



# NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 31, No 19 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • SEPTEMBER 27-OCTOBER 10, 2018



**INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:**  
**THE FEEL OF FALL | PG. 4**



**FULL COVERAGE:**  
**BRONX PRIMARY ROUNDUP | PG. 6**

## THE REAL ESTATE HUSTLE IN BEDFORD PK.

*Developer siege on Bedford Park residents intensifies*



Photo by Adi Talwar

**SMALL HOMES LIKE** these on Perry Avenue near East Mosholu Parkway South in Bedford Park are becoming something of a rarity in the neighborhood thanks to a continuing interest by real estate investors.

**By JOSEPH KONIG**

“Right now, the Bronx is prime real estate. Prime, prime real estate.”

Those are the words of Joseph Governali, a Norwood resident and realty investor who said he recently entered into contract to purchase four homes in Bedford Park. Governali and his Brooklyn-

based partner, Emmanuel Marshall, are part of a larger movement of investors and developers buying up Bronx homes, and tearing them down to replace them with tall buildings, exploiting existing zoning laws.

The section of Bedford Park-bordered by Grand Concourse, Mosholu Park-

way, East 198th Street and Webster Avenue--saw 28 properties sold between January and August of 2018, according to data provided by ATTOM Data Solutions and analyzed by the *Norwood News*. These include private homes, duplex, triplex, and quad-plex properties. Many of these homes were purchased

by limited liability corporations, a tactic used by developers. Over the same period in 2017, only nine properties within that same area were sold.

For Bedford Park residents, real estate developer interest is hardly new. In 2016, notorious developer Pe-  
*(continued on page 19)*



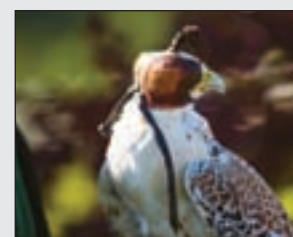
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# NORWOOD NEWS

Vol. 31, No. 19

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# Opinion

## Fordham Hill Owners Corp.: A Vital Influencer for Growth of Fordham Manor and University Heights

By RACHEL MILLER-BRADSHAW

The bus was filled with anxious Fordham Hill Owners Corporation (FHOC) shareholders on the way to the Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA) meeting set to take place that morning on Sept. 19, 2017. Empowering conversations on what the corporation could do to advocate for improvements to uplift University Heights was the discussion during the ride.

Fordham Hill's Community Engagement Committee (CEC) had to quickly galvanize and coordinate their shareholder community after learning that oil giant BP resubmitted an application to build a gas station at 205 W. Fordham Rd.

In addition to getting shareholders to send in emails before the Monday meeting expressing their thoughts about the gas station, FHOC also decided to attend the meeting with a prepared statement by its Board of Directors, which the board president, at the time Myrna Calderon, would present along with the FHOC CEC chair opposing the gas station for environmental and traffic reasons.

The presence of the Fordham Hill community was felt as the impressive number took their seats in the conference room. After acknowledging Fordham Hill's attendance, the BSA decided to vote first on the BP gas station appli-



Photo courtesy Rachel Miller-Bradshaw  
**FORDHAM HILL OWNERS CORPORATION** opened in 1950.

cation. Before the chairperson initiated the vote she commented that "The board had received all of the letters from the shareholders and local legislators. Fordham Hill has made their position very clear."

With that being said, the vote commenced and it was a unanimous vote to deny BP's application.

Some might say, 2017 was the year FHOC, developed in 1950, awakened from its slumber in regards to community engagement. It's undeniable that Fordham Hill is the socioeconomic anomaly in the neighborhood with a community of shareholders whose influence has, is, and should continue to lead the charge in the socioeconomic uplifting and revitalization of the surrounding district.

In the past two years, the FHOC board has increased its engagement by instating a productive community engagement committee. Through this com-

mittee, with the support of the board of directors and shareholders, has made its voice heard to local legislators. The committee has taken up issues including:

The disproportionate number of shelters placed in Community Board 7 and the Bronx.

- Public Safety.
- The beautification, maintenance, and safety of Devoe Park.
- University Heights property values.

Meantime, Assemblyman Jose Rivera, who lives in Fordham Hill, acknowledged myself, along with my fellow board members Myrna Calderon and Blandon Casenave for our efforts in keeping Fordham Hill a nice place to live.

Because of the concerted effort of the CEC, our local elected officials have taken notice and three board members have been recognized for their work in the community.

Two current board members now sit on Community Board 7. FHOC, geographically, is on the far end of the community's board jurisdiction. Because of their participation, FHOC is now aware of initiatives to occur in the district.

Civil rights leader Coretta Scott King said, "The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

The CEC shares this ideology. Based on the increased support from the FHOC community in joining in the committee's participation in addressing our community's issues, it is clear that we are united in this belief.

*Rachel Miller-Bradshaw is chair of Fordham Hill Owners Corporation and the Community Engagement Committee.*

## 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: Economic Development & Long-Term Planning Committee meets on Sept. 27. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

The **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meets Oct. 3 at 8 p.m. at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So., Apt. B1 (lobby floor). For more information, email [bedfordmosholu@verizon.net](mailto:bedfordmosholu@verizon.net).

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





## Letters To The Editor

### Honor the Living

The editorial in your Sept. 13 - 26, 2018 issue encourages residents to follow the example of stalwart activist Mary Vallati who recently had a street named after her to honor her many years of service to the community after passing away last year at the age of 102.

In this particular instance, as Vallati reached more advanced years, and already having served the area for so long, it would have been a grander gesture to offer to honor her work with a street renaming while she could be present to enjoy the occasion.

What a shame that such honors are bestowed posthumously. If an individual is involved in years of public service, such service should be honored during the person's lifetime and thereby be made to feel appreciated while he or she is still alive to revel in any festivities.

In the entertainment industry, there are lifetime achievement awards and

ceremonies given to those deemed to deserve it, while they are still around and able to enjoy the honor first hand. Community activists deserve the same type of recognition.

**Judy Noy**

**Norwood resident**

### Protecting the Vulnerable

City Council Member Fernando Cabrera rightly compares the inadequate response to the damage by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico with Katrina and New Orleans. The similarities include horribly incompetent Republican presidents [George W. Bush and Donald Trump] and the horribly neglected residents being mostly people of color.

