



# NORWOOD NEWS

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**INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:  
RAISE THE AGE TAKES EFFECT | PG. 4**



**SEE PICTURES;  
NORWOOD NEWS SNAPSHOTS | PG. 10**

## KATZ: NCBH HERE TO STAY

*Head of NYC Health + Hospitals seeks to expand services*



Photo by Adi Talwar

**NORTH CENTRAL BRONX** Hospital has been in the Norwood community for more than 40 years. In a recent interview, the President and CEO of NYC Health + Hospitals, Dr. Mitchell Katz, said the hospital will remain open.

**By JOSEPH KONIG**

North Central Bronx Hospital (NCBH) will “absolutely” stay open for the foreseeable future, NYC Health + Hospitals President and CEO Dr. Mitchell Katz said during a “Newsmakers Q&A” roundtable discussion at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism on Sept 27. Katz said he planned on expanding

services at the Norwood hospital.

“If it’s going to be closed, it should be closed. If it’s going to be open, it should be open,” Katz said. “So now I’ve looked at it and we’re going to expand services to the North Central Bronx.”

But New York City Health + Hospitals has not yet determined which areas of ser-

vice will be introduced or expanded upon at NCBH, press secretary Robert de Luna added. Still, news that the hospital will remain open should quell longstanding fears that it would someday and somehow close in the near future.

“I’ve been here for many years and that rumor has always been lingering,” the hospital’s newly promoted

executive director, Cristina Contreras, told the *Norwood News* in a telephone interview. “[Katz] has been very consistent with that message and we are very grateful. It makes a big difference.”

Contreras took over the top job at NCBH in September after spending 11 of her 24 years in the New York City  
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# NORWOOD NEWS

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## Letters To The Editor

### Give Credit Where It's Due

As a resident of Fordham Hill for over six years, I take exception to the misleading narrative of the Op-Ed published in the *Norwood News* Vol. 31, No. 19 [Sept. 27 - Oct. 10, 2018] edition regarding Fordham Hill residents' involvement in the 2017 defeat of the BP gas station proposal by the Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA). I was made aware of the issue by one of our own community leaders who also lives at Fordham Hill. Not only was he not recognized in the article, but others joined me in signing a letter of opposition to the project based on his research.

While Fordham Hill is a very important voting bloc whose residents have begun to take a more proactive approach to community issues, a number of catalyzing elements enabled this activism. As one of the leaders in our community, this person also serves on Community Board 7, raises important issues including lack of post office ADA accessibility, safety and cleanliness in Community District 7 parks, and services for special needs children. In my opinion, those shareholders who attended the gas station proposal vote at the BSA need to be recognized. But if there is one name that should not be omitted, it is the person I am writing about: Chad Y. Royer.

Mr. Royer maintained contact with local elected officials, raising pertinent and thoughtful questions regarding the process that would ultimately decide the fate of the gas station project. The recommendation to organize

a letter-writing campaign among Fordham Hill residents was communicated directly to Mr. Royer, who provided a sample letter template to numerous shareholders to make widespread action easy for residents.

Opinion articles like this that portray a story without honestly recognizing those who volunteer their time for service are divisive, self-serving and ultimately counterproductive. Omitting real leaders from the narrative discourages activism and advocacy by creating alienation. The late Ozzie Brown would have been honored to shake the hands of all the individuals who helped mobilize the Fordham Hill community, who emailed letters the weekend before the BSA meeting and who attended the BSA proceedings. Giving credit where it is due to others is the mark of true leadership.

**Earl L. Thomas**  
**Fordham Hill**

### Biaggi the Enforcer

The last time Democrats had control of the New York State Senate, nothing progressive got done. But leadership positions were given to some who would end up leaving office due to scandals. State Sen. Jeff Klein formed the Independent Democratic Conference and working with Republicans, numerous progressive bills became law.

Klein's record bears no resemblance to the Trump agenda. Without a Democratic majority, he got plenty of legislation passed that you would not expect Republicans to support.

But Alessandra Biaggi claimed Klein blocked more progressive legislation. So because he wasn't able to get Republican cooperation on even more issues, that means he was blocking them? That questionable argument shows that Biaggi's attacks on Klein were, to anybody actually scrutinizing her, quite unbelievable.

Biaggi mentions her grandfather, longtime U.S. Representative Mario Biaggi, as her inspiration for entering politics. But her grandpa was repeatedly re-elected running simultaneously on the Democratic, Republican and Conservative lines. He was rather conservative.

In 2016, Biaggi did not work on the primary campaign of Senator Bernie Sanders. She worked for the Republican-minded Democrat, Hillary Clinton.

But Sanders was an Independent and Clinton was a registered Democrat. So Sanders and Klein, despite progressive records, must be punished by those who believe not in serving the people but blindly following Democratic Party leadership. This is the case even when that leadership shows no true support for the values they claim to represent.

By running against Klein, Biaggi serves as an enforcer to punish a legislator who valued his constituents above blind party loyalty. By beating him, this serves as a warning against any future independent thinking Democrats.

But we the people do not have to take this. Klein got 44.5 percent of the vote in the Democratic primary. He is on the ballot as an independent. If everybody who voted for him in the primary plus Klein supporters who did not vote in the primary vote for him in November, he will win. I know I'm voting for him.

**Richard Warren**  
**Van Cortlandt Village**

## Public and Community Meetings

**COMMUNITY BOARD 7** will hold its general board meeting on Oct. 23 at 6:30 p.m. at Montefiore Medical Center's Cherkasky Auditorium, 110 E. 210th St. The following CB7 committee meetings will take place at the board office, 229A E. 204th St. unless otherwise noted: Public Safety & Quality of Life Committee on Oct. 11; Health & Human Services Committee on Oct. 16; Executive Committee on Oct. 17; Public Relations Committee on Oct. 18; and Economic Development/Long-Term Planning Committee on Oct. 24. For more information, call the board office at (718) 933-5650.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets Oct. 25 at The Plaza Rehab and Nursing Center, 100 W. Kingsbridge Rd., at 7 p.m. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

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**SEE YOU THERE!**

# INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers their thoughts on the newly passed Raised the Age measure that separates 16- and 17-year-old inmates from the adults and incarcerates them in detention centers instead of on Rikers Island, which is expected to close in 2027.



