



NORWOOD NEWS

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
NORWOOD NEWS 30TH ANNIVERSARY | PG. 4



SEE PICTURES:
JGHBID FALL FESTIVAL FESTIVITIES | PG. 14

TENANTS: REPAIRS NOW AT NEW STAGG BLDGS.

Opened in 2016, Webster Avenue buildings show signs of decay



Photo by David Cruz

ZXAVIER SIMPSON STANDS across from The Bedford Manor at 2985 Webster Ave., where quality of life, he says, has dropped.

**By JOSEPH KONIG and
DAVID CRUZ**

Zxavier Simpson moved from Harlem in 2016 into 2985 Webster Ave., one of two buildings in a complex dubbed “Bedford Park Manor.” Less than two years later, he’s fed up with the flooding, broken elevators, loose wires, and squatters that plague his building. Simpson wants more effort from his landlords, but

he says they have been nonresponsive and unhelpful.

“No one ever answers the calls,” Simpson said. “The maintenance [workers] come in and take the garbage out. They don’t mop. They don’t clean... It’s like we’re just here and they’re just collecting money.”

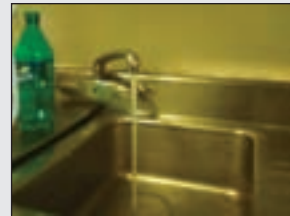
Shoddy living conditions and uncommunicative landlords is hardly abnormal for

some Bronx apartment buildings, dilapidated by neglect and time. But Bedford Park Manor opened just three years ago and is run by The Stagg Group, an omnipresent construction and realty firm with over 150 properties in the Bronx alone. The Bedford Park Manor properties were built with partial funding from the state’s Division of Housing and Community

Renewal.

Community stakeholders have their own concerns with The Stagg Group, who have become increasingly active in Bedford Park and Norwood. The firm is set to open “Norwood Gardens” on East 203rd Street and Webster Avenue.

When Mark Stagg, CEO of the Stagg Group, called
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Bronx Buildings | pg 5**



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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

By DAVID CRUZ

Blake Announces PA Run

Assemblyman Michael Blake, who, along with representing the 79th Assembly District while pushing a national Democratic agenda as vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee, is throwing his hat into the race for New York City Public Advocate.

The Public Advocate's seat will officially be up for grabs come November since the current advocate, Letitia James, won the Democratic nomination for state attorney general. With an overwhelmingly Democratic state, James's shot at winning the AG seat is all but secured. Should Blake win the advocate seat, it will open the door for his Assembly seat. The district encompasses Tremont, West Farms, Claremont, Melrose, and Concourse Village.

Blake has represented the district since 2015, winning the seat left vacant by Eric Stevenson, who was hit with federal bribery charges in 2014.

Bronx BP Slams

Heading into the November General Election are two questions over whether community boards should be overhauled, and you can count Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. in using his office to convince voters to vote "no" on the matter.

Diaz, along with Gale Brewer and James Oddo, his respective counterparts in Queens and Staten Island, have formed a committee to oppose questions of term limits on and assistance to community boards. The proposed questions are labeled Proposal #2 and Proposal #3 on the Nov. 6 ballot. The latter asks whether community board members should only serve eight years on a board, then taking a one-year break before reapplying. The current setup is that members can serve for life depending on whether they're appointed or reappointed. The proposal was added by

the Charter Revision Commission.

Diaz is equally opposed to Proposal #2, which would strip a borough president's powers to offer assistance to boards and give them instead to a "Civic Engagement Commission," comprised of members largely appointed by the mayor.

In a statement, Diaz said the measures, if passed, could "gut the independence of our community boards, rob them of their institutional knowledge and give developers the upper hand in the land use process."

Of the 59 community boards in the city, 12 are in the Bronx. Norwood is represented by Community Board 7. Members are comprised of non-paid volunteers and a paid district manager who serves at the pleasure of the board.

NYCHA Heating Improvements

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is assuring tenants they can expect a toastier winter season in their apartments.

The public housing authority announced that mobile boilers and extra staff to handle heating issues have been added to manage extreme cold spells. The news comes amid last year's reportedly dismal response by NYCHA to handle heat and hot water issues happening across the authority's network of buildings.

Mayor Bill de Blasio, at a news conference on Oct. 18, said that while NYCHA will provide services to everyone, it aims to "help 87,000 more residents who have seen some of the most acute heating problems" previously.

"So I want you to think about it this way – the plan is system-wide but with a special focus on the buildings housing 87,000 people that are some of the ones that've had the worst problems that we think we can come up with very immediate improvements for," said de Blasio.

NYCHA has also installed better windows to better insulate New Yorkers this winter.

The Path to Citizenship



Photo by Miriam Quinones

VOLUNTEERS WITH THE Citizenship Project help foreign-born Bronx residents (backs turned) properly fill out their federal applications for U.S. citizenship status. The group was at Tracey Towers on Oct. 13 at the event sponsored by Councilman Andrew Cohen.

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: Veterans Affairs Committee on Oct. 25; Traffic & Transportation Committee on Nov. 1; and Education, Youth & Libraries Committee on Nov. 7. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

The **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meets Nov. 7 at 8 p.m. at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So., Apt. B1 (lobby floor). For more information, email bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets Oct. 25 from 7 to 9 p.m. at The Plaza Rehab & Nursing Center, 100 W. Kingsbridge Rd. For more information, call the precinct's Community Affairs Unit at (718) 220-5824.

Opinion

Parking Garages Are the Solution, Especially for the North Bronx

By DAVID CRUZ

Two weeks ago, as I wrapped up production of the last edition, an argument seemed to erupt outside, and no one was backing down.

A parking spot had opened up on Putnam Place by Reservoir Oval East, and it was the perfect time to take that spot. A man with a large pickup truck perfect for the spot had patiently waited for the spot to open up and sought to take it.

In a series of unfortunate events, largely due to my having to move my colleague's car (which was blocking my own) out of the tiny office lot (located in that area) before pulling my car out (I call it musical cars), I ask the man to hold the available spot temporarily so that I can double park my colleague's car outside the office lot, then move my car out of the lot and temporarily into the empty parking space held by the waiting man. The man was okay with it, and began standing at the spot. After driving my colleague's car out, I return to my car, still in the lot, intending to park it in said spot, when a driver, a woman with a child in the back seat, sees the spot and logically seizes on the chance to take it.