The most lame excuse from Trump was that access to the island was difficult. If Puerto Rico was a fo-

reign country that our government wished to invade, our military would have no problem getting there.

One of many countries we have

invaded is Iraq. One PBS documentary showed a base the military built for its soldiers there that was like a mini-city, even including fast food chains. But we're to believe our military could not enter and rebuild Puerto Rico?

On another subject, Assembly Member Nathalia Fernandez and activist Heather Guerino make excellent points on our courts' inadequate dealings with domestic violence. For one thing, how come there is no performance review for judges so those who make irrational and dangerous decisions can be removed? There's something wrong with a judge who

orders a victim to allow her assailant back in her home.

Also, if the only way to keep an abuser away from his victim is to hold him without bail, why not? I don't know of any case where a bank was robbed and the only thing done to the robber was he was hit with an order of protection.

If someone beats up a stranger on the street, that person is hit with arrest, not an order of protection. Why is it different when the victim has been in an intimate relationship with the attacker?

**Richard Warren**

**Van Cortlandt Village**

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## EDITORIAL

### Takeaways from the Sept. 13 Primary

The Sept. 13 primary in the Bronx is one for the ages. It's usually a tough one for challengers, but in the year when the reckoning on establishment Democrats reached its peak, no one was safe. Not even the state's most powerful senator, Jeff Klein, ousted as the Democratic representative for the 34th Senate District by Alessandra Biaggi, a candidate with a Democratic platform that translates to a complete condemnation against President Donald Trump.

The people made their voices heard in a race that should be seen as an example of what happens when there's a more engaged voting bloc in a borough that

doesn't vote. It puts incumbents on edge, and hands true power to the true decision-maker: voters.

Klein, who led the now-dissolved Independent Democratic Conference, had spent a whopping \$2.4 million on media advertisements and consultants on this election only to heavily lose. Money can't always buy a victory, plain and simple. Being part of the IDC membership became a nasty mark as six out of the eight IDC Democrats lost their seats across the state.

The *Norwood News* wrote that Klein's loss is a "tremendous blow" to the Bronx mainly because Klein brought in the kind of pork barrel discretion-

ary funding that kept non-profits thriving. But money can't wash away resentment residents, particularly in the Riverdale side of the 34th District, felt towards Klein. While he did bring in funds that have helped the most downtrodden neighborhoods in his district, it was the mere appearance of turning his back on Democrats to caucus with Republicans in exchange for self-seeking power that did him in. It seems ideology can be the sacrificial lamb for power. But the chickens came home to roost.

While the people have spoken, Klein hasn't. As of press time, Klein has avoided the spotlight, extremely disappointing es-

pecially on primary night when he didn't bother speaking to supporters. The least he could've done was thank the very people who stood by his side all these years.

The paper wishes Biaggi well as she heads into the November general election. With Bronx Democrats mathematically outnumbering Republicans, Biaggi's poised to become the next representative for a large, gerrymandered district. Our hope is she won't cast out the Klein loyalists, but embrace them and put the kinds of divisions that give politics a black eye to rest.

As for Klein, it's undeniable he'd done some good

for the Bronx. But you can't overplay your hand, and you can't think that the people you see on the fringes don't have a point. You also can't continue to fight newspapers such as the Riverdale Press and believe that a negative story should somehow translate to the Nixonian view that the press is out to get him.

The press is not the enemy of the people, but an estate designed to hold powerful people and institutions accountable. This system of checks and balances is a hallmark to our country, and for lawmakers who've taken an oath, it's surprising to see barriers put in place to keep us from doing our job.

## INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers if they did everything they wanted to do this summer and what they look forward to (or not) with the cooler temperatures.



I didn't do anything this summer because I was in court and it was a disaster. I couldn't swim because I had too many things on my mind. I had no barbecue, I had barbecue on the stove from the Chinese restaurant. I can feel it. I will stay here because I feel comfortable here. I will take it as it comes, I don't think it will be that cold, but seasons do change. I hope the Jets come close to [winning] this year.

**Richard Pressley**  
Norwood



Hell no. I didn't get to go to Jones Beach, I didn't get to go to Smorgasbord in Brooklyn yet, and I didn't get to go to Coney Island or City Island. Those were the main things I wanted to do. I did get to go to Virginia Beach, I loved that. I'm looking forward to my birthday, I'm turning 25 and getting to see the Christmas lights. Me and my new boyfriend will go to Rockefeller Center to ice skate. Christmas lights are the best and we'll get to see the tree. I got a new job, so I'm making a lot of money this year, so I know that's coming. Oh God, I'm not excited about the commute.

**Sasha Rose**  
Van Cortlandt Park South



The weather was nice and I did everything I wanted to do. We had a barbecue in Van Cortlandt Park as I live in Tracey Towers and I don't want to go far. It's better to stay in the neighborhood and not get into trouble. Last year the weather was quite severe. I'm hoping that this year it's a little better, especially when you're going to the job or going out; it's very difficult with the extreme weather. I'm hoping it will be better, but it's Mother Nature, so whatever happens is God's will.

**Daniel Boateng**  
Norwood



I just worked. I didn't go to the beach one day this summer, not one day. I didn't go to Six Flags. I was supposed to take my wife to Six Flags. I was supposed to take her to the beach so many times, but after I got off work I was too tired. Well, in the middle of October I'll take her to Fright Fest at Six Flags. The snow is not a problem.

**Vinny Jackson**  
Bedford Park



Well, I'm from Hawaii, so I definitely like the winter. It's different for me, it's almost romantic, exotic. I'm looking forward to it. It was very cold last year; I think this year it will be even worse.

**Marcell Porter**  
Kingsbridge



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# Has it been 30 years already?

The Norwood News is Celebrating 30 Years of Bringing You Community News!

Our anniversary celebration will take on place Thursday, Nov. 1 at Lehman College's Faculty Dining Hall in the Music Building.

The event will include a keynote address from NY1 political anchor Errol Louis, several awards, and the unveiling of our commemorative edition.

Tickets are \$30! Dinner and drinks will be served!

To buy tickets, call (718) 324-4998 or visit <https://bit.ly/2Nv1FPQ>.

We hope you can join us for this great event as we honor our roots and the impact our paper has left on the community.