From what I understand they've had 16- and 17-year-olds on Rikers Island for years without seeing a judge or anything. I myself had a family member who was in Rikers Island for smoking weed and he was there for years... for only a joint. They have to be housed somewhere. Any neighborhood you take them you're going to have demonstrations. But they are human beings and members of society and we as a village should be more compassionate and understanding. It could be our children. As parents, sometimes we don't know what our kids are out there doing, no matter how good we try to train them. I'm glad they're doing something.

**Lavern Williams**  
Parkchester



You have to protect the community from dangerous people. Sometimes people make mistakes and sometimes people get jammed up even though they're presumed innocent, but are herded down that same road. It should be a one stop shop. The jail should be in the courthouse; put it right by Yankee Stadium.

**Jason Winchester**  
Soundview



I feel that putting a jail in the outer boroughs will bring more crime to the neighborhoods. And I don't think it's safe to put a jail in Mott Haven, near the projects. I don't think it's a good look for the Bronx. I don't believe a jail should be in the middle of the Bronx. I think the jail should stay across the water and away from civilization and it shouldn't be placed where people can walk past the jail. It's dangerous and I don't think adolescents should be anywhere next to grown men.

**Alyshia Watson**  
Belmont



I feel that's a good idea because when you put these teenagers with adults, you sometimes get a bad outcome when they come out. They're angrier because they've been abused. Society doesn't see that these kids make mistakes and are entitled to make mistakes and learn lessons from it. They shouldn't be in there with men who may be in there for murder or rape. These kids need to learn skills. I don't think they should close Rikers Island. It's there and serves its purpose. If they invest and improve the problems there, they can fix it.

**Nancy Rodriguez**  
Norwood



My thoughts are about all of the jobs on Rikers Island. What's going to happen to all of the guards if they close it down? But otherwise, I think it's a good plan, I don't think teens should be held in the same jail as men.

**Anita Chapman,**  
Van Cortlandt Village



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# Norwood Man Killed in Crash Near Major Deegan; Suspect Arrested

A Norwood resident died in a hit-and-run accident on Sept 30 between Jerome Avenue and East 233rd Street, near the Major Deegan Expressway. Another Norwood resident has been charged with manslaughter in the driver's death.

Ramon Monteagudo, 59, of East 203rd Street was killed while driving his 1995 Toyota sedan northbound on Jerome Avenue when he collided with 24-year-old driver Collin Hedley, who was driving southbound and on the wrong side of the road, according to police. The incident occurred shortly after 8 p.m.

Hedley was traveling in the left lane and crossed over the double yellow lines onto the right lane, police said. He then proceeded to sideswipe an incoming 70-year-old woman operating a 2014 Honda SUV. However, he could not avoid Monteagudo.

After receiving the brunt of the collision, Monteagudo's car spun clockwise into another vehicle, a 2013 Honda SUV operated by a 59-year-old female. Hedley exited his car and fled the scene on foot, according to police.

Paramedics arrived after responding to a 911 call and transported Monteagudo to Montefiore Hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Officers arrested Hedley after he returned to the location of the crime and he has been charged with leaving the scene of an accident resulting in death, criminal possession of a controlled substance and operating a vehicle without a driver's license. As of press time, Hedley was also charged with Second Degree manslaughter, and was held without bail at Vernon C. Bain Center. Police say the investigation remains ongoing.

This year, there have been three car accidents in the vicinity, none resulting in death, according to a review of publicly available data. Residents at Monteagudo's home at 249 E. 203rd St. declined to comment on the tragedy.

—Jonathan Custodio

WWW.NORWOODNEWS.ORG

## In Bedford Park Preservation Campaign, a Need: Your Photos

By DAVID CRUZ

As developers far and wide continue eyeing Bedford Park for development, the Bedford Mosholu Community Association (BMCA) is utilizing a work-around strategy to ward off further development.

And Ella Santos, a vice president of the group needs an item that'll serve as the lifeblood of the campaign: your photos.

"They don't have to be historical photographs. It could be current," said Santos, speaking at the latest BMCA meeting Oct. 3. "Any old photos of you standing in front of your house, with friends."

BMCA is now applying to be placed on the Historic Districts Council's (HDC) "Six to Celebrate" initiative which assists communities in getting their neighborhoods approved for landmark designation. According to its website, HDC offers free resources to help neighborhoods achieve official preservation designation through the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. Landmarked neighborhoods usually make it tougher for developers to re-



Photo by David Cruz

**THE BEDFORD MOSHOLU** Community Association raised the lobbying effort for preservation at its Oct. 3 monthly meeting.

velop portions of a neighborhood.

The website notes that the "six selected groups receive HDC's hands-on help on all aspects of their efforts over the course of the year and continued support in the years to come. The program helps community activists learn to use tools such as documentation, research, zoning, landmarking, publicity, and public outreach to advance local preservation campaigns."

The Bronx neighborhoods of Westchester Square and Little Italy on Arthur Avenue are on this year's list. Santos has already done her part, hav-

## More New York City Students Passing State Test, But Bronx Still Lags

By DAVID CRUZ

Test scores for New York City students from third through eighth grade have gone up this year, but the Bronx still lags.

Scores released by the state Department of Education show 46.7 percent of all New York City public students met proficiency standards in the English test, according to city officials. They also saw 42.7 percent of students pass the math test. A borough breakdown shows 32.3 percent of Bronx students from third to eighth grade passed their English test, according to raw data by the state Education Department.

Mayor Bill de Blasio framed the test scores as a "reset moment" at a news conference Sept. 27 at the Morris Heights School since the test scores could not be compared to the 2017 due to testing standards having been restructured. That's because the test was untimed and administered three days instead of two, giving an added advantage to students.

De Blasio, joined by Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza, hailed the test scores but downplayed their overall significance since they can't be measured by last year's test outcomes.

"So, when you see positive num-



Photo by David Cruz

**MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO** (center) at a news conference Sept. 26 on the new state test scores.

bers of New York City's performance versus the rest of the state, that's always encouraging," said de Blasio. "But we know this is not a perfect direct comparison because the standards changed. The fact is it's powerful to have a baseline but I also want to note and put in perspective that as an administration we never want to overrate standardized tests to begin with. They are one of multiple measures."

