



NORWOOD NEWS

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STREET HONOR FOR LATE BEDFORD PK. LOCAL

Mary Vallati, neighborhood stalwart, remembered with street co-naming



Photo by Adi Talwar

JAMIE MCCAULEY-IACOCCA, the youngest grandchild of late Mary Vallati, holding a replica of the street sign named for her grandmother. Local community, politicians and officers from the NYPD were present at the street naming ceremony.

By MARTIKA ORNELLA

On a rainy Sunday afternoon, neighbors, elected leaders and family members of the late community activist, Mary Vallati, gathered to honor her with the co-naming of the street she resided on.

Councilman Andrew Cohen attended and, with

help from Vallati's son Dennis Vallati, and granddaughter Jamie McCauley-Iacocca, pulled the brown covering from underneath the East Mosholu Parkway South and Perry Avenue sign to reveal "Mary Vallati Place."

"I think this is a perfect tribute to her commitment,

the really lifelong commitment to this community," Cohen said at the street co-naming on Sept. 9. "I'm really grateful, and I know that all of you are grateful for everything she did."

Vallati passed away Sept. 12 last year at the age of 102. Born and raised near a farm in Illinois, Vallati moved to

the Bronx when she was a teenager. The community activist, characterized as cheerful with an unusual sense of independence, spent the rest of her life in the borough, coming into advocacy upon retirement from a telephone company.

Vallati was largely rec-
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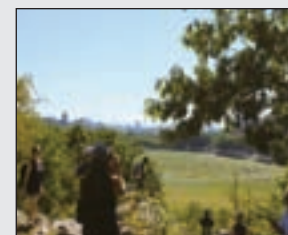
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Opinion

One Year Later, US Response To Hurricane Maria Abysmal

By **FERNANDO CABRERA**

Not since Hurricane Katrina have we seen the U.S. government fail so miserably in addressing a domestic humanitarian crisis as it has in the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. A full six months after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, 2017, ravaging the island, our federal government continued dragging its feet in providing relief to rebuild Puerto Rico's most basic infrastructure functioning and reliable electricity, healthcare, operational schools, bridges, roads and reliable communications.

These aren't luxuries; they are basic necessities for any community to jumpstart its own economy, generate and maintain jobs, and restore a sense of normality. Through multiple humanitarian visits to the mountain region of Puerto Rico, in partnership with the Hispanic Federation and other organizations, I witnessed the ongoing crisis firsthand. These areas are so remote and destroyed, that it took months just for responders to get through.

One year later, functioning and reliable infrastructure, combined with the crushing public debt that economists have agreed needs restructuring, have stagnated Puerto Rico's economy and led to tremendous hardship. And in August of 2018 we were informed of what we already knew to be true: the number of people who died as a result

"Most important are the lives of the people, especially those in remote areas, who suffered the most and whose daily lives are still not restored to normalcy. I know because I've been there."

-Fernando Cabrera

of Hurricane Maria is more than 20 times the official number reported 1,427, not 64. We now know that this number is more than that of those who died in Hurricane Katrina and comparable to the number of 9/11 fatalities. These deaths are directly related to the grossly inadequate federal response: suicide, diabetes, sepsis, lack of access to medicine, critical healthcare and mental health resources.

While some progress has been made, the federal government has not taken strong and decisive mea-

sures to address Puerto Rico's overall economic downward spiral, worsened by Hurricane Maria. The Center for Puerto Rican Studies at CUNY Hunter College estimates that between 114,000 and 213,000 Puerto Rico residents will leave the island annually in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, with up to 470,335 residents or 14 percent of the population leaving by 2019. The "Centro" further finds that based on school enrollment data, many of these families are taking the "long view" of living in the mainland United States, a strong indication that for these hurricane victims, the future continues to look bleak.

The United States has an obligation to Puerto Rico and all territories to be proactive in taking measures to protect the lives of people in advance of a well-publicized extreme weather event and reactive to immediately mitigate damage, provide health care and rebuild. Most important are the lives of the people, especially those in remote areas, who suffered the most and whose daily lives are still not restored to normalcy. I know because I've been there.

I've submitted legislation in the New York City Council calling on Congress and President Donald Trump to enact the U.S. Territorial Relief Act to provide debt relief to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands for rebuilding. I've also called for New York City to construct a memorial to all who lost their lives due to Hurricane Maria and the inadequate response of our federal government.

One year later, we must demand that our federal government act morally and humanely to take care of Americans, wherever they are.

Fernando Cabrera is the New York City Council Member for District 14 in the Bronx.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting at Sister Annunciata Bethell Senior Center., on Sept. 25 at 6:30 p.m. CB7 committee meetings are held on the following dates at the board office, 229 E. 204th St., at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Environment & Sanitation Committee meets on Sept. 17, Public Safety & Quality of Life Committee meets on Sept. 20; Executive Committee meets on Sept. 24; and Economic Development and Long Term Planning Committee meets on Sept. 27. For more information, call the board office at (718) 933-5650.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets Sept. 27 at Glad Tidings Assembly of God Church, 2 Van Cortlandt Ave. E., from 7 to 9 p.m. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.



Letters To The Editor

Don't Dumb Down

Kudos to Bill and Anne Cohen for their letter in your Aug. 30 - Sept. 12, 2018 issue, espousing not dumbing down education. Although I didn't attend Bronx Science, at the time I attended high school, it was expected that most students would not only pass all courses, but do so in a timely manner, i.e. within the proper time frame of the school.

Too many students today are either dropping out of high school or attending for more years than standard.

Those entering college who must take remedial courses in any academic subject should not have graduated high school in the first place. In addition, they should know that what they could have learned for free would now have to be paid for as part of their college tuition.

Passing grades shouldn't be lowered nor entrance requirements to high schools lessened. This doesn't do the student any favors. If anything, standards should be raised. If more is expected of a student, he or she will rise to the occasion.

Judy Noy
Norwood

Teach Kids to Think

Public Advocate and New York State Attorney General candidate Letitia James has called on Mayor Bill de Blasio to have the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene require mandatory labeling of ads with photoshopped pictures of models. James claims those photos cause girls to be unhappy with their bodies and results in eating disorders.

I have a better idea. How about de Blasio ordering a new school policy that teaches children how to think?

The day after the Sept. 3 *Daily News* article on James' proposal, I was around 231st Street and Broadway. I saw numerous girls and women wearing very short shorts who looked better than any Victoria's Secret model.