**Errol Louis**  
Keynote Speaker

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17TH FOR NON-MEMBERS  
CLASSES ARE 1X WEEK FOR 8 WEEKS  
PRICING STARTS AT \$50 FOR MEMBERS



**ALVIN AILEY DANCE REGISTRATION STARTS:**  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH FOR MEMBERS  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH FOR NON-MEMBERS  
CLASSES ARE 1X WEEK FOR 16 WEEKS  
PRICING STARTS AT \$106 FOR MEMBERS



**YOGA REGISTRATION STARTS:**  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH FOR MEMBERS  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH FOR NON-MEMBERS  
CLASSES ARE 1X WEEK FOR 8 WEEKS  
NON-MEMBERS: \$38; MEMBERS: FREE



**new settlement  
community center**



**CARATEA REGISTRATION STARTS:**  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24TH FOR MEMBERS  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26TH FOR NON-MEMBERS  
CLASSES ARE 1X WEEK FOR 8 WEEKS  
PRICING STARTS AT \$112 FOR MEMBERS



**SALSA REGISTRATION STARTS:**  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 8TH FOR MEMBERS  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10TH FOR NON-MEMBERS  
CLASSES ARE 1X WEEK FOR 8 WEEKS  
PRICING STARTS AT \$96 FOR MEMBERS



**MIXED MARTIALS ARTS REGISTRATION STARTS:**  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 FOR MEMBERS  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH FOR NON-MEMBERS  
CLASSES ARE 1X WEEK FOR 8 WEEKS  
PRICING STARTS AT \$65 FOR MEMBERS



# BRONX PRIMARY: SURP

By JOSEPH KONIG and DAVID CRUZ

The Bronx political establishment was rocked by a political earthquake as state Sen. Jeff Klein, beleaguered by a bad year that left him in defensive mode, lost the Sept. 13 Democratic primary to Alessandra Biaggi, 32, an attorney and political newcomer.

And in the last two weeks, Klein has not spoken to the public about his loss.

In a night that did not go in his favor, Klein never emerged from his upstairs suite at Maestro's Caterers in Morris Park. Supporters left disgruntled and spurned. Some shed tears. Uncertified voting results showed Klein lost 14,754 to Biaggi's 17,618 votes.

Multiple requests for comment were not responded to by the Klein camp.

"I haven't spoken to him since primary morning, to be perfectly honest," Councilman Andrew Cohen, who represents the 11th Council District that overlaps with Klein's district, said at a Bronx organizational meeting one week after the primary.

There has been "no additional communication" between the two candidates, Biaggi press secretary David Neustadt informed the *Norwood News* in an email on Sept. 24. The two did leave voicemails for each other.

Klein, a constant in Bronx politics since he was first elected to the Assembly in 1994, was largely criticized for leveraging party loyalty for political power over the last decade. Ultimately, it was the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), the breakaway faction he formed in 2011 to work with the Republican majority in the Albany Senate, that led to his demise in a year where progressives dominated primaries citywide. Six of the eight former members of the now dissolved IDC were successfully primaried by progressive alternatives.

The primary did not go well for statewide progressives. Cynthia Nixon lost to Governor Andrew Cuomo. Brooklyn City Councilman Jumaane Williams lost to sitting Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul. Anti-corruption academic Zephyr Teachout lost to New York City Public Advocate Letitia James in the attorney general race.

## Primary Night

"We have now cut the head off the IDC snake!" Biaggi declared at her victory party at the Bronx Ale House in Kingsbridge following the results.



Photo by Adi Talwar

**GUESTS AT THE** Bronx Democratic Party's election night party stand disappointed as they watch primary election results.

For Biaggi, the night was a celebratory one. She ousted one of the most powerful people in New York politics, a man accused of sexual misconduct early this year, and someone who spent more than \$2 million on his campaign.

Biaggi ran on promises to support and propose progressive legislation that Klein declined to support or actively fought against.

"[Biaggi] plans to focus on essential needs that have not been met while her opponent was in office," Neustadt wrote in a statement to the *Norwood News*. The campaign focused on fixing rent laws, pursuing criminal justice and bail reform, and fully funding schools. Anti-IDC activists frequently connect Klein's empowerment of the Republican majority and the blocking of an education bill that would introduce considerable funding to the system.

This platform appeared to appeal to residents heavily in Riverdale and Westchester County's town of Pelham, where Biaggi won the majority of her support. In election districts falling in the 81st Assembly District covering Riverdale, Kingsbridge, and Woodlawn Heights, Biaggi received 7,817 votes to Klein's 3,357 votes. In Pelham, Biaggi won 2,009 votes to 545 votes for Klein.

Voter turnout also appeared to favor Biaggi with more than 18,000 more Democrats voting in 2018 than in 2014,

when Klein was last primaried. Turnout statewide this year was almost a million votes higher than 2014.

On primary night, the Bronx Democratic Party's election night party was not quite as celebratory. Party chair Marcos Crespo gave a speech calling for party unity as the unofficial voting tallies became insurmountable. He lauded Karines Reyes, the Democratic nominee for the 87th Assembly District, who fought off her primary challengers John Perez and Farah Despeignes.

"Tonight has included some happiness and some sadness," Reyes, flanked by party members and Reyes' family, said. "We all have to band together regardless of what our position is and really, really respond to the needs of our community."

## Judicial Convention

With Klein have not having made any official announcement of dropping out of the November election, the prospect of him running on the Independence ticket is open. It's currently his only option as party officials opted not to put him on the ballot for a judgeship, dispelling rumors Klein would be placed on the ballot.

Days leading up to the annual judicial convention, where party delegates nominate those seeking a judgeship, multiple reports suggested Klein was in the running. Klein has a law degree

from CUNY law, but is not a practicing attorney and has never been a judge.

Crespo denied all reports and said it would be "tone deaf" to nominate Klein in the wake of the sexual misconduct allegations against U.S. Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. In a fiery speech at the judicial convention, Crespo critics for taking onus with the judicial nominating process. In the Bronx, the Democrats nominate judges who almost always run unchallenged.

"I am proud of the approach," Crespo said. "And I am proud of the fact that we have these incredible leaders who I believe have been insulted by those who are out there claiming that this process is a sham and that the people who get nominated are political hacks."

## Financial Fallout

Klein's primary loss had immediate implications in the 34th District.

Since the formation of the IDC, Klein secured roughly \$20 million in state funds and grants for projects and organizations in his district, according to calculations made by the *Norwood News* using news reports and press releases. One of the biggest beneficiaries from the flow of state funding, the Kingsbridge Riverdale Van Cortlandt development corporation (KRVC), cancelled a major event in the days following Klein's primary loss.