In the Bronx, 24.1 percent of level three and four students in the fifth grade met proficiency standards in English, representing the worst, according to the state's raw data. More eighth graders scored the highest in

ing created an official BMCA Instagram account several months ago. Photos of the architectural beauty of Bedford Park, with its ornate Victorian-style homes mixed in with pre- and post-war buildings, are routinely taken and posted on Instagram.

Bedford Park has undergone a development blitz. In a review by the *Norwood News*, relying on data from AATOM data solutions, the section of Bedford Park--bordered by the Grand Concourse, Mosholu Parkway, East 198th Street, and Webster Avenue--saw 28 properties sold between January and August of 2018. These include private homes, duplex, triplex, and quad-plex properties. Over the same period a year before, only nine properties within that area were sold.

Bedford Park was initially built to be a suburb within New York City, but has since seen the development of eight-story buildings abutting century-old homes.

**Editor's Note:** Photos can be sent to [bedfordmosholu@verizon.net](mailto:bedfordmosholu@verizon.net). BMCA's Instagram handle is [@bedfordmosholuassoc](https://www.instagram.com/bedfordmosholuassoc).

the English exam with 37.1 percent.

Level three and four students in the third grade in the Bronx scored the second highest in the English test with 36.6 percent. They also had more third graders pass the math test compared to other grades, with 35.7 percent in Level three and four. Eighth grade students did not do as well, with only 21.7 percent of them passing proficiency standards.

It's third grade proficiency rates de Blasio will pay attention to carefully next year and after as it will be the time when most New York City students were enrolled in the universal pre-K program that rolled out in 2014.

"Next year will be the first time we see the pre-K expansion expressed in the third grade test scores but remember that's when we went from 20,000 kids in pre-K to 53,000," said de Blasio.

**Editor's Note:** While the data indicating 46.7 percent of New York City public school students was presented by the city, the latter figures in this article differ from the state's since they were released in August. City officials were able to get an update on the data, but did not release all figures to the public.



# Cops Search for Two Suspects in Separate Assault-Robbery Cases

**By JONATHAN CUSTODIO**  
A cell phone robbery and a daytime stabbing are what cops at the 52nd Precinct are tackling and in need of the public's help.

Police say a 45-year-old woman was robbed of her Samsung Note 8 cellphone at the East 205th Street/Norwood D subway station while waiting for her downtown train on Sept. 23, at 5:30 a.m.

The victim was using her phone on a bench when a man

approached and forcibly tried to strip the device from her. After the two briefly struggled, the robber took the phone and ran off heading towards the exit on East 206th Street and Bainbridge Avenue.

According to authorities, the suspect is described as a black male, approximately 20 years old, 5'11" tall, 185 pounds, with a medium complexion. He was last seen wearing a black hooded sweatshirt, black pants, and wearing a

black backpack (see photo on right).

Three days later on Sept. 26, a robbery and assault was reported to police just before 10 a.m., this time in Kingsbridge Heights. There, a 39-year-old male victim was asked for money by a man at the corner of East Kingsbridge Road and the Grand Concourse. After the victim refused and walked away, the individual stabbed the man in the back, police said. The vic-



tim was transported to Saint Barnabas Hospital once paramedics arrived, where he was declared to be in stable condition. The suspect is described as a black male, sporting a dark-haired ponytail and a beard (see photo on left).

The theft of phones has become something of a common occurrence within the 52nd Precinct, which covers Norwood, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge Heights, Fordham and University Heights.

"Apple's killing us. We have a petition against Apple to shut down," Inspector Peter Fiorillo of the 52nd Precinct, jokingly said at the last 52nd Precinct Community Council meeting on Sept. 27. "Crime would go away almost 100 percent."

But the number of robber-

ies—which usually covers stolen cellphones—remain even within the precinct, with officers reporting 241 robberies compared to the exact same number a year ago, according to NYPD statistics. September saw robberies rise 50 percent, from 22 a year ago the same time to 33.

**Editor's Note:** *Anyone with information with regard to these incidents is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at (800) 577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, (888) 57-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging on to the CrimeStoppers website at [www.nypdcrimestoppers.com](http://www.nypdcrimestoppers.com), on Twitter @NYPD-Tips, or by texting their tips to 274637 (CRIMES) then enter TIP577. All calls are strictly confidential.*

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# As One Garage Collapses, Another Raises Rates



Photo by Miriam Quinones

**THE GARAGE ONCE** at 3000 Jerome Ave., once a garage, has come down. Plans show owners look to convert the property into retail space.

**BY DAVID CRUZ and  
CHRISTY RAE AMMONS**

Bedford Park locals have always had difficulty finding parking, becoming a frustrating scourge in the upper Bronx neighborhood. But with one parking garage gone and others with rising rates, locals may have to settle with what they have.

The New York Botanical Garden parking garage has been a focal point of aggression over its rising monthly prices. When the garage first opened in 2012, it offered an “introductory fee” of \$99 for residential, monthly parking. The residential membership includes access to the garden and 24/7 accessibility to the garage.

The garage received a total of \$41 million in city and state funding towards the construction of the garage. Since 2012, their rates have increased incrementally, leading up to the current price of \$300 per month for a reserved space and \$275 per month for a non-reserved space. Residents are wondering if the Garden is responsible for maintaining more reasonable rates since the garage was publicly funded.

“When I first looked at the garage when I first moved into the neighborhood, monthly fees were a hundred, a hundred-fifty, dollars a months,” said local resident, Jonathan Atkin. “People are also charging \$150 to park in their private driveways in the neighborhood.”

“The Garden plans to price the parking memberships at ‘market rate,’ depending on how much other garages in

the area are charging,” an article from the *Daily News* reported in 2010. Their prices are now surpassing the competition’s.

The *Norwood News* reached out to other garages in the area, inquiring about their monthly rates. Central Parking at 3450 Bainbridge Ave. charges customers a meager \$115 per month. The garage has maxed out on their spaces. Other nearby garages’ rates ranged from \$230 to \$400.

While the Botanical Garden owns the property, a spokesman deferred questions to the management company managing the day-to-day, Manhattan Parking Group. A spokesman for the management company, did not directly answer why the rates are climbing higher, though mentioned that they charge market rates. The spokesman did not respond to questions over whether the garage has a duty to residents to keep lower rates because the garage was publicly funded.

