



NORWOOD NEWS

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
CRIME CONCERNS | PG. 4



**MTA: MOSHOLU PKWY. STATION
MAY GET ELEVATOR DOWN THE LINE | PG. 2**

\$3 MIL ROOF FIX FOR BAILEY HOUSES

Pichardo secures funding; hopes to see repairs by next year



TIESHA JONES (AT MIC), Bailey Houses Residents Council president, speaks at a news conference announcing a \$3 million allocation by Assemblyman Victor Pichardo (wearing beret) to fix Bailey Houses' roof.

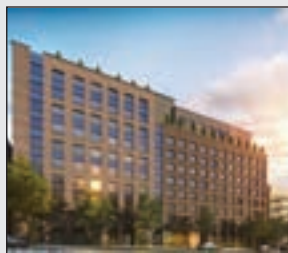
Photo by David Cruz



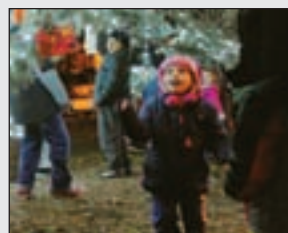
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By JOSEPH KONIG

Assemblyman Victor Pichardo has earmarked \$3 million in capital funds for roof repairs at the Bailey Houses, a troubled NYCHA building in Kingsbridge. The news is the latest in a years-long fight by the building's residents council to better conditions as a leaky roof continues to destroy property and harm residents.

"The roof is just absolutely in complete disrepair," Pichardo, flanked by residents, said at a news conference on Dec. 4. "This isn't something that's abstract. People are living with this every day. If there is a leaky roof, it creates mold issues across the entire building."

Pichardo said the water damage from the porous roof reaches down to the second

floor of the 20-story building. And while the \$3 million in state funding should help get the ball moving, the timetable for repairs is still unclear.

"I would be – how could I put this very lightly – I would be incredibly pissed if this takes a little bit more than a year," Pichardo said. "I'm trying to, as soon as we get to January, to put a plan into

action to get it done hopefully before the summer... so when the next cold season comes around, the folks here at Bailey Houses have a brand-new roof."

The roof-offering a 360-degree view of the north Bronx, the Manhattan skyline and the New Jersey Palisades--currently sags and bubbles with water damage,

(continued on page 23)

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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Off List for Now, Mosholu Parkway Station Getting Elevator in Coming Years

By DAVID CRUZ

Despite a petitioning campaign pushing for the installation of an elevator at the Mosholu Parkway #4 subway station on Jerome Avenue, the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) opted to award it to another Bronx station.

The MTA, however, is considering adding the station to its list of those that will receive an elevator when the next capital budget takes effect.

"The design phase for elevator accessibility at Mosholu Parkway will soon begin, and the station is likely to be done in the next capital program; we look forward to completing this project," Shams Tarek, a spokesman for the MTA, said.

Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz, whose office introduced the petitioning drive in the summer, hails the silver lining. "They're already going to be in the process of designing the elevators for the station, which is actually the first step that they would take," said Dinowitz.

For now, MTA intends to install an elevator at the 170th Street #4 subway station on Jerome Avenue. The station is one of five to receive an elevator after the MTA added another \$200 million to its 2015-19 capital budget plan for it. It falls within the recently rezoned Jerome Avenue, between East 184th and East 167th streets. Local community boards 4 and 5 advocated for an elevator installation at the station within the rezoned area.

Other stations to receive a station include the Queensboro Plaza, Broadway Junction, Livonia Avenue, and Main Street stations.

Dinowitz's office, along with 81st Assembly District Leader Eric Dinowitz, and Community Board 7 jointly launched the campaign in the summer despite the Mosholu Parkway station falling outside his district.

Getting an elevator at the 170th Street station was already in the cards. A so-called Points of Agreement Statement drafted by Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen during negotiations involving the Jerome Avenue Rezoning stated that the Bronx station would be included in the updated capital budget.

"The MTA has preliminarily identi-



Photo by David Cruz

THE MOSHOLU PARKWAY #4 SUBWAY station won't receive an elevator, at least for now.

fied the 170th Street station as one of the five City priority stations to receive access improvements. These projects were developed as part of the City's \$2.5 billion contribution to the MTA's 2015-2019 Capital Program. Under the proposal, the MTA will add elevators to the station and make it fully ADA accessible," read the talking point.

"They pretty much had their minds already made up," said the elder Dinowitz. "The fact that that's sort of the center of the whole rezoning thing that's going on and they expect a large influx in population in the not too distant future, I guess they were looking ahead."

Though good news lies ahead, the current denial deals a major blow to commuters forced to trudge up four flights of stairs to get to the Mosholu Parkway platform. The station is home to Tracey Towers, the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District, North Central Bronx Hospital, Mosholu Montefiore Community Center and Montefiore Health System. No elevator access at the station poses even greater strain to wheelchair-bound commuters heading to the two Norwood medical institutions.

Chris, a passenger heading into the station, said the elevator would be a boon.

"Oh we need it. I don't know why there's not an elevator here when there's two main hospitals here. People have to come here all the time, and the

people that really need the elevators, they can't walk. It's a main strip. We got two hospitals over there, you know?" he said. "I don't know why we don't have one [elevator]...MTA should be convenience for the people. The main stations that are by hospitals should always have an elevator."

Another passenger, who declined to give his name, said an elevator is a good option since it falls within a "very commercial area."

Annual ridership estimates show 2.7 million riders entered the station in 2017, down from 2.8 million riders the year before.

Dinowitz's office announced the campaign in the summer, several weeks before the MTA was to meet to discuss the additions. Community Board 7 and petitioners gathered some 2,000 signatures outside the station. It wasn't enough for the 23-member board to place the station on the list.

