



NORWOOD NEWS

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
\$2B NYCHA FIX PLEDGE | PG. 4



SEE PICTURES: BRONX POLAR BEARS'
DIP AT ORCHARD BEACH | PG. 10

RITE AID CLOSURE STUNS BEDFORD PK. LOCALS

Impact could be felt greatest by Serviam Garden residents



Photo by Alondra Vasquez

RITE AID AT 239 E. 198th St. in Bedford Park on its last day, closing on Feb. 5. The closure surprised residents at nearby Serviam Gardens.

By ALONDRA VASQUEZ

Gloria Murray, 70, a resident at the Serviam Gardens senior home in Bedford Park, will no longer be able to pick up her prescriptions at her local Rite Aid.

The sign taped to the pharmacy's front door at 239 E. 198th St., just two blocks from the affordable housing complex, said it all: "Hello Rite Aid Customers. We are closing at 7 p.m. today. Thanks for choos-

ing us as your favorite store. Sorry for the inconvenience." The sign was posted Feb. 5, the date the store permanently closed.

The closure adds a greater layer of inconvenience for residents at Serviam Gardens and its recently opened sister senior housing complex, Serviam Heights, totaling 439 units and home to hundreds of seniors on fixed incomes.

"Rite Aid is usually where I

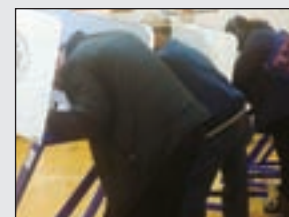
get my medication. I shop there because it is close to us here," said Murray.

It was at Serviam Gardens where many residents also relied on the pharmacy giant's free flu shot, with a nurse often stopping by to administer the shots in September over the last few years, essentially bringing the service to residents. Administrators at Serviam Gardens are now hoping another provider steps in

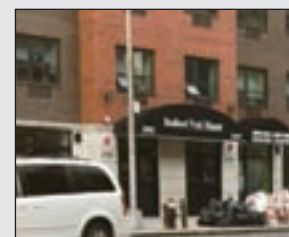
to offer the vaccine.

Beside medications, Murray will also miss the store's rain checks, a type of coupon that allows customers to buy an out-of-stock sales item once it's in stock again for the same sales price. For Murray, being denied a rain check signaled the end. "I went in there to ask for a rain check and the manager said, 'We have stopped giving out rain checks because

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**IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST****Special Election for NYC Public Advocate's Race Set for 2/26****By JOSEPH KONIG**

Seventeen candidates are on the ballot for the New York City Public Advocate special election race on Feb. 26, but voting will be harder than just picking the Democrat or the Republican. Due to the circumstances of the race, each candidate is running on their own unique party line. For example, former New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito is running on the "Fix the MTA" line and

Queens Assemblyman Ron Kim is running on the "No Amazon" line.

The winner of the Feb. 26 election will only hold the office for a few months before the September primaries. Mayor Bill de Blasio called for the special election after former Public Advocate Letita James was elected to be the state attorney general. However, city law mandates a primary and general election be held this fall to determine who will serve the rest of James'

term that expires in 2021. To make matters even more confusing, current City Council Speaker Corey Johnson is serving as interim Public Advocate until the Feb. 26 election.

The *Norwood News* has compiled a list of all the candidates in the order in which their name appears on the ballot, their party line, and a brief biography to help voters determine who they want to see as the next public advocate.

**Melissa Mark-Viverito**
Fix the MTA

The former City Council Speaker has remained active since she was term-limited in 2017. Last year, she was one of Cynthia Nixon's surrogates as Nixon primaried Governor Andrew Cuomo from the left. Like Nixon, Mark-Viverito has made the dilapidated MTA the focus of her campaign, proposing to direct the tax revenue from recreational marijuana legalization.

**Dawn L. Smalls**
No More Delays

Smalls is an attorney and a long-time Democratic operative running as a first-time candidate, frequently referring to herself as an "outsider" to city politics. She served in both the Clinton and Obama administrations. While she currently is a partner at a Manhattan law firm, she has also worked for large philanthropic organizations like the Open Society and Ford Foundations. For the last three and a half years, she has served as a commissioner on the Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) in Albany.

**Michael A. Blake**
For the People

The South Bronx assemblyman is no stranger to the public advocate race. He was the campaign manager for Reshma Saujani, a candidate for public advocate in 2013, who ultimately lost. Backed by much of the Bronx Democratic Party establishment, Blake is running on his three and a half years in the Assembly and his experience working in the Obama administration. Blake is running on a platform of jobs and justice "for the people," with plans that target shady landlords and the MTA. Earlier in February, the Albany Times Union reported Blake was a paid consultant for a political party in Bermuda, but he refuted that he violated any law that would require him to register as a foreign agent. It's unclear whether Blake will relinquish his post as vice chair of the Democratic National Committee.

**Eric A. Ulrich**
Common Sense

The Queens councilman is one of two Republicans running for the position, hoping a 16-way split of the Democratic vote will allow him to sneak in as the first Republican elected to citywide office since Mayor Michael Bloomberg in 2005. Ulrich, a self-identified anti-Trump, moderate Republican, argues that he would be more independent of the mayor than the other candidates who more closely align with de Blasio on ideological terms.

**Ydanis Rodriguez**
Unite Immigrants

The Upper Manhattan City councilman is running on a pro-immigrant platform, calling for a bill that would allow immigrants with green cards and work permits to vote in local elections. Rodriguez has also touted education reform, citing his experience as a New York City public school teacher.

Public and Community Meetings

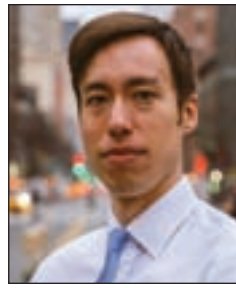
COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting on Feb. 26 at the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., at 6:30 p.m. CB7 committee meetings are held on the following dates at the board office, 229A E. 204th St. at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Health & Human Services Committee on Feb. 19; Executive Committee on Feb. 20; and Economic Development & Long-Term Planning Committee on Feb. 27. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets Feb. 28 at 7 p.m. at Scott Towers, 3400 Paul Ave. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.



Daniel J. O'Donnell
Equality for All

A key figure in the movement to legalize gay marriage in New York, the Manhattan assemblyman has argued his career as a public defender and trailblazing legislator have prepared him for the role of public advocate. City & State magazine reported O'Donnell's campaign put out promotional material that falsely included endorsements from Congressman Anthony Brindisi and Queens Assemblywoman Michele Titus.



Benjamin L. Yee
Community Strong

Yee is the Secretary of the Manhattan Democratic Party and the vice president of the national Young Democrats of America. He worked as the New York digital director on the Obama 2008 campaign and later revamped IT infrastructure for Democrats in Albany.