For anyone seeking convenience, drivers appear to be at the mercy of the lot since another garage has been permanently demolished.

A public garage in Bedford Park came down via demolition after it partially collapsed in early 2017. A posted sign indicates the property will be converted into retail space, nixing the prospect of a garage once again.

Owners plan to rebuild the space at 3000 Jerome Ave. just near Bedford Park Boulevard. Residents passing by the clear lot hope owners consider a parking lot.



Photo by Miriam Quinones

**CREW INSIDE THE** now empty lot at 3000 Jerome Ave.

The garage, once known as Dr. Parking Garage, had at one point charged customers an overnight rate of \$11, a bargain for one Bedford Park resident who only went by “BB.” Meantime, Maria, another resident passing by the empty lot, said she was forced to sell her car because finding a spot after the garage closed was impossible. Another resident, who did not give their name, said the new building should be more than two floors as was the case with the former garage.

But plans found hanging on the property’s perimeter fence show a two-story retail space is planned, and not a garage. The new space is expected to be com-

pleted by next year.

The garage collapse in February last year destroyed more than a dozen cars. Many drivers who depended on the lot could not retrieve their damage vehicles for months. The building’s owner, Fordec Realty Corp., was hit with a \$4,000 fine following the collapse.

A company representative for the company did not return a call seeking comment. A representative for Valentino Pompeo Architect, P.C., the architect that drafted plans for the retail space, did not return a call seeking comment.

*Miriam Quinones contributed to this report.*

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# Bronx Gang Squad Identifies 12 Gangs Within 52nd Precinct

By DAVID CRUZ

When it comes to tracking gang activity, the Bronx Gang Squad is on it. All 22 members. It's a small number, with two detectives per precinct, but it's keeping them busy. Within the northwest Bronx 52nd Precinct, roughly a dozen gangs have been identified. And their makeup varies.

"You have Hispanic gangs ranging from the Latin Kings to the Trinitarios, who are Dominican. We used to have DDPS; they seem to have fallen out of favor with the Dominican gangs. You also have some Mexican gangs," said gang squad detective James Shanahan. Shanahan appeared at the latest 52nd Precinct Council meeting on Sept. 27. "You also have the Crips and the Bloods," he said.

Locally, Shanahan pointed out small neighborhood gangs they identified in Tracey Towers and Gates Place. He also named the St. James Boys who operate in Fordham's St. James Park.

"There's another gang called the Wild Card Crips; and you also have a gang over on 194[th Street] over on Valentine Avenue and Bainbridge Av-



Photo by David Cruz

**BRONX GANG SQUAD DET.** James Shanahan speaks at the 52nd Precinct Community Council meeting on Sept. 27.

enue called the 194 Crew," said Shanahan. "Further up, on Valentine Avenue...you have a gang called the 700, which is a Trinitarios gang."

Shanahan also said there's gang activity at 183rd Street and Davidson Avenue, the birthplace of the Bloods.

The squad is divided between the investigative/major case unit and street level enforcement teams that gather intelligence on gang activity. There's also a gang response team that assists when gang-related shootings occur. These days, gangs have drifted

to more white collar crimes such as financial crimes that steal credit card and social security numbers.

Gang activity has been on the public's mind lately following the gang-related killing of Lesandro "Junior" Guzman-Feliz. Members of a Trinitarios subset were charged with murder and other charges related to Junior's death.

The Police Department places New Yorkers with suspected ties to gang activity on an internal database that has drawn ire from critics such as the Legal Aid Society of New York City. Shanahan disputed media reports that one is simply placed on the list without any vetting.

"To get into the gang database in New York City we have to follow elite criteria set up by the New York City Police Department's Legal Division. And I think there's one detective one time who said it's almost easier to get into Harvard than it is to get into the gang database," said Shanahan.

Shanahan recommended anyone with information on gang activity be asked to call the nearest precinct.

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# Local Woman Acts After Norwood Man Suffers Seizure

By DAVID GREENE

A nursing assistant enjoying the “Weekend Walks” festival in Norwood on Sept. 29 with her two young children—put her medical skills to work after a volunteer suffered a seizure.

The victim, later identified as long-time Norwood resident Allen Peisel, 49, collapsed in the closed-down roadway of East 204th Street and Decatur Avenue in front of Star Furniture, sometime before 3 p.m.

Maria Colon, a nursing assistant at Saint Patrick’s Nursing Home on Van Cortlandt Park South, was with her two kids when she saw Peisel falling down and convulsing. Colon stretched Peisel out to maintain blood flow and tilted his head back to ensure Peisel was breathing properly.

The scene of children playing and having fun at the festival noticeably contrasted with police officers surrounding Peisel, who remained on the ground with FDNY members applying a neck brace on him. One young child told the *Norwood News*, “I feel bad for the man. He fell backwards.”

A third police vehicle and FDNY’s Engine 78 soon arrived, but no ambu-



Photo by David Greene

**ALLEN PEISEL LAYS** down after suffering a seizure as FDNY members surround him.

lance arrived to transport Peisel until 3:15 p.m. The FDNY maintains that the initial call for Peisel was made

at 2:52 p.m. and they claim an ambulance arrived at 2:57 p.m., after five minutes, though no bus was present at

the scene then. FDNY added that Peisel was transported to St. Barnabas Hospital at 3:19 p.m. and arrived at 3:30 p.m. The FDNY spokesperson noted, “No delays.”

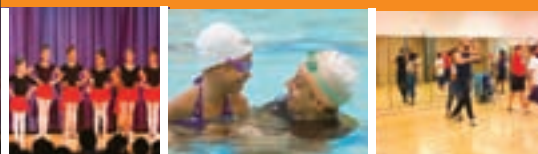
Colon handed off her patient to paramedics and nearly disappeared into the crowd, but had to stop to fix a loose tire on one of her children’s bikes.

Colon recalled, “I saw him fall down and I just thought he fell, but I noticed he was having a seizure, he was convulsing.”

Colon said Peisel didn’t get to thank her, explaining, “He was still out of it when EMS took him.” She added, “He was alone and he was helping the NYPD. I know that if he had the chance to thank me, he would have.”