The man stands in front of the spot, and defiantly stands there as the other driver begins to parallel park. Backing up her car, the driver has no qualms about

reversing, almost to the point where she's ready to collide with the man. The woman begins to calmly argue with the man standing in the spot. The man says he's not moving while the driver says she's going to keep backing it up. I can sense a full on argument ready to happen.

I then step in and plead with the driver, telling her the man was simply holding the spot for a brief moment. Already exasperated in having spent a half hour looking for parking, she says no.

"Parking is tough around here," she says.

Realizing that she wasn't giving up and noticing the line of cars already forming as the argument ensues, the man and I tell her it's fine.

The issue clearly demonstrated the need for more parking in the community. And I'm talking about affordable parking, not a price-gouging facility with rates that go beyond \$350.

The city, under Mayor Bill de Blasio, simply has no sympathy for drivers. Mr. de Blasio perfectly captured his sentiment about public parking garages at a May 27, 2017 news conference in the Bronx: "We could be building parking garages all day long. That's not the solution to the problem. The solution to the problem is to make more mass transit available, which we're doing – the ferry service, the select bus service, the light rail."

That's true. But are you telling me someone from Norwood who works out in New Jersey or Westchester County is going to take public transportation to work when a car suffices?

Bronx residents are getting squeezed by parking and petty fights are the result of that. This above example happens nearly every day, and here's hoping it doesn't take a bad turn.

David Cruz is the editor of the Norwood News.



Letters To The Editor

Reform the Justice System

Concerning the "Raise the Age" Inquiring Photographer (*Norwood News* issue dated Oct. 11-24, 2018), I don't see why anybody should be in jail for marijuana. It should be legalized. If this is done, those arrested for underage smoking should not be sent to Rikers Island just as they should not be sent there for underage drinking.

Bail should be eliminated. If there's no reason to fear a person will be a danger to the public, release him or her pending trial. In cases where there is good reason to fear for the public's safety, hold the person without bail. The defendant's ability to pay bail should not determine whether he or she stays incarcerated.

Young people 16 and 17 years old

who are seriously violent should not be placed in places like Horizon to prey on nonviolent offenders. Correction officers should not be transferred there with them, where they are not permitted to use the same tactics to control violence as in Rikers. Also, assigning them out of title is a violation of their union contract.

When I was called last December for jury duty and not selected, the case involved a defendant accused of illegal gun possession three years earlier. There's no reason he should have had to wait three years to be tried.

As for closing Rikers, moving the same problems to other jails in the five boroughs will solve nothing.

Richard Warren
Van Cortlandt Village

Have an Opinion On What You've Read in Our Paper?

The Norwood News loves, welcomes and encourages letters to the editor.



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Editor-in-Chief
Norwood News

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Letters should be 400 words max, and include writer's name. Anonymous letters will not be published, but names will be withheld upon reasonable request.

INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers their thoughts and memories of the *Norwood News*, which is celebrating 30 years of publication.



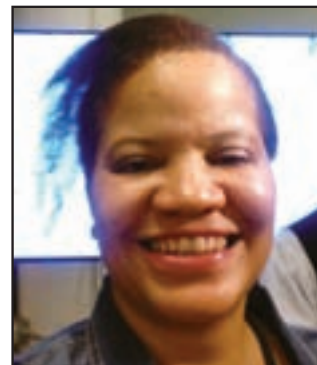
Let me think about this. I've been following the *Norwood News* since...the 1990s? I like the fact that the *Norwood News* is hyper local and accessible. You really get down to what is going on in the community. Many times, I'll find out things that have happened or will happen that are of interest to me. There aren't many good resources for news in the Bronx, especially the Northwest Bronx.
Shannon Lee Gilstad
Bedford Park



I've been a long-time reader; I live right off of Bedford Park Boulevard. I think it's very informative about the area and I recommend it to friends and I read it regularly. I would like to see it distributed in more places to expose more people in the area to it. I enjoy the front-page stories, the police news and information on community meetings and election stuff. It's important.
George Forbes
Bedford Park



I've only been reading the paper for about a year now. It's good. I like to read about local crime and community events and things. It can be very useful in research and I really enjoy it.
Raven Chesnut
Norwood



As an educator and STEM teacher's advocate, education stories are what resonates with me most. Stories of people who are willing to give themselves to help the children of the community interest me. A story on Steven Ritz underscored how egos are a big reason why our education system is not working for our children. I was so compelled by his story, I wrote to the paper's opinion page. I hope to see new stories from our education landscape. I am looking forward to the *Norwood News*' continued success and hearing what my neighbors are up to and how we can help each other.
Lorita Watson
Norwood



I worked at the *Norwood News* when Jordan Moss was the editor. He was inspiring, as was publisher Dart Westphal. Occasionally, I wrote articles and reviews about movies that took place in the Bronx. When school wasn't in session, I helped with layout and editing. This was when we were still pasting out articles on boards. While the media has changed formats, the purpose of studying our neighborhood and the people to see what solutions it needs remains important in community journalism. I hope that pounding the pavement-oriented and understanding of our environment continues at the *Norwood News*.
Anne Leighton
Bedford Park



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DEP Backtracks Following Outrage Over Tap Water Taste

BY JOSEPH KONIG

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) conceded that the agency could have done more in communicating with the public but insisted that there were no health risks in consuming city tap water that came from an alternate source.

"No question it wasn't quality and up-to-snuff as what we usually deliver," Michael Deloach, DEP's deputy commissioner for public affairs and communications, said of the "metallic"-tasting water Bronx residents reported drinking over the last few weeks. "Moving forward when we do have a big shift from one reservoir to another, we'll do a better job of alerting the public and elected officials."

Deloach spoke at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Croton Facility Monitoring Committee on Oct. 16. "I don't think we thought it would be as extreme as it ended up being or in people's minds considered it being," Deloach said.

The DEP temporarily shut down the water flow from the Croton watershed reservoirs the day before Deloach's comments after increasing it from normal levels earlier this month following



Photo by Jonathan Custodio

THE WATER AT this apartment in Fordham Hill Cooperative is back to normal.

renovations on another water source.

Hundreds of New Yorkers called 311 this October to complain of a "bitter" or "metallic" taste in the tap water. Between Oct. 1 and Oct. 13, 107 water quality complaints originated from the Bronx, compared to 20 the entirety of September and 19 in August. In mid-October, calls from the Bronx about water

quality dropped into the single digits.

"Although the water remains safe, over the weekend we decreased the percentage of Croton water going into the distribution system as we refine the mix of water from east and west of the Hudson River," DEP spokesperson Ted Timbers told the *Norwood News*.