The annual Johnson Avenue Street



# RISES AND AFTERMATH

Festival, scheduled for Sept. 16, was cancelled on Sept. 14, one day after Klein's primary defeat. The cancellation raised eyebrows as residents speculated the cancellation was politically motivated. The KRVC received criticism in the past for their close relationship with Klein, specifically by Koppel, Klein's 2014 primary opponent.

Initially, KRVC claimed the festival was canceled due to lack of funding and the possible impact of Hurricane Florence. In an email to residents, Klein was not mentioned. Then, in a follow-up email, the organization cited Klein as a source of support, but without explicitly naming his primary loss as the reason for the cancellation. KRVC said it would have to preserve resources and look for new funding sources "to the tune of \$250,000 a year."

"We truly regret the cancellation of today's block festival and hope the community will not judge us for it," the email read. "This state funding was allocated to us by State Senator Jeff Klein... We do



Photo courtesy Biaggi Campaign Facebook Page

**ALESSANDRA BIAGGI (AT MIC)** celebrates her victory at Bronx Ale House in Kingsbridge.

not know now what our future will bring but we look forward to hearing from and receiving support from the community as we map that out."

Dozens of other organizations and

programs received funding from the state secured by Klein in recent years. A "Meals on Wheels" program run by the Emerald Isle Immigration Center was almost entirely funded by hundreds of

thousands of dollars in state allocations Klein secured. Public schools in the Bronx and Pelham were also frequent recipients of discretionary monies.

While Biaggi will only be a freshman senator, Democrats aim to retake the majority in the Senate this November relying on the blue wave of progressivism and anti-Trump sentiments. The majority party controls the budget and would be able to distribute discretionary funds and capital grants to caucus members' districts.

"It's impossible for Ms. Biaggi to answer in detail how she will deal with supporting nonprofits in District 34 until after she wins in November and joins the Senate and finds out what is available," Neustadt said in a statement. "This will be affected by whether or not the Democrats win enough seats to be the majority, since historically the majority party determines the distribution of discretionary funding."

*Additional reporting by Jonathan Custodio.*

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## Norwood News Celebrates 30 Years With Nov. 1 Gala

By NORWOOD NEWS

The *Norwood News* is celebrating 30 years covering Norwood and its surrounding communities with an anniversary night at Lehman College and we would like you to join us.

As a community-based newspaper, the publication has striven to provide first-rate journalism and in-depth coverage of the neighborhood. Our mission to inform readers has guided our success throughout the past three decades and with your continued support, we will do so for years to come.

Errol Louis, political anchor for NY1 news, will keynote the event that will also feature a trip down memory lane, acknowledgements, and honors for special guests Gary Axelbank and Sally Dunford, along with Mosholu Montefiore Community Center.

Louis, who hosts "Inside City Hall," a nightly show with a focus on New York City politics, has interviewed the city's political stalwarts and other newsworthy persons of interest.

As long-time host of the borough's flagship talk show "BronxTalk" and creator of website thisistheBronx, Axelbank has been one of the most dedicated and influential practitioners of Bronx journalism.

In her time as executive director of Bronx tenants advocacy group West Bronx Housing, Dunford has fought to protect the rights of the borough's residents, demonstrating an admirable devotion to the community.

The Mosholu Montefiore Community Center has provided programmatic support for the neighborhood residents and children, with a strong emphasis on recreation, education and enrichment.

Attendees will receive a free commemorative edition of the *Norwood News*, highlighting the publication's most influential stories over its 30 years.

The event costs \$30 (tax-deductible), which includes dinner and drinks. Tickets can be purchased by clicking 'Tickets' or you can pay by check or cash by calling (718) 324-4998. If you can't attend, we would graciously accept an in-kind donation to continue our mission in providing news coverage to the Bronx. RSVP by Oct. 25.

## Petitioners Get Support for Mosholu Elevator

Ahead of the MTA Board meeting on Sept. 26, petitioners pushing for the installation of an elevator at the Mosholu Parkway No. 4 station stood outside the station just over a week before the meeting to collect signatures. The plan is to present the signatures at the meeting in downtown Manhattan.

Jason Caraballo, a manager at Montefiore Health System's Office of Community & Government Relations, broached the subject with straphangers during the evening rush. Caraballo teamed up with Frederic Klein, an employee at Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz's office, and Kenny Agosto from Sen. Jamaal Bailey's office.

The petition gathering is part of an initiative to convince the MTA of an elevator. The agency received a \$200 million cash infusion for elevator installations in its 2015-2019 capital budget. The agency hasn't decided which stations will be prioritized for an elevator. The move to bring in more elevators falls under the Fast Forward Plan launched by MTA president Andy Byford. The hope is to make the stations wheelchair-accessible.

Getting up to the platforms of the station is quite the hike, given the long three flights of stairs.

Mosholu Parkway serves as a nexus for travelers visiting North Central Bronx Hospital, Montefiore Health System, DeWitt Clinton High School

and Mosholu Montefiore Community Center. Tracey Towers is within walking distance of the station. The commercial corridor known as the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District borders the station.

Petitioning has previously helped sway the MTA to prioritize certain stations over others. It worked for

the East 149th Street/Grand Concourse station of the Nos. 2, 4, and 5 lines. Other stations that are expected to receive an elevator under the current capital plan include the Bedford Park Boulevard station B/D line and the Gun Hill Road station No. 2 line.

—David Cruz



Photo by Jonathan Custodio  
**JASON CARABALLO (L) OF** Montefiore Health System collects the signature of this subway straphanger as part of an initiative to get an elevator at the Mosholu Parkway train station #4 line.

## "Joker" Film Shoot Spotted in Bedford Park

By DAVID CRUZ

Bedford Park Boulevard has gone Hollywood, shooting the upcoming "Joker" film!

An Instagram Post by "fromtheBronx," crediting the entertainment website TMZ, shows extras at the Bedford Park Boulevard B/D station awaiting a subway to pull in. Suddenly extras flee as a purple-suit clad Joker, played by Oscar-winner Joaquin Phoenix, who's starring in the role, emerges from the subway, walking towards the film crew. Signs were apparently spotted around the neighborhood showing that the filming of "Romeo" was taking place.

