home-delivered meals, medical appointment coordination and transportation to medical appointments. To learn more, call 1-855-55-MONTE.*



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The Bronx Food Fight

Part 3 of 5

If It's Edible, Why Is It Still Thrown Out?

The Norwood News, in partnership with WFUV radio and BronxNet television, continue its five-part series on food insecurity issues impacting the Bronx and its residents.

By ROWAN HORNBECK of  **WFUV**.org

Every day, more than a million New Yorkers live without enough food to eat. At the same time, millions of tons of edible food go directly from supermarket shelves to dumpsters to landfills.

But some organizations are working to bridge that gap.

"It doesn't make any sense for people to be going hungry in the United States when we have all this food available," said Kevin Mullins, co-founder of the Connecticut-based non-profit Food Rescue US.

Food Rescue US doesn't operate in New York, but they're very similar to City Harvest, which operates in the five boroughs. Mullins and his teams of volunteers pick up high quality food donations from businesses like caterers and grocers and bring the food to those in need.

Mullins said that they've saved soup kitchens and food pantries tens of thousands of dollars in food costs, and that for every dollar donated to their organization to cover overhead costs, they can rescue 20 meals' worth of food. "It was like turning a tap on and not being able to turn it off," Mullins said of discarded food. "We knew there was a lot of food going to waste... we had no idea what we were in for."

Businesses in New York City throw away roughly 650,000 tons of food every year, a large percentage of which is still high quality food that could be eaten. Mullins said many businesses want to donate food, but are worried about repercussions. "One of the first reactions we almost always hear is, 'Oh, we would love to help but we can't because we don't want to be held liable,'" Mullins said.

The federal Good Samaritan Act protects businesses from this. It states that organizations serving the needy in good faith can't be held liable for the transfer of goods. Because of the legislation, Mullins said, "we're able to, with confidence, say 'no, actually you're protected by federal law.'" To be clear though, needy



Photo courtesy city Department of Sanitation

THE CITY DEPARTMENT of Sanitation is handing out these specially-marked bins for food recycling as a way to reduce the city's carbon "foodprint."

families aren't being fed garbage. All donations have to meet legal standards. Under New York State law, donated food must be inspected by the donor before giving it away to ensure it is fit for human consumption. If businesses don't inspect it carefully, they may be liable for bad food that's donated.

In New York City, not only are businesses protected from liability when donating food, they're also, in some cases, required to dispose of food waste more responsibly. Food service establishments, manufacturers, and wholesalers over a certain size are required by law to separate their organic waste.

The Foundation for New York's Strongest — the non-profit arm of the city Department of Sanitation (DSNY) -- works with businesses to cut back on their food waste through prevention, recovery and recycling efforts. In 2017, the foundation hosted its first Food Waste Fair where businesses could discuss

cost effective ways to reduce the amount of food that goes unused, donate remaining edible food, or compost additional organic waste.

A recent study by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), an environmental advocacy group, suggests that the city could meet as much as 23 percent of its meal gap if it donated excess food rather than throwing it away.

According to the NRDC, businesses waste perfectly edible food because they overstock shelves, discard food a few days before its sell-by date, or are forced to buy in bulk from retailers.

Consumers expect to see overflowing aisles of unblemished produce, but this means businesses have to stock more than they can sell, according to the report. This can have enormous economic costs. The USDA estimates that wasted produce costs US retailers more than \$15 billion annually. The most common foods to be discarded are produce, dairy,

and meat — the same fresh items lower-income households throughout the country have the least access to.

Businesses aren't the only ones who feel the economic cost of food waste. The NRDC says the average four-person household in the US wastes 1,000 pounds of food, worth about \$1,500 every year. Most household food waste comes from buying too much or throwing away food that's still good, even though it's past the printed expiration date.

New York offers educational resources for residents to help them reduce food waste. The state Department of Environmental Conservation suggests freezing foods or preparing them right away to prevent spoilage. They also offer online resources to check the shelf life of various items.

While food waste can be a financial burden, it also takes a toll on the environment. Food waste produces roughly the same amount of greenhouse gases as 37 million cars. The NRDC says the best way to cut back on emissions is to donate the large amount of edible food before it hits a landfill.