If children are taught to think for themselves instead of following fashion industry propaganda, then girls will appreciate what they have and notice boys' appreciation for them.

If you teach people how to think, they might apply this to politics. Then someone like James won't be able to mislead voters by referring to

an opponent like Zephyr Teachout in a derogatory manner as "Professor." Instead, voters will say, "What's wrong with being a professor?" Then when President Donald Trump talks about "rebuilding" a military that is already way more powerful than any other country's forces, people might notice that we already spend more on it than the next nine countries combined spend on their armed forces.

Richard Warren
Van Cortlandt Village

Thanks Norwood News

On behalf of the Whalen Family (Perry Avenue), my sisters Eileen Whalen Lennon and Nancy Whalen Sheehy want to thank you for your coverage of the renovation of the new Whalen Park. You did a wonderful job on informing and reporting the upcoming renovation, following through to the completion of the Parks Department Project of this beautiful Whalen Park, which was named in honor of our father Henry. We are so moved that Norwood and the Bronx remembers the great man he was.

He was a man of service, serving God, his country in WWII, his neighbors, and anyone in need who requested his help. My father and mother loved the Bronx and their neighbor-

hood and we are sure they were smiling down on all of us on July 24, 2018 during the beautiful ceremony that was put together by so many wonderful people.

Our special thanks to Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, Borough Commissioner of the Bronx, who welcomed us with open arms and made us feel so special. We can't thank her enough and all the other people who put so much energy and knowledge into creating this wonderful haven for the young and old. Another special thanks to the "Friends of Mosholu Parkland," who are a Volunteer Community Organization who spends so much of their own time volunteering in the Conservation and Beautification of the Norwood Parks, including the new Whalen Park!

There were so many more people who were a huge part of the renovation and who were there to celebrate this wonderful accomplishment, which was completed in less than one year. We recognize and are grateful for their service and dedication to the Bronx and its many projects working very hard to keep their community a safe and beautiful place for all to live. Thank you all!

Kate Armstrong
Nyack, NY
(former Norwood resident)

EDITORIAL

Do Right by the Community and You Could Get Honored

Mary Vallati was honored with a street renaming just outside where she lived (see this issue's *Norwood News*' front page story on it). Now, those who knew Vallati will tell you she was a person with a real love for the community up until the time she passed away last year. At 102 years old, almost 40 years after the average age of re-

tirement, Vallati continued volunteering her time for causes seen as vital to the community.

She was there to hand out raffle tickets at 52nd Precinct Community Council gatherings, and doing her part sending mailers for upcoming Bedford Mosholu Community Association meetings. At 102 years old

you can't ask for anything more. She proved her mettle in her earlier years, standing up against young people who dared to disgrace Mosholu Parkway, picketing against the closing of a precinct, and even standing up against local greed when a supermarket mogul closed up shop.

Vallati's sense of duty still

rings in the Norwood and Bedford Park sections of the Bronx, which need stalwarts like her to root out poor quality of life concerns. She stood among the louder voices for those types of causes, and it's clear she's deserving of a street renaming.

The honor should serve as inspiration to anyone who thinks their volunteer work

is going unnoticed. It's bitter-sweet in general for street renamings, which are traditionally dedicated to those who've passed away. But those who seek inspiration should look up at the corner of Perry Avenue and East Mosholu Parkway South to find a new street sign named for someone who put in the work, and is now remembered for it.

**TO REPORT A STORY TO THE NORWOOD NEWS,
CALL US AT 718-324-4998**

INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers what they think about the city's plan to expand the speed camera program that places cameras with radar detection around public schools, increasing the number from 140 to 290 locations.



It doesn't matter. I mean, people are going to drive any way they want. But around schools, personally I would drive the speed limit and just speed up afterwards. I don't think it will change anything. People are going to do anything they want to do at the moment. They make laws for different reasons. If you're passing a school you shouldn't be speeding, that's why I speed up afterwards.
Kevin Smith
Williamsbridge



I think, in a way, it's a good idea because it's keeping the kids safe. If the cars are speeding, there's always a chance that a kid can get hit by a car. But the city is always trying to find ways to make money off of you. It's good in one way and bad in another. But in the long run it's good for the kids. There's a lot of speeding and people aren't being careful.
Angelo Roldan
Norwood



According to what we hear on the news, they've significantly reduced the amount of speeding around schools, at schools where there are cameras. The numbers they have are phenomenal, the reduction in speeding. The thing I don't like about them is they told the whole population that the speed is posted at 20 [mph] and they won't ticket somebody unless they're doing 35 in a 20-mile zone. Why even publicize it? But these cameras aren't run by police officers; it's run by a computer, a robot. Look how many times a day a robot asks you to prove you're not a robot.
Doug Condit
Bedford Park



I believe it will raise money but it's also its a good thing because it's a deterrent for drivers, who really can't afford it and they will think about it before they speed by it and they will be more conscious of it. It will definitely increase awareness when they know there are more eyes on them and they're not going to get away with it. It will most likely save lives.
Chris Bailey
Fordham Heights



I actually do support the program. You never know when there's a big accident near school grounds. We really need that support for our kids. I'm a father of a four-year-old, so I can definitely relate. I support it all the way. I don't agree with many of the traffic calming methods, but I support this.
Andy Vargas
Kingsbridge



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Tickets are \$30 and is tax-deductible.

There will be cocktails, dinner, entertainment and special guests, including our keynote speaker Errol Louis of NY1.

We hope you can join us for this wonderful event marking a milestone to this community paper!



Battle of the Bills

Similar bills on lead testing introduced

By JONATHAN CUSTODIO

Two Bronx senators are proposing separate bills that bear similarities towards improving lead level testing in children, in light of the New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) lead poisoning crisis.

State Senator Luis Sepulveda recently introduced a bill that seeks to raise the maximum testing age from 6 to 10 years old and lower the microgram threshold to match the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) danger level of five micrograms.

In New York State, it takes 10 micrograms of lead found in a child's blood to trigger action.

Under current state law, children under the age of two are guaranteed two insurance-covered annual physical screenings of lead that include blood testing. After the age of two, blood testing is replaced with verbal annual check-ups for children up until age six. Blood testing is required between ages two and six only if the child

is found to be at risk.