Anthony Tony Herbert
Residents First

Herbert is a community activist based in Brooklyn who works to promote minority-owned businesses through his roles in the NAACP and the African American International Chamber of Commerce. He has worked in the offices of City Councilwoman Priscilla Wooten and Congressman Edolphus Towns.



Rafael L. Espinal Jr.
Livable City

Espinal Jr. is a Brooklyn councilman and a rising star in New York City politics. On the City Council, Espinal Jr. helped create the Office of Nightlife, ban the "Cabaret Law," and secure over \$250 million for his district to address infrastructure and housing concerns after Mayor de Blasio announced an affordable housing rezoning plan in 2014. Recently, he has been a notable backer of the NYCHA rent strike.



A. Manny Alicandro
Better Leaders

Unlike Ulrich, Alicandro is an unapologetic supporter of Republican President Donald J. Trump. The Brooklyn-based attorney told the New York Post he had spoken to the President, who encouraged him to run.



Nomiki D. Konst
Pay Folks More

A former investigative journalist and longtime Democratic activist, Konst has campaigned on stripping the Public Advocate's office of its political aspects and refocus it as an independent check on the powers-that-be. Konst said she would call to remove the public advocate from the mayoral line of succession and form deputy public advocate positions in each City Council district. A former Bernie Sanders surrogate, Konst has landed high-profile endorsements from Rosario Dawson, Cornel West, and Democratic presidential hopeful Rep. Tulsi Gabbard.



Helal A. Sheikh
Friends of Helal

Sheikh is a public school teacher who immigrated to America from Bangladesh when he was 17. Sheikh ran in the Democratic primary for the 32nd Council District in 2017, losing to the Democrat who was ultimately defeated by now-public advocate contender Ulrich. In 2013, Sheikh ran in the Democratic primary for 37th Council District, losing to another public advocate contender, Espinal Jr.



Latrice M. Walker
Power Forward

The Brooklyn assemblywoman will appear on the ballot, but only because the Board of Elections refused to remove her despite her request. After entering the crowded race in December, Walker stopped campaigning in January and skipped the first debate on NY1.



Jumaane D. Williams
It's Time, Let's Go

Fresh off an unsuccessful primary challenge to Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, Williams has used the momentum (and network of endorsements) from that race to launch himself into this one. An activism-minded politician with Tourette's syndrome and ADHD, Williams has been criticized for missing City Council committee meetings due to his campaigning over the last year.



David Eisenbach
Stop REBNY

Eisenbach was the sole challenger to Letitia James in the 2017 Democratic primary, receiving 23.42 percent of the vote. A historian who teaches courses on LG-BTQ history, media and politics at Columbia University, Eisenbach has hosted several History Channel shows and written several history books.



Ron Kim
No Amazon

The Queens assemblyman is a vocal opponent of the deal that would bring Amazon's second headquarters to his borough. While this view is held by most, if not all, of his opponents in this race, Kim has made his opposition central to his campaign. In October, he called on the state to end subsidies for companies like Amazon and use that tax revenue to eliminate student debt in New York.



Jared Rich
Jared Rich for NYC

Rich, a Brooklyn born-and-bred attorney, has a section on his campaign website titled, "Who is This Guy??" His campaign slogan is "a litigator who will fight and a negotiator who will listen." Rich has argued his lack of political experience will lend itself to the office of public advocate, which is intended to be an independent voice to counter the mayor and City Hall.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers living in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments in the Bronx about the recent decision for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to oversee NYCHA, and the city's \$2.2 billion commitment for NYCHA repairs over the next decade.



I'm all for that because right now we don't even have heat in the building, no heat at all. We have running hot water, but no heat. We've had no heat since yesterday. It comes on and off. They keep saying they're repairing it. The elevator keeps breaking down. Sometimes we have to go up and down from the 10th floor. We put in for repairs and a guy took pictures of our apartment, and we don't hear from them for another year or two and it seems like every day there's something new that's wrong. It's crazy. They need to get their act together. Some of these NYCHA executives are not doing anything so they need to get to the bottom of this.

Gabriel Alicea
Fort Independence Houses



I don't think the budget really makes a difference, I think their policy is what actually needs to change and some of the actual staff needs to be rearranged. I think we've always had the money, but the corruption and poor policymaking is what keeps that money allocated in other places (i.e. the recent scandals at NYCHA, and the sex parties with money being funneled through the buildings). We have to clear that up first or it's not going to make a difference what contracts we get until we clear that up. Repair times are astronomical, it's not consistent. It could take a week or two or it could take a year to two years; just depends on how they prioritize it. No one knows.

Joey Marciano
Fort Independence Houses



It's about time. Yes, it will help, we have no heat right now. I don't know how cold it is right now, but my house the heat is on. But it's extremely low and you can't feel it. Plus, we have no hot water and no sign on the door saying we have no hot water. All winter, nothing's changed. I just got my floors fixed from June of last year. My husband just got assaulted outside of these projects by some [tenants]. I'm about to get a transfer out of here now and they raised my rent to \$1,138 and I'm on public assistance that pays \$400 and they're going to raise my rent like that, trying to evict me. Yes, they need to change the management here.

Sade Douglas
Pelham Parkway Houses



I don't know if it will change anything, but maybe. Hopefully. I'm a person that gets up at 4 in the morning. No one wants to get up at 4 in the morning to go to work when there's no hot water or any heat. It's been out all weekend, there's barely any heat. It's been on and off all winter. It's a constant battle with them all year round. The rodents, the roaches, always taking over and the lack of repairs; the walls are crumbling. When the workers come, they don't care; they do half-assed jobs or they do Band-Aid work. They need better workers who take the initiative and do their jobs well.

Annette Bonilla
Gun Hill Houses



My thoughts are that I don't think it will improve much because of all the speculation that's been going on now with all the funding they've been getting, and they haven't done anything for the residents. Our apartments are still the same. They haven't repaired the old pipes; the refrigerators and ovens haven't been replaced after 15 or 20 years. They're moldy. It's just a hot mess over here. Yes, we need a whole new management team and we need to fix NYCHA. I've lived here for more than 20 years and I still have the same refrigerator, oven, and cabinets and now they're moldy and roaches are coming out of it. And the rent just keeps going up!

Guillermo Otro
The Justice Sonia Sotomayor Houses



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Opinion

Community Boards: One of New York City's Greatest Resources

By **COUNCILMAN
FERNANDO CABRERA**

The 59 community boards throughout New York City are probably one of the least understood and most undervalued resources for neighborhood residents. Mandated by the New York City Charter, community boards have up to 50 non-paid voting members who are New York City residents and live or have a business, professional or other

major interest in the district. The Charter requires each board to appoint a district manager who serves as a liaison to community residents and run the daily operations of the board and its office.

The Charter assigns many responsibilities to community boards requiring them to address the well-being of the district, including planning for community needs; participating in the

City's budget process and capital program; monitoring and evaluating service delivery; communicating with the residents of the district; and conducting the board's business.