Despite the news, the MTA is now drafting rendering of an elevator for Mosholu Parkway, suggesting it would be next in line to receive one. The next capital plan is expected to go in effect in 2020.

"If they're already are putting this into the design stage then I feel good about it, and I believe that the actions by members of the community had a significant impact on that process," said Dinowitz.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 18 at Tracey Towers, Community Room B, 40 W. Mosholu Pkwy. So. Community Board 7 holds committee meetings held on the following dates at 229A E. 204th St. at 6:30 p.m. or unless otherwise noted: Executive Committee meets on Dec. 13. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets Dec. 13 at 7 p.m. at Lexa Bar 357 E. 204th St. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

Relief for Hull Ave. Fire Victims

Thirty-five people in three homes impacted by blaze

By **CHRISTY RAE AMMON**

In response to the fire that started two days before Thanksgiving at 3210 Hull Ave. in Norwood, Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez, who represents the neighborhood, hosted a clothing drive for the affected families.

The drive was held at the Community Board 7 Office at 229A E. 204th St. Men, women, and children's clothing and shoes were donated to the displaced families who spent their holidays in temporary shelters. The collection of clothing and other personal items for the families ended on the last day of November.

Dozens of garbage bags full of clothes, coats, and other necessities filled a room at the Community Board 7 office in Bedford Park. Fernandez connected with the displaced families so that they can pick up their donations.

The four-alarm fire happened on Nov. 20 around 2:15 p.m., ripping through the Hull Avenue home before spreading to two other homes beside it. Roughly 200 firefighters responded and quickly arrived to the scene, with helicopters humming over it. Smoke could be spotted billowing all the way from Reservoir Oval East. Hull Ave, meantime, was shut down to assist combating the fire. Crews battled the fire from Hull Avenue and the adjacent street, Perry Avenue, but this could not stop the roof of the home collapsing on itself. Three people, including two firefighters, were injured.

Families from 3210 Hull Ave., the two buildings on either side, and relatives visiting for the holidays stood in disbelief as the firefighters fought to save their homes.

Thirty-five people were displaced from three homes as a result of the di-

saster, including a visiting naturalized family whose passports were swallowed by the flames.

"They told me the items they lost, and how they hope the [American] Red Cross could help them. And already some were asking for my assistance in reapplying to get their passports done again...because everything had been burned," Fernandez told the Norwood News in a telephone interview.

After the chaos from the fire calmed down, the foreign-born family was able to visit their embassy. They were issued new passports and returned to their home country.

Another affected family went to live with relatives in Pennsylvania, getting a fresh start after the disaster. The rest of the displaced are being put up in a hotel near LaGuardia Airport for the time being.

Fernandez was at a community dinner around the corner from the incident. When she heard of the fire, she went to check on the families and invited them to stay warm inside Lexa Bar on East 204th Street.

"It was helpful the event was happening," she said. "They could sit inside and get a free meal."

Fernandez mentioned that she, and the afflicted families, were grateful that neighbors were sticking together through thick and thin by contributing to the drive. "They're just happy that the community has stepped up to help them at this time," she said.

It's unclear what caused the fire.

Editor's Note: Additional reporting by David Cruz and Miriam Quinones.



Photo courtesy Michelle Diaz

SMOKE FROM THE fire at 3210 Hull Ave. is seen from Montefiore Medical Center on East Gun Hill Road.



Photo by Miriam Quinones

FIRE CREWS SPEND several hours knocking out the blaze that spread to two adjacent homes.



Photo by Miriam Quinones

SOME OF THE fire victims, who asked their names not be published, arrive to Lexa Bar following the fire.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



With a new commanding officer at the NYPD's 52nd Precinct, this week we asked readers what are the specific problems and issues the command should focus on.



Well, one problem is the people who are hanging out on the street at nighttime. They drink and play loud music. They come and hang out and lately there's been some car break-ins here. They come at night and break the windows, but it starts with disorderly conduct. Before, the neighborhood was not like that, so it's getting a little bit bad. The neighborhood is not that bad; the only issue is the little things like this.
Louie Gonzalez
Norwood



I think he [Commanding Officer, Deputy Inspector Thomas Alps] needs to have his men address having his team of officers get more sociable with the neighborhood; get to know the people that live and work here and establish better relationships. If he could do that, that would be great. I haven't heard of the [Neighborhood Coordination Officer] program and I haven't seen them. That would be key. If they did that and had better relations with the people that they're patrolling, things would be better and people wouldn't be afraid.
Esther Price
Norwood



I see a lot of domestic incidents, where people are attacking other people, because they're drunk or disturbed. I don't see anyone getting shot out here. I do see graffiti on the walls. I don't know if it's a Mexican gang, but there's a lot of Bloods here. They don't let people have a way of living, because automatically, they think they own the streets. I've got little kids and big kids and I have to worry about them coming in the building. It's annoying.
Samantha Ortiz
Norwood



They need to actually put more police officers in the train stations. I don't see them at all. There's actually more and more people from the street going up there. Some are homeless and some are on drugs and they just hang out there for hours and smoke cigarettes. They even had to close one of the entrances because they were doing drugs there. They opened it back up, but I don't see many officers there. It's at the East 182nd Street station, but it's now moved up to Fordham Road. Years ago, we never had that here.
Joey Barrios
Fordham Heights



I would like to see the police focus on having people clean up after their dogs. It's a \$500 fine. It is an issue; they say it's small, but they ticket people all day and make a lot of money ticketing people. They can make a lot of money ticketing people who don't clean up after their dogs and that can provide revenue to the city. Gangs to me is litter and they should remove them with the trash.
Tasha Chapman
Kingsbridge



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New 52nd Precinct CO to Community: “I Would Give My Life for You”

By DAVID CRUZ

The new commanding officer of the 52nd Precinct, Deputy Inspector Thomas Alps, told an audience at the latest Community Board 7 general board meeting he would take a bullet for them if need be. “I would give my life for you,” said Alps. “And there’s plenty of police officers in the Five-Two Precinct that would do the same and they don’t know you on a personal level.”