But Sepulveda's senate colleague, Gustavo Rivera, looks to increase the age limit from 6 to 18 years old under his bill dubbed Dakota's Law. He also seeks to lower the threshold to five micrograms.

The bill is named after Dakota Jones, a child who contracted lead poisoning while living in NYCHA Fort Independence Housing and suffers from developmental challenges as a result. She is the daughter of Tiesha Jones, president of the Bailey Houses.

"I'm really proud of the fact that most of the legislation, including pieces that I've passed or introduced, have been a result of community-related issues," said Rivera. "[It's] a real comprehensive bill that came directly from [Dakota's] situation."

According to statistics from New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), 299,000 children in New York City under the age of 6 had their blood lead levels tested in 2016 and 4,928 had results



File photos

STATE SENATORS LUIS Sepulveda (l) and Gustavo Rivera (r) have drafted similar bills aimed at curbing lead poisoning outcomes in children living in NYCHA buildings.

above five micrograms, amounting to 16.5 percent.

In the Bronx, 884 had levels above five micrograms out of a total 59,000 who were tested, 15 percent, just below the city average. At ten micrograms or above, that number fizzles down to 162 and 2.7 percent.

In Fordham-Bronx Park, 11,900 children were tested and 209 showed results above the accepted limit of five micrograms. The 17.5 percentage is

the highest in the Bronx with a 2.5 percentage increase above the borough's average.

In addition to major changes to age and accepted blood lead levels, both senators are seeking to make operational improvements.

Sepulveda wants to add environmental evaluations and infant wellness visits to the state's Home Visiting Program, which provides support and

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Cabrera Chides NYCHA Over Legionnaires' Response Lag

By MARIYA MOSELEY

"Is it safe to brush my teeth?"

Those are the words of the 6-year-old grandson of Barbara Lauray, President of the Tenants Association at the Fort Independence Houses complex at 3340 Bailey Ave.

Lauray, 61, said it's "sad and heartbreaking" to see her grandchildren dig into their bookbags for a bottle of water and toothbrush

every morning.

This comes as two residents at the building have recently been treated and released from a local hospital after contracting Legionnaires' disease. The disease is often described as a severe form of pneumonia caused by a bacterium that festers in water, leading health officials to recommend people avoid taking showers.

But even after the out-

break, it will be weeks until residents are expected get a better idea of just what caused the outbreak. The New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene is visiting each unit to test the water.

Lauray faults NYCHA for not "doing anything to help us."

She adds, "This isn't a third world country."

Councilman Fernando Cabrera, who represents



Photo courtesy Councilman Fernando Cabrera's Office

COUNCILMAN FERNANDO CABRERA, outside Fort Independence Houses, is considering legislation to require immediate testing for Legionnaires' disease if at least two residents have contracted it.

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the 14th District that overlaps with the NYCHA complex, is also calling on NYCHA to take action.

Cabrera said he plans to introduce a bill that requires testing immediately after a building has identified at least two people with Legionnaires' disease.

"It's pitiful that we have to legislate something that is common sense," Cabrera said.

In the meantime, tenants at the complex are advised to use bottled water and take a bath rather than shower. Health experts report that Legionnaires' can be contracted by breathing in contaminated water droplets, which includes mist from the shower head.

To complete daily tasks like cooking, cleaning and bathing with clean water,

residents are spending more than \$100 a week. For some, this includes using at least 40 gallons of water, which is what is required to fill a small bathtub.

The apartment complex has more than 500 residents across 344 units, many of whom are senior citizens and children.

Lauray, who has lived at the complex for more than four decades, grew up in the building with her mother and siblings. She is the mother of eight children and more than a dozen grandchildren.

As residents move out the building in droves amid the situation, Lauray said she's staying to fight the good fight. "Somebody has to care," Lauray said.

NYCHA has not responded to the *Norwood News*' request for comment on this story.

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Be Careful What Your Dog Sniffs

By JOSEPH KONIG

A Fordham veterinary office has noted a rise of rat poisoning in pets and other animals in Norwood. The trend was made known after the *Norwood News* was alerted to the recent death of a resident's dog.

“We have, in fact, seen rat poison and chemical intoxicant ingestions in the past year,” Giselle Camacho, a veterinarian assistant for The Bronx Veterinary Center at 2460 Webster Ave., said in an email. “We have averaged roughly between 10 and 15 rat poison cases this year alone...Before, we only used to see possibly [five] cases a year.”

Camacho consulted with Dr. Peter Voyst, DVM, the veterinarian at The Bronx Veterinary Center, and wrote that pets should be brought to the veterinary as soon as possible after potential exposure to rat poison and other chemical intoxicants.

“The best thing to do would be to immediately bring the pet to a veterinarian/emergency hospital,” Camacho wrote. “They would know exactly what to do in that situation depending on what chemical has been ingested.”

A resident of Hull and Decatur avenues in the vicinity of 207th Street reported alarming animal deaths, possibly caused by vermin control agents.

“It’s too frequent that you hear somebody tell you ‘my animal just died’ when these are young animals,” Edward Rodriguez of Hull Avenue said. “It’s heartbreaking.”

On Sept. 25 of last year, Rodriguez let his 5-year-old Yorkshire Terrier, Cookie-Marie, out for a pee in front of his Hull Avenue residence. She ran around a bit, did her business and came back inside. Minutes later, Cookie-Marie’s eyes rolled back and she began to seize. By the next morning she was dead. The veterinarian told him she was likely poisoned.

“It was really hard to find my dog, that I had so long with me, that I took care of, in that condition,” Rodriguez said.

More recently, Rodriguez said



Image courtesy Edward Rodriguez

COOKIE-MARIE, A Yorkshire terrier, was an otherwise perfectly healthy dog when she died at age five last year. Owner Edward Rodriguez suspects she was exposed to rat poison.

his sister, a resident of Decatur Avenue, lost her cat. On Sept. 1, Rodriguez’s neighbor lost his 2-year-old dog in a similar case. Neither the sister nor the neighbor could be reached by press time.

“I started alerting other people that have pets, not to let their dogs go on the tree because they’re putting stuff on the trees and there are animals showing up dead on this block,” Rodriguez said. “On Decatur Avenue, right on 207th between Hull and Perry [avenues] and Parkside [Place]. There were animals just showing up [dead].”

Rodriguez said he and others in the neighborhood have spotted dead birds and raccoons that appear to have been poisoned.