To carry out this mandate, community boards must hold regular meetings for the community; help city agencies and departments provide information to the people of the district; consult with agencies on the program needs of the district; hold public hearings on capital needs; submit capital and expense budget priorities to the mayor; and submit a Community Board District Needs Statement, used in making decisions for locating proposed facilities in each borough. Community boards also have a major responsibility in land use, which provides an opportunity for residents to participate in the development and improvement of the district.

If this sounds like a lot of work, it is! As a former member of Bronx Community Board 7, I have first-hand experience with the important role of these agencies and the challenges of meeting the demands of the Charter's mandate.

Community development rezoning requires the expertise and skills of urban planners. Rising costs of housing, overcrowding and strains on infrastructure and public services increase constituent concerns that community boards must address. Outreach and efforts to increase constituent participation in board meetings and land use decisions are restricted by inadequate space, inadequate technology, and staff is overburdened. Between 2012 and 2016 there was no increase in community board base budgets and only

modest increases in 2016 and 2017.

Last year, I convened the first ever citywide community board conference call seeking input from each board on its needs. In Fiscal Year 2019, I secured more than \$2.5 million for community boards, a total of \$42,500 for each of the 59 boards. I also introduced legislation to help community boards better serve our neighborhoods including requiring the Board of Standards and Appeals to notify a community board when a local business' permit or variance is about to expire; providing parking permits to community board chairpersons; and requiring notification and approval of community boards for all on- or off-site liquor sale establishments.

I co-prime sponsored a bill to require the Department of Social Services to give more advanced notice to NYPD, FDNY and community boards before the opening of a shelter or other group facility. I will again be asking for additional funding in the FY 2020 budget.

Community boards are vital players in decisions that affect all our neighborhoods. The work required to do this is extensive and reflects the strong commitment of board members and staff to the districts they serve. But this effectiveness is greatly increased by the input and participation of the people they serve. Get involved in your local community board.

Go to a meeting, join a committee. Be a voice in the decisions affecting your neighborhood. Join me in strengthening our community boards and all of the Bronx.

Councilman Fernando Cabrera has served the 14th Council District of the Bronx since January 2010.



Letters To The Editor

Defining Real-Money Pay Cut

The last issue of the *Norwood News* [Jan. 31 - Feb. 13, 2019] had only one item that had mistakes. That was my letter and not on my part.

The opening sentence of paragraph three should have read, "Giving workers real-money pay cut contracts is not a new idea." The words "cut contracts" were left out. When speaking to editor David Cruz, I was informed that not only he, but his entire staff, did not know what a real-money pay cut was. And this is a newspaper?

If you get a 1 percent raise and infla-

tion rises 3 percent, that's a real-money pay cut. Workers have been getting these for decades. That's why so many positions that used to pay decent salaries no longer do so.

Cruz says that the term that he never heard of in the first place is arcane. Perhaps if people were aware of what a real-money pay cut was, they would be fighting them. They might also be more critical of Mayor Bill de Blasio when he sticks city workers with them.

Richard Warren
Van Cortlandt Village

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New York City Agencies

NY Police Dept. 52nd Precinct, 3016 Webster Ave., (718) 220-5811

Deputy Inspector Thomas Alps, Commanding Officer

NY Fire Dept., N. Bronx Firehouse, 2928 Briggs Ave., (718) 430-0279

NY Dept. of Sanitation Action Line, (212) 219-8090

NY Dept. of Environmental Protection Helpline (air, noise, hazardous materials, water - including open fire hydrants), (718) 337-4357

Community Board 7, 229A E. 204th St., (718) 933-5650

Chair: Jean Hill; District Mgr.: Ischia Bravo

Elected Representatives

NY State Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz, Dist. 81, 3107 Kingsbridge Ave., (718) 796-5345

NY State Assembly Member Nathalia Fernandez, Dist. 80, 1126 Pelham Pkwy. S., (718) 409-0109

NY City Council Member Andrew Cohen, Dist. 11, 3450 DeKalb Ave., (718) 549-7300

NY State Senator Jamaal Bailey, Dist. 32, 959 E. 233rd St., (718) 547-8854

Recreation

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NEWS BRIEFS

The Bronx Plan

Three schools in Kingsbridge and Fordham are slated to get an extra boost to “reach their greatness.” Kingsbridge International High School, the High School for Teaching and the Professions, and Fordham Leadership Academy are among the Bronx’s 50 schools chosen for the so-called Bronx Plan. The initiative, announced by Mayor Bill de Blasio, offers extra resources in the way of new curricular materials, teacher training, and a “hard-to-staff” differential pay starting the next school year to keep them at these struggling schools.

—David Cruz

Catholic School Closures

Two Bronx Catholic schools will be closed by the end of the school year, officials with the Archdiocese of New York announced. St. Nicholas of Tolentine Elementary School in the Fordham Heights area and St. Joseph Elementary School in Tremont will shutter. Funding was the determining factor in this decision. The Archdiocese said in a statement it’s open to helping parents of students apply to another Catholic school.

—Sha-Nia Alston

BronxNet Hosting Class

Gary Axelbank, host of “Bronx Talk with Gary Axelbank” and “Bronx Buzz,” will lend his television talents at a workshop on television hosting. Classes run through Feb. 27 at BronxNet’s flagship TV studio at the Lehman College campus in Bedford Park. Students will learn how to better engage their audience and strengthen on-air skills for the camera and other media.

—Sha-Nia Alston

No Parking at Jerome Avenue Stretch

A new no parking zone has been temporarily issued for Jerome Avenue between Woodlawn Cemetery and Shandler Road through Feb. 28 so crews can install a new 72’ trunk water main. Vehicles found in violation of signage posted in advance by the

On Cusp of Averted Gov’t. Shutdown, Norwood Bank Offers Free Tax Help

By DAVID GREENE

As a possible federal government shutdown loomed days before federal lawmakers reached a deal, Bronxites converged at one local bank for some to have their taxes prepared and filed before their refunds are stalled.

On Feb. 7, Ridgewood Savings Bank, the largest mutual savings bank in New York State, announced it had partnered with non-profit tax professionals Ariva, in offering free tax preparation at two of its Bronx branches, including one at 3445 Jerome Ave. in Norwood. Customers arrived at the Jerome Avenue branch on Feb. 9 and 10 with documents in hand and met with a tax specialist and e-filed their returns the same day.

Few seats were available as one group filled out the required forms, another group waited for an accountant and still another group was sitting with the accountants, doing the actual taxes.

“We’re pleased to be partnering with Ariva in providing this valuable service to residents of our local communities,” Ridgewood Savings Bank President and CEO Leonard Stekol said. “As a community bank, we’re mindful of working closely with the people in the neighborhoods we serve, so we can help them reach their financial goals.”

At the announcement, Irene Baldwin, the executive director of Ariva, said, the service is “very popular with neighborhood residents.”