The audience at the CB7 meeting was much larger than at Alps’ initial introduction to the neighborhood when a snowstorm that crippled traffic on Nov. 15 kept everyone at home or stuck on the roads.

Approachable with an earnest sense about him, Alps succeeds Inspector Peter Fiorillo, on the post for two years before being promoted to run the Narcotics Squad in Upper Manhattan. Alps told an audience he’s been on the job for 18 years, having first started at the 52nd Precinct. “My career’s coming full circle,” said Alps.

His tenure includes stints at the NYPD’s Intelligence Division, moving

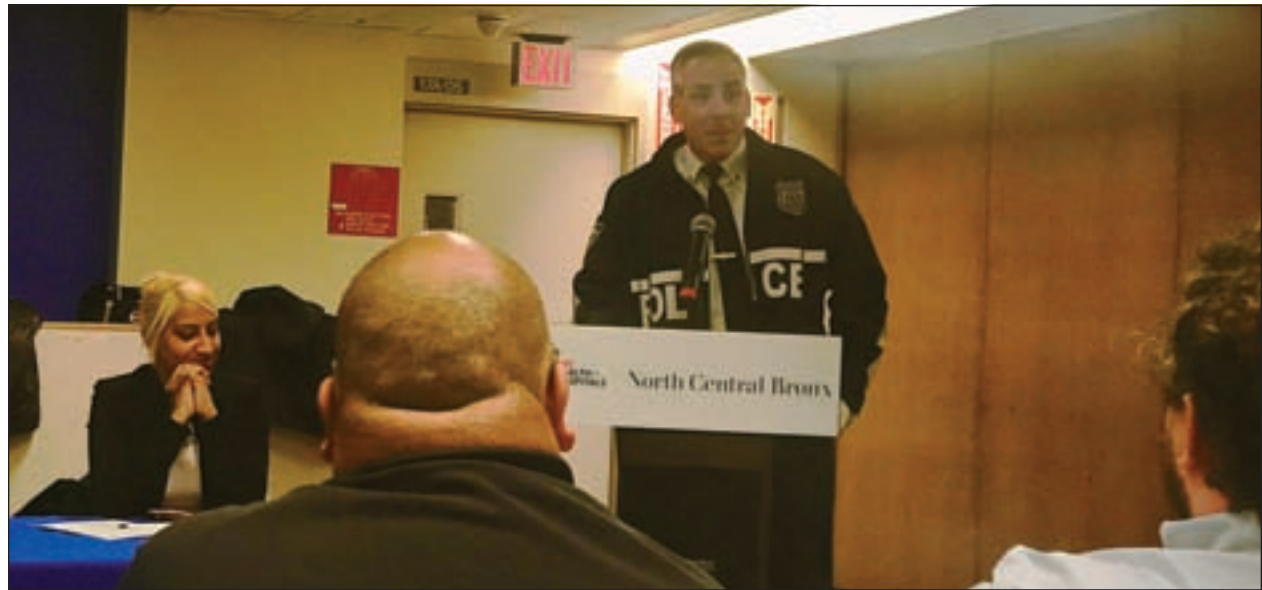


Photo by David Cruz

DEPUTY INSPECTOR THOMAS Alps (at podium) speaks at the latest Community Board 7 general board meeting on Nov. 27.

on to become Captain of the 41st Precinct, and commanding officer of the 40th Precinct. His latest command was neighboring 49th Precinct, foregoing a return back to the Intelligence Division.

Alps was at the 49th Precinct when the Neighborhood Coordination Officer (NCO) program was implemented, and he credited it as the best NCO pro-

gram of all the NYPD’s precincts. He told guests he expects to improve the 52nd Precinct’s NCO program even further. “If there’s anything I’m most proud of is that program is running strong and will continue that way,” said Alps.

The 52nd Precinct covers the Bronx neighborhoods of Norwood, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge, parts of Fordham

and University Heights. Offering no specifics, Alps said the existing problems plaguing the north Bronx precinct are the same ones he took on when he began at the 52nd Precinct. The precinct is still combatting an opioid abuse issue, with Bedford Park and Fordham ranking in the top five city neighborhoods with overdose deaths.

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First Bike Sharing Program in The Bronx Seeks Expansion

By **CHRISTY RAE AMMONS**

The bike sharing company JUMP looks to expand their pilot program that began in Fordham and Tremont this summer, to another part of the Bronx and hopefully the entire borough. Expansion rests on the city Department of Transportation, which would give the bike sharing company the green light.

For now, the DOT confirmed it has extended the program for another 90 days with the agency closing monitoring demand. The program was originally set to last for four months, but rising interest from Bronx residents prompted DOT to extend the program.

The pilot program brought 200 pedal-assist bikes to the Fordham section of the Bronx. These electric bikes help the rider pedal, making it easier and faster to get from place to place.

“Pedal-assist bikes open up biking to individuals who would not otherwise use a bike. Somebody who may need a little boost on a hill would get that with a pedal-assist bike, so we see more usage,” said Josh Gold, a policy and communications manager for Uber, the parent company of JUMP.

An estimated 16,000 trips have been taken using a JUMP bike in that area, and 10 percent of those who used JUMP rode the bikes three or more times a week.

The cost of riding a JUMP bike is \$2 for the first 30 minutes, and then seven cents for every minute after that. Reduced rates are offered for people who qualify for benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

JUMP staffers noticed that users in other areas of the Bronx were looking for bikes on the mobile app, and thought to expand its reach, aiming to offer bikes in all of the Bronx.

“We saw tens of thousands, on a regular basis, of people opening their Uber apps in the region looking for a bike way outside our service area in the Bronx,” said Gold.