Peisel was released from the hospital, and was spotted back on Decatur Avenue on Oct. 2, saying, “I’d like to thank the lady. I actually don’t remember anything. I just woke up in the hospital.”

Peisel said he had hoped Colon would return to the Octoberfest Concert along East 204th Street, on Oct. 6 so he could properly thank her.



## Swim Registration Starts:

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Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks  
Members: \$176 Non-members: \$256;

## Capoeira Registration Starts:

Monday, November 19th for Members  
Wednesday, November 21st for Non-Members  
Classes are 2x week for 8 weeks  
Pricing Starts at \$112 for members

## Mixed Martial Arts Registration Starts:

Monday, November 5th for Members  
Wednesday, November 7th for Non-Members  
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks or 2x weeks for 8 weeks  
Pricing Starts at \$65 for members





# NORWOOD NEWS

## S N A P S H O T S



Photo by Miriam Quinones

**HATTIE JONES SHOWS** off this eye-catching T-shirt she designed at a so-called Creative Corner workshop sponsored by the Office of Senator Jamaal Bailey. The Sept. 20 gathering sought to highlight and cultivate artistic expression in the way of painting, photography, and open mic.



Photo by David Greene

**CHRISTOPHER MASTRONANO, EXECUTIVE** director of Jacob Medical Center, rides in glory alongside his partner as the grand marshal for Bronx Columbus Day Parade on Oct. 7. The second largest parade in the state, the Bronx Columbus Day Parade was held in Morris Park, beginning at the intersection of Morris Park Avenue and White Plains Road.



Photo by David Greene

**AUTUMN WAS SURE** on display on a misty Oct. 6 as the second annual Fall Festival was held at Kossuth Playground. The event was hosted by Friends of Mosholu Parkland (FOMP), with several members pictured. Elizabeth Quaranta (back row, 2nd from left) serves as president FOMP.



Photo by David Greene

**PROTESTERS DISRUPT** A press conference organized by local elected officials on the steps of Bronx Borough Hall that called on the city to stop a proposed jail center from being built in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx. The demonstrators, some representing No New Jails NYC and Take Back the Bronx, held up signs. Coincidentally, protesters were opposing elected officials present, including Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., Assemblyman Michael Blake, and Congressman Jose Serrano, yet their message of no new jails were the same.



Photo by David Greene

**THIS YOUNG BOY** roars with energy as he hangs out by the chalk writing section at the eighth annual Weekend Walk celebration that saw the streets of East 204th Street, between Bainbridge and Decatur avenues, closed to cars and open to the public. A car show was one of the highlights at this year's Weekend Walk sponsored by the city Department of Transportation.



Photo courtesy Montefiore Health System  
**TEN-MONTH-OLD ESli CAUGHT** up with Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) nurse Wilma at the seventh annual NICU reunion at Montefiore Wakefield Hospital. The event took place during Neonatal Intensive Care Awareness Month, which is dedicated to raising awareness about the challenges NICU babies and their families face and honor the providers who care for them. Montefiore providers care for around 400 babies each year at the Wakefield NICU.





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# After Primary, a Wary Alliance

*Establishment Democrats Stand Alongside Shoo-in Progressive Candidates*

By JOSEPH KONIG

In the wake of the Democratic primary victories by progressives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Alessandra Biaggi, the Bronx party establishment has entered into a wary alliance with the forces that helped bring these outside challengers to power.

Assemblywoman Natha-

lia Fernandez, endorsed by every establishment figure from Bronx party boss Marcos Crespo to Governor Andrew Cuomo in her special election run in April, supported Ocasio-Cortez's opponent Joe Crowley in the June congressional primary. On Sept. 12, Fernandez took umbrage when Ocasio-Cortez, while campaigning for

Biaggi, tweeted "The Bronx has almost NO female elected officials." Only 20 percent of city, state, and federal positions in the Bronx are held by women, according to an analysis by the *Norwood News*.

"This comment is disrespectful and discredits the hardworking women who have been advocating for

"Change is something that we are very much used to and wish to be part of. We will not be in opposition to any sort of new group."

- Michael Heller, BFDRC

base that helped elect Ocasio-Cortez and still unsatisfied with the current state of Bronx Democrats.

"We were there, and the streets were there when no other Bronx politicians would touch [Ocasio-Cortez]," Newsome said. "There was the same poverty, the same shootings, the same oppression under Democrats and Republicans. The only way you change this is by electing people like [Ocasio-Cortez]."

Groups like Bronx Progressives, which co-hosted the Oct. 4 event, have taken a different tact than Newsome to bringing about change — supporting candidates like Biaggi and attempting to get their members into Bronx Democratic Party positions — but often have an equally antagonistic relationship with party establishment.

The Ben Franklin Democratic Reform Club (BFDRC) in Riverdale, among the more active clubs championed by the Bronx political establishment, held a meeting on Sept. 26 and invited Biaggi to speak. In the primary, the club endorsed Biaggi's opponent state Sen. Jeff Klein. The BFDRC has a long history of battling the powers-that-be dating back to the '60s, but the club has been intertwined with the Bronx Democratic establishment since the "Rainbow Revolution" against party boss Jose Rivera in 2008. The club also has a close relationship with Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, embedded within Bronx Democratic Party politics. Bronx Democratic Party political director, Daniel Johnson, is a former club president and currently serves as one of three vice presidents.

"It makes no difference if you voted for me or if you voted for my opponent,"

(continued on next page)

progressive change in the Bronx," Fernandez tweeted back. "You need to take time to learn about our community."

Yet, on Oct. 4, Fernandez capitulated to her party's congressional candidate and appeared with Ocasio-Cortez publicly for the first time at a campaign event at the Parkside Center in Fernandez's 80th Assembly District. Fernandez spoke in generalities for a few minutes at the beginning of the event, a forum on criminal justice reform. In an email to the *Norwood News*, Fernandez spoke more specifically on the subject of Ocasio-Cortez.

"In terms of endorsements, I will be supporting my fellow Democratic nominees so that we can maintain unity and move this state forward," Fernandez wrote. "In these trying times, it is important that we stand together as Democrats and represent progressive values. However, I am not able to speak on Ms. Ocasio-Cortez's behalf, but I hope she feels the same way."