Baldwin added, “It is all the more important this year with all of the changes in the tax law to have high quality professional tax assistance



Photo by David Greene

BRONXITES WORK WITH tax specialists at Ridgewood Savings Bank in preparing their tax returns.

and we really encourage folks... to take advantage of this service.”

According to Dominic Ciaccio, the CRA officer at the bank, explained, “We’re very busy, I believe we saw 80 individuals today, that we were able to help with their taxes. We’re getting them in and out and basically getting their taxes done at no cost.”

Ridgewood Savings Bank has been offering the free service to customers for about the last six years. Their service is similar to those offered by Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, which offers free tax prep services for income-eligible clients.

East Gun Hill Road resident Renee Narvaez was busy filling out her forms, when she said she “found out about it from a sign on the door.” She excitedly added, “Yes, it’s free and I get a tax refund this year.”

Ciaccio said that residents have two more chances on Saturday, March 9, at the office of Community Board 12, located at 4101 White Plains Road and Saturday, March 16, at the Ridgewood Saving Bank at 711 Allerton Ave., where 60 to 70 residents will be seen on both dates.

Eligible individuals include single taxpayers with no dependents earning less than \$30,000 and individuals with dependents earning less than \$55,000.

Editor’s Note: *Eligible residents can reserve a space by calling (917) 509-4609 or email: vkancler@ridgewoodbank.com. Interested parties should bring a photo ID, social security card and Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) as well as all income statements, tax forms, W-2 and 1099 forms and other documentation of child care payments and/or charitable donations.*

contractor will be towed to other locations nearby. Sidewalks access may be temporarily restricted as well. For questions on the no parking zone, residents can contact the 52nd Precinct at (718) 220-5811 or Community Construction Liaison (CCL) Yosha-belle Desulme’s direct line at (718) 644 2065.

—Sha-Nia Alston

Jerome Corner Open to Traffic

The formerly closed off southeast

corner of Jerome Avenue and Gun Hill Road is now open to traffic. Cars travelling north on Jerome no longer need to wait behind a bus waiting at the stop, but can pass it on the right. Parking is prohibited.

—Judy Noy

Desus and Mero

Good news for fans of local comedians Desus Nice, an alumnus of the College of Mount Saint Vincent in Riverdale, and the Kid Mero, who gradu-

ated from DeWitt Clinton High School in Norwood: The pair will debut their new hour-long weekly comedy show titled *Desus and Mero*, on Feb. 21 at 11 p.m. on Showtime. The pair previously co-starred in a late-night show of the same name on Viceland. Their guests included notable Bronx personalities such as Cardi B, MSNBC’s Chris Hayes, Fat Joe, Rubén Diaz Jr., Neil DeGrasse Tyson and the Yankees’ CC Sabathia.

—Emily Suzanne Lever

Norwood Among Nabes Targeted For Lead Awareness Campaign

By EMILY SUZANNE LEVER

City health officials are sounding the alarm about lead poisoning that comes not from peeling paint but everyday foods and cosmetics.

The city Department of Health & Mental Hygiene announced a lead prevention awareness campaign—which will include flyers, trainings and outreach through community organizations—targeted specifically at South Asian immigrants, who are particularly at risk.

The rollout is part of LeadFreeNYC announced at North Central Bronx Hospital on Jan. 28 by Mayor Bill de Blasio, who pegged it as a roadmap to the “literal eradication” of childhood lead exposure. The initiative includes free blood lead level testing and lead inspections for every residential unit in the city.

A 2016 study by the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* found elevated blood lead levels in 20 percent of adults and 15 percent of children in the New York City South Asian community—more than four times the citywide rate. Lead poisoning can harm children’s physical and mental development and can cause miscarriages in pregnant women, as well

as organ damage in all adults.

DOH officials said it will raise awareness about products used by the South Asian community—including spices, kohl (a thick, dark eyeliner) and sindoor (a red powder worn by brides)—which may have high levels of lead. Ayurvedic medicines, an ancient form of medical treatment with roots in India, is known to also have lead.

The existence of lead in products largely used by the South Asian community is not new. The FDA issued a recall on turmeric that contained lead in 2016, and New York City banned the sale of imported kohl in 2007.

In Norwood, home to a growing South Asian community, this informational campaign will likely have its work cut out.

“There’s not much awareness, there’s not much coverage in the newspaper or TV,” said Nafiu Hoque, a pharmacy specialist at ZamZam Pharmacy in Norwood. “I don’t know if people know about the dangers of lead or can even define what lead is.”

Many locals expressed shock when they heard that their everyday staples

ASK YOUR DOCTOR TO TEST YOUR CHILD FOR LEAD

Lead in peeling paint poisons children.

- Tell your landlord to fix peeling paint. It’s the law.
- Wash floors, windowsills, hands, and toys often.



GET YOUR CHILD TESTED AT AGES 1 AND 2.
CALL 311 TO LEARN MORE OR VISIT NYC.GOV/LEAD

NYC
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & MENTAL HYGIENE

Image courtesy New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene

WEB ADVERTISEMENTS LIKE this look to educate the South Asian communities on the dangers of lead in products.

might be toxic. Taniya, 24, said she had not heard of the informational campaign about lead in consumer products, but regularly ate her mother’s food, spiced with

turmeric and chili powder.

“We didn’t even think about whether there might be lead in them,” she said. “I
(continued on page 14)

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This rating looks at the number of hours of care provided to each resident each day. This information is “acuity based”, meaning it considered the care needs of the resident when looking at the number of staff available. This measure looks at both RN staff and total nursing staff.

QUALITY MEASURES

Medicare assigns the star rating based on data from a select set of clinical data measures and compares the facility performance to national norms. The measure looks at how well the facility is caring for the residents’ physical and clinical needs. More stars means better quality of care.

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Heart Month: A Reminder to Make Heart-Healthy Choices

By **DR. MARIO GARCIA**

Heart disease remains the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. Every year, roughly 735,000 Americans have a heart attack, and right now, 5.7 million Americans are living with heart failure.

The signs and symptoms of heart disease, include chest pain/discomfort that doesn't go away after a couple of minutes, shortness of breath, weakness or nausea, and pain/discomfort in arms, shoulders, back, neck or jaw.

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing any of the above symptoms,

call 911 immediately. Do not attempt to take yourself to the emergency room. While you wait for the ambulance to arrive, have a loved one prepare a list of any medications you're currently taking. If you live alone, it's a good idea to keep this list handy in case you need to call 911.