When food can't be salvaged, however, there may still be more sustainable ways to get rid of it. Composting can help scale back greenhouse gas emissions because food is no longer going to landfills where it produces methane gas.

New York City is rolling out its organic waste recycling program. Its goal is to reach all residents by the end of this year. Building landlords, their management companies, and homeowners in participating neighborhoods can request a brown bin for food scraps, food-soiled paper, and yard waste. DSNY says the scraps collected will be turned into compost or natural gas to fuel vehicles or power homes.

Mullins of Food Rescue US said the environmental impact is huge, but it wasn't what drove him to start his group. "It's an absolutely amazing secondary benefit for us that at the same time we're able to make a positive impact on the environment," he said.



Chipping Away at NYC Schools Segregation

By DAVID CRUZ

In the school cafeteria of PS 73 in the Concourse section of the Bronx on March 8, a discussion on how to improve diversity across the city's public school system had finally put the issue of school desegregation at the forefront.

It was the first of five town hall discussions on the topic, a product of the city Department of Education's (DOE) Equity & Excellence for All plan. The plan, announced last year, seeks ways to promote a healthier mix of ethnicities across the borough.

The plan was also the product of Councilman Ritchie's Torres' bill he co-authored with Brooklyn Councilman Brad Landers that sought a greater ethnic balance in schools in the hopes that a child's exposure to an ethnicity not their own can prepare them for a more globalized world in the years ahead.

And while the city has placed school diversity at the forefront, neither Mayor Bill de Blasio nor his appointees at the city DOE will concede the plan is intended to desegregate a public school system that's been operating on segregated terms for decades.

"Words matter. Because how can you prescribe the right solution when you refuse to even diagnose the problem correctly? And the administration is loathed to acknowledge that our school system is segregated," said Torres, speaking to the *Norwood News* from his office on Bathgate Avenue. The city's stance, Torres notes, falls in line with denialism.

But the group's formation is as close the DOE will admit to suggesting segregation, while unintended, is systemic. That's evident at the Concourse school, where its neighborhood is predominantly home to black and Hispanic students, and one of the more segregated communities in the city.

A Decades Long Problem

Undoing school segregation is quite lofty. In a city impacted by the effects of redlining, a federal policy where so-called "hazardous populations" comprised of mostly minority neighborhoods were deliberately deprived of investment, leading to a segregated city, a segregated school system soon followed.

Even today, current zoning laws have been drafted to keep affordable housing units reserved for low-income earners



Photo by David Cruz

COUNCILMAN RITCHIE TORRES is among the small chorus of politicians pointing out the pattern of school segregation within the city's public school system.

out of wealthier, whiter neighborhoods such as the case in the East Bronx communities of Country Club, Edgewater Park, and City Island. In 2004, Mayor Michael Bloomberg recommended downzoning, reinforcing segregation that's bled into the school system.

But while the city has chipped away at housing segregation, up to this point it has allowed school segregation to worsen. A 2014 UCLA study revealed that a black student in New York City only attended public school with 17 percent of white students in 2010, down six percent when compared to 1970.

The simple though often complex educational policies imposed by the public school system make it difficult to go for an easy fix. On the elementary and middle school front, parents typically send their children to schools closest to their home. In a city already plagued by housing segregation, this practice only promulgates segregation.

A data map available from IntegrateNYC, a nonprofit pushing for diversity across the school system, shows white students are separated from black and Hispanic students across the New York City public school system. Meantime, another map by the Anti-Discrimination Center, which litigates cases involving alleged discrimination, shows a deep disparity between where whites and minorities live. Overlapping the datasets together will show a relationship between segregated schools and communities.

"The evidence is clear that wherever you have racially concentrated poverty you'll have far worse academic out-



Photo courtesy Twitter

THE FIRST MEETING by the DOE's School Diversity Group drew a large number of guests.

comes," said Torres.

The evidence was shown in a 2016 report by Measure of America, a Brooklyn-based think tank group, where neighborhood disadvantage is tethered to a low high school graduation rate. Community District 5, covering the South Fordham, University Heights, Morris Heights, and Mount Hope sections of the Bronx, had the lowest high school graduation rate in 2015 with only 60.9 percent of students graduating on time. The neighborhood is largely segregated, where whites comprise 1.4 percent of the district's population.