According to New York City law, homeowners are allowed to apply pest control measures themselves, but multi-unit and commercial property owners are required to hire pest control professionals. New York City Department of Health regulations require anyone who uses rat poison to post signage indicating when and where the poison was placed, unless the area is inaccessible by children or pets. The Department of Health encourages pet owners to call the Poison Control Center at (212) 764-7667 if they believe their animal has been exposed to poison or pesticides.

At 76 Years Old, Bedford Park Local Fights for Quieter Quality of Life

By DAVID CRUZ

All Andrea Ortiz wants is peace and quiet.

Sitting on her flowery couch in her fourth-floor one-bedroom apartment on Briggs Avenue, Ortiz is at her wits end, frustrated over the ongoing noise originating from her upstairs neighbor.

But the problems didn't just spring up this year, or the year before, but in February 2015, shortly after the sale of her building to The Related Cos., a multi-billion-dollar real estate firm that purchased a portfolio of properties with funds from the New York City Pension Fund.

"From there, it's been hell," Ortiz said. Her only theory is that management is attempting to kick her out. "They want me to move out to make a profit."

Management first attempted to get her out by offering a \$5,000 buyout, which she rejected. She was then temporarily relocated to another apartment on the first floor until work was completed inside her apartment. Meantime, Ortiz claims she gets random knocking at her door.

Then the new tenant above her moved in. From there, nighttime noise became the norm. It's sometimes the vibration of music, bangs on the floor, and more. For Ortiz, the noise has become so unbearable she's resorted to "sleep in the hallway or the floor" outside her apartment. At 76 years old with heart issues, Ortiz is battling for a better quality of life in a city that shrugs over loud noise.

"Sometimes I call the manager and I hold the telephone at two or three o'clock in the morning. I say, this is what's going on," says Ortiz.

It's often the price tenants pay for a city that never sleeps. And Ortiz has certainly paid it. Still, Ortiz has been making noise of her own.

She's chronicled this saga through 311 noise complaints and handwritten letters to elected officials, haranguing Mayor Bill de Blasio, Comptroller Scott Stringer, Public Advocate Letitia James, and Governor Andrew Cuomo, along with the building's management company, Simply Better Homes. She's called 311 numerous times over the same issue. She's even tried mediation through the IMCR Resolution Center, trying to reason with her.

"She says at that time, due to the fact that she works in the daytime she has to do all her stuff, cleaning or



Photo by David Cruz

ANDREA ORTIZ (R), with daughters Evelyn Bodoy (c) and Brenda Bodoy (l). Ortiz has spent the last three years wanting consistent quiet in her building.

whatever, during the nighttime," Evelyn Bodoy, Ortiz's daughter, said of the tenant. "She admitted it herself; she cooks at 1 o'clock in morning. It's fine. You could do all the cooking—there's no need for you to have your high heels on at 1 o'clock in the morning walking around your house."

The next step was taking the tenant to Housing Court. While the tenant, management, and PIBLY, the housing agency that pays Ortiz's rent, met in Housing Court to determine a one-year probation, Ortiz was not included in the meeting.

Attorneys for the management office soon sent Ortiz a letter explaining that despite mediation, offering relocation is the only solution. "[T]he landlord is willing to offer you a transfer to another apartment," wrote Neil Sonnenfeldt, a partner at the Gutman, Mintz, Baker & Sonnenfeldt law firm.

"They don't see nothing going on with the lady upstairs," said Bodoy. "So, my mother has to be the one to move? That's not fair."

The tenant in this story, whose name is being withheld by the *Norwood News*, did not return an email request seeking comment. A knock at her door yielded no results. Neighbors living on the fifth floor, meantime, told the paper they've never heard loud noise.

"We take the comfort of our residents very seriously and have been actively engaged in this issue for several years. We proactively offered a transfer to the resident and have pursued

various approaches to try and come to a solution. We will continue to investigate and respond to any and all complaints," a spokesperson for The Related Cos. said in a statement.

For now, Ortiz will keep fighting.

"I don't want to move out. I've been here 22 years. Crime is very bad here in the Bronx. Over here, the only trouble I have is with that lady here, [and] the district manager, but the other people always watch after me," said Ortiz.



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NORWOOD NEWS

S N A P S H O T S



Photo courtesy Montefiore Health System

BRONX KIDS SPENT six days in New Hampshire's Camp Spinnaker alongside medical students from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine as a way to get away from it all before hitting the books again. Funding for the camp getaway was made possible by the American Lung Foundation, the Carvel Foundation, and coordinators from Montefiore Health System's Family Care Center. The camp is known for integrating asthma education and its management with recreational activities.



Photo by David Cruz

THIS NEWLY UNVEILED mural beautifies the corner of East 207th Street and Bainbridge Avenue in Norwood. The colorful artwork was presented on Sept. 3 and was designed by Laura Alvarez with support from Artbridge, Liquitex and Councilman Andrew Cohen.



Photo by Joseph Konig

GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE FOR New York, Cynthia Nixon (l), meets with reporters from community and ethnic media, including the Norwood News, at a forum addressing issues impacting minority neighborhoods. She sits alongside former New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. Read about her discussion with reporters at www.norwoodnews.org.



Photo by David Greene

MOURNERS MARK THE 17th anniversary of 9/11 by placing white roses on a plaque at Jacobi Medical Center dedicated to Bronx residents who were victims of the terror attack. They were remembered by victims' families, hospital staffers, and local elected officials at a memorial service 17 years to the day of the attacks.



Photo courtesy Office of Senator Gustavo Rivera

STATE SENATOR GUSTAVO RIVERA chats with families during a back-to-school event at St. James Park in Fordham on Aug. 28. It was Rivera's second of three back-to-school events across his 33rd Senate District. More than 1500 backpacks were distributed throughout the school-related events. Visitors were also offered free health screenings by local community groups as a way to ensure a healthy start to the new school year.



Photo courtesy Bronx Borough President's Office

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT Ruben Diaz Jr. (l) stands onstage with Governor Andrew Cuomo at the final performance for the Bronx Summer Concert Series 2018 at Orchard Beach on Sept. 2. Los Hermanos Colon, Domingo Quiñones, and Cynthia headlined the free concert event that capped several weeks of individual concerts.

Battle of the Bills

(continued from page 6)

guidance to pregnant and parenting families.