President of the Black Lives Matter of Greater NY, Hawk Newsome, was also at the Oct. 4 event and was one of six panelists. If Fernandez is a surrogate for the Bronx Democratic Party establishment, Newsome is representative of the opposite extreme — the activist

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(continued from previous page)

Biaggi told the crowd, many of whom had attended an endorsement meeting earlier in the year where both candidates spoke. "What I'm excited to do is unite everybody and talk to you and to hear... what your concerns are."

The BFDRC leadership had the same message about unity.

"We think she will be an excellent candidate and we are happy to work with her and people who are supporters," club president Michael Heller told the *Norwood News*. "Change is something that we are very much used to and wish to be part of. We will not be in opposition to any sort of new group."

Despite the show of party solidarity, the club meeting still contained some internal bickering over con-

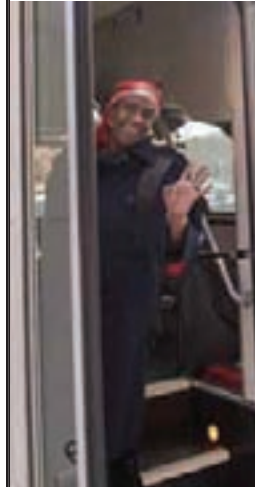
fusion at the Sept. 20 Democratic Party organizational meeting. Eric Dinowitz, 81st Assembly District Leader and the son of Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz, along with Heller promised to run clinics in the future to help inform club members better about party processes and functions.

Both the younger and elder Dinowitz, have a familiar, if antagonistic relationship with progressive activist and Biaggi field director, Michael Beltzer, in particular. The younger Dinowitz claims it's all in good fun.

"It's kind of par for the course," Beltzer said. "When you want to make change, the people who are already there are usually hostile to you."

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# Torres: Scammer Targets Guzman-Feliz Family

By JOSEPH KONIG

The mother of Lesandro “Junior” Guzman-Feliz, Leandra, and City Councilman Ritchie Torres announced that a cease and desist letter from the state has been sent to a known con-artist who posed as a government official in an attempt to defraud Junior’s family.

The subject of the cease and desist letter, Dr. R.A. Gregg, is a 38-year-old Staten Island native with a track record of scams stretching back over a decade. According to Torres, Gregg approached Guzman-Feliz in August and convinced her to sign a letter giving him power to raise funds on behalf of the family in the aftermath of her son’s brutal murder by alleged Trinitarios gang members in June.

“I didn’t get nothing from the people,” Guzman-Feliz said in a press conference at Torres’ District Office on East Fordham Road on Oct. 1. “Everybody talking, talking, talking... but I didn’t get nothing.”

On June 5, 15 days before Junior’s murder, Torres arranged for the City Council’s Office of the General Counsel to send a cease and desist letter to Gregg in June demanding he stop calling his organization “The New York City Coun-



Photo by Joseph Konig

**COUNCILMAN RITCHIE TORRES** (at mic), at a news conference Oct. 1, discusses several cease and desist letters city and state agencies have sent to con artist and scammer Dr. R.A. Gregg.

cil Community Affairs Bureau” and using any City Council-related titles or symbols. Gregg raised money, collected dues, and operated as a community organizer under the title of “Chief” of the

fraudulent “bureau.”

“He had been on my radar,” Torres said. “I saw he had Leandra sign under false pretenses a letter authorizing him to raise funds on behalf of the family [and] I knew this was the latest manifestation of his fraud.”

When Gregg approached Junior’s family in August, he identified himself as the “commissioner” of “The New York State Community Affairs Bureau.” He had Junior’s mother and father, Leandra and Lesandro, sign a letter to a number of fundraisers demanding they stop using Junior’s name in their fundraising. On Aug. 6, Torres penned a letter to Alphonso David, Counsel to the Governor, requesting a cease and desist order be sent to Gregg over his apparent rebranding and fraudulent behavior. According to Torres, Gregg is now under criminal investigation.

“The latest victim of his elaborate scheme is the family of Lesandro “Junior” Guzman-Feliz, who lost his life in a savage act of gang violence more than a month ago,” Torres wrote. “I have enclosed for your review a letter that Mr. Gregg bamboozled the family of Junior Guzman-Feliz into signing under false pretenses.”

On Sept. 10, in a letter to Gregg and his associates, an associate attorney from the Office of General Counsel in the state’s Department of State stated that Gregg was in violation of a number of New York State corporation

laws. Specifically, provisions that require not-for-profit corporations not be named in a way which will trick people “into believing that the corporation is an agency or instrumentality of the... state of New York.”

Gregg has a history of fraudulent behavior, dating back to 2007 when he stole almost \$200,000 by posing as an attorney and orchestrated the sale of a friend’s Staten Island home, according to SILive.com. In 2010, Gregg was sentenced to up to six years in prison for stealing the money, including \$30,000 he used to settle gambling debts at Atlantic City’s Borgata Casino. Gregg’s father was an administrative law judge on Staten Island for years and is the founder of the law firm Gregg & Associates. The younger Gregg’s businesses are registered to the same address as his father’s law firm, according to New York State filings.

“I would never use someone’s criminal record to stigmatize that individual,” Torres said. “My concern is his present conduct, is his pattern of defrauding members of the public.”

The Sept. 10 letter from the state instructs Gregg to rename his business within 30 days. At the time of publication, Gregg’s LinkedIn page still identifies him as the “Commissioner” of “New York State Community Affairs Bureau” and the website for his organization is still online. Gregg did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

## Cheers and Praise for Five-Two Comm. Council Prez



Photo by David Cruz

**BRENDA CALDWELL (C)** holds up a “Key to the 52nd Precinct” for her efforts in leading the precinct’s Community Council where she serves as president. Caldwell was presented with the special key by Five-Two commanding officer, Inspector Peter Fiorillo (l), and precinct Community Affairs Officer Crystal Reveron (r). A round of applause went to a surprised Caldwell.





# HEALTH CHECK

## Why the Flu Shot Matters Every Year

**By ST. BARNABAS HOSPITAL**

It's impossible to know how bad a flu season 2018-19 will be – it was very bad in 2017-18 – or what specific strains of flu will be circulating this year.