Citi Bike, another dockless bike sharing organization, launched a pilot program alongside JUMP over the summer. They also offered 200 bikes to the Central Bronx, though they were not electric. The mayor’s office announced Citi Bike will triple the number of bikes to 40,000 over the next five years.



Photo by David Cruz

BIKE-SHARING COMPANY JUMP looks to expand its service in the borough. It first needs approval by the city Department of Transportation. Pictured is a JUMP bike on the Grand Concourse near East 192nd Street.

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In Norwood, a Mobile Library

By JONATHAN CUSTODIO

Every weekend Brandon Montes puts out a crate full of books on East Gun Hill Road between Bainbridge and Wayne Avenues. Books come in and books go out. And it's all for free.

On average, Montes brings 5 to 15 books each time he puts out the crate. In the morning, he chains the book crate to a small tree guard and returns at sunset, usually to an empty box or some new books.

Montes wants to address the dearth of brick-and-mortar bookstores in the Bronx and expand upon on the borough's literary access. "We deserve a literary community. There are plenty of readers in the Bronx even though we don't have a bookstore. It's almost as if it's by design that the Bronx doesn't have a bookstore," he said.

Though the Norwood

resident calls his crate "The Norwood Community Library," he seeks to complement the Mosholu Library and hopefully work with the staffers there, saying, "I would love to work out some co-programming. It would be great to have a book talk within the community in the future."

Aside from libraries and college bookshops, there have been no retail bookstores located in the Bronx since the Barnes & Noble in Co-Op City closed in early 2017. An indie bookstore called The Lit Bar plans to open in the South Bronx. There are numerous libraries in the borough that provide an expansive literary network, but travelling to them can be quite a commute for some.

Montes has been working on this book exchange program since Aug. 26 and has comprised his inventory of



BRANDON MONTES HOLDS UP Robert F. Kennedy's "Thirteen Days" alongside "The Norwood Community Library" book crate.

donations from friends and family, as well as books he purchases out of pocket.

Titles have ranged from bestsellers like Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* and Alex Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* to books

covering various genres, including self-help, current affairs, and health. He recently gave away 27 copies of George Orwell's "1984," a classic novel about the dangers of censorship. The book recently gained even more

attention following the election of President Donald Trump.

Montes grew up on 184th Street and Marion Avenue in Fordham Heights but has lived in Norwood for the last 12 years. He currently resides on Tryon Avenue.

A graduate of Fordham University, he is employed as a social worker for the city Administration for Child Services (ACS) and strives to be heavily involved in the community. "Being civically engaged is something that's important to me," Montes noted.

Montes promotes his work through social media and is considering reaching out to publishers for donation assistance. In the meantime, he says he will continue with what he has. "I'm going to keep this going until the weather won't let me. I don't plan on ending anytime soon."



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2x week for 8 weeks
Prices Starting for Members: \$65

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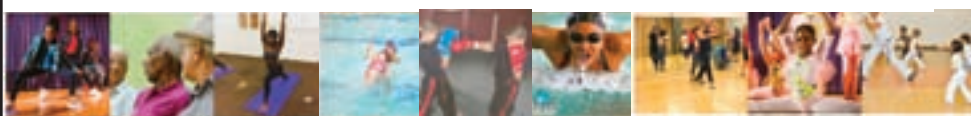


Swim Registration Starts:
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Wednesday, January 4th for Non-Members
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Prices Starting for Members: \$80

STEM Registration is Open:
Registration ends on February 9, 2019
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Prices start from \$450

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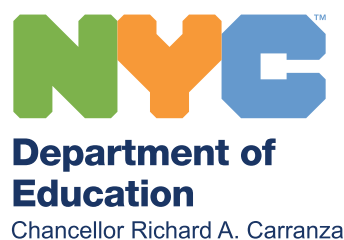


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CB7 Strongly Condemns CAMBA Housing Plan in Bedford Park

By DAVID CRUZ

Community Board 7 rejected a plan by a social services developer to build two buildings on properties where single homes once existed. The rejection opens the possibility for the developer to drastically alter the buildings.

Though advisory, the vote to send a letter to the city's Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) agency represents no confidence in the building projects by Brooklyn-based CAMBA Housing Venture. Over the summer several homes were knocked down at East 202nd and East 203rd streets to make way for the projects, representing the ongoing deterioration of single-family homes in Bedford Park.

Two weeks before the vote, neighborhood residents attended CB7's Land Use, Zoning & Housing Committee to hear the proposal. Turnout was unprecedented, with dozens of residents addressing concerns of overpopulation and more traffic congestion in a neighborhood originally built to be a northern suburb in the Bronx. Similar concerns over



Rendering images by CAMBA Housing Ventures

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 wrote a letter to NYC's Housing, Preservation and Development agency, opposing the construction of these two projects on East 202nd and East 203rd streets near East Mosholu Parkway South.

the project were even shared by Ted Weinstein, HPD's Bronx Planning director, who was in attendance at the committee meeting.

"The community concerns were many, including that it was a large building on a very narrow street and

how it would impact the services of the community," John Snider, chair of the committee, said at the Nov. 27 general board meeting.

The properties call for the construction of two buildings—one at 257-271 E. 202nd St. and the other at 258-278 E. 203rd St.—totaling 328 units. Thirty percent, or 100 of the buildings' units, will be set aside for homeless families and single adults.

A spokesperson for HPD told the *Norwood News* the project is in the early stages of development. Determining what housing financing programs CAMBA would apply for is also unclear, according to the spokesperson.

For its part, CAMBA will continue to keep an open ear for the neighborhood.

"CAMBA Housing Venture, Inc.'s plans in Bedford Park have not been finalized and we will continue to work with and listen to the Community Board and other stakeholders on this effort," a CAMBA spokesperson wrote in a statement to the *Norwood News*.