His spokesperson noted key distinctions that Sepulveda's bill addresses. "Our bill addresses the following that the Rivera bill does not touch on. [It] requires blood testing during annual physical, expands testing to 10 years of age and requires follow-up by the New York State home visiting programs."

Meantime, Rivera wants to increase oversight in the testing process, re-

quiring physicians to report elevated blood lead levels to a state or local health department. Healthcare providers are currently mandated by the city to make reports within 24 hours to DOHMH. He also explained that his bill would ensure that private insurance and Medicaid would cover the cost of testing.

Both bills will go to the Senate Health Committee in January or February, where further determinations will be made.

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HEALTH CHECK

Coping With Stress As Your Child Prepares to Begin College

By KATIE PANCZNER

As the end of summer approaches, many families have sent their children off to college.

As a parent or caregiver, the thought of sending a child to college may be the start of an adventure. To others, it can be overwhelming. You may question how your child will manage laundry, eating well, cleaning up after themselves and finding their way around. You may also wonder how your home life will change in their absence and how they will adjust to a new environment with new responsibilities.

This transition will likely be stressful for your teenager, too, even if they are attending school close to home and are not moving away. For those who are leaving, this transition may be the first time they live away from home. They may be worried about leaving behind household responsibilities, childhood friends, and the comforts of home.

Some common signs of stress may include:

- Tension and irritability
- Fear and anxiety
- Feeling numb
- Loss of interest in normal activities
- Loss of appetite
- Sadness and other symptoms of depression

These reactions are normal, but as drop-off day and the start of class approach, managing this stress to ensure the best possible transition for all of you is crucial. If you or your child is experiencing any of these symptoms or others associated with stress, the Centers

for Disease Control recommends using some of the following methods to cope:

Take care of yourself: Be sure to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet, get plenty of sleep, and work to maintain a normal routine. This can be an opportunity to treat yourself – get a massage, try meditation, or something else that relaxes you.

Stay active: Try yoga, go for a bike ride, or even take the dog on a walk – these can be positive ways to cope with stress.

Connect socially: Spend time with your teenager, whether that means dorm shopping together, spending time as a family, or going to the movies. Doing this together may make the transition easier for both of you.

Find support: Talk to your partner, a family member, friend, counselor, doctor, or religious figure about how you feel. Having someone listen to you may lighten the burden.

If your teenage son or daughter shares with you that they are feeling stressed as they prepare to leave, listen with a sympathetic ear, suggest spending time together, and ensure that they are taking care of themselves. Showing your child that you feel confident in their ability to be independent will be crucial to them as they prepare to leave.

More information about the college transition can be found here: <http://coastalcenter.org/surviving-back-to-college-stress/>.

Katie Panczner was an intern at Montefiore Health System's Office of Community & Population Health.



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A Career Change Later, a Bedford Park Bakery Opens

By JOSEPH KONIG

Angel Espinal opened Confectionaires, a new bakery at 2961 Webster Ave. and Bedford Park Boulevard, on Aug. 11. For Espinal, the bakery -- which serves up a wide-ranging menu of fresh baked pastries, cakes, breads and coffee -- is a second career of sorts. After nine years in the personal training industry, Espinal found a new passion in the cake-making business.

"What attracted me was the artistry of the pastries," Espinal said. "I would go into the nice bakeries, Bouchon Bakery, Maison Kayser, Dominique Ansel. It was like they were selling art that you can eat. I always had a little bit of a fascination with that."

Why the name, "Confectionaires"? A combination of "confections" and "extraordinaire," a simple play on words that Espinal says "starts rolling off the tongue."

Confectionaires is one of the newest businesses of a certain echelon to be opened on Webster Avenue and the surrounding areas since they were rezoned at the beginning of the decade. For longtime residents, the bakery is representative of the types of establishments they have hoped would open in the neighborhood for years now.

"It's a plus for the neighborhood," Barbara Stroczer, president of Bedford Mosholu Community Association, said at the group's Sept. 5 meeting. "We're always complaining that we don't have good shopping options here."

Espinal praised the neighborhood for immediately embracing the new business after being so patient during the long construction process. He chose the location because he believed other neighborhood bakeries were far away enough that he could build a reliable customer base. Already, Espinal said, he has regular customers.

"Everybody who comes in here, the one word they talk about is gentrification," Espinal said. "I don't know if that's what I was aiming for, but that's what they keep saying. 'Oh my God, the neighborhood is changing. Look at this.' But it's for the better."

Luis Monilla, a building super who lives around the corner, was walking out of the bakery with a carrot cake on Sept. 5. It was his sixth or seventh time at Confectionaires.

"In the morning you want fresh



Photo by David Cruz

CONFECTIONAIRES OWNER ANGEL Espinal (pictured) serves up fresh baked breads, pastries and custom cakes seven days a week.

coffee and croissant," Monilla said. "I like the croissant. Muffin is good. Nice and fresh."

Espinal lives just around the corner from Confectionaires. The previous occupant, a kitchen equipment store, sold the property to a developer after the owner retired. Espinal moved in after the developers made only minor renovations. There was no counter or kitchen. He would have to start from scratch.

"I designed the entire place from top to bottom," Espinal said. "Everything that's gone in here I've designed. Some I got right, some not so much. It's a work in progress: the entire

front from the ceiling with the wavy boards to the wainscoting on the wall and the stonework on the wall."

Espinal hired a construction company to handle the work that required city permits. Everything else, he did using the skills he learned flipping houses after the 2008 housing market crash.

Espinal enrolled at the Institute of Culinary Education in Manhattan in 2015 and found that the more he learned, the more he fell in love with baking. After completing the program, Espinal decided to "keep it local" and work an "externship" at a bakery in Parkchester called, "There

Should Always Be Cake." The baker there, Laury Saldana, was hugely influential to Espinal.

"She is the most amazing cake designer I have ever met," Espinal said. "I worked with her for a few months and stayed a few months after my externship was done until I started construction over here."

Espinal plays the guitar and the piano and considers himself to be an "artistic person," but he never had any formal training before attending culinary school. He takes particular pride in his breads and custom cakes.

Confectionaires is still working on a menu and an online presence, but Espinal encourages customers to come in and peruse the wide selection of pastries. As the seasons change over, Espinal plans to have seasonal treats like pies and fresh-baked specialty breads. He also hopes the bakery will take on a café-like feel, with the couple of tables he set up in the spacious storefront.