Renovations of the 113-year-old

Catskill Aqueduct began this month, forcing the DEP to rely more on the Croton watershed in Westchester County. New Yorkers have been drinking Croton water for 150 years, according to the DEP. The renovation on the Catskill Aqueduct will take 10 weeks and cost \$156 million.

(continued on page 7)

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

DEP Backtracks Following Outrage

(continued from page 5)

"The reason for increasing the percentage of Croton water is that we will be shutting down one of the two large Aqueducts that bring water from our west of Hudson Catskill reservoirs down to the City," Timbers said. "The geology of those two areas are different, which means the water from different reservoirs can have different tastes."

New York City gets its water from upstate reservoirs that flow through treatment facilities like the one in Van Cortlandt Park, before reaching residential and commercial faucets.

Both Assemblyman Jose Rivera and Councilman Fernando Cabrera, who represent parts of Bedford Park and live in the Fordham Hill Oval Co-Op, one of the buildings where the water tasted funny, called for intervention and improved transparency.

"They should've communicated," Cabrera told the *Norwood News*. "You shouldn't have hundreds of people calling in frantic about it and concerned about the water they drink."

Cabrera spoke with DEP officials the morning of Oct. 16, but was still frustrated with an unclear plan going forward and the overall lack of commu-

nication, according to his office. Even if decisions regarding the city's water supply are made daily, a disruption as significant as this one should include some kind of heads up to the neighborhoods affected, Cabrera's chief of staff, Greg Faulkner, argued.

"It was a real disrespect to the community," Faulkner said. "They should get on the phone and talk with elected officials in the community and tell us the plan."

Rivera called on the state government to intervene because he says he does not trust Mayor Bill de Blasio to properly handle the situation.

"As the current NYCHA lead poisoning crisis attests to, we cannot rely on the current mayoral administration to provide us with factual information, nor the proper oversight needed to remedy this crisis," Rivera said in a statement. "I am calling on Governor Andrew Cuomo to intervene in this matter and... ensure that New York City's water supply system is healthy and unharmed."

Editor's Note: Up-to-date information on water distribution and point of origin in New York City can be found at www.nyc.gov/dep.



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Norwood Deli Owner Says Store Will Be More Vigilant Following Robbery

By JONATHAN CUSTODIO and
CHRISTY RAE AMMONS

The owner of a Norwood deli held up in an armed robbery is now taking extra measures to stay safe. Chris Lopez runs the store and told the *Norwood News* he and his employees will be “more careful.”

“Just stand point in case something like that happens again,” he said, adding the store will be “closing earlier, temporarily until [the suspects] get caught. Then we’ll return hours to normal.” Prior to the robbery, the deli, in business for three years, was open 24 hours.

The robbery took place in the early hours of Oct. 14 when three men wearing masks stormed into the store and demanded money from the cash registers, according to police. One of the men pointed his handgun at an employee at the register while another suspect tied up the other two shift employees. The third robber approached the register and filled a backpack with \$1,100. After spending approximately three minutes inside, the suspect fled in a dark-colored, four-door sedan.

Legend Deli falls within the bor-



Photo by Christy Rae Ammons

ONE LEGEND DELI at 275 E. Gun Hill Rd. in Norwood was robbed of \$1,100.

ders of the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District, which provides consultation and service assistance to over 200 businesses. El Jalapeno Food Market just a block up was burglarized during the summer.

Describing the suspects as Hispanic men in dark clothing, authorities are currently investigat-

ing whether the incident is linked to a string of store armed robberies in Manhattan. Lopez has had his other store in Manhattan recently robbed, telling the *Norwood News* he thinks these could be the same thieves as before.

Compared to last year at this time, robberies have risen slightly by 0.8 percent, tallying at 254.

Editor’s Note: A video of the robbery can be found at www.norwood-news.org. Anyone with information on the robberies and the three individuals is asked to call the NYPD’s CrimeStoppers Hotline at (800) 577-TIPS(8477). Calls will be kept confidential.



Image courtesy NYPD

THE THIEVES WERE caught on video pointing their gun at a store employee.

Swim Registration Starts:
Monday, October 15th for Members
Wednesday, October 17th for Non-Members
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
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Pricing Starts at \$112 for members

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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

Yoga Registration is Open Year Round:
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Non-members: \$88; Members: FREE

Alvin Ailey Registration Starts:
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Wednesday, January 9th for Non-Members
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Members: \$176 Non-members: \$256;

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Cohen Pledges \$5M For Frisch Field Fix

By **CHRISTY RAE AMMONS**

For the last 20 years, Frisch Field in Bedford Park has not been fully maintained. The baseball diamond, backstop, dugouts, and bleachers still stand, but the field has draining issues. Baseball is the only sport the field accommodates for now.

But Councilman Andrew Cohen, who represents a large portion of Bedford Park, looks to pump \$5 million towards revamping the field.

A year ago, Cohen approached the city Parks Department to tell them that he, along with community leaders, “think that Frisch Field is severely underutilized.”

The two original plans the Parks Department developed were for either an \$8 million renovation, or a \$12 million renovation. These two plans would replace the current bleachers and add lighting to the field, but that’s not what the community wants. Cohen thought these costs to be exorbitant for such a small field, and thinks less money

could be used more wisely.

Cohen explained, “We want a field that drains properly, that’s usable for multipurpose.” Cohen told the Parks Department that if they come up with a \$5 million plan, he will somehow find the money, possibly by partnering with another local lawmaker.

Two decades ago, Fernando Ferrer, Bronx Borough President at the time, allocated \$234,000 for renovations.

The field, located on Webster Avenue near Mosholu Parkway South, is named after Giants baseball player and Fordham University student, Frank “The Fordham Flash” Frisch. Little League teams, who have permits, sometimes play ball on the field, but other than that, it is often unoccupied.

In the past, community groups have been upset by the field’s lack of purpose. In May of 2018, Mosholu Preservation Corporation held a wellness fair at the park, advocating to keep the space and use it for the community.



Photo by Joseph Konig

U.S. SENATE MINORITY LEADER Chuck Schumer (at mic) joins Bronx elected officials in urging CSX Corp. to get back to the table in talks with the city.

Flanked by Bronx Electeds, Schumer Rails Against CSX Land Deal Talks

By **JOSEPH KONIG**

U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and a slew of Bronx lawmakers slammed rail transportation giant CSX for walking away from a deal to sell unused land in Kingsbridge to the city so it can be converted into a greenway and bike path.

“We cannot allow this project to be delayed just because CSX wants to squeeze a few more pennies out of the community,” Schumer said at a news conference Oct. 17 held at the West 238th Street overpass near Broadway. “We are telling them, asking them to come back to the table or else.”