If you don't know the status of your heart health and you need an update, schedule an appointment with your primary care provider and learn your numbers – find out if your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugars are in safe ranges; ask about ways to



Photo courtesy Montefiore Health System

(L-R FRONT) PETER SEMCZUK, MPH, Senior Vice President and Executive Director, Montefiore Moses Campus and Montefiore Wakefield Campus; and **Dr. Steven M. Safyer**, President & CEO, Montefiore Health System; and **(l-r back) Dr. Mario Garcia**, chief, Cardiology and co-director, Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart & Vascular Care, and professor, Medicine (Cardiology), Radiology, Albert Einstein College of Medicine; and **Donald Stark**, director, Clinical and Business Affairs, Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart & Vascular Care, complete a quarter-mile around the Montefiore Mile indoor "track" in recognition of February Heart Month.

achieve a healthy weight and reduce obesity. Prevention is key in staying heart-healthy, and it's only possible when you know your numbers. Taking an active role in your heart health can help you achieve your health goals.

Here are five additional heart-healthy tips to adopt this Heart Month:

1 - Manage Stress Safely: Regular stress is exhausting and can damage your nervous system. There are several ways to better manage stress in your life including identifying and addressing triggers, eating healthier, getting more exercise, setting a regular sleep schedule and practicing meditation and/or yoga. Some people also find arts and crafts activities help to reduce stress. Whatever works for you, it's important to weave this stress-relieving activity into your daily routine

2 - Exercise More: Exercise is good for more than just stress management. Regular exercise will improve your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels. It will also reduce unwanted and unsafe body weight. All of these improved numbers mean improved health and a lower risk of heart disease. If you're new to exercising, start with everyday tasks such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator; parking your car a little further from the entrance; or going for a 10-minute walk on your break. If you're worried about starting (or enhancing) an exercise plan, consult your doctor and he or she will help create a safe plan for

you.

3 - Set a Regular Bedtime: Good sleep patterns are shown to reduce stress and recharge the body. It can be hard to set up a regular bedtime, but we encourage our patients to try and establish a regular sleep schedule seven days per week.

4 - A Healthy Diet: Every meal presents an opportunity to improve your heart health. Try adding more whole fruits and vegetables to your meals, reducing your overall portion sizes, and choosing to eat whole grains. Also, reduce the amount of sugary foods and beverages you consume; including processed and packaged foods. One of the best ways to make healthy food choices is to plan your meals in advance – this way, when hunger strikes, you're prepared with a healthy food choice.

5 - Quit Smoking: Cigarettes, vaping and e-cigarettes are dangerous for heart health. In fact, if you're already suffering from heart disease, these habits can worsen your heart. For information and help on how to quit, ask your primary care provider or call (866) NY-QUITS.

To learn more about the cardiac services at Montefiore, visit www.montefiore.org/heart, or call (718) 920-6700.

Dr. Mario Garcia is chief of Cardiology and co-director for Montefiore Einstein Center for Heart & Vascular Care, and professor of Medicine (Cardiology) and Radiology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Heart Health Month

Montefiore's Calendar of Events Checklist

Montefiore Health System still has several Heart Health Month events lined up for the rest of February. They include:

Thursday, February 14
WORKSHOP: HEART DISEASE IN WOMEN
1:00 PM- 2:00 PM
Riverdale Senior Center
2600 Netherland Avenue
Bronx, New York 10463
Open to the public. A talk aimed at Seniors.
To register, contact Ms. Lisa Spinelli, RN at (718) 884-5900.

Friday, February 15
WORKSHOP: HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
12:30 PM-1:30 PM
Sister Annunciata Bethell Senior Center
243 East 204th Street
Bronx, New York 10458
Open to the public. A talk aimed at Seniors.
To register, contact Ms. Jovanna Lopez at (718) 365-3725.

Thursday, February 21
HEALTH SCREENING:
BLOOD PRESSURE
10:00 AM-12:00 PM
PSS Parkside Center (NYCHA)
44 Adee Avenue
Bronx, New York 10467
A chance for seniors to get to know their numbers! To register, contact Ms. Melissa Torres at (718) 881-7780 Ext. 20.

Sunday, February 24
WORKSHOP: HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
12:30 PM-3:00 PM
Church of God Prophecy

85 East 165th Street
Bronx, New York 10452
Open to the public. A talk for all ages.
To register, contact Christopher McKay at (516) 697-8606.

Monday, February 25
WORKSHOP: HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
11:00 AM-12:00 PM
PSS Andrew Jackson Senior Center (NYCHA)
325 East 156th Street
Bronx, New York 10451
Open to the public. A talk aimed at Seniors.
To register, contact Keena Laster at (718) 585-1640.

Tuesday, February 26 (two events)
WORKSHOP: HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
10:30 AM-11:30 AM
Mt. Vernon Armory, Senior Center
144 North 6th Avenue
Mount Vernon, New York 10550
Open to the public. A talk aimed at Seniors.
To register, contact Ms. Nancy Garay at (718) 547-8854.

HEART HEALTH LECTURE - CLINTON HIGH SCHOOL
1:30 PM
DeWitt Clinton High School
100 West Mosholu Parkway South
Bronx, New York 10468
Open to the public. A special talk focused on overall heart health and how proper nutrition and access to healthy foods can contribute.

10458 and 10468 Zip Codes Top Bx. Evictions in '17 & '18

By EMILY SUZANNE LEVER

New York City's decades-long housing crisis continues, and it's hitting the northwest Bronx the hardest.

Fordham and Bedford Park were among the neighborhoods with the most evictions in the city, according to a report released by the office of City Council Speaker and interim Public Advocate Corey Johnson. From January 2017 through 2019, the Bronx led in evictions, in one eviction for every 79 units. That's more than twice as much as in the next-most affected borough, Brooklyn, which saw one eviction in every 180 units.

The 10458 and 10468 zip codes, which encompass Bedford Park, Fordham and other neighborhoods, hovered around an especially high eviction rate of four percent-three times even the average for the borough. There were 986 evictions in the 10468 and 1,214 in the 10458.

"[Bedford Park] has some of the highest levels of preferential rent in the city," meaning rent control and rent stabilization, explains Sally Dunford, the executive director of the Bedford Park-based tenant advocacy group West Bronx Housing. When the lease on a unit is up, Dunford says, landlords can raise the preferential rent to the legal rent, which can be an increase of several hundred dollars. In a low-income neighborhood, an increase of that amount prices tenants out.

Tenants can fight these rent increases, and the recent Universal Access law—which entitles any

tenant facing eviction to free representation in housing court—has helped 21,955 New Yorkers facing eviction to keep their home, according to the report. But lack of awareness about these rights has stood in the way, as have other factors.

Some tenants may leave their apartments rather than mount a legal challenge, fearing they might end up on what the New York state Bar Association and others have called a tenant blacklist, simply for having gone to housing court.

Additionally, sometimes it is completely legal for landlords to raise the rent by a few hundred dollars through what is called a Major Capital Improvement, considered a significant renovation such as installing an elevator. Landlords can tack on a fraction of the renovation cost to the rent in perpetuity, for as long as the building is standing.

But why are these rent increases, whatever the reason, happening now? Bronx landlords who are evicting aggressively are eyeing a new market, Dunford says.