What is known is that October officially begins the flu season (which will last through next spring) and that the best protection against getting the flu remains the flu vaccine.

“We strongly encourage our patients to get a flu shot this year – regardless of whether they got a flu shot last year,” said Dr. Judith Berger, division director of infectious diseases at SBH Health System (St. Barnabas Hospital). “The more people who get vaccinated, the more people will be protected from getting and spreading the flu. This is particularly important among those most at risk: the elderly, young children, pregnant women, and those with cer-

tain health conditions that make them more vulnerable to serious flu complications.”

In fact, the Bronx hospital has already treated several cases of the flu.

According to Dr. Berger, only injectable flu vaccines will be given this year (with those dispersed in nasal sprays no longer recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

Flu activity begins to increase in October and November and can last until May. It typically peaks between December and March.

“The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older,” said Dr. Berger. “Some children up to the age of eight years old, who are getting vaccinated for the first time, require two doses of flu vaccine, spaced at least 28 days apart. While children under the age of six months are too

young to receive the vaccine, it is important that parents and older siblings get vaccinated to prevent the spread of the flu to infants who are most vulnerable to serious complications.”

The effectiveness of the vaccine depends in part on the match between the vaccine virus used to produce the vaccine and the strains of flu that will circulate this season. While the vaccine is produced to protect against the flu viruses that research and surveillance indicate are most likely to be common this season, there is no way to predict with certainty.

“Flu viruses not only change from season to season, but can even change within the course of a single season,” said Dr. Berger. “Still, antibodies made in response to a vaccination with one flu virus can sometimes provide protection against different but related viruses. That’s why, even if the vaccine is a less than a perfect match, it is still far more effective in preventing the flu than getting no shot at all.”

*St. Barnabas Hospital is located at 4487 Third Ave. in the Belmont section of the Bronx.*



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## NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

### Bedford Park Photos Wanted

The Bedford Mosholu Community Association is accepting photos of the Bedford Park neighborhood to go with its application to the Historic Districts Council. The application seeks to begin an effort to preserve Bedford Park from further development. Photos can be sent to [bedfordmosholu@verizon.net](mailto:bedfordmosholu@verizon.net).

### Gun Buyback

The NYPD will host a gun buyback program on Oct. 13 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the following drop-site locations: Mitchell Community Center, 210 Alexander Ave., and Holy Spirit Church, 1940 University Ave. Anyone turning in a handgun or assault rifle in working condition will receive a \$200 pre-paid gift card, and a \$25 pre-paid gift card in exchange for rifles, shotguns, and airguns. No questions will be asked.

### Free Tenant Assistance

The Mayor's Tenant Support Unit, which offers free assistance to New Yorkers who may be at risk of displacement or harassment, as well as sharing information on tenants' rights and healthcare, will meet at the following Bronx locations from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Refuge House, 2715 Bainbridge Ave., Oct. 18; Assemblyman Jose Rivera's Office, 1 Fordham Plaza, Oct. 18; Office of State Senator Gustavo Rivera, 2432 Grand Concourse, Oct. 16, 23 and 30; and Office of Assemblyman Victor Pichardo, 2175 Jerome Ave., Oct. 18 and 25. In addition, the Mayor's Get Covered unit meeting will be held at North Central Bronx Hospital, at 3424 Kossuth Ave., on Oct. 13, 14, 20, 27 and 28 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 311.

### 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 [mcmanus638@aol.com](mailto:mcmanus638@aol.com). The walks are made possible through a grant by Councilman Andrew Cohen.

### 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](http://NYC.gov/IDNYC) or call 311.



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# Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

## EDITOR'S PICK

### Free Fall Festival on Jerome

The public is invited to the Jerome Gun Hill BID's 17th annual free Fall Festival, Oct. 13 from noon to 6 p.m. on Jerome Avenue between East Mosholu Parkway North and East Gun Hill Road. The street will be closed to traffic. Visitors can enjoy food, music, games, arts & crafts, face painting, live performances, and a pumpkin patch. For more information, call (718) 324-4946.

## Onstage

Lehman College for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **Tony! Toni! Tone!, Sheila E, and Deniece Williams**, Oct. 13 (\$100/VIP) and **Tito Rojas, Tito Nieves, and Tito Allen**, Oct. 20, performing salsa (\$125/VIP). Tickets for each are \$50 to \$85; each show at 8 p.m. VIP tickets include pre-concert reception at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

Bronx Arts Ensemble, 80 Van Cortlandt Park So., presents **Woodwind Music of Mexico and Russia** featuring Bronx pianist, Oct. 21 at 2 p.m. (\$20; \$30/at door). For more information, call (718) 601-7399.

## Events

A performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by the Public Mobile Unit will take place at Williamsbridge Oval Park Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East, on Oct. 12 at 7 p.m. To RSVP, email [bronxact@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:bronxact@parks.nyc.gov) or call (718) 543-8672.



Photo courtesy Jerome Gun Hill BID

**BE ONE OF** the thousands expected to enjoy themselves Oct. 13 at the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District's annual Fall Festival (see Editor's Pick for more information).

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. Also scheduled are **Ukulele and Slack Key Guitar**, Oct. 13 and 14 from 1 to 4 p.m. featuring Hawaiian music; and **Giant Pumpkin Weekend**, Oct. 20 and 21 at 1 p.m. in the Everett Children's Adventure Garden, featuring monstrous pumpkins from around the country. For more information, call (718) 817-8700.

The Bronx Zoo presents **Boo at the Zoo**, weekends, through Oct. 28. 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). Also scheduled is **Brew at the Zoo**, beer and wine festival for over age 21 (no children

allowed), Oct. 19 from 6 to 11 p.m. Events include beer tasting, food options, mentalism shows, a spooky haunted trail, live music, dancing, DJs, and a game room featuring old school favorites. Guests are encouraged to come in costume for a costume contest. For more information, ticket purchases, and a full schedule of events, visit [www.BronxZoo.com/Brew](http://www.BronxZoo.com/Brew).