The solo adventure on Batman's arch-nemesis will be released in theaters sometime in 2019. It's unclear what the story is about, though there are indications it will trace the Joker's origins as Phoenix has been spotted



Image courtesy TMZ.com  
**THE JOKER, PLAYED** by Oscar nominee Joaquin Phoenix, films a scene inside the Bedford Park B/D subway station.

in character but sans makeup around other shooting locations.

Coincidentally, the concept of Batman was created at Poe Park, mere blocks from the shooting locale, with Co-creator Bob Kane and Bill Finger hammering out the essence of Batman in the 1920s.

This isn't the first occurrence of a Batman-related filming in the Bronx. Several times, creators from the show "Gotham," which traces the early years of Batman ally Commissioner Jim Gordon, have been shot outside Bronx Borough Hall near the Grand Concourse.



# Big Bands and Business Flair: JGHBID to Host Fall Festival

By **ARIANA CIPRIANI**

The Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District is gearing up for its 17th annual Fall Festival, slated for Saturday, Oct. 13. Join the BID for the annual event where Jerome Avenue between Mosholu Parkway and East Gun Hill Road is closed to traffic and full of people shopping, dancing, and celebrating the fall season.

"The goal of the festival is twofold," said Jennifer Tausig, the BID's executive director. "We want to celebrate the neighborhood and say thank you to all the loyal local shoppers as well as attract new shoppers to the variety of quality goods and services offered in the Jerome Gun Hill BID. We are looking forward to another successful, fun festival."

As most signature BID events go, the Fall Festival aims to draw a crowd in hopes of familiarizing patrons with the commercial district's many shopping options. The BID extends to East Gun Hill Road between Jerome Avenue and Webster Avenue. It is home to 220 businesses that include clothing stores, pharmacies, fast casual eateries, and general stores.

"The BID provides convenient, affordable shopping for residents and the local workforce," Tausig said. "You can finish all your errands here." Whether you are in the market

for a manicure, haircut, new shoes, or a bite to eat from one of the BID's many bodegas, bakeries, and restaurants, there is something for everyone.

Musical headliners from this year's event include the Brooklyn-based group Alive n Kickin' and local Norwood bachata group, Luis la Fama. Palladium Mambo All-Stars will grace the stage and play hits from Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez, and Celia Cruz.

The BID is also bringing back a pumpkin patch where kids and families can paint pumpkins for free. There will also be free art activities from the Bronx Children's Museum, inflatables, and food stalls. Local merchants along the avenue will be out displaying their goods, offering deals to festival goers.

Last year's event drew some 5,000 people to shop and browse the BID's borders.

The event's major sponsors include Agape Luxury Transportation, HealthFirst, Montefiore Health System, United Health Care, Ridgewood Savings Bank and Con Edison.

**Editor's Note:** *The Jerome Gun Hill Fall Festival event is scheduled for Oct. 13 from noon to 6 p.m. There is no rain date. For more information, call the Jerome Gun Hill BID at (718) 324-4946.*

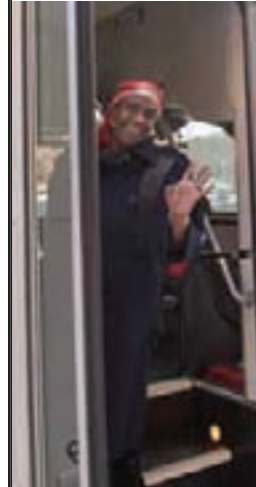


Photo courtesy Jerome Gun Hill BID

**THOUSANDS ARE EXPECTED** at the 17th annual Jerome Gun Hill Fall Festival.

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# A Rapidly Rising Company Settles in Norwood

By **CHRISTY RAE AMMONS**

After 35 years working as a taxi driver, Mario Sena started his own driving company. But he never dreamed of how far it would go.

Taking his understanding of the vehicle-for-hire business to work for him, Sena and his wife, Olga, operated a Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) service from a makeshift office in their apartment in Pelham Bay. In 2012, he only had three customers and one driver, Sena himself. Now, Agape Luxury, Corp. books an average of 5,000 trips per day.

Last year, Agape drove over one million patients to and from medical appointments, and in the last three years they have grown 688 percent. In 2014, Agape Luxury's gross revenue was \$3.5 million, and in 2017 it was \$28 million. According to *Ink* magazine, they are the 726th fastest growing company out of 5,000 in the United States. New York City also ranked Agape #1 in logistics and transportation, and in the state they ranked #23.

"That's one of the greatest things this company has accomplished. The



Photo by Christy Rae Ammons

**MARIO SENA, OWNER** of Agape, at his recently opened office at 361 E. Gun Hill Rd. in Norwood.

growth that we have experienced is a true rags-to-riches story on their [Sena and his wife's] behalf," said Agape's chief administrative officer, Eric Arroyo.

Because the company has quickly expanded in the last several years, it continues to outgrow its office space.

After moving out of Sena's apartment, Agape transferred to a rented basement at 560 Southern Blvd. to accommodate its six employees. Eventually, the company was able to rent the first floor of the building, and now they are once again settling into a larger space. They are in the process of settling into 361 E. Gun Hill Rd., beside the McDonald's on Webster Avenue.

Agape's band of dispatchers delivers their customers to doctors' appointments, physical therapy, chemotherapy sessions, and other medical appointments. Lacking the ability to drive or access other forms of transportation can put a stop to necessary, preventative treatments, but Agape is assuring that those needs are met.

Once the customers provide Agape with approval from their doctors, they are able to call on the day of the appointment for a ride, or schedule their trips a week in advance. Agape's call center answers the phone and matches customers with available drivers. The company also has wheelchair-accessible vehicles upon request, otherwise drivers use their own cars.

Agape contracts with 900 drivers, who are required to pass a NYC Taxi & Limousine Commission background check. Approximately 20 to 30 drivers are dispatched at a time, and about 600 are available daily. Sena claims that Agape values all drivers equally. "There's no privilege for any driver here. I have two brothers that drive over here for us, and they're treated equally, like all the 900."

The cost of each trip is determined by distance. For those with Medicaid or Medicare, medical transportation services are federally mandated and paid through insurance, which prevents struggling individuals from being forced to pay out of pocket.

"In this community we have, you know, your low to moderate income families," Arroyo said. "The population that we're serving is a very needy community with a lot of medical issues."