While the report credits the Bloomberg-era educational policy of school choice—where high school students can choose to enroll at a school outside their neighborhood and less restrictive—for moving the graduation needle some, high school graduation rates are still the poorest in largely segregated communities.

School choice itself can pose prob-

lems to desegregating the system since students rank their schools according to their preference. Students who choose to go to their neighborhood school will get priority, while those who don't live in a given community will be given secondary preference.

For Torres, school choice gives the "illusion of equity."

"[T]he truth is those who have the most money, and the most information will have the best choice. There are people who hire specialists that assist in navigating the public school system," said Torres.

The DOE's Equity and Excellence plan is doing away with some of its school choice criteria that puts students at the top of admissions preference come 2019, among them the attendance of open houses and high school fairs that had put students at the top of the list.

Torres' bill inspired the DOE to launch a pilot program that allows for controlled choice, where parents of students can sign up for their desired school choice, but adds filters that allow for a more diverse mix of students.

Despite Torres' and Landers' bill passing, the two were largely alone in sounding the alarm.

The DOE's push to desegregate the system is incremental, Torres suggests. He's aware an even greater nudge to overhaul the system requires too much political capital. And his colleagues, he notes, are unwilling to trade it in.

"The attempt to desegregate public education is politically treacherous territory," said Torres. "There's no political constituency for integrating the schools. So if the mayor were going to pursue it, he would do so because it's the right thing to do not because of his political interests."

Editor's Note: *This series is made possible by a fellowship from Marguerite Casey Foundation, which supports low-income families in strengthening their voice and mobilizing their communities to achieve a more just and equitable society for all. School Diversity Advisory Group town hall events take place at 6:30 p.m. on the following days: April 17 at Forest Hills H. S., 67-01 110th St., Queens; May 15 at CSI H. S. for International Studies, 100 Essex Dr., Staten Island; and Frederick Douglass Academy, 2581 7th Ave. Child care, language translation services, and food are served.*

SpringFest

HUNDREDS OF RESIDENTS took part in the 2nd annual SpringFest held on March 24 at the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center at 3450 DeKalb Ave. in Norwood. The festival doubled as an open house where residents toured the facility, enjoyed program demonstrations including an art show, dance class and arts and crafts as well as a bouncy castle for the children. The center also had a tax professional on hand to assist with free tax preparation. Photos by David Greene; captions by David Cruz.



KADIRAH DOW, AGE 6, slides down the bouncy castle during MMCC's free open house.



YOUNGSTERS TAKE ADVANTAGE of the free arts and crafts demonstration during the free open house.



HERE'S SOMETHING FUN: Taxes! This tax preparer offers free tax assistance for guests of Mosholu Montefiore Community Center.



ARTIST ANNINH STEINBERGEN, an MMCC member since 1990, holds her self-portrait and a ceramic duck she created at the center's arts and crafts class.



VISITORS TAKE PART in a free art show display by members.



MMCC STAFFER STACI PEARSON (r) shows guests how to make a paper airplane.

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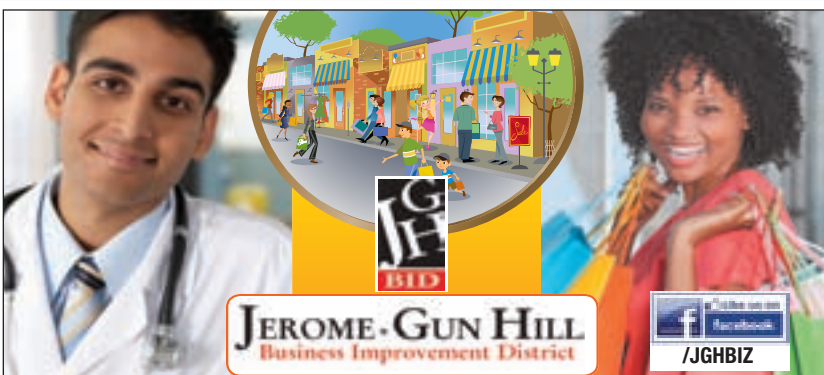
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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Free GED Class

SUNY Bronx Educational Opportunity Center, 1666 Bathgate Ave. (between 172nd and 173rd streets), offers tuition-free class for those 18 and over interested in obtaining their GED diploma. Classes begin on April 16. For more detailed information, requirements, and to register (required), call (718) 530-7000.