What “or else” meant was unclear and none of the Bronx politicians seemed to be able to identify what sort of penalty CSX would face for refusing to negotiate. A powerful Senator, Schumer indicated he could cause trouble for the rail company (the federal government regulates railroads) and Congressman Adriano Espaillat—whose district falls within the CSX property in question—said he hoped to serve on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee starting next year, but neither official would be able to do much unless Democrats win majorities in Congress next month.

“For now, CSX should exit out,” Espaillat said. “Exit out of the way and allow this community to have what they want.”

The land runs parallel to Tibbetts Brook and was the site of tracks for the commuter train “Putnam Line” that was shut down in 1958. The city hopes to turn it into a greenway and bike trail that would

connect similar parks in Manhattan and Westchester County.

“What have they been doing with this beautiful and valuable land? Nada. Nothing,” Schumer said, his transition into Spanish earning him groans and eyerolls from the Spanish-speaking elected officials in attendance. “We brought CSX and the city to the negotiating table. Everyone agreed to have an independent appraiser. The city... was willing to buy the land.”

Councilman Andrew Cohen, whose district covers the proposed greenway, brought the issue to Schumer’s attention last year after nearly a decade of stops and starts. Schumer said the city brought CSX to the negotiating table and offered to buy the land. The price of the land would be determined by an independent appraiser. Although the elected officials said the price was a “fair amount,” they were not at liberty to name either the appraiser or the price.

“CSX gave their word,” Cohen said. “Their conduct is really, really shameful... We’re not asking them to give it, though they should give it. The city is willing to pay.”

Cohen credited two groups, Friends of Van Cortlandt Park and the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality, for bringing the inactive land to his attention. Cohen also said if the city purchased the land, Tibbetts Brook could be redirected into the Harlem River, which would help reduce sewer overflow and flooding on Broadway. Currently, the brook flows into the Bronx sewer system.

(continued on page 15)



Photo courtesy New York City Parks Department

FRISCH FIELD (PICTURED) at the corner of Webster Avenue near East Mosholu Parkway South, hasn’t undergone renovations for 20 years.

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BRONX CONNECTIONS: THE GANG IMPACT

PART 1 of 5

The Norwood News, WFUV radio, and BronxNet Television have partnered to bring you a five-part series on gangs in the Bronx and their implications to their communities.

Credible Messengers to Bring Cautionary Tales of Gang Life to Belmont

By ELIOT SCHIAPARELLI of



This past summer, Lesandro “Junior” Guzman-Feliz was brutally murdered by gang members affiliated with the Trinitarios in a case of mistaken identity in Belmont, drawing massive media attention and spurring the hashtag #JusticeforJunior.

Freddy “June” Charles Jr., a so-called “credible messenger” at the Morrisania-based “Release the Grip” (RTG), said no one should die like that. When news of Junior’s murder broke, he was at the RTG office.

“That’s not just a murder, that’s gonna be a worldwide tragedy,” Charles said. He remembered telling his coworkers, “You hear about murders all the time, but you rarely see someone get killed in that manner on the street.”

Lesandro’s brutal death was captured on surveillance video.

When the RTG team heard, they all came to one question: *How can we avoid this?*

The answer could come in the near future as RTG is slated to open an office in Belmont, thanks to \$1 million in funding from Councilman Ritchie Torres, who represents Belmont.

Only a partnership with the community is our best hope for tackling gang violence. It’s all hands on deck,” Torres said. “We have to ensure that we’re operating as a cohesive whole in the struggle to tackle gang violence.”

The Morrisania office is an embedded institution the nonprofit hopes to replicate in Belmont. Charles works alongside Troy Miller, who are guided by the principle that credibility is key. Their role as a “credible messenger” in the South Bronx community is a term that suits them better.

Miller and Charles serve as outreach workers for RTG, a program under BronxConnect’s Cure Violence initiative. Their role is a step beyond a so-called violence interrupter, which involves former gang members



Image courtesy BronxNet Television

TROY MILLER (FRONT L) and Freddy “June” Charles Jr., both with RTG, walk the streets of Morrisania, spreading an anti-gang message.

canvassing a neighborhood to share their past with active gang members to prevent violence and gang activity.

Charles has lived in Morrisania his entire life, and his apartment is just two blocks from his outreach office. He would not give specifics about participants or different gangs in the community for fear of damaging his reputation.

“Credibility is everything,” Charles said. “If the community doesn’t trust you or feel a certain way about you, this program would never work.”

In 2010, Miller lost his 25-year-old brother to a gang murder. These days, Miller shares this experience with young people.

“The first thing I want them to do is think about your life because right now life expectancy for these kids is under 25,” Miller said referring to the young adults. “That’s sad because when we were growing up they said we would never live to see past 20 and I’m 41.”

As outreach workers, Miller and Charles each have caseloads of 10 to 15 young adults. They help them get GEDs, birth certificates, and identification cards. They also provide emotional support and sometimes act as job placement counselors. “It’s not

just what we do for them, but it’s what you do for yourself,” said Miller. “I believe in you, if you believe in you.”

Along with their caseloads, Charles and Miller often canvass the neighborhood wearing BronxConnect hoodies and RTG flat-bill hats. Everywhere they go, cars honk, people wave, and kids give them high fives.

“I think the kids just need to know that someone is there for them. At two or three in the morning if they get arrested, they can call me and I’ll call their lawyers and their lawyers are gonna check on them.” Charles said.

Miller noted that he was not always an upstanding community member. “I was one of the ones growing up causing havoc and destruction in the neighborhood, and to give back and help the community rebuild, and give everyone a better way of thinking is touching.”

A John Jay College study found areas with Cure Violence initiatives like RTG in New York saw gun violence fall up to 50 percent.

“This was a hard area because there was so much going on,” Miller said. “It went from worse to okay and now it’s getting there, but it doesn’t just stop with us. It takes the community as a whole, not just RTG.”

The RTG office provides a safe space for kids after school.

On Oct. 10, a shooting occurred at a playground one block from the office. Many of the kids who might have been there were safely inside playing games, drawing and doing homework.

Aarian Punter, program manager of RTG, is proud of the long stretches her area has gone without shootings. There’s even a white board that tracks “days without a shooting” in the office. Before the playground shooting, RTG went 146 days without a shooting, and 200 days before that.

“The trend is good because it was probably every day. It was probably every weekend,” said Punter. “So, the presence of credible messengers in communities like these really make a difference.”