Agape aims to have its customers trust them, and their drivers love them. "There are two things we are looking to accomplish here. Customer service, number one, and that the drivers get paid well and they have enough jobs," Sena said.

Agape is still trying to win over critics who've berated the business, causing the company to earn an overall review average of 2.9 out of five stars with claims that some drivers were unprofessional to its clientele.

Sena explained that about a month ago they were having problems with dispatch, and that they simply grew too fast and needed some time to catch up. "We were not ready. We were not trained completely for that, and the company was not ready for our volume," Sena said. Now, they are more prepared to handle the pressure.

In the future, Agape is looking to expand into other boroughs and across the East Coast. They also plan to offer rides for more than appointments, like to church or the grocery store.

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# With an Uptick in Homeless, Is Anyone Paying Attention?

By JONATHAN CUSTODIO

With a cigarette hedged between his fingers, the plainly-clothed man spoke of hardship. The man, whose name is being withheld by the *Norwood News* out of concern over any reprisals, is a resident at the recently opened men's only homeless shelter at 3600 Jerome Ave., in front of Van Cortlandt Park.

The 200-bed shelter, which

opened this past summer, houses the homeless who are mentally ill. A curfew is set at 10 p.m. and only clients who work late nights are allowed to skip it.

"The shelter's not ready," said the inside source. "Where is the security? There's no maintenance guys here. They're understaffed. They have four or five counselors."

However, according to the

Department of Homeless Services (DHS), which runs the shelter with support from community-based human service organization BronxWorks, there are roughly 15 social service staff and a minimum of seven security officers overseen by shift supervisors who work closely with the Police Department.

"This specialized facility provides New Yorkers experi-

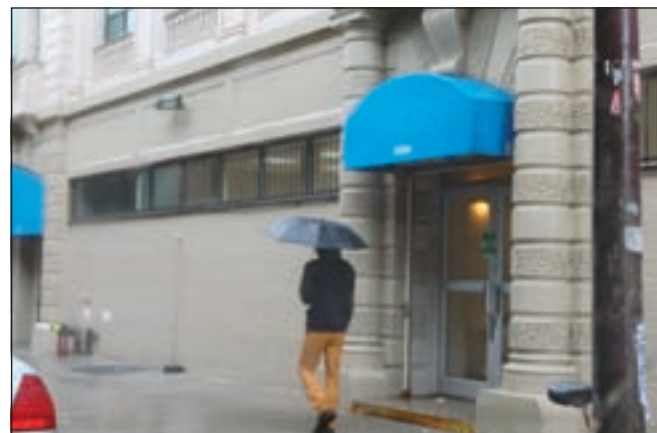


Photo by David Cruz

**THE HOMELESS SHELTER** at 3600 Jerome Ave. quietly opened during the summer.

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encing homelessness and mental health challenges with the targeted supports they need to stabilize their lives, including medical and mental health services, expert clinical staff, individual and group counseling, and connections to additional care in the community," says DHS spokesperson Arianna Fishman. "Working in close partnership with not-for-profit social service provider BronxWorks, we're confident that we will make this the best experience it can be for these individuals as they get back on their feet."

Some residents were unaware of the shelter's existence. Residents were alerted of the shelter through Community Board 7.

Onekki Clarke, a 15-year resident of the neighborhood, had only realized there was a nearby shelter when a Family Dollar employee told her about a homeless man entering the store's bathroom with a roll of toilet paper. "Homeless has always been an issue here. There's a park and [Bronx Dance Academy] down

the block so what are they doing with the pedophiles? Are there people on the registry?"

The shelter's close proximity to Bronx Dance Academy, a sixth-to-eighth grade school that specializes in classical ballet, modern dance and visual arts, was an issue with residents prior to opening.

Felix Hernandez, manager of the Family Dollar a block away from the shelter, could not confirm Clarke's story, but says, "I could see it happening. They steal food from the store and do a five-course meal. I had to kick out a couple [of them] standing in front of the store."

"I didn't even know they opened up around here. First time I hear about a shelter," said 29-year resident Woody Rivera, who sees homeless at night on the corner of Jerome Avenue and 213th Street and in Van Cortlandt Park.

There are 671 individuals in homeless shelters across Community District 7, in addition to the 1,195 homeless that are estimated to be in the district, according to DHS.

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# For the Traveling Art Lover: “All Roads Lead to Fordham”

By DAVID GREENE

The spinning wheels inside a young artist's mind and the wheels from vintage wagons discovered across the Bronx, collided at the intersection of Fordham Road and the Grand Concourse, creating a unique work of art that will be on display until next spring.

Welder and artist Colin Nicodemo, 44, of Cold Spring, N.Y., beamed with pride during the unveiling of his 10-foot high hand-welded, circular

shaped statue entitled “All Roads Lead to Fordham.”

Nicodemo was surrounded by family members and members of the Fordham Road Business Improvement District (BID), at the unveiling at the south side of the East Fordham Road overpass on the Grand Concourse, on Sept. 14.

Working with the BID and the New York City Department of Transportation's Art Program, Nicodemo explained, “We had this concept that was

Fordham Road and the importance of transportation and meshing that together and coming up with a piece that people can look at and give appreciation to, however they see fit.”

Nicodemo, who spent a good deal of his childhood visiting family on Conners Street, scoured the Bronx's junkyards and flea markets across the borough to find vintage wheels of old wagons and carts and welded them together, cre-

ating his unique urban art project. The gears came from an antique shop, he said.

According to Daniel Bernstein, deputy director of the Fordham Road BID, the project has been kicked around since 2015. “This project has been in the works since 2015... We've actually done a lot of projects like this in the past,” said Bernstein. “What we do is partner with the Department of Transportation's Art Program. What they do is kind

its on the Grand Concourse for the last decade, Bernstein added, “[Nicodemo] really had a great idea for something that would center around Fordham Road, just generally the traffic that we get, the accessibility that runs through here, and that's really what this piece is all about.”

Sponsors of the program include Dylan James Design, Councilman Ritchie Torres and the Woodstock Artists

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Photo by David Greene

(L-R) ARTIST COLIN Nicodemo, Executive Director of the Fordham Road BID Wilma Alonso and Fordham Road BID Deputy Director Daniel Bernstein at the unveiling of a new street art project on Fordham Road.

of select hotspots throughout the city, where they want to see art.”