"People can come and if they want to open up their laptop or their tablet," Espinal said, "there's tables. It's well lit. We have the open windows, the good air conditioning. Trying to give the neighborhood something a little bit different."

Confectionaires is open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week.



Photo by Joseph Konig

CONFECTIONAIRES AT 2961 Webster Ave. opened on Aug. 11.

\$300M Set Aside for Classroom Space

State officials have earmarked \$400 million for the construction of classrooms in New York City on Sept. 6, including \$300 million for five schools in the Bronx and Queens. The funding, which is a part of the \$2 billion Smart Schools Bond Act passed in 2014, is estimated to affect 7,400 students in the Bronx and Queens.

"We are addressing inequality in our education system and ensuring that every child in New York has access to permanent, modern, and fully equipped classroom space," Governor Andrew Cuomo said in a press release. "This funding will provide the next generation of New Yorkers with the vital resources and skills they need."

The funding for the schools in the Bronx and Queens will go toward constructing permanent classroom locations and replacing trailers currently used for classroom space. New York City relied on trailers in the wake of Mayor Bill de Blasio's Pre-K for All Initiative. An additional \$100 million will go towards the construction of 36 pre-kindergarten classrooms in Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn.

"A record 68,547 children are now enrolled in Pre-K," the New York City School Construction Authority (NYSCA) wrote in its proposal. "This number is nearly 50,000 more students than were enrolled prior to the Mayor's Pre-K for All initiative launched in 2014."

The NYSCA projects 70,601 Pre-K students will enroll in New York City schools during the 2018-19 school year, with the highest participation in low-income neighborhoods.

"It's so important that children and their families have access to early childhood education to ensure success," Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul said in a statement. "We're continuing to address the issue of inequality in schools, because we believe all children should have equal opportunities to learn and grow."

The \$400 million allocation is a little more than half of the \$783 million total set aside for New York City in the 2014 Smart Schools Bond Act.

—Joseph Konig

First Day File-In



Photo by Adi Talwar

HORDES OF PARENTS and students of PS 280 file into the Norwood K-8 school for the first day of classes since the summer. The school, located at 3202 Steuben Ave., at the corner of East Moshulu Parkway North, was among the 1700 New York City public schools that began classes for the 2018-19 academic year on Sept. 5.

Speed Cameras to Expand at Public Schools

By JONATHAN CUSTODIO

After the State Senate failed to pass legislation during last year's session, elected officials were able to get the speed camera program expanded around public schools a day before the first day of school. Over one million children attend New York City public schools.

Mayor Bill de Blasio announced in a public hearing that the new law would preserve and expand the use of speed cameras near schools where speeding is prevalent.

Immediate enforcement will take place at 140 schools that already have existing cameras and expansion is planned to another 150 schools, bringing the total to 290.

The de Blasio administration did not disclose the locations where speed cameras will be installed.

Speed cameras were approved by the State Legislature five years ago and installation began in 2014. It began as a pilot program under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, with 20 cameras introduced across the school system. The expansion program introduced 120 more cameras and had a price tag of \$14 million. That law expired in July and pressure was put on the

state's elected officials to have an updated law in place before the school year began. A bill proposed to address the shutdown of speed cameras passed the Assembly but didn't make it to the Senate for a floor vote.

De Blasio, Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson spearheaded the initiative to re-establish the speed camera program.

A ticket of \$50 will be issued to

drivers who exceed the speed limit by more than 10 miles an hour.

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz of the 81st Assembly District, who represents Kingsbridge and Norwood, said in a statement, "There is no refuting the data: Speed cameras save lives."

According to city statistics, there was a decrease in pedestrian deaths in the Bronx from 29 to 20, between 2016 and 2017.



Photo courtesy Ed Reed/Mayoral Photography Office

MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO (seated left) shakes hands with New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson after signing a bill expanding the speed camera program near public schools.

Norwood Activist Lobbies Assemblywoman for Domestic Violence Bill

By **CHRISTY RAE AMMONS**

Local activist and president of Guerinos Against Graffiti, Heather Guerino, met with Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez to discuss issues surrounding domestic violence and how it is handled by authorities.

The meeting came days after Lisa Marie Velasquez was killed while trying to protect her friend from an abusive boyfriend. In an ironic twist, Velasquez also witnessed the abuse and death of her mother, resulting in Velasquez's grandmother raising her. Guerino wants to make life safer for victims of domestic violence by retraining police officers on how to deal with orders of protection.

Guerino has found the system marred with loopholes that can endanger victims' lives. For instance, she notes that an abuser can receive permission from housing court to reenter the home of their victim and their children, despite an order of protection being placed against them. "...Most abusers know how to manipulate the system," Guerino said in a phone interview with the *Norwood News*. "They know how to lie to get what they want, so they can keep on coming back to abuse the victim."

"So now you have a woman who has



Photo courtesy "Guerinos Against Graffiti"

HEATHER GUERINO (L) with Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez shortly after Guerino pushed Fernandez for a bill that further protects domestic violence victims.

an order of protection. That order of protection was presented to the housing court judge before a decision was made," said Guerino. "So now, here it is, the judge on this case makes a decision for the abuser to be back with the victim. It's like, oh my god. What do you do?"

Guerino is asking that legislation be passed in Albany to further protect victims from their abusers by closing loopholes that allow abusers to return

and continue abusing. In a letter to Fernandez, Guerino insists that family court, housing court, and the district attorney's office should team up to take action.

Alongside retraining police and educating the housing court system, Guerino wants other forms of help to be available to victims, including 24-hour respite care for the children of afflicted families, easier access to domestic vio-

lence counseling, and protection from eviction due to the actions of the abuser.

While the state could always use additional resources, there are already a number of bills working to keep victims safe. In 2013 a bill was passed that allows victims to change their telephone number for free and keep their name off listings. In March of this year, a bill preventing abusers from getting their hands on weapons was passed.

According to the 2017 report by the New York City Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee, from 2010 to 2016 there were 78 people killed by intimate partners in the Bronx, the most for any borough. There were 64 people killed by other family members for a total of 142 domestic violence related deaths in the Bronx. Manhattan, on the other hand, had a grand total of 56.

Guerino is asking Fernandez to hold a press conference on domestic violence, so that victims who fear speaking out may find encouragement and help.

Fernandez has been working on a bill related to domestic violence. In a statement she said she'll be introducing "a bill that will allow for victims of domestic abuse to receive lifetime orders of protection."