The behavior of young people [changes] when they see someone who can tell them, ‘Listen I’ve been in your shoes,’ and they see the result of them changing their life. It does change their life because they’re not born criminals.”

RTG also tries to bring the community together. Recently, the group held a “Bikes Up, Guns Down” block party, the first one on that particular block since 1969. They’re also planning a Halloween celebration, and a Blue Christmas dinner for families who have lost loved ones to gun violence.

Bringing the community together and broadening horizons is important to Charles and Miller. “A lot of kids can’t leave a particular block that they live on,” Charles said. “It’s tragic the way the kids are not interacting with each other on a good note, instead of playing basketball games and stuff like when I was growing up, or football games. It’s the gangs, and the gangs are separating people, and isolating people from certain areas.”

Cohen and Norwood Group Scour Streets for Potential Parking Spots

BY CHRISTY RAE AMMONS

Jose Diaz, the leader of a local informal organization, Reservoir Place Residents & Neighbors for a Better Community, recently met with Councilman Andrew Cohen, who represents Norwood, to discuss adding more street parking in the neighborhood.

Cohen and the leader of the local quality of life group walked around East Gun Hill Road and Reservoir Oval to identify spots that either have out of date sign restrictions, or signs that are not visible as a way of converting them into parking spaces.

After meeting with the group, Cohen wrote a letter to the city Department of Transportation (DOT) in hopes the agency would reconsider the signage in the area to make parking easier for residents. "After evaluating the situation myself, I believe there are changes that can be made to address the constituents' concerns, while also ensuring everyone's safety," Cohen said in his letter. "I am requesting that a re-evaluation be performed by the Department of Transportation to confirm that they are absolutely necessary, or (more preferably) their removal if they

are not."

One of the particular spots mentioned is directly in front of the Keeper's House, home to *Norwood News*, at 3400 Reservoir Oval E. The parking spot is marked with a "No Standing Anytime" sign that Cohen said in his letter to the DOT "doesn't appear to be necessary." In front of 3463 Putnam Pl., around the corner from the *Norwood News* office, the sign prohibits parking from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., which also seems unnecessary to Cohen and local activists. The last sign is at East 210th Street and Bainbridge Avenue with a "No Standing Anytime" restriction.

By removing outdated and unnecessary parking restrictions, residents may have less trouble finding a spot for their vehicles. With the parking garage at 3000 Jerome Ave collapsing and other garages' rates rising, a little more parking in Norwood would appease local drivers.

"It's not going to radically make parking suddenly easier in the Norwood area, but every spot counts. And there's no reason if there are unavailable spots they shouldn't be made available," Cohen said.

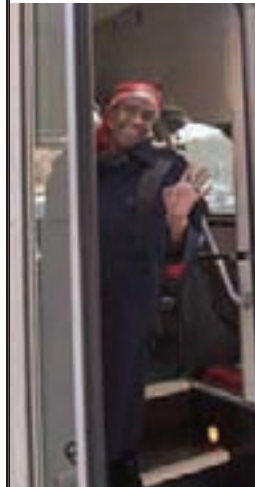


Photo courtesy Office of Councilman Andrew Cohen

COUNCILMAN ANDREW COHEN (R), at Reservoir Oval Place, speaks with a resident (c) over parking concerns in Norwood.

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OFF THE TRAIL

*The Norwood News, WFUV radio, and BronxNet Television
present a special report profiling
several candidates ahead of the November general election.*

The Energetic Insurgent: How Alessandra Biaggi Toppled a Political Powerhouse

By JULIA AGOS of 

On a blustery October evening, in a park in Soundview, Alessandra Biaggi stood ready to canvass inside a residential building. She wore pink jeans and a leather jacket. With minimal makeup and long brown hair, she looked more like an activist than a woman running for New York State Senate for the 34th District.

"Many industries, including the political sphere, have created a story about how women should look without women really having an input," she said. The 32-year-old political newcomer is ready to take control of her own narrative and be true to herself.

Early in her campaign, Biaggi grew frustrated by questions about her choice of shoes or lipstick color. "I have so many important things to tell everyone! And you're focusing on this?" she said. Biaggi managed to steer the focus away from her looks during the primary.

Though Biaggi won her primary, she still hasn't stopped campaigning. During the primary, she would start her days at 6 a.m. Biaggi could be found at train stations and bus stops talking to constituents. Then she'd head to meetings and rallies -- nonstop before crashing into bed at midnight. "I keep my energy going because I have a lot of anger," she laughed. "It's dangerous to make me angry because I will definitely channel it into action, no matter what."

Her campaign hustle led to one of the largest upsets in New York's Democratic Primaries in recent memory: Biaggi beat Jeff Klein, a powerful lawmaker who led the now dissolved Independent Democratic Conference, by nine percentage points. Though to many it seems like Biaggi made a sudden splash on the political scene, politics is in her blood. Her grandfather, Mario Biaggi, was a New York Congressman from 1969 to 1988.

Growing up, the adults around her always asked her to not only identify the problem, but also come up with a solution. "I could never



Image courtesy BronxNet Television

ALESSANDRA BIAGGI (L), candidate for the 34th Senate District, speaks to reporter Julia Agos of WFUV.

really get out alive without talking about politics at the dinner table," she said. "[A]nd so because of that I did not feel uncomfortable getting involved in politics."

Before becoming a politician, Biaggi worked as the deputy national operations director for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. "When we lost that election, I thought to myself, 'What is my role in (the political sphere)?"

She then joined Governor Cuomo's administration in his Counsel's office focusing on women's issues and public health. But during her time there, she became frustrated with the lack of progress on the many bills that never got out of committee.

So, as her family taught her as a child, she began to look for a solution. She looked at her representatives, and saw Klein as the reason certain bills she wanted to see passed had stalled. "I figured that nothing would ever change if we have the same type of leadership," she said.

During the primary cycle, Klein's \$3 million war chest outspent her 10 to 1.

With the Bronx heavily Democratic, Biaggi's Republican rival, Richard Ribustello, will have a hard time beating Biaggi, virtually sealing Biaggi's fate as the winner. For his part, Ribustello did not return a request for an interview.

Biaggi said that she hopes to be a leader in the State Senate and to work with people of all political perspectives. "I hope that people perceive me as someone who is fierce," she said.

Anthony Pappas: Candidate Backing Immigration and Justice Reform

By NATALIE MIGLIORE of 

Walking around Astoria Park on a chilly Saturday afternoon, Anthony Pappas talks about the path that brought him to run on the Republican ticket for Congress against Democratic rival Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, particularly in a district that is largely Democratic.