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.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Papermaking With Lavender, to make paper from scratch, Oct. 13 and 14; and Wormy, Squirmy Decomposers Parade, to listen to storyteller, then make an ecosystem of insects and decomposers on a tall hat, topped with a flower, followed by a parade, Oct. 20 and 21, both in the WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled are **Concert**: featuring Jolie Holland singing jazz, blues, soul, and rock and roll, Oct. 14 at 2 p.m. in the WH House (\$28/ includes grounds admission; WH members 10% discount; \$12/ages 8 to 18; info: ext. 251); **The Boneyard**, to see what's left after an animal carcass decomposes including skeleton, Oct. 20 and 21 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the grounds; and **Culture Culture: A Live Bird Presentation at 2 p.m.**, to observe birds of prey, Oct. 20 in the Ecology Building and Oct. 21 in the WH House. 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 [pofeldtww@gmail.com](mailto:pofeldtww@gmail.com).

## Exhibits

The Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street), presents **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**, through April 7, 2019. For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

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.

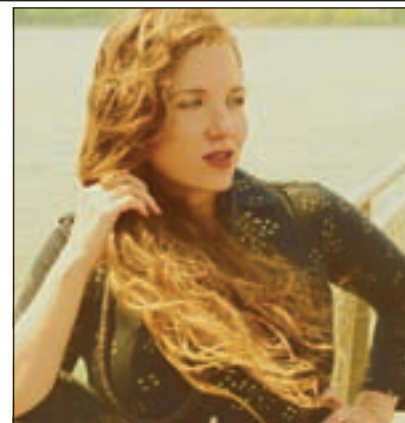


Photo courtesy Shervin Lainez/Wave Hill  
**SINGER JOLIE HOLLAND** performs a variety of genres at Wave Hill on Oct. 14 (see Events for details).

## Library Events

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for children: **Storytime/Arts & Crafts at 4 p.m.**: (ages 3 to 5; preregistration required), Oct. 11 and 18; **Arts & Crafts at 3:30 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12; preregistration required), hands on projects, Oct. 14 and 21. Teens/young adults can enjoy **Maker Mondays at 4 p.m.**: crafts: Oct. 15 - Pumpkin Craft, and Oct. 29 - Cat Craft; and **film**: "Stardust," Oct. 24 at 4 p.m. Adults can attend **films at 2:30 p.m.**: "The Monuments Men," Oct. 13 and "West Side Story," Oct. 20; and **Computer Basics**: Oct. 16 at 2 p.m. 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 at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), crafts, Oct. 12 and 19; **Family Storytime at 3:30 p.m.**: (ages 3 to 5), stories and crafts, Oct. 11, 15, 18, 22 and 25; **STEM: Kids' Science**: (ages 5 to 12), "reactions," Oct. 16 at 3 p.m.; and **Toddler Storytime at 11 a.m.**: (18 to 36 months), stories, songs, fingerplays and crafts, Oct. 18 and 25. Teens/young adults can enjoy **films at 2 p.m.**: "Ready Player One," Oct. 12, and "Rampage," Oct. 26; and **Birds of Prey**: to meet hawks, owls, falcons or others, Oct. 18 at 3:30 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 at noon**: Oct. 18 and 25. 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. 15 for the next publication date of Oct. 25.

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# Katz: NCBH Here to Stay

(continued from page 1)

public hospitals system. She previously served as NCBH's deputy executive director and chief operating officer for a year. NCBH has a staff of 1,200 physicians and non-clinical staff.

"The clinicians made it very clear to him when [Katz] came [they were concerned about the rumors]," Contreras said. "In terms of the confidence they have now and the morale, you can see the difference."

Katz would only consider closing any of the 11 hospitals that fall in the NYC Health + Hospitals network, if it dipped below 100 patients a day or stopped meeting the needs of their communities. According to Katz, the smallest public hospital in the city, Metropolitan Hospital on the Upper East Side of Manhattan has at least 160 patients "on most days." Katz said there will be no hospital closures or de-

creases in services anytime soon.

"I didn't really understand the dynamic and a group of providers told me that NCBH has been threatened with closure since it opened," Katz said at the roundtable discussion. "It's a community venue. We're absolutely not closing it."

While discussions about expanded services are still in the preliminary stages, Contreras hinted at some areas the hospital is looking at.

"Ambulatory services is definitely one of the areas we want to expand here at North Central in collaboration also with Jacobi [Medical Center]," Contreras said. "We're really not looking to grow the inpatient; we're looking to grow the outpatient which is the way the industry is moving towards."

Mayor Bill de Blasio nominated Katz last September after he turned Los Angeles De-

partment of Health Services' \$250 million budget deficit into a \$650 million surplus between 2011 and 2017. Katz began leading the New York city system on Jan. 8. Katz is attempting to replicate his efforts in Los Angeles, reducing administrative costs and implementing proper billing practices to the tune of \$150 million in deficit reduction since he first took office.

"In order for us to be able to take care of people who don't have insurance, I also need to take care of people who do have insurance," Katz said. According to Katz, the NYC Health + Hospitals system was not charging insured patients before he showed up, giving private insurance companies a "break" to the detriment of the department's finances.

During the discussion, Katz discussed topics ranging from the role NYC Health + Hospitals plays in combating

the opioid crisis, the department's lawsuit against United Healthcare over \$40 million in unpaid claims, and the relationship between public hospitals and undocumented immigrants.

"We, as [NYC] Health and Hospitals are prepared to do anything within our power to protect the rights of immigrants," Katz said. He added that Immigration and Customs Enforcement have not entered New York City public hospitals at this point. "I would certainly, personally be prepared to burn records before I give anybody up."

Katz lamented the failures of the system to adequately provide for mothers, specifically women of color. A New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene study found black women were 12 times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related causes, up from the previous four-year period when women

of color were seven times more likely to die.

"We should all feel bad as New Yorkers that the rates of maternal morbidity and mortality, especially in black and brown mothers, is as high as it is," Katz said. "Health and Hospitals is really working on moving the trust of the people in the communities, to get women involved in pre-natal care."

This year, the city announced \$12.8 million will be spent over three years on data collection, implicit bias training, and a public awareness campaign in regard to maternal and infant mortality.

Prior to his position in Los Angeles, Katz served as the director for the San Francisco Department of Health for 13 years. He is a graduate of Yale College and Harvard Medical School. A practicing physician, Katz said he still sees patients at Gouverneur, an elder care facility on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

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