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MUSIC CONCERT & DINNER

The Bedford Park Congregational Church invites you to celebrate our 129th anniversary with a Musical Concert and Dinner. Performers are Mr. Sergey Pobedinski (guitarist) and Ms. Ludmila Fesenko (vocalist). Presentation in the church on Sunday, Sept. 23, 2018 from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., followed by a delicious catered dinner in the hall. Tickets \$40. Location 201st Street and Bainbridge Avenue. For further information and tickets, please contact Reverend Dr. Christopher Ponnuraj at (718) 367-8996

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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Teen Talk

The 52nd Precinct is inviting children ages 12 to 18 to share their concerns on bullying, gangs, drugs, and domestic violence/teen dating over free McDonalds burgers and fries at a date that's to be determined. Anyone interested can call the precinct's Community Affairs Unit and speak to Police Officer Crystal Reveron at (718) 220-5824 for more information and to reserve a spot.

Resource Expo

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., is hosting the annual Resource & Career Expo on Sept. 14 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Employers in the retail, manufacturing, security and law enforcement, construction, transportation, administrative, and health sectors will be present. Bring copies of your resume and be dressed appropriately. Pre-registration is required by going to blcannual.eventbrite.com. For more information, contact ceis@nypl.org or call (718) 579-4260.

Bird Walks

Free bird walk tours with guides provided by the New York City Audubon Society and Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy, are scheduled for every Saturday through Nov. 24 from 9 to 10:30 a.m. at the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy. Meet at the VC Nature Center. For more information, contact Joseph McManus at mcmanus638@aol.com. The walks are made possible through a grant by Councilman Andrew Cohen.

Personal Finance Workshop

University Neighborhood Housing Program is sponsoring a free personal finance course dubbed "Getting Ahead Financial Education Workshop" on Sept. 20, 27, Oct. 4 and 11, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Concourse House, 2751 Grand Concourse. Topics include wage garnishment, debt collectors, credit cards, student loans, banking products, retirement, savings and more. For more information and to RSVP, call (718) 933-2359.

Prostate Exam

Montefiore offers prostate exam to men 40 and older regardless of insurance or immigration status at The Tower at Montefiore Medical Park, 1695 Eastchester Rd., Sept. 29 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more infor-

mation and to register, call (718) 405-8076.

IDNYC Expansion

Children as young as age 10 can now apply for an IDNYC, which grants them free one-year memberships at museums, zoos, and theatres, along with discounts on movie tickets, entertainment options, and more. For more information on eligibility criteria, benefits, enrollment centers, and more, visit NYC.gov/IDNYC or call 311.

Free Air Conditioner

Free air conditioners are available to Bronx residents who either receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Temporary Assistance (TA), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and did not receive an air conditioner by the Home Energy Assistance Program. Income-eligibility requirements also apply. For more information, call (212) 331-3126, or visit the Department of Human Resources Administration at 1932 Arthur Ave., Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Commercial Lease Help

Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition offers free legal help to small businesses in negotiating commercial leases with their landlords. Businesses have to be in New York City, must be non-franchise, have a household income below 500 percent of the federal poverty guideline, and have a new or renewal lease. For more information, contact Evy Viruet at (718) 584-0515 ext. 100.

Tenant Support

The Tenant Support Unit, which offers assistance to New Yorkers who may be at risk of displacement or experiencing harassment in zip codes covered under the Human Resources Administration's Anti-Harassment Protection legal service funding, will be at the following locations and dates: state Sen. Gustavo Rivera's office, 2432 Grand Concourse on Sept. 18, 21 and 25 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Assemblyman Victor Pichardo's office, 2175 Jerome Ave., on Sept. 13, 20 and 27 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and UNHP Refuge House, 2715 Bainbridge Ave., on Sept. 20 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, call 311.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Free Events in Norwood

Bainbridge Adult Day Health Care Center, 3529 Wayne Ave., invites the public to the following free events: Sept. 13 - Welcome New Registrants Party; Sept. 17 - Hispanic Heritage Party; Sept. 21 - Karaoke; Sept. 28 - September Birthdays Celebration; and Sept. 27 - Zumba Party. All events are held from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Call in advance to arrange transportation. For more information, call (718) 653-2273 ext. 5608.

Onstage

Lehman College for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **Mambo Legends Orchestra**, tribute to the music of the Palladium Era, Sept. 22 at 8 p.m. Tickets: \$45 to \$65; \$100/VIP (includes pre-concert reception at 6:30 p.m.). For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

Events

The Bronx County Historical Society presents **Walking Tour: Gouverneur Morris, the Bronx's Forefather**. Meet at southeast corner of East 138th Street and Lincoln Avenue outside the Third Avenue subway stop on the #6 train; rain or shine. Tickets: \$10/BCHS member; \$20/non members. Sales are final; no refunds. Also scheduled is the **18th Annual BCHS Golf Tournament**, at Pelham Split Rock Golf Course, 870 Shore Rd., Sept. 27 at 10 a.m. For more information on these

events, call (718) 881-8900.

The New York Botanical Garden's **Farmers Market** is scheduled to be held Wednesdays through Oct. 31 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., just inside the Mosholu entrance and across the street from the Botanical Garden station of the Metro North commuter railroad. For more information, call (718) 817-8700.

Friends of Van Cortlandt Park presents **Hike-toberfest**, Sept. 29 in VC Park. Hikes are guided and begin at 2 p.m. Options are 4- to 5-mile hike throughout the park or a 2-mile leisurely nature or history hike. Participants will receive a giveaway. Fundraiser is from 4 to 7 p.m. Attendees will receive a souvenir mug, eat German food and drink beer. For more information and tickets, call (718) 430-1890.

BronxWorks presents **5K Run**, Sept. 15 at St. Mary's Park. Cash prizes will be awarded to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place male and female winners and for top fundraisers. Events include fun activities for the entire family (kids, costumes and



Photo courtesy Friends of Van Cortlandt Park

GET YOUR WALKING shoes on for the Sept. 29 Hike-toberfest hosted by the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park (see Events for details).

leashed pets are welcome). Check-in begins at 8 a.m. and the run at 9 a.m., on the north side of St. Mary's Park near the intersection of Eagle Avenue and 149th Street at the big rock. For more information and to register, call (718) 731-3114.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: In the Path of Monarch Butterflies, to make printed butterflies, Sept. 15 and 16; and Bundle Dyeing and Happa Zome, to create art with common herbs and garden flowers, Sept. 22 and 23; 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 photographer Walter Pofeldt and his daughter Eileen present **"Kenya and Tanzania in Focus"** through Dec. 16 at Metropolitan College, 60 West St., on the sixth and seventh floors, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during normal business days. For more information, email pofeldtw@gmail.com.