CAMBA Housing Ventures has several other properties in the Bronx, including the Mt. Eden and Claremont sections of the Bronx. The nonprofit's total assets in 2015 was \$12.7 million, according to its tax filings. Its CEO, Joanne M. Oplustil, makes half a million dollars.

The planned project at 257-271 E.

202nd St. includes the lot where a three-story building was hollowed out by a three-alarm fire in 2016. The building, at 267 E. 202nd St., was the center of a tenant-landlord dispute that the *Norwood News* covered extensively at the time.

Notorious Bronx developer Peter Fine began sending eviction notices to tenants before he officially bought the building, an underhanded method that drew condemnation from Community Board 7. CB7 and the building's tenants fought Fine, particularly as the building's condition and upkeep deteriorated.

Tenants went to the press and fought Fine in court, but their efforts for staying inside their home had limited success. In August 2016, a fire ripped through the two-story home, displacing all the families. The fire was deemed accidental, but it did set the wheels in motion for Fine to begin bulldozing the building.

CB7 pursued downzoning pock-ets of Bedford Park to ward off the ever-growing development phase, but the city Department of City Planning said in May 2016 that a downzoning is unlikely since the majority of the existing buildings are in compliance. A downzoning request is usually honored if the bulk of a neighborhood matches the existing layout of the property.

Additional reporting by Joseph Konig.

Train & Earn in the real world!



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--John Snider, CB7 Land Use, Zoning & Housing committee chair.



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BRONX CONNECTIONS: THE GANG IMPACT

PART 4 of 5

The Norwood News, WFUV Radio, and BronxNet Television continue their five-part series on the impact of gangs in the Bronx.

A Lone Private Eye's Quest to Take Down the Trinitarios

By JULIA RIST of



At first glance, Manuel Gomez, a private detective, comes across as a modern-day James Bond. His pen doubles as a recorder, reading glasses serve as a video recorder, and he carries a knife and DNA collector. Gomez also carries a 40-pound black briefcase with him at all times that contains handcuffs and a laptop.

Gomez, who operates in the Bronx, has a keen interest in bringing the violent Trinitarios gang down, and he uses his detective agency as a way to go after them.

The Trinitarios obtained national attention this past summer when a subset group called the Sunset Trinitarios viciously stabbed 15-year-old Lesandro "Junior" Guzman-Feliz to death in front of a bodega on Bathgate Avenue in the Bronx. Lesandro's death was a case of mistaken identity because the Sunset Trinitarios thought he belonged to their rival group, the Southies, another Trinitarios subset.

Gomez was the person who managed to find and release the video of Lesandro's murder to the media. He acquired the video from a next-door neighbor of the bodega where the attack took place. The video soon went viral, garnering millions of views online and sparking 'JusticeForJunior.' Gomez said that he wanted the video to prompt a sense of urgency in the NYPD and the Bronx District Attorney's office to investigate the Trinitarios.

"We need to eliminate them off the street and it's not about people just calling 911. People need to be involved in their community to make it safer," said Gomez. "If the Trinitarios realize they have nowhere to hide, the gang will dissipate."

The public's overall response to the video was complete outrage, particularly over how the Trinitarios targeted a young boy. The NYPD eventually arrested a total of 15 people in connection with the murder. Gomez said that the police are aggressively following all leads in response to the

public pressure that they're now facing. He said that he's given them several leads involving Trinitarios, but they didn't pursue them. The NYPD declined to comment.

The Trinitarios are a Dominican-American identified gang. They were founded on Rikers Island in 1989. According to a Rikers' insider, there are around 200 Trinitarios in Rikers in 2018. The gang has an estimated membership of 8,000 to 12,000 people in states like New York, Georgia and Pennsylvania. Gomez said that machetes are their weapon of choice.

"Their motto is, 'give me a knife because it never runs out of bullets,'" Gomez said. "With a gun, you can shoot 6 or 7 times and then it's no good, but a knife can stab all day long."

The Trinitarios are known for their excessive violence. The gang attacks in large groups, so the ratio of Trinitarios to the target is usually 15 to 1.

Gomez hasn't always been taking on the Trinitarios. Before he started Black Ops Private Investigators Inc., he worked as an 18th Airborne Division military intelligence officer in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Gomez has been in the military for 24 years and previously served in Afghanistan and also worked in the NYPD for 14 years as a police officer.

Gomez said he's different from other P.I.s because he only takes cases where he believes the client is innocent of any gang-related activity. "What I do is I go to the mom and I say, 'are you 95 percent sure your son or daughter is innocent because if you're not sure, I won't take the case,'" Gomez said. "If you hire me you have to be prepared for the truth because if I find out you're guilty, I'm going to know, and if you're innocent, I'm going to know."

Gomez has had a total of 142 cases over the course of his career as a private investigator in the Bronx. He's had to drop 44 of those cases after he learned his client was guilty of illegal activity. Of the 142 cases, 98 of them have gone to court, and his client has been successfully acquitted



Video still by BronxNet Television

PRIVATE DETECTIVE MANUEL Gomez walks with WFUV radio reporter Julia Rist as he outlines his life as a private eye.

of all charges in every single court appearance.

Since he opened the doors to his detective agency, Gomez has been investigating the Trinitarios. Enger Javier, a former Trinitario, was Gomez's first case. Javier was accused of being involved in the 2015 murder of Hansell Arias. Arias was stabbed repeatedly by Trinitarios members outside of an automobile shop on Claremont Avenue in the Bronx.

Javier's mother contacted Gomez to see if he could help with the case. It turned out that Javier was an innocent bystander to the stabbing. He spent two years at Rikers Island awaiting trial, but Gomez eventually found video proof of the murderer, Trinitario member Jose Muniz, killing Arias.

Gomez said that Javier's case is still special to him in that Javier was able to escape the Trinitarios and move away from New York.