Producer Training

Producer training workshops are available to Bronxites at BronxNet Television starting April 9. Topics include field production, audio recording, directing and more. Participants who complete the program will gain access to professional studios and equipment free of charge. To register, email training@bronxnet.org.

Pre-K Registration

Parents can register their children born in 2014 for free, full day pre-kindergarten classes at Community Board 7's office, 229-A E. 204th St., on March 29 from 1 to 4:30 p.m.. For more information, call Jimmy Rivera at (212) 637-8021 or email jrivera118@schools.nyc.gov.

Excelsior Scholarship Applications for the Excelsior Scholarship are now open for new applicants pursuing a college degree at city- or state-funded colleges/universities for the 2018-19 academic year. Eligible candidates must be New York State residents, take 30 credits per year (including summer and winter sessions), a family whose annual household income is below \$110,000, and be on track to graduate on time with an associate's degree in two years or a bachelor's degree in four years. Applications will be accepted through July 23. For more information, and to apply, go to <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/excelsior/>.

Excelsior Scholarship

GEDs and Paid Internships Mosholu Montefiore Community Center offers the following for young adults ages 18 to 24: free classes and tutoring sessions to prepare for the exam to get their GED (orientation/registration sessions are held every Thursday at 3512 DeKalb Ave.); and 14-week paid internship to those who are not employed or enrolled in school, to receive training and workshops. For more information or to make an appointment, call Jessica Acevedo or Perlita Mendez at (718) 652-0282.

GEDs and Paid Internships

Free Tax Filing Assistance Free tax filing is available for families whose total income is \$54,000 or less or individuals who make \$30,000 or less at the following locations: Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave. (appt: Dewayne Lee at (718) 882-4000 ext. 209 or email DLee@mmcc.org); and SUNY Bronx Educational Opportunity Center, 1666 Bathgate Ave. (appt: (718) 530-7019). Applicants must bring a W2 and/or 1099 form or any other proof showing income, government-issued ID, social security card or ITIN number for self, spouse and dependents, a 1095 health form or health insurance statements and bank account information for those looking to have their tax refund direct deposited. Appointments are required.

Free Tax Filing Assistance

Tax Help Free tax preparation services are available at University Neighborhood Housing Program, 2715 Bainbridge Ave., with help from students from Manhattan College's O'Malley School of Business. The service is only available for qualified families with an income of \$54,000 or less and individuals with a gross income below \$30,000. Services are available, by appointment only, as follows: Wednesdays from 1 to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (718) 933-2539.

Scholarship Program The National Puerto Rican Day Parade is accepting applications for its 2018 National Scholarship Program. The program will award a \$2,000 scholarship that will go towards college education. Applicants must be of Puerto Rican descent, have a 3.0 or higher grade point average, a high school senior or freshman through junior at a two- or four-year college/university, and have a proven track record of volunteer work or community service. Previous scholarship winners are eligible to apply. The deadline is March 30. For more detailed information or to apply, go to www.nprdpinc.org.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Spring Egg Hunt

The public is invited to a free spring egg hunt at the Williamsbridge Oval on March 31 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. for ages to 11 years. Events include egg hunt, carnival games, helmet distribution, arts & crafts, relay races, and visit from Easter bunny. Bring a can of food for donation to local pantry. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

Onstage

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Jazz Concert**, presented by the Celia Cruz H.S. of Music Jazz Band, April 11 at 6 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Office of the Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. presents 2nd annual **Bronx Gospel Concert**, April 7 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., featuring a variety of performers, at 177 Dreiser Loop, Coop City auditorium. Must RSVP and must have a ticket (free for seniors). Events include vendor and sponsor tables and refreshments for sale. Concert is scheduled for 12:30 to 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 590-6248.

Lehman College's Lovinger Theatre, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **East Meets West** featuring members of the Bronx Arts Ensemble (BAE), April 7 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15/\$25 at the door. For more information, call BAE at (718) 601-7399.

Pregones Theatre, 571-575 Walton Ave., presents **International Contemporary Ensemble + UpBeat NC**, March 31 at 8 p.m. Tickets (non refundable) are \$15/rows B&C; \$30/advance online sales only; \$50/at the door; 25% off regular admission for members. For more information, call (718) 585-1202.