"To get an idea of my childhood, you can go back to one of the world famous movies that was filmed on the street where I grew up," he says as he talked about West Side Story. "I don't claim my childhood was exactly like the movie, but it gives you a reference point."

Pappas, 72, was born to Greek Immigrants in Western Manhattan. Lincoln Center stands where his childhood home once was - when Pappas was 12, his family had to move to Astoria to make way for the building.

On top of his calls for major immigration reform, and undue taxation on New Yorkers, Pappas also wants to see the justice system reformed. And he's basing the third item on his political platform on experience. Pappas went through a difficult divorce where he found the judge arrive to the bench with a predetermined decision. He thinks some judges abuse their power. "Judges are not investigated or accountable to anyone in my opinion," he says. "So I would advocate for changing that if I'm elected into Congress."

Pappas references one U.S. Supreme

Court case called *Stump v. Sparkman*. The 1971 case involved a judge who ruled to permanently sterilize a 15-year-old girl at her mother's request. The girl was unaware that she was being sterilized and later sued the judge. "I regard it as one of the worst rulings of the United States Supreme Court," Pappas says.

Pappas believes the girl in this case was denied due process. The judge was granted immunity in this case. "I view that as immoral and unethical against the Constitution. The judges are the only group of officials that have this immunity and they conferred it upon themselves and it doesn't seem to be a part of the political conversation and you wonder why," he says.

Pappas believes court cases have had severe and intrusive consequences on families because judges are unfair in some cases and that can eventually lead to a party involved committing suicide.

When Pappas is not campaigning, talking politics, or teaching at St. John's University, he likes to have lunch at a local Senior Citizen Center. "I do qualify as a senior citizen," he chuckled. "By going there you don't have to do the shopping, you don't have to cook the meal and you don't have to clean the dishes. And the company isn't too bad either."

Editor's Note: *These articles have been adapted into a radio and television piece for WFUV radio and BronxNet Television respectively.*



Image by BronxNet Television

ANTHONY PAPPAS IS the Republican candidate challenging Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.



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FALL FESTIVAL

RESIDENTS HIT THE streets on Oct. 13 to enjoy the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District's 17th annual free Fall Festival on Jerome Avenue between East Mosholu Parkway North and East Gun Hill Road. Visitors enjoyed a bevy of foods, activities and entertainment while getting to know Norwood's main commercial strip. All photos by Adi Talwar except bottom left.



SPORTING A CAMOUFLAGE vest and multi-colored socks, this kid isn't ready to bounce, but he's ready for the bouncy house. Children's activities also included face painting, arts and crafts and a pumpkin patch.



THIS SMILING WOMAN anticipates enjoying her kebab from this stand on Jerome Avenue near East 208th Street. The smell of grilled meats permeated the air and attracted residents. There were more than 80 vendors at the event.



A YOUNG TEEN munches on a snack while three young boys eagerly scarf down a few candy apples, just some of the variety of treats available.



(ABOVE) ACTION FIGURES capture the gaze of a young boy. Numerous items were available for sale.



Photo by Miriam Quinones

JENNIFER TAUSIG, EXECUTIVE director of the Jerome Gun Hill BID (c), shares a moment with community service honorees from North Central Bronx Hospital, Executive Director Cristina Contreras (l), and Director of Weight Management and Healthy Living programs Gloria Bent (r) who stand holding their awards.



SALSA MOVES BREAK out under the 4 train as a couple responds to the live music by strutting their stuff. A crowd enjoys both the dance performance and the music.

Flanked by Bronx Electeds, Schumer Rails Against CSX Land Deal Talks

(continued from page 9)

"CSX has a long history of working with the City of New York on property transactions that support their long-term goals and allow CSX to focus on its core business," a spokesperson for CSX said in a statement. "We remain committed to discussing any potential property transaction and working to find a mutually beneficial resolution."

"When our community needs help, our elected officials show up," Community Board 8 Chairperson Rosemary Ginty

said. "This shows it."

Notably absent was state Sen. Jeff Klein, whose district also covers the piece of land. Klein has made no public statements or appearances since he lost in the Democratic primary on Sept. 13. At one point, Schumer began to introduce a state Senator only to look around and realize no one was there to be introduced. The media contact number for Klein's office is defunct, calls to his Albany office went unanswered, and a message left at his Bronx office was also not returned.

Recognition for Sister Annunciata Admin.



Photo courtesy BMCA

LINDA MCCAULEY (AT MIC), daughter of late Bedford Park resident Mary Vallati, speaks during a surprise awards presentation to Patricia Burlace (r), Sister Annunciata Senior Center executive director, on Oct. 11. The Bedford Mosholu Community Association (BMCA), was represented by Ella Santos (l), Margaret Collins (2nd from l), and president Barbara Stronczer (2nd from r) who were there to honor Burlace recognizing her for her devotion to the senior center located in Bedford Park. Burlace accepted the award named after Vallati.

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Can I See Some ID? Here's Mine

By JONATHAN CUSTODIO

A new law went into effect on Oct. 19 that mandates NYPD officers to carry business cards on duty and hand them out when conducting stops.

Known as the Right to Know Act, the law was sponsored and introduced by Councilman Ritchie Torres of the 15th District, who noted the importance of an effective police-civilian relationship in a news conference at his

district office in Fordham on Oct. 19. "We cannot improve community relations without first improving day-to-day interactions between police and civilians. Requiring an officer to proactively identify himself serves to de-escalate the encounter," said Torres.

The business card is pre-printed with the officer's name, rank, command and shield number. On the back of the card is information that those stopped can use to file

a report with the city's 311 hotline. They can also request video footage from an officer's body-worn camera.

Additionally, officers must ask those stopped for permission to search them, their car or home, or their property before conducting the search.

Reports to 311 are examined by the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), the city's independent oversight agency. Harya Tarekegn, the agency's senior counsel for policy and

advocacy said, "The Right to Know Act is about making it easier for New Yorkers to understand their rights during an encounter with the police and if necessary, how to comment or complain about that police encounter." She adds that the CCRB is "prepared for any increase in complaints."

Determination of when an officer is required to hand out their cards is separated by four levels. Officers are mandated to provide their identification and explain reasoning for the encounter in levels two through four.

In a case of an arrest where probable cause is determined immediately, an officer is not required to present their card.

If the officers run out of cards, they must write their identification on blank cards they carry as backup. Vocal identification is used as a last resort, with the officer allowing the civilian time to write down the information.