"It was a rewarding feeling that I can't put into words," Gomez said. "I got to give a mother back her son and to prove his innocence. Then, I saw a family go from being poor and struggling to now. Javier owns a big house, has his own business, and he's living the American dream."

Muniz, who allegedly went on to kill Lesandro, posted a video on Facebook in Spanish featuring him bragging about Arias's death.

Gomez said that it's common for the Trinitarios to post videos on social media of themselves bragging about killing people. He said that the gang uses it as a recruitment tool.

"They make music videos showing the death of Junior, dealing drugs, money, girls and automatic weapons. This is insanity. They use social platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp to brag about their image and hype themselves up," Gomez said.

Though Muniz wasn't arrested for the Arias killing, he never left Gomez's radar. Gomez repeatedly wrote letters to the Bronx District Attorney to inform them of the danger Muniz poses.

Gomez said that if the Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark investigated Muniz over Arias' death, Lesandro would probably still be alive. "Junior died in vain. It was completely needless. I've been giving the Bronx DA the names of these serial killers for two years. I don't know what else I can do."

Patrice O'Shaughnessy, spokesperson for the Bronx District Attorney's Office, said that they cannot comment on any of Gomez's letters or pending cases involving the Trinitarios.

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Increasing Physical Activity: What to Do and Where to Go

By SHIRLEY SYMISTER

Even as winter approaches, there is still time to enjoy exercising outdoors. Grab a partner, a warm jacket, and comfortable shoes, and don't let the colder weather keep you from being healthier, especially as the new year draws near.

If you want to avoid indoor activity, there's plenty to do in the north Bronx, home to several beautiful parks in Norwood. There are several perfect areas for you to boost your heart rate and enjoy the scenery along the way:

The Williamsbridge Oval: The park has basketball courts, a soccer field, running track, playground, and a recreation center with classes for both youths and adults. It will soon be

home to a skating area for skateboarders. The Oval has something for everyone.

Van Cortlandt Park (West Gun Hill Road and Jerome Avenue): Trees, trails, and grassy hills await you at New York City's third largest park. If you are exercising with your kids, or your pets, further down the block is the Dog Bone Run and Sackerah Woods Playground.

Jerome Park: Next to the Jerome Park Reservoir between the Bronx High School of Science and Lehman College, a jogging path with great views is one of the best parts of this park.

Getting started is easy. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Ser-

vices recommends that adults should aim to do a combination of cardio and strength training exercises for at least two and a half hours each week. These hours can be broken up throughout the week, translating to just over 20 minutes of a workout each day.

Brisk walking, dancing, and biking for at least 10 minutes or longer are all examples of cardio as they raise your heart rate in a good way. Strength training exercises include lifting weights, working with resistance bands, sit-ups, or any type of activity that makes you use your body weight and hopefully shed some pounds.

While keeping the body active, you should also watch what you eat. A low-calorie diet combined with exercise is a surefire way of keeping yourself trim, particularly during the holiday season as parties and get-togethers can jeopardize that waistline.

For more information on physical activity and how to get more active, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov. For more information on Bronx parks, visit www.nycgovparks.org.

Shirley Symister is a project manager for Montefiore Health System's Office of Community & Population Health.

Benefit for Puerto Rico



Photo by Miriam Quinones

DANCERS AT LEHMAN College show off the Puerto Rican flag during their dance presentation at a charity concert event on Dec. 1. Monies raised from the event will fund transportation costs for college students from Lehman Leaders Involved for Everyone program. The students will be taking a humanitarian trip to Humacao, Puerto Rico to help build and supply an afterschool program. The concert also doubled as an awards presentation.

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Anger and Questions Linger After Three Bx. Post Offices Temporarily Shutter

By DAVID GREENE

The hustle and bustle of the holiday season came to an abrupt stop for more than a week at three local post offices in the Norwood and Allerton sections, after the United States Postal Service (USPS) announced rain from a recent storm flooded the three locations.

The three local post offices reopened Dec. 3 after being closed days before Thanksgiving. The Mosholu Post Office at 3464 Jerome Ave. posted a sign on the iron shutter gate read-

ing, "Closed due to flood." The paper sign was torn in half a day later.

USPS spokesman Xavier Hernandez confirmed Mosholu Post Office, along with the Van Cott Post Office at 3102 Decatur Ave. and the Allerton office at 2815 White Plains Rd. were also closed. They have since reopened with Hernandez saying the offices were under "an emergency suspension of services due to water damage."

Though the three post offices were operating once again, one

postal worker at the Webster Avenue branch near Bedford Park Boulevard seemed confused, asking, "If they're open, then why are they still sending people here?"

The Webster Avenue location was one of several post offices that had to manage the load of new customers. At the post office at 2549 Jerome Ave. in Fordham, hordes of customers jammed the office, making it difficult to enter or exit the building.

Outside that Jerome Avenue



Photo by David Greene

THE MOSHOLU POST Office on Jerome Avenue was shut for more than a week due to a flooding condition.

branch, Bedford Park resident Issac Ferris had just picked up some holiday packages, when he fumed, "I was in there, it felt like federal prison."

"Three fights broke out--two old ladies--they kicked them out. It took me almost three hours to get my packages. Déjà vu," said Ferris, referring to the Nov.15 storm that gridlocked the city and possibly shut the three post offices.

As days without regular postal service went on, questions and concerns were raised over the timing and the number of post offices that went down at once.

One elderly woman visiting the Mosholu location claimed, "Last year, the same thing happened and they closed. I had to go to [East] Gun Hill Road to send a letter."

Many customers also headed to the Williamsbridge Station at 711 E. Gun Hill Rd., which extended its hours to 7 p.m. Meantime, a mobile post office was parked in front of the Bronx

General Post Office at 558 Grand Concourse.