Bernstein continued, “Fordham Road wasn't one of them, but we made sure that it was, because we feel like it should have more art because we're known for just clothing stores and retailers and things like that.”

With the BID having participated in public art exhib-

Association. The Fordham Road BID is a non-profit corporation under contract with the City of New York to “provide supplementary services to the community,” focusing on sanitation, beautification, promotion and overall advocacy for the Fordham Road area. For more information on the Fordham BID, visit their website at: [www.Fordhamroad.nyc](http://www.Fordhamroad.nyc).

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## Exercise: Don't Give Up, Keep It Up!

By **MATTHIWS ARCENTALES**

Being healthy is a group effort that starts with you! Eating well is an important part of feeling well and being healthy. Another way to improve health is to increase how often you move your body, also known as exercising. Of course, it is recommended to have a conversation with your healthcare professional to ensure you are safe to begin an exercise program.

There are different types of exercises that help reach certain health goals. Cardiovascular exercises help increase your heart rate to decrease body fat. Body building exercises help to build muscle and define your body shape. Endurance training helps to increase the time you can exercise and build a greater tolerance of tougher exer-

cise workouts. Each type of exercise has a different purpose, yet they share a common goal of helping an individual become healthier.

Adapting good exercising habits is one way to help prevent most diseases. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people who are physically active tend to live longer and have lower risk for heart disease, stroke, Type 2 Diabetes, depression, and some cancers. Doing at least 150 minutes a week of moderate activity can lower your risk premature death. Unfortunately, many people who do not get regular exercise, or care for their health, may develop one of these conditions.

The CDC also states that exercise may also improve academic

achievement in students. School aged youth share that they have increased energy when exercise is a part of their day. They report having more energy to pay attention and take notes during the day, participate in class, and socialize with both their peers and teachers.

Starting an exercise program can be difficult, but like any good habit, it is worth it. It is important to remember not to get discouraged. Many obstacles may rise up over time, including people unwilling to give their support.

Learn to ignore them. Instead, pay attention to those with encouraging words, loving support, and people who believe in your goals. It takes time and sacrifice to make changes, but goals are achievable with motivation, determination, and patience.

For more information on staying motivated to exercise, go to: <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/data/facts.htm>.

*Matthiws Arcentales was a summer intern with Montefiore Health System's Office of Community & Population Health.*

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## NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

### College Fair

SUNY Bronx Educational Opportunity Center, 1666 Bathgate Ave., hosts a free college fair on Oct. 9 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Visitors can speak with college reps and learn about scholarships, financial aid and admission requirements. For more information, call (718) 530-7017.

### Grant Campaign

NYC Service and Citizens Committee for New York City launched the 2019 "Love Your Block" grant campaign to support communities making local change in transforming public spaces. Resident-led volunteer groups should submit project proposals that address community concerns and highlight how the project will transform public spaces. Twenty-five community group winners will receive a \$1,000 grant, project management support, and City agency services to improve their neighborhood. Interested participants can attend an information session on Oct. 16 or Oct. 23 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Applications can be found at [nyc.gov/loveyourblock](http://nyc.gov/loveyourblock). For more information and to RSVP, call (212) 822-9579. Applications are open through Nov. 7.

### Scholarship Competition

NYC Bronx Community Board 6 which covers the neighborhoods of Bathgate, Belmont, East Tremont, and West Farms Square will hold a scholarship contest to support high school graduates who seek higher education and who have financial need. Five students will be selected and winners will be notified on May 1, 2019. Requirements include graduating senior living in CB 6, resume, and video submission. For more information and detailed information, call (718) 579-6990.

### 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 [mcmamus638@aol.com](mailto:mcmamus638@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. 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 information 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.



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# Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

## EDITOR'S PICK

### Weekend Walks in Norwood

East 204th Street and Bainbridge Avenue Merchants Association presents two free Weekend Walks, featuring family friendly activities, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. along East 204th Street between Bainbridge and Decatur avenues. Sept. 29 events include Youth Expo "Anti Bullying & Literacy Programs" from noon to 4 p.m., and Oct. 6 events include Octoberfest "Food, Wine & Beer Festival" from 3 to 7 p.m. Streets will be closed to traffic. For more information, call (917) 640-1003.

### Onstage

Lehman College for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents Latin artist **Olga Tañón**, Sept. 29 at 8 p.m. (tickets: \$25 to \$85; \$100/VIP includes pre-concert reception at 6:30 p.m.); and **Compañía Flamenca**, Oct. 7 at 4 p.m. (tickets: \$25 to \$45; \$10/ages 12 and under). For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

### Events

The Jerome Gun Hill BID presents **Community Cleanup Day**, Oct. 8 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. All ages welcome; cleaning supplies provided by DSNY. Meet at Jerome Avenue and East Mosholu Parkway North at 10 a.m. For more information, call (718) 324-4946.

The New York Botanical Garden presents **Spooky Pumpkin Garden**, a Halloween makeover of the Everett Children's Adventure Garden, through Oct. 31.

Included are huge scarecrows, pumpkins, hand-puppet show at the Pumpkin Puppet Theatre, and live snakes and lizards. For more information, call (718) 817-8700.

The Bronx Zoo presents **Boo at the Zoo**, weekends, Sept. 29 through Oct. 28 and Columbus Day, Oct. 8. Events include magic shows, costume parades, professional pumpkin carving demos, crafts, and the extinct animal graveyard. Bootoberfest returns with music, lawn games, haunted pirate hayride, and more. Most activities are included in the price of a general admission ticket; all activities are included with the purchase of a total experience ticket. For more information, cost, and a full schedule, visit [www.BronxZoo.com/boo-at-the-zoo](http://www.BronxZoo.com/boo-at-the-zoo).