1596 or visit art@hebrewhome.org. Photo ID required for admission.

Bronx River Art Center (BRAC), 1087 E. Tremont Ave., presents **River Rising**, through June 30, 2019, featuring an exposition of science, art and technology, located in Starlight Park. For more information, call (718) 589-5819.

Library Events

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for adults: **Computer Basics**: Sept. 13 at 2 p.m.; and **films at 2:30 p.m.**: "Queen of Katwe," Sept. 15 and "A Wrinkle in Time," Sept. 22. Children ages 5 to 12 can enjoy **Arts and Crafts at 3:30 p.m.**: Hands-on projects using a variety of skills (preregistration required), Sept. 16 and 23. Teens/young adults can attend **film**: "Doctor Strange," Sept. 28 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Toddler Storytime at 11 a.m.**: (ages 18 to 36 months), interactive stories, action songs, fingerplays, and crafts, Sept. 13 and 20; **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), crafts, Sept. 14 and 21; and **STEM: Kids Science at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), science activities, Sept. 18 and 25. Teens/young adults can enjoy **film**: "The Mummy," Sept. 22 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can attend **Knitting Circle**: Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for adults: **Computer Basics**: Sept. 20 and 27 at noon and Sept. 25 at 5:45 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy **Sip and Paint**: create painting using canvas and painting materials, Sept. 26 at 4 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 Sept. 17 for the next publication date of Sept. 27.

Exhibits

Lehman College Art Gallery, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents **20th Century Mexican Painting Masterpieces**, through Sept. 22. For more information, call (718) 960-8710.

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

Derfner Judaica Museum at Hebrew Home at Riverdale, 5901 Palisade Ave., presents **Swords Into Ploughshares**, free sculpture exhibit by Jay Moss, through Oct. 7, in the Pauline and William Goldfine Pavilion Lobby Gallery. For more information and to RSVP, call (718) 581-



Photo courtesy Lehman Center for the Performing Arts

LEHMAN CENTER KICKS off its 38th anniversary season with a performance by Mambo Legends Orchestra (see Onstage for more information).

Street Honor for Late Bedford Park Local

(continued from page 1)

ognized for her work with the Bedford Mosholu Community Association (BMCA), the 52nd Precinct Community Council, and her unwavering determination to show up when no one else would.

Cohen affirmed his commitment to preserving the memory of community leaders like Vallati through commemorative honors like street co-namings. “I cannot tell you how many people appreciate them, the family appreciates it, and how appropriate I feel it is for people who really had an impact on a corner like this, on a small block, on our community,” said Cohen. “[People] that really touched us on a granular level and make the neighborhood a better place. And I think Mary really, really embodied that.”

The street co-naming was in the works months after she passed. For many, Vallati was emblematic of the kind of neighborhood commitment residents should aspire to be.

“She was always very concerned about what was happening around her,” said Barbara Stronczer, BMCA president and Community Board 7’s Parks Committee chair, which covers Norwood and Bedford Park.

Recalling a protest against the closing of the Bedford Park C-Town, Stronczer said, “When they closed the supermarket on 204th and Valentine [Avenue], and then Assemblyman Jeff Klein, who covered this area, said he would be out there with Channel 12 at seven in the morning.”

Stronczer continued: “Most of us had to go to work, but it was Mary who got out there with him, in front of the TV camera and did what she had to do.”

The unseasonably chilly and wet weather during the Sept. 9 ceremony didn’t stop a host of lawmakers from personally stopping by to regale Vallati. Alongside Cohen, Assembly members José Rivera, of the 75th Assembly District representing Bedford Park, and Nathalia Fernandez of the 80th Assembly District representing Norwood shared stories of Vallati’s activism, and her never-ending devotion to her neighborhood.

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz of the 81st Assembly District repre-



MARY VALLATI (PICTURED) died last year at the age of 102.

File photo

sending Riverdale also attended the ceremony, alongside his son Eric Dinowitz.

Brenda Caldwell-Paris, of the 52nd Precinct Community Council called Vallati a “treasure,” and described the loss the community feels with her absence.

“Mary was full of wonderful, wonderful stories,” Caldwell-Paris said. “Those who didn’t know her missed out on some of the great stories she was willing to tell.”

“She was so independent,” Sheila Sanchez, president of the Northwest Bronx Democrats told the *Norwood News* of Vallati. Sanchez met Vallati when she was 95, describing her as a kind-hearted woman who put community first. Recalling one of her and Vallati’s regular trips to the farmers market, Sanchez related, “On one occasion, I had a problem with my back, so I told her to wait for me because I want to help her cross the street, but she didn’t wait for me.”

“I see Commander [Joseph] Dowling [formerly of the 52nd Precinct] stopping right next to her and he says, ‘What are you doing by yourself crossing a long street? You are not

supposed to be alone.’”

Sanchez continued: “I say, ‘Commander, she’s with me.’ Mary was laughing and said to him, ‘See, I am never alone.’”

Sanchez’s impassioned sermon for her friend and neighbor who continues to inspire her highlighted Vallati’s community work, which Sanchez hopes other residents will continue.

“Get engaged,” Sanchez said. “Local community is important, to know who’s next to you. Mary would say, if you love your neighborhood, if you want to have a good life, then you have to study very hard and go to the meetings, so you can learn what needs to be done.”

The family has since moved out of the neighborhood. But McCauley-Iacocca affirmed the significance of East Mosholu Parkway to her

grandmother. Relating her memories of the parkway, McCauley-Iacocca said, “We had a lot of great memories on this street. We’d read or I’d run around the park. Or we’d walk, which was new for me since in the suburbs we don’t walk.”

As customary in street co-naming events, Vallati’s family was given a duplicate street sign bearing Vallati’s name.

For Stronczer, the street sign bears a metaphorical philosophy—Vallati was a person you can look up to. Her presence is now a street sign you can look up to.

“She certainly was a role model for all of us,” Stronczer said. “And I think people need to see that you can do things as you age, and generations working together, different generations working together, is the way to do it.”



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