Grand Concourse resident Emilio Lopez was more understanding, though admitting "it's an inconvenience. [T]hey've got to do what they've got to do. It's better having a safe environment than a bad one... we just have to adjust," said Lopez, who was sending out his rent checks.

On why the post offices all suddenly went down, Hernandez of USPS said, "It's unclear if we can point to a single event as the cause, but weather is always a factor, and as soon as issues were identified, managers took swift action to avoid safety concerns for our employees and our customers."

Expressing his frustration, Alberto Nuñez, a resident of East 208th Street, blurted out, "It's pretty awful, especially for the people who live locally. It's kind of a pain in the ass to go all the way down Gun Hill Road and to come here with all your packages. That's crazy."



Photo by David Greene

LONG LINES AT the post office at 2549 Jerome Ave. in Fordham became the norm for about a week when three other Bronx post offices temporarily closed.

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Bright Smiles for Chanukah Lights



Photo by Joseph Konig

ASSEMBLYMAN JEFF DINOWITZ (c) is all smiles as he stands alongside (l-r) Councilman Andrew Cohen, Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) Executive Director Rita Santelia, parents, and young MMCC participants, during the lighting of the second candle on the menorah alongside the center on Dec. 3, celebrating Chanukah. The Festival of Lights runs from sundown Dec. 2 through Dec. 10 at sundown.

Report: Quarter of the Bronx Still Food Insecure

By **JOSEPH KONIG**

A new report shows more than a quarter of the Bronx's population live in food insecure households. That is down from 29 percent in a period from 2012-14, but still higher than pre-recession levels.

Bronx elected officials, and activist and community leaders gathered the day before Thanksgiving at Part of the Solution Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry (POTS) on Webster Avenue to discuss the report by Hunger Free America and measures that can be taken to reduce food insecurity.

"When you invest in families and you provide them with access to food, you can change their lives," Councilwoman Vanessa Gibson, representing the west Bronx, said. "The fact that the numbers are not yet where we want them to be just signifies the work that must continue."

Despite the slight decrease in food insecurity in the period studied (2015-17) from the previous period (2012-14), the report shows that the rate of food insecurity in the Bronx is by far the city's highest. The citywide average is 12.8 percent of households, or 1,090,936 people.

Food insecurity is categorized by the USDA – the federal agency that produced the data Hunger for America used in its report — as "low food security" and "very low food security." A low food security household has reduced access to quality and variety of diet, while maintaining sustainable caloric levels. A household with "very low food security" is one with "disrupted eating patterns" and "reduced food intake." According to Hunger for America, 290,469 people in the Bronx can be placed in one of those two categories, second only to Brooklyn's 368,799 in total population.

Susan Resch, a community organizer for Hunger for America, relies on SNAP benefits. The day of the news conference, she spoke through tears on how SNAP benefits help her and others in New York City.

"Thank God for SNAP and people who follow what Jesus said to do: feed my sheep and feed my lands," Resch said. "SNAP benefits are considered one of the fastest and most effective forms of economic stimulus... for everyone \$1 billion cut [in funding, there will be] 11,437 lost jobs."



Photo by Joseph Konig

COUNCILMAN ANDY KING (L) speaks at a news conference announcing the latest findings on hunger in the Bronx. He stands alongside Hunger Free America CEO Joel Berg.

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Canned Food Drive

The office of Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, 3107 Kingsbridge Ave., is accepting canned goods for its annual food drive. 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.

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.

Coat Drive

Crunch Fitness Gym is collecting usable coats to be donated to military veterans. Coats can be dropped off at Crunch Fitness Gym, 3170 Webster Ave., during normal business hours—5 a.m. to 11 p.m. on weekdays, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. on weekends. For more information, call Emmanuel Martinez at (347) 909-0726.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Holiday Tree Lightings

The public is invited to attend the following community holiday tree lightings:

Dec. 6 at 6 p.m. - Hosted by Bronx Community Board 7, at Mosholu Parkway Lawn at the intersection of Mosholu Parkway and Bainbridge Avenue. Featured are caroling, hot apple cider, holiday cookies, goodie bags giveaway and local elected officials. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

Dec. 11 from 6 to 8 p.m. - Hosted by Jerome Gun Hill BID, at Jerome Avenue and East Mosholu Parkway. Featured are free toys for children, holiday shopping guides, pictures with Santa, and hot cocoa. For more information, call (718) 324-4946.

Onstage

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Chamber Music Concert**, featuring the Celia Cruz H.S. Orchestra, Dec. 8 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Lehman College for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **José Feliciano in Feliz Navidad**, Dec. 8 at 8 p.m. (tickets: \$50 to \$65; \$100/VIP; \$10/to age 12); **Soweto Gospel Choir**, Dec. 9 at 4 p.m., to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Nelson Mandela (tickets: \$25 to \$45; \$10/to age 12); and **Special Holiday**



File photo by Adi Talwar

BE THERE ON Dec. 11 as the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District lights up its holiday tree at the corner of East Mosholu Parkway North and Jerome Avenue (see Editor's Pick for more information).

Celebration, Dec. 15 at 8 p.m. featuring salsa performers (tickets: \$50 to \$65; \$100/VIP). VIP tickets include pre-concert reception at 6:30 p.m. with wine and hors d'oeuvres. For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

Lehman College and Community Latin Jazz Ensemble presents free **cabaret-concert** program, "Let the Winter Be HOT!" in Lehman's Music Building, in the 3rd floor Hearth Room, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., preceded by a **mambo dance workshop**, Dec. 16 at 2 p.m. Refreshments will be available. For more information, call (718) 960-8247.