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

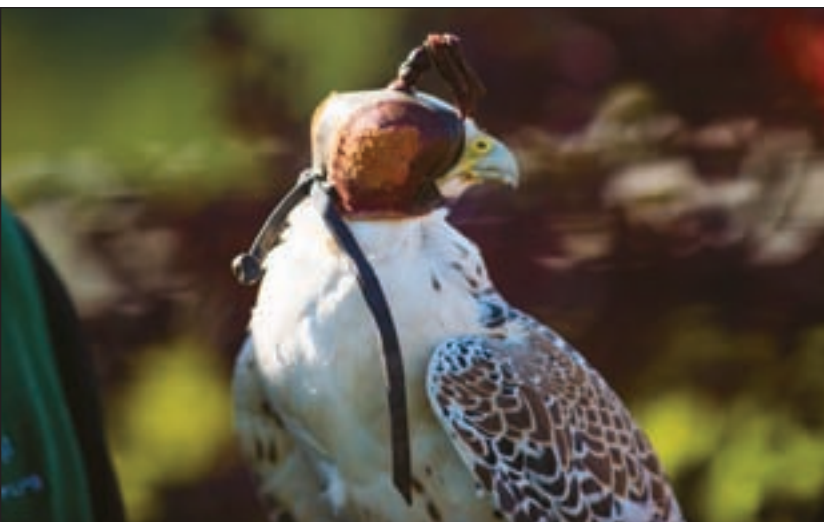


Photo courtesy Wave Hill

**A LIVE BIRD** presentation featuring an assortment of aviators will take place at Wave Hill (see Events for more information).



File photo by Adi Talwar

**THIS YEAR'S WEEKEND** Walk, sponsored by the city Department of Transportation, will have plenty of fun for the whole family (see Editor's Pick for details).

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.

Lehman College's School of Arts & Humanities, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents **Young Puerto Rican Filmmakers**, free, Oct. 4 at 12:30 p.m. in the Studio Theatre in the Speech and Theatre Building. Events include short films, music videos and Q&A. For more information, call (718) 960-8556.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Tiny Terrariums, to create mini terrarium in a recycled glass, add sand, tiny rocks and natural materials, Sept. 29 and 30; and Raptors Take Flight, to make raptor puppet or windsock, Oct. 6 and 7, both in the WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled is **Falconry Presentation: Skyhunters in Flight**, live bird presentation including hawks, falcons and owls, Oct. 8 at 1 p.m., on the grounds. 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](mailto:pofeldtw@gmail.com).

### Exhibits

The Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street), presents **Bronx Expo - The Starlight Park Story**, through Sept. 30; **Women's Suffrage**

**and New York City: A Centennial Celebration**, through April 11, 2019; and **His Muse: The Women of Edgar Allan Poe's Life**, Oct. 4 through April 7, 2019. Opening reception is free on Oct. 4 from 4:30 to 7 p.m. 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) 581-1596 or visit [art@hebrewhome.org](http://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 teens/young adults: **film**: movie screening, Sept. 28 at 4 p.m. Adults can enjoy **film**: "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," Sept. 29 at 2:30 p.m. Children can attend **Arts and Crafts**: (ages 5 to 12), hands-on projects, Sept. 30 at 3:30 p.m. (preregistration required). For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org).

Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Crafty Fridays**: (ages 5 to 12), crafts, Sept. 28 at 3 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 at noon**: Oct. 4 and 11. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

**NOTE:** Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to [norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org](mailto:norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org), and should be received by Oct. 1 for the next publication date of Oct. 11.



# The Real Estate Hustle in Bedford Park

(continued from page 1)

ter Fine got into a prolonged legal battle with tenants of a small apartment building at 267 E. 202nd St. Eventually, a fire forced tenants out anyway while a lawsuit was settled.

Lois Harr and her husband John Reilly lived at 257 E. 202nd St., two homes down from Fine's property. Fine had bought up the neighboring houses and was planning the construction of a 12-story apartment building.

But Fine is not the only developer interested in the area. Carlos Melendez, the owner of a home at 3000 Perry Ave., told the *Norwood News* he was repeatedly pestered by phone calls from real estate solicitors over the last six months. According to Melendez, the solicitors initially offered him \$600,000 and then \$725,000.

"Then they told me that the next-door house, they offered them 800,000," Melendez said. "I asked why don't you offer me this money? They told me they wanted to take both houses and build a new structure here."

Even after he told them to stop calling and that he was not interested

in selling his house, they persisted. "I told him, 'look, I don't want to sell, but if you give me a million dollars then I'll sell it,'" Melendez said. "And he told me, 'what, you think your house is made out of gold?'"

Melendez is a Vietnam War veteran, having served in the Army for 21 years, and retired from his position at the post office nine years ago. He has no interest in selling his home, which New York City Department of Finance tax assessors value at \$513,000. Instead, he wants to leave his home to his children.

Around the corner from Melendez is homeowner Ella Santos, who told the *Norwood News* she receives mailers two or three times a month offering cash for houses. Developers are constantly spotted in the neighborhood, approaching residents on foot.

It could explain why Santos was wary when Governali approached her outside her home and inquired about its history. Governali insisted he was not interested in tearing her house down but admiring the history of the century old residence. Santos did not believe him and even recounted her conversation with him at a Bedford

Mosholu Community Association meeting on Sept. 5.

"He says, 'I'm a historian,'" Santos said. "But then he gives me his card and it says he's a developer."

Turns out the card actually said "realty investor" with Governali's name on it. Real estate investing is just one aspect of Governali's professional background, he said. He's also interested in shipwreck exploration, particularly the H.M.S. Hussar, in the East River.

The properties he was interested in purchasing on Bedford Park Boulevard and Briggs Avenue got the hard sell from Governali.

"When I approached 261 Bedford [Park Blvd.], basically what I said to them was, 'how does this feel to sit on the lottery ticket?'" Governali said. "I said, 'My friend, the Bronx is prime real estate and your property alone? Forget about it.'"

Governali said he is in contract with four homes, but could not produce any paperwork to substantiate his claims. The homeowners could not be reached at the time of publication. Governali is negotiating with the homeowners on behalf of a "hedge

fund" called Arena Holdings LLC.

Governali said he approached Fine's company, Atlantic Development Group, about a possible partnership, but they wanted to build low-income housing. Governali would rather build luxury apartments or housing for college students at Fordham University, Lehman College, or one of the other nearby academic institutions. "There's so many features and history here and to take that and just demolish it and to put low-income housing, it's horrible," Governali told the *Norwood News*.

He added, "If you have low-income housing, then the income is obviously low income so you're not going to have any kind of retail establishment that's going to be catering to those people. Why would you want to do something like that for? Just to make a dollar? That's not right. You don't do that. Go to your own neighborhood and do that. Don't do that here."

As for Harr and Reilly, the pair spent two years standing their ground before ultimately deciding living next to a major construction site was not worth it. In May, they sold to Fine.

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**Octoberfest Concert**  
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