Hostos Community College, 450 Grand Concourse, presents **free concert**, Viento de Agua, April 14 at 11:30 a.m. in the Repertory Theatre at the Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture preceded by a pre-performance arts workshop at 10:30 a.m. Tickets are required. For more information, call (718) 518-4455.

Events

Lehman College's Lovinger Theatre, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **film**, "From Nowhere," story of three undocumented Bronx high school seniors and the obstacles they face while trying to pursue the American dream, April 18 at 7 p.m., followed by a Q&A. Tickets (\$10/general public) and donations (\$5/suggested) can be made at the door. Students with student ID are



Photo courtesy Joshua Bright

A WORKSHOP ON photographing local landscapes is scheduled in April, just a number of upcoming events at Wave Hill (see more activities under "Events").

admitted free. For more information, call (718) 960-8535.

Williamsbridge Oval presents free **Tiny Prints: Baby and Toddler Program**, Mondays 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and Fridays 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects: Pastel Eggs in Watercolors**, to hear story, then make painting, March 31 and April 1; and **Rock With the Rock Pigeons**, to learn how pigeons carried secret messages, then in costume, join sing-along and storyteller, April 7 and 8; both in the WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Grounds admission is free until noon Tuesdays and Saturdays all year. For more information and a schedule of events including tours and walks, call (718) 549-3200.

Bronx County Historical Society (BCHS) presents **Bronx Brewery Legacy Trolley Tour**, April 7 from noon to 5 p.m., to visit Bronx breweries and beer halls (\$40). Tours start at the Woodlawn Cemetery Jerome Avenue entrance. For more information, call BCHS at (718) 881-8900.

Exhibits

The Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street), presents **Bronx Expo - The Starlight Park Story**, April 12 (opening reception from 4:30 to 7 p.m.) through Sept. 30; and **Women's Suffrage and New York City: A Centennial Celebration**, April 12, 2018 through April 11, 2019. For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

New York Botanical Garden presents **Orchid Show**, through April 22, in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory (\$28/members 21 years+; \$38/non members). For more information, call (718) 817-8616.

Bronx Documentary Center, 614 Courtlandt Ave., presents exhibit **"Father Figure: Exploring Alternative Notions of Black Fatherhood,"** through March 31, Thursdays and Fridays 3 to 7 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, call (718) 993-3512.

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.

Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for children: **Hands-on Projects:** (ages 5 to 12; preregistration required): Sun Collage Making, March 29 at 4 p.m.; and **Bilingual Birdies Spanish Series at 2 p.m.:** (all ages), Spanish teachers play guitar, percussion, and use puppets, ending in bubble dance party, April 7 and 14. Teens/young adults can enjoy **film:** "Spider-Man," March 30 at 3:30 p.m. Adults can attend **film:** "The Shack," March 31 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

The Moshulu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.:** (ages 5 to 12), crafts, March 30, April 6 and 13; **Toddler Storytime at 10:30 a.m.:** (18 to 36 months), interactive stories, action songs, fingerplays and crafts, April 5 and 12; **STEM: Kids Science at 3 p.m.:** (ages 5 to 12), April 3 and 10; and **Build a Puppet Workshop:** (ages 5 to 12), to make puppets from arts and crafts materials, April 4 at 3:30 p.m. Adults can attend: **Knitting Circle:** Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

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NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by April 2 for the next publication date of April 12.



File photo

SPRING TO WILLIAMSBRIDGE Oval Park on March 31 for the annual Spring Egg Hunt (see Editor's Pick for more details).

Battle Sprouts at Risse Garden

(continued from page 1)

little recourse. The agency, for better or worse, leaves it to gardens to enforce their bylaws.

"Responsibility that the gardeners have is to operator above board, on the record, in some agreed upon fashion," said Carson.

A Growing Problem

The seeds of friction were sown in Oct. 2016 when talk of a pond project inside the garden was in the works. The project's pre-construction phase hadn't gone as smooth as it should have, Carson said, citing costs and a vague plan to build it.