The Riverdale Choral Society presents two performances: **Music of Bach & Faure**, at the Christ Church Riverdale, 5030 Henry Hudson Pkwy. (West 252nd Street), with organ and orchestral accompaniment, Dec. 9 at 3 p.m. (\$25); and **Handel's Messiah Sing-Along**, at the Riverdale Presbyterian Church, 4765 Henry Hudson Pkwy. (247th Street on west side of parkway), free and open to the public. Guests are invited to bring scores or scores will be provided; come to sing or come to listen, Dec. 16 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 543-2219.

Bronx Arts Ensemble presents **Bronx Holiday With Manhattan Brass**, brass quintet performing jazzed up seasonal and other favorites, free with museum admission, at the Bartow Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd., Dec. 9 at 1 p.m. For more information, call (718) 885-1461.

Events

Williamsbridge Oval presents two free events: **Literacy Day: Reading Rainbow**: bring your favorite book and enjoy stories and snacks (youth can choose a book to bring home), Dec. 6 from 4 to 6 p.m.; and **Winter Wonderland**: arts and crafts, carnival games, music, and pictures with Santa, Dec. 15 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

The New York Botanical Garden presents its annual **Holiday Train Show**, through Jan. 21, 2019, featuring miniature replicas of many NYC building replicas made from natural materials including bark, twigs, fruit and pine cones. For more detailed

information, show schedule, and rates, call (718) 817-8700.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Put Wave Hill in the Palm of Your Hand, to trace your hand to make a palm-shaped amulet, Dec. 8 and 9; and Winter Birdy Marionettes, to make bird marionettes to hang, Dec. 15 and 16; both in the WH House, 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 Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse (167th Street), presents **Image of an Image**, featuring the work of Bronx-born native Rochelle Feinstein, through March 3, 2019. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

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

Library Events

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for adults: **Microsoft Word 2010 for Beginners**: Dec. 11 at 2 p.m.; **Computer Basics**: Dec. 14 at 2 p.m.; and **film**: "I Can Only Imagine," Dec. 15 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), crafts, Dec. 7 and 14; **STEM: Kids' Science at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), "building," Dec. 11 and 18; and **Toddler Storytime at 11 a.m.**: (ages 18 months to 3 years), interactive stories, action songs, fingerplays, and crafts, Dec. 13 and 20. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **film**: "Ant-Man and the Wasp," Dec. 8 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can attend **Knitting Circle**: Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for children ages 5 to 12: **film**: "Christopher Robin," Dec. 15 at 2 p.m.; and **Winter Extravaganza**: fun, story, hot cocoa and cookie decorating, Dec. 20 at 3:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Dec. 10 for the next publication date of Dec. 20.

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\$3 Mil Roof Fix for Bailey Houses

(continued from page 1)

crumbling in some places. Members of the Bailey Houses Residents Council said they hoped the new roof would include green space or solar panels.

For now, however, the tenants will just have to cross their fingers and hope the winter months leaves the roof relatively intact. Snow could exacerbate existing problems, as it did in November when the surprise snowstorm on Nov. 15 left the building without power for two days. Residents reported their fuse boxes were flooded by runoff from the snow.

"It was horrible," Bailey Houses Residents Council president Tiesha Jones said. "It leaked all the way down to my apartment – I live on the 13th floor."

While there have been some repairs to the building, including the roof, residents said the efforts have largely been ineffective.

"They patch up one side, it'll stop, and then the other side is affected," Jones said. "And then when they patch this side up, it goes back. It's like Russian Roulette."

With Pichardo's \$3 million allocation, residents are hopeful the repairs will happen, but they have enough experience with the beleaguered Housing Authority to feel skeptical as well. The *Norwood News* reported on the water damage and NYCHA's mishandling of the situation back in April.

Jones felt positive about the new funding but said she would believe roof repairs are coming when she sees it.

"We don't want to focus on negatives right now; we want to focus on the positives, on NYCHA's strengths. And they have accepted some accountability," Jones said. "And with this funding, I know NYCHA will move forward as fast as possible to get the roof fixed so that these residents can tackle their health issues."

A Bronx jury awarded Jones \$57 million in January after agreeing that NYCHA failed to inspect Jones' apartment at Fort Independence Houses – the sister property just around the corner from Bailey Houses – for lead. Jones' toddler was found to have lead levels 10 times the normal rate, leaving her developmentally delayed. Jones herself dealt with depression. Now, Jones wants to help her new neighbors improve the health conditions of the Bailey

Houses.

"We have experienced asthma, mold and some mental illness coming home to the conditions that are arising here," Jones said. An estimated 68 percent of the nearly 1000 residents in the Bailey Houses suffer from asthma, according to a yet-to-be-published joint survey by St. Barnabas Hospital and the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC).

"If you have to take days off from getting sick or your child getting sick... that could cause you to lose your job, which creates this cycle of poverty," Pichardo said. "People might say we're fixing the roof, we're fixing a building, but what we're trying to do is repair a lot of lives here and create more healthy conditions."

Leah James, lead organizer for NWBCCC's economic development team, said that the survey was part of the Bronx Healthy Buildings Program, an initiative linked to the Bronx Partners for Healthy Communities. The program's goals include promoting community health "by addressing upstream causes of asthma-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations," according to a presentation NWBCCC submitted to the New York State Department of Health in September.

As they toured the building, James and the Healthy Buildings team handed out hypoallergenic pillow cases, bedsheets, asthma machines and other materials to help combat asthma in the building. Residents were also taught to avoid asthma triggers while learning where they can go to get help should they spot the warning signs of asthma.

"We're working as a collective and as a community to make an example to show that this can be done and have hope," James said.

The health issues represent the string of systemic issues continuing throughout NYCHA's network of 574 buildings.

On Dec. 3, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. called NYCHA the city's worst landlord after touring the Patterson Houses, where tenants in the South Bronx NYCHA complex were without water over the weekend. Diaz Jr. called Mayor Bill de Blasio's inability to improve NYCHA's bureaucratic and physical infrastructure "the height of progressive hypocrisy."

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