"People are being priced out of other areas and coming here," Dunford says. "They're a little higher on the income scale, and they can pay that higher rent."

The housing stock in Bedford Park has increased due to the recent uptick in high-rise development, but that alone will not necessarily keep rents down across the neighborhood.

"Those tall buildings are filling up," Dunford says, "but will it be sustainable?"

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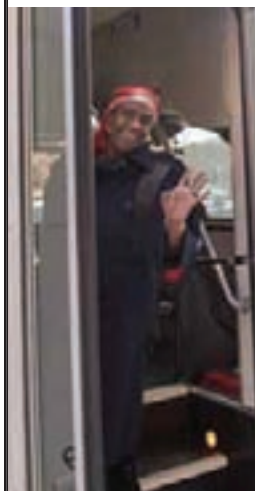
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Polar Bear Swim

BRONX RESIDENTS AND others braved the frigid temps, and risked hypothermia, for the annual Bronx Polar Bear Swim at Orchard Beach co-hosted by BronxNet Television and BronxWorks. The annual Dip Against Homelessness on Feb. 9 doubled as a donation drive for the homeless, with BronxWorks collecting clothes during the event. Check out these photos by Miriam Quinones.



NEW YORK CITY Parks Department Bronx Commissioner Iris Rodriguez delivers remarks before the big dip.



THESE PARTICIPANTS bring out a temperature dial to see just how cold the water is.



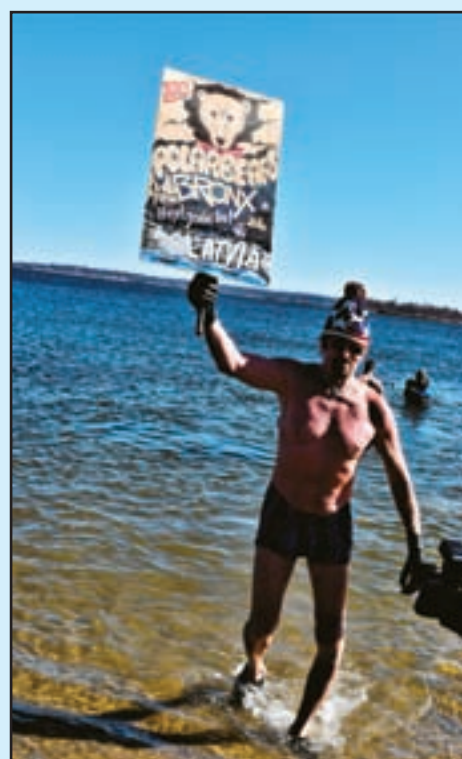
BRONXWORKS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Eileen Torres (c) gets a faux scare from two gentlemen dressed as sharks seemingly about to attack her.



THE PLUNGE SEES these swimmers in the background splashing away, but it's a little too much for the participant in the foreground.



THE COLD WATER was enough for this "shark" to scurry out of the water.



THIS GENTLEMAN PLUGS the Bronx Polar Bears, who have taken their annual mid-winter plunge for several years.

Snow Postpones Stagg Group Meeting at Community Board 7

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Snow and ice caused the cancellation of Community Board 7's Housing, Land Use & Zoning committee meeting of Feb. 12, in which residents from 2985, 2987, and 2999 Webster Ave., owned by the Stagg Group, were prepared for a heated confrontation with the landlord's representatives.

As previously reported in the *Norwood News*, residents of the three buildings have intensified their complaints over repairs not being tended to, security cameras not working, dirty hallways not being regularly cleaned, and just the overall difficulty of getting the management team to respond.

Led by Zxavier Simpson, from 2985 Webster Ave., residents are joining forces to get these complaints rectified.

Getting fixes has been the most troublesome part, according to Simpson. Before moving to the Bronx from Harlem in August 2015, a few months after the properties opened, Simpson remembers how he would reach out to elected officials like Gale Brewer, current Manhattan Borough President, or former New York Public Advocate and current state Attorney General Letitia

James, and get a response.

"Yes, we had problems in Manhattan, and I don't know if this is a Bronx thing, but we'd get results a lot faster," Simpson told the *Norwood News*.

Simpson and other residents were prepared to confront the Stagg Group's representatives in a public forum as their frustration over complaints continues to grow. On top of taking their complaints to CB7, tenants have also gone to Bedford Moshulu Community Association (BMCA). At their last meeting on Feb. 6, Simpson criticized Councilman Andrew Cohen, whose district covers the Stagg building, over his response to the building complaints.

"I'm tired of complaining and not seeing anything get done. I used to live in Harlem and saw how some politicians would work with developers to get things done for them and not us," said Simpson, venting to Cohen, seated mere feet away.

A few residents who felt Simpson was unjustly comparing Cohen to shady politicians quickly interjected to defend the councilman and his work in the community. BMCA president Barbara Stronczer reminded Simpson to keep



File photo

RESIDENTS LIVING AT this Bedford Park Manor property on Webster Avenue, three buildings owned by the Stagg Group, continue their demand for repairs at the houses.

the proceedings civil. "As you can see, we have residents who value what he's [Cohen] done for us," Stronczer said.

Cohen reminded Simpson that he had taken a tour of the building complex and found no glaring issues as far as maintenance. "Listen, I know how these things work. When a landlord knows an inspection's coming, they're on their best behavior," Cohen acknowl-

edged.

It remains to be seen what effect the growing number of complaints against the Stagg buildings on Webster Avenue will have on the conditions in question.

The CB7 Housing, Land Use & Zoning Committee meeting has been rescheduled for March 19 at 6:30 p.m. The Stagg matter will be on the agenda.

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Bailey Forms Criminal Justice Reform Council, Gauges Input

By **SHA-NIA ALSTON**

State Sen. Jamaal Bailey, representing Norwood and chair of the Senate Committee on Codes, recently announced the creation of a Criminal Justice Reform Council, attracting advocates from the district to help reshape the state's criminal justice system.

The council is comprised of several advocates on criminal justice reform that hail from the Bronx, and Westchester County. Members on the council are representatives from an array of organizations that include the Legal Aid Society, Vocal-NY, CUNY Law School, Discovery for Justice, B.R.A.G., Not On My Watch, RAPP Campaign, and 100 Suits for 100 Men.

Bailey felt it was imperative to develop a council with members offering input on any proposed legislation that adds a greater layer of judicial equity. Along with

advocates, members on the council include the formerly incarcerated who have been through the criminal justice system.

"We wanted to get a cross-section of individuals who have been affected by the justice system and hear what they have to say," Bailey said.

The Senate Committee on Codes holds vast jurisdiction over the state justice, defining crime, and amending any penalties for a crime, and revamping judicial procedures.

For Bailey, criminal justice reform has been a long time coming. With the Republicans no longer in power in the State Legislature, Democrats look to push forward several criminal justice bills that now stand a greater chance at becoming law.