Victor Rivera, a community activist with the Bronx Parent Housing Network, said

at the news conference, "As a man of color and as a man who has had interactions with the NYPD, both positive, very positive, and negative, I want to say to the NYPD that we are partners."

Jose Laboy, also at the news conference, said, "[It's] something that should have happened a long time ago. Business card sharing can be very effective."

Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA) released a statement on the Right to Know Act on Twitter, citing the law will inhibit police officers from doing their jobs well. "As we've said from the beginning, the 'Right to Know' laws will discourage police officers from proactively addressing crime and disorder and will lead to more frivolous complaints. The City Council has continuously piled on new burdens and second-guessing for our police officers, creating unnecessary distractions for them that will ultimately make NYC a more dangerous place."

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Photo by Jonathan Custodio
COUNCILMAN RITCHIE TORRES (at mic) offers details on the Right to Know Act at a news conference.

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HEALTH CHECK

Flu Season is Here: Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones



By JOY SPRENGER

As we welcome the cooler weather and the beauty of foliage, we also need to think about taking precaution to the upcoming flu season.

The flu is not just a really bad cold. The flu is a contagious illness that affects the nose, throat, lungs and other parts of the body. The flu usually spreads from person to person when someone with the flu coughs or sneezes. Sometimes people get the flu because they touch an object or surface with flu virus on it and then touch their mouth or nose. It can spread quickly from one person to another. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious complications from the flu. This includes women who are pregnant. If you are pregnant, the flu is more dangerous for you.

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu shot. Everyone 6 months or older should get a flu vaccine every year. The best way to protect children under 6 months old

from the flu is to make sure members of their household and their caregivers are vaccinated.

The flu vaccine does not give you the flu. It stimulates your body to produce antibodies. These antibodies protect you from flu viruses.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), last year's influenza season was the first to be classified as a "high severity" season across all age groups. Once you get the flu vaccine, it takes about two weeks for it to be fully effective. Until then, you are still at risk for getting the flu.

Once again, Montefiore is teaming up with partners like Walgreens/Duane Reade to offer flu vaccines out in the community. Flu clinics are being set up throughout the Bronx, and Walgreens/Duane Reade is ready to provide the vaccine at no cost, regardless of insurance status. You can also get your flu shot from any pharmacy at no cost to you (with most insurances).

Protect yourself and your loved ones. Get your flu shot today!

Joy Sprenger works with the Office of Community & Population Health for Montefiore Health System.



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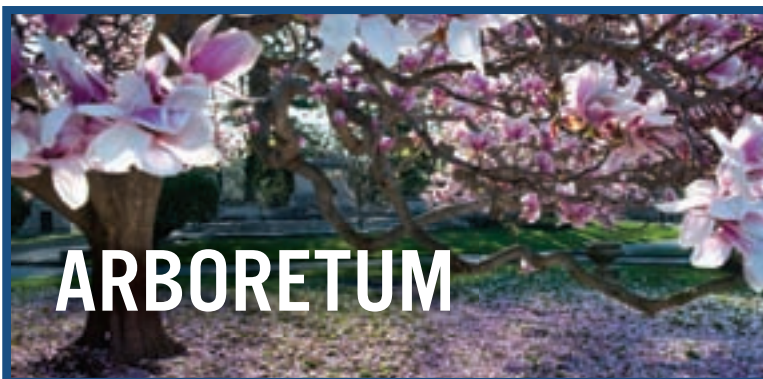
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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

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 bedford-mosholu@verizon.net.

Canned Food Drive

The office of Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, 3107 Kingsbridge Ave., is accepting canned goods for its annual food drive. Thanksgiving donations will be accepted before Nov. 14; donations for the Chanukah, Christmas and Kwanzaa seasons will be accepted through Dec. 12. All proceeds will be delivered to Kingsbridge Heights Community Center and St. Frances of Rome Pantry. Some acceptable canned goods include fruits and vegetables, cereals, dried beans, tuna, pasta, rice and juice. For more information, call (718) 796-5345.

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.

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.: Office of State Senator Gustavo Rivera, 2432 Grand Concourse, Oct. 30; and Office of Assemblyman Victor Pichardo, 2175 Jerome Ave., Oct. 25. In addition, the Mayor's Get Covered unit meeting will be held at North Central Bronx Hospital, at 3424 Kossuth Ave., on Oct. 27 and 28 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 311.

Bird Walks

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

Convert Stories to Music

Singer-songwriter Emily Cavanagh will appear at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore's Family Learning Place, 3415 Bainbridge Ave., Nov. 1 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. to help turn your stories into a song. There are only 10 spots available. Admission is free. For more information and to RSVP, visit www.letsreimagine.org/new-york/schedule.

Right to Counsel

Right to Counsel (RTC)—which assigns a free attorney to those sued for eviction in housing court and in NYCHA termination of tenancy hearings and who are income eligible—is available to tenants who live in Bronx zip codes 10457, 10467, and 10468. If a tenant is not income-eligible, they have the right to a one-off legal consultation or advice session. Tenants facing eviction or harassment from management can call Nova Lucero at the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition for support at (917) 952-5494.



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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Norwood News Celebrates 30 Years of Publication!

The public is invited to the 30th anniversary celebration of publication of the Norwood News on Nov. 1 from 6 to 9 p.m. at Lehman College's Faculty Dining Hall in the Music Building, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W. Dinner and drinks will be served. Event features keynote speaker and special guests will be honored. Tickets are \$30/pp. For more information, call (718) 324-4998.

Onstage

Lehman College for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **Chinese Warriors of Peking**, featuring acrobats and masters of martial arts, Oct. 27 at 8 p.m. (tickets: \$25 to \$45; \$10/age 12 and under); **Legends of Disco**, featuring a variety of performers, Nov. 3 at 7 p.m. (tickets: \$35 to \$100); and **Eddie**

Palmieri & Lalo Rodriguez, Nov. 10 at 8 p.m. (tickets: \$55 to \$85; \$100/VIP). VIP tickets include pre-concert reception at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

Events

Bronx Tourism Council presents its 24th annual free **Tour de Bronx**, Oct. 28 at 9:30 a.m. Event features 25- and 40-mile rides,

and begins at Bronx Borough Hall at 161st Street and the Grand Concourse, and ends at the New York Botanical Garden with a music festival and pizza. Riders must wear a helmet. Onsite registration is at 8:30 a.m. For more information, to register online, or to rent a bike, visit ilovethebronx.com, or call (718) 590-3518. Rented bikes including helmets can be picked up on site and dropped off at the end of the ride, and are available from Unlimited Bike.