The criticism drew the ire of the pond's volunteer project manager, Brendan O'Regan. After writing an email outlining ways to improve construction of the project while also relaying her concerns to Community Board 7, Carson alleges that O'Regan lobbied garden members to remove most of her privileges. O'Regan told the *Norwood News* the situation could've been handled without Carson bringing it to CB7.

"All she had to do was say put a motion out on the garden and then say, 'I want a vote to do this or do that or stop the pond,'" said O'Regan. "She voted for the pond at that time. If she had any problem, all she had to do was call immediately a steering [committee] meeting or a general meeting of the garden. Call a motion for anything she chooses too. And she never did that."

Adding to the issue were two residents advocating for Carson, claiming to be CB7 members. Though Carson insisted she did not send them, O'Regan said their presence violated the garden's bylaws which mandate friends or guests of garden members must be civilized.

Despite only four of the five steering committee members on hand, a vote was passed to remove Carson's plant beds though keeping her membership status.

"I've been punished for speaking out," said Carson. "That's not against the rules."

O'Regan admits the steering committee was down a member but a sanction was still approved by GreenThumb. "We did many things in the past without full steering memberships, which is very normal. The director of GreenThumb told me. It's very normal," said O'Regan.

GreenThumb

Elizabeth Carson's relentless crusade for garden governance (she's collected nearly 40,000 signatures in a petition supporting her right to keep her garden beds) has raised the question of enforceability of a garden's bylaws. Though GreenThumb offers mediation, it does not police gardens. Rather, garden groups are encouraged to resolve conflicts internally. This contradicting approach confounds Carson, who at one point wrote to the director of GreenThumb questioning its paradox. For Carson, bylaws should be enforced by GreenThumb.

"They want to say to a garden, 'Write your bylaws, follow your bylaws. It's on you,'" said Carson of GreenThumb. "We have bylaws, but they are terribly weak."

Carson should know. She co-wrote the bylaws. GreenThumb gardens are now in the beginning stages of updating their bylaws, supporting Carson's view that GreenThumb is involved with the garden governance but absolves itself from enforceability in messy situations.

O'Regan wants the laws amended too, though he notes the by-the-book sanction on Carson was just. "And [GreenThumb] would have stepped in if there was something unfair or unjust being done," said O'Regan. "That's their job. And they would have. And they told me that they would. But they can't because there's nothing unfair or unjust being done."

Lack of funds is to blame for an understaffed agency as GreenThumb.

"New York City Parks has worked closely with Risse Garden over the past year and continues to do so, offering resources and conflict mediation assistance. We strive to help our gardens maintain harmonious environments," said Kelly Krause, a Parks Department spokesperson.

Currently, GreenThumb's executive team staffs 10 outreach coordinators who work with members for each of the nearly 600 sponsored gardens.

Workloads for each coordinator appear heavy. In the Bronx, for instance, one of the two coordinators oversees 69 of the 115 community gardens scattered across the borough's city-owned properties. The other oversees the rest, with 20 more in Manhattan.

GreenThumb, created in 1978, holds monthly gardening workshops while offering technical support. The Department of Parks could not provide a total budget for GreenThumb, though revealed its cost on supplies stands at \$774,000, with much of the funds coming from New York City than ever before. That's largely due to the Trump Administration's constant threat to do away with its Community Development Block Grant program, which at one point funded 43 percent of GreenThumb's budget.

"GreenThumb dodged a bullet last year when the Community Development Block Grant wasn't cut. Working with New York City Parks, we advocated for the protection of the program, and it did receive additional city funding in fiscal year 2018," said Lynn Bodnar Kelly, executive director of New Yorkers for Parks, a park advocacy group. "However, it's risky to have a local program depend so heavily on federal funding, particularly when the politics of New York City are so different from the politics of Washington."

Among the only things that O'Regan and Carson could agree on was a faster outcome on the part of GreenThumb.

"Maybe that's part of the reason why this has dragged on for so long," said O'Regan of the staffing.

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CB7 Honors Empowered Women



Photo courtesy Marketing and Advertising Solutions

COMMUNITY LEADERS FROM the various professional sectors were honored at Community Board 7's second annual Women's Empowerment Summit, "Powerful Women Share Their Secrets of Financial Independence and Success." The event happened March 24 at Herbert H. Lehman College and involved panels, mentoring sessions, and workshops about how women can network for success. The event comes at the end of March's National Women's History Month.

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