Pending criminal justice reform bills in the State Legislature include restoring

education and voting rights to those who were formerly incarcerated, legalizing recreational marijuana use, and the elimination of large cash bail amounts that tend to heavily affect low-income individuals who are often accused of petty crimes, resulting in greater prison stays as their case churns through the system.

The response from the community, according to Bailey, has been positive so far.

"They think it's a good idea for people to convene and talk about the extremely important issue in our community and not just in the community, in our city, and the entire state," Bailey said.

The council's first roundtable talk was scheduled to take place on Feb. 13.

Editor's Note: *Constituents interested in offering input on criminal justice can email scjreform36@gmail.com.*



Photo courtesy Office of State Sen. Jamaal Bailey
STATE SEN. JAMAAL BAILEY, who chairs the Senate Committee on Codes, has formed the Criminal Justice Reform Council to get input on the current state of the criminal justice system.

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Norwood Among Nabes Targeted For Lead Awareness Campaign

(continued from page 7)

just eat my mom's food."

To make matters more complicated, lead is tasteless and visually undetectable in products; only a lab test can detect it.

Lead is known to get into products by accident, be it during the manufacturing process, through the packaging, or if the soil in which the raw ingredients grow is contaminated. But manufacturers may also deliberately add it to products, believing lead to be a quality ingredient that can cure diseases. Manufacturers simply want to make products sold by weight a little heavier to increase their profits.

And the problem is bigger than South Asian products—bigger even than the host of imports from North Africa, West Asia, Southeast Asia, and Mexico that health officials have issued warnings about in the past.

Cecil Corbin-Mark, deputy director of the Harlem-based nonprofit WE ACT for Environmental Justice, cautioned against describing imported products as the only dangerous and unsanitary items out there. He argued that lets unscrupulous manufacturers in America off the hook.

"This is not a problem limited to products made in China, India or the Dominican Republic," Corbin-Mark said, citing the health risks that come from cleaning products or lipstick. "U.S. manufacturers are putting in toxic chemicals as well, and the first testing of these products is on the public. We're the guinea pigs."

What's particular to immigrant communities and other marginalized people is simply that ill-intentioned manufacturers or suppliers can more easily get away with selling them unsafe products, Corbin-Mark said, adding that the city's new initiative is a step in the right direction. Given the disparities in lead exposure, it's important to make sure that immigrant communities and communities with English as a second language are protected," he said.

But flyers and guidelines may not be enough to undo profit motives—or forces of habit.

"I know about that," said the manager of a Bengali grocery store on Bainbridge Avenue when asked about the recall of products made by the Indian brand Swad. "But Swad is the most popular. And I myself only use Swad."

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

Mixed Martial Arts Registration is Open:
Registration ends on December 2nd
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks or
2x week for 8 weeks
Prices Starting for Members: \$65

Capoeira Registration Starts:
Monday, November 19th for Members
Wednesday, November 21st for Non-Members
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Prices Starting for Members: \$112

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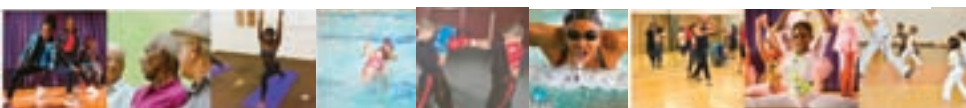


Swim Registration Starts:
Monday, January 2nd for Members
Wednesday, January 4th for Non-Members
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Prices Starting for Members: \$80

STEM Registration is Open:
Registration ends on February 9, 2019
Classes are 1x week for 8 Weeks
Payment plan is available
Prices start from \$450

Salsa Registration Starts:
Monday, December 3rd for Members
Wednesday, December 5th for Non-Members
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Prices Starting for Members: \$96

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College Scholarships for DREAMers

TheDream.US is offering scholarships for qualifying students pursuing an associate's or bachelor's degree who are recipients of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and TPS (Temporary Protected Status). Applications are accepted through Feb. 28 at thedream.us/scholarships/.

Heating Assistance

Applications for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) for older adults and low- and middle-income New Yorkers will be accepted by local departments of social services. Eligibility is based on income, household size and how the home is heated. Residents can apply online at <https://on.ny.gov/2Fn062M> and mail it to NYC DSS/HRA/ HEAP, P.O. Box 1401, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008. For more information, call (212) 331-3126.

Free Vocational Classes

Free vocational classes are offered at the SUNY Bronx Educational Opportunity Center, at 1666 Bathgate Ave., for the following fields: certified nursing assistant, direct support professional, master barber, medical assistant, security guard, and emergency medical technician. Registration takes place Mondays and Wednesday (except holidays) from 8:30 to 11 a.m. Documents required for registration are: New York State ID, Social Security card, high school diploma or equivalent, proof of legal status, income, and residency. Bring copies as well as originals. Additional criteria are required. For more detailed information, call (718) 530-7002/7039.

Free Tax Prep

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave. offers free tax return service Mondays through Fridays from 4 p.m. Those who made

\$54,000 or less in 2018 and have children, or \$30,000 or less without children, qualify for the free service. For more information or to make an appointment, call (718) 882-4000.

Free Legal Services for Immigrants

Low-income immigrants can receive free legal advice from volunteer attorneys through the New York State Liberty Defense Project and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York. For more information, visit CatholicCharitiesNYProBono.org or call (800) 566-7636. If you are interested in volunteering, visit catholiccharitiesny.org.

Free Pre-K

Children born in 2015 are eligible for free universal pre-K. Application deadline is March 15 for school year starting September 2019. Enroll your child at the Family Welcome Center at 1 Fordham Plaza on the 7th floor, or apply online with My Schools application at <https://www.myschools.nyc/en/>. For more information, call (718) 935-2009.

Writing Workshops

Several writing workshops for aspiring writers looking to develop and improve their writing will take place Feb. 16 and 23 from noon to 4 p.m. at the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. in conference room C21. For more information, email amnoriega@gmail.com, or call (646) 504-1041.

Free College Prep Workshop

High school students and their parents or guardians are invited to attend a free college prep workshop on Feb. 16 from 10 a.m. to noon at Fordham University's Rose Hill Campus, 441 E. Fordham Rd., in the Hughes Hall's room 104. Topics will include financial aid, advantages of attending college, and the college admissions process. Food will be available. For more information, call (866) 509-5921, or email jrodrig32@schools.nyc.gov.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
GOV'T. SHUTDOWN | PG. 4

STATE OF THE CITY: DE BLASIO
OUTLINES PLANS FOR BX. | PG. 10

STAGG TENANTS BATTLE FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

Vocal tenants ramp up demand for fixes at Webster Ave. bldgs.

Photo by Adi Talwar

NEIGHBORS ZXAVIER SIMPSON (l) and Shannon Terrell (r) inside Terrell's third floor apartment at 2985 Webster Ave. Terrell has filed papers at Bronx County Housing Court for an HP action, violations and alleged harassment against her landlord.