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.

Risse Street Community Garden hosts their **"Trick or Treat Halloween Event"** on Oct. 28 from 2 to 4 p.m. at 10 Risse St. Candy and snacks, face painting, and Halloween games will be available. Guests are encouraged to come dressed in their Halloween costumes and donate a book to the garden's library. For more information, email Dominick Vitiello at d_vitiello@icloud.com.

The New York Botanical Garden's **Farmers Market** is scheduled to be held on 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**: Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), Mexican cultural holiday when the spirits of the beloved come home and visit; make a decorated box to remember a deceased loved one including photo, Oct. 27 and 28; and Dances With Leaves, to make leaves into prints, Nov. 3 and 4; both in the WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Grounds admission is free until noon Tuesdays and Saturdays all year. For more information and a schedule of events including tours and walks, call (718) 549-3200.

Bronx photographer Walter Pofeldt and his daughter Eileen present **"Kenya and Tanzania in Focus"** through Dec. 16 at Metropolitan College, 60 West St., on the sixth and seventh floors, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during normal business days. For more information, email 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.



Photos courtesy MMCC, Gary Axelbank, Errol Louis

THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY of the Norwood News will feature awards for Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC, pictured above), Gary Axelbank (pictured above, bottom left), and Sally Dunford (not pictured). NY1 political anchor Errol Louis (pictured above, bottom right) will deliver the keynote address (see Editor's Pick for more information).

Library Events

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for children: **Storytime/Arts & Crafts**: (ages 3 to 5; preregistration required), Oct. 25 at 4 p.m.; and **Arts & Crafts**: (ages 5 to 12; preregistration required), hands on projects, Oct. 28 at 3:30 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy **Maker Mondays**: Oct. 29 at 4 p.m. - Cat Craft; **film**: "Stardust," Oct. 26 at 3:30 p.m.; and **Halloween Party**: costume party, treats, games, and a movie, Oct. 31 at 5 p.m. Adults can attend **film**: "Sully," Oct. 27 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nysl.org.

Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Crafty Fridays**: (ages 5 to 12), crafts, Oct. 26 at 3 p.m.; **Family Storytime at 3:30 p.m.**: (ages 3 to 5), stories and crafts, Oct. 25 and 29; **STEM: Kids' Science**: (ages 5 to 12), "reactions," Oct. 30 at 3 p.m.; and **Halloween Party**: (ages 18 months to 12 years), music, games, wear costumes, Oct. 31 at 4 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **films at 2 p.m.**: "Rampage," Oct. 26 and "Tomb Raider," on Nov. 2. 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 children: **film**: (ages 5 to 12), Oct. 27 at 2 p.m.; and **Fall Harvest Day**: (ages 3 to 12), wear costume or favorite outfit for fun, crafts and snacks, Oct. 30 at 3:30 p.m. (in-person advance registration is required). Adults can enjoy: **Computer Basics**: Oct. 25 at 5:45 p.m.; and Nov. 1 and 8 at noon. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

Public Service Announcement

Daylight Saving Time ends Sunday, Nov. 4 at 2 a.m. Turn clocks back one hour.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Oct. 29 for the next publication date of Nov. 8.

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(continued from page 1)

the *Norwood News* to comment on this story, he was at a construction site at 150 Van Cortlandt Ave., E., a mile away from Bedford Park Manor. "This isn't a typical Bronx landlord story," Stagg said. "There's no lead paint... We're good. We show up. We're there."

On a tour of the 2985 and 2987 Webster Ave. properties, Simpson showed reporters from the *Norwood News* signs of water damage in hallways, evidence of squatters in the basement, and examples of low-quality repairs to broken appliances and fixtures in apartments. While Stagg concedes his company needs to "improve the lines of communication" between management and tenants, he argues that many of the issues are the result of tenant neglect, not landlord negligence.

"People are people and some people are disruptive and some aren't," Stagg said. "Any New York City building is going to have some tenants who are quieter than others." Stagg promised that a new, online portal called Yardi would be launched within the next week to handle tenant complaints.

Security is a major concern for Simpson and others. Last winter, Simpson said that squatters frequently inhabited the building, breaking into apartments and living in the basement. In a letter to the *Norwood News*, Five Star Management – the in-house realty group that manages all Stagg Group properties – wrote that they are aware of and have worked hard to combat the problem of squatters and homeless in the building.

"We have made numerous attempts to keep the squatters and homeless out of the building and the basement," senior vice president of management Cristianir Arroyo wrote. "We have changed all entry front locks on the front entry to magnetic/manual mechanisms to prevent illegal entry."

Shannon Terrell lives at 2985 Webster Ave. with two of her children, an 11-month-old and a three-year-old, and is a domestic violence survivor. For her, security is incredibly important, which is why the shortcomings of the building are frustrating and jarring. Instead of window guards, maintenance workers screwed her windows into the frame with a small chain, lim-

iting circulation and doing little to secure the window. "They're supposed to have window guards and all of them were broken when I got here," Terrell said. "I kept asking them to fix it and they didn't."

Terrell said that the locks on apartment doors are easily breached and that many tenants believe thieves enter apartments and take their belongings. Arroyo said the Stagg Group only received one report of theft and they worked with the police to resolve the matter.

When the *Norwood News* visited the buildings, in many dimly lit hallways and stairwells, loose wires hung out of the ceiling where security cameras used to be. Stagg said the missing cameras were a problem, but were the result of tenant vandalism and not removed by management. "We'll certainly address the camera issue," Stagg said. "One guy clipped eight to 10 cameras in a night."

Simpson disputes that claim. He showed the *Norwood News* a photo of a pile of cameras and accessories in the basement of 2985 Webster Ave. in December of 2016.

In an email exchange around that same time, another tenant requested security camera footage from The Stagg Group to use to press charges against a woman who robbed the tenant. Despite an immediate promise to produce the footage, a Stagg Group employee dragged his feet for two months before informing the tenant that the cameras only record a month at a time and that the cameras were not recording at the time of the incident.

Despite their differences, both the tenants and The Stagg Group share a similar solution.

"Tenants would work with them if they were willing to work with us," Simpson said. He organized a tenant meeting this summer and invited The Stagg Group. No one showed.

Now, Stagg told the *Norwood News* he plans on hosting a meeting with residents of Bedford Park Manor to hear their concerns. As someone heavily invested in the community financially, Stagg wants to make sure his tenants know their landlord is invested in their well-being, too. "We're not hit and run," Stagg said. "We're here for the long haul."

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