By DAVID CRUZ and JOSEPH KONIG
Residents of three fairly new buildings on Webster Ave.

are. The Stagg Group, a construction and development company with multiple ongoing projects in the neighborhood, has been waging a fight waged by tenants over conditions at the buildings at 2985, 2987, and 2999 Webster Ave. Since the Norwood

responsive and made improvements to the properties, known collectively as Bedford Park Manor.

Bodies found in Two Separate Norwood Incidents | pg 7

Achieving Student Balance at PS/MS 95 | pg 8

New 5-2 CO Attacks Crime Spike of '18 | pg 2

Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Seniors Should Socialize

JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center, 3880 Sedgwick Ave. presents the following February events: (call (718) 549-4700 for more information):

Feb. 14 - Informal Valentine's Day party with music and special refreshments following lunch.

Feb. 15 - Trip to City Island to dine out. Meet at the center at 10:30 a.m. and return by 2:30 p.m. Pre-register with Cindy.

Feb. 21 - Classical concert at 1 p.m.

Feb. 28 - Belated Valentine's Day/Birthday party, featuring music, at 1 p.m.

Onstage

Lehman College's Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **Hector Acosta "El Torito,"** Feb. 16 at 8 p.m., performing Bachata and Merenge (tickets are \$45 to \$85; \$125/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.

Events

Church of St. Philip Neri, 3025 Grand Concourse, presents **Healing Mass,** with Father Michael Barry, Feb. 14 at 7 p.m. The Rosary will be recited at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 733-3200.

Elected officials present **Democracy in Action,** a northwest Bronx Town Hall series, "Legislative and Neighborhood Priorities," Feb. 19 at 7 p.m. at Rambling House (Woodlawn), 4292 Katonah Ave. For more information, call (718) 796-5345.

Bronx elected officials present **Valentine's Day Senior Dance,** Feb. 14 from noon to 4 p.m. at 135 Einstein Loop Community City, Co-Op City. For more information, call (917) 553-5961 or (212) 788-6873.

New York Botanical Garden presents **Crazy for Composting,** Feb. 16 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Adults can enjoy networking with community gardeners and composters. Participate in free compost basics and advanced composting workshops. For more information, call (718) 817-8543.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects:** Exotic Desert Dwellers, to sketch, paint, and make a desert or tropical mirage, Feb. 16 and 17; and **Ubuntu - I Am Because We Are,** to use African wax fabric and other materials to make portraits, based on African term ubuntu, which means humanity towards others in Nguni-Bantu, Feb. 23 and 24; both in the WH House, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled is



Photo courtesy Joshua Bright/Wave Hill

WAVE HILL HAS several art-related workshops on hand during February (see Events for more information).

Concert: featuring Marika Hughes - The New String Quartet, including music from classical and jazz songs to pop music (tickets: \$28/includes grounds admission; WH members 10% discount; \$12/8 to 18; info: ext. 251), Feb. 17 at 2 p.m. in the WH House. Grounds admission is free until noon Tuesdays and Saturdays all year. For more information and a schedule of events including tours and walks, call (718) 549-3200.

Exhibits

Bronx River Art Center (BRAC), 1087 E. Tremont Ave., presents **Material With Meaning,** featuring NY artists whose international roots include Nigeria, Mexico, El Salvador, and China, through March 16. For more information, call (718) 589-5819.

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. Also scheduled are **A Celebration of Black History Month,** Feb. 1 to 28 and **A History of the Bronx Latino,** ongoing. 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. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

Cuban Art Show free exhibition, **We Have Ire: Afro-Cuban in the U.S.,** is scheduled through March 9, at the Casita Maria Gallery, 928 Simpson St., 6th floor, weekdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. It documents the stories of four Cuban artists, focusing on

their influences and dreams. A **live performance of excerpts** will be held on March 9 from 2 to 2:45 p.m. combined with a **Family Storytelling Workshop** from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 589-2230.

Library Events

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for adults: **film:** "The Pursuit of Happiness," Feb. 16 at 2:30 p.m.; and **Sophie Shao and the Bronx Arts Ensemble,** featuring classical music, Feb. 23 at 2:30 p.m. Children can enjoy: **Bilingual Birdies - Spanish:** (ages to 12 years), includes live music, movement, dance and puppetry; and **film:** (all ages), Feb. 19 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.:** crafts, Feb. 15 and 22; and **STEM: Kids Science at 3 p.m.:** Coding, Feb. 19 and 26; both for ages 5 to 12; and **Toddler Storytime at 11 a.m.:** (ages 18 months to 3 years), interactive stories, action songs, fingerplays, and crafts, Feb. 21 and 28. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **film:** "Incredibles 2," Feb. 22 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can attend **Knitting Circle:** Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road, offers for adults: **Computer Basics at noon:** Feb. 21 and 28. 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 Feb. 14 for the next publication date of Feb. 28.



Photo courtesy Bronx Arts Ensemble

BRONX CELLIST SOPHIE SHAO performs at The Bronx Library Center, courtesy of Bronx Arts Ensemble (see Library Events for more details).

Rite Aid Closure Stuns Bedford Pk. Locals

(continued from page 1)

a month we are going to close," Murray recalled. She was in disbelief. Apparently no one mentioned that the store's rain check could be used at any Rite Aid location.

Murray asked the pharmacist what is going to happen to her medication. They told her to call on Feb. 5 so that they could update her. Murray said they transferred all of her information to Duane Reade at 1 E. Kingsbridge Rd.

The news of where to go was confirmed by Chris Savarese, Rite-Aid's Director of Public Relations. "The Rite Aid store closed Tuesday, Feb. 5, 2019. All patient files have been transferred to Duane Reade located at 1 E. Kingsbridge Rd," he said.

It's unclear why that particular Rite Aid closed. Rite Aid had recently merged with another pharmacy giant, Walgreens, last summer.

Silvano Rodriguez, a local resident, said the Rite Aid manager told him the closure was due to the rent increase. "I heard that Rite Aid lost their lease because the landlord raised the rent. The manager was talking about that like 2-3 weeks ago when I was there. The community is now going to have to walk to Fordham if they want to go to Rite Aid," said Rodriguez. But that location at 49 W. Fordham Rd. would be quite a healthy walk from the closed location at 198th Street near Valentine Avenue.

Meantime, Murray called the Kingsbridge Duane Reade, with an employee telling her that they will make it easier for senior citizens to get their medication hassle-free. "You can call in for your medication on Monday or Tuesday, and Wednesday they will deliver for you for free of cost," said Murray.

But Murray preferred being able to pick up her prescription at her local pharmacy because it allowed her to look around for other vitamins she needed while offering the chance to interact with other people. She is not looking forward to the new change. Getting to Duane Read from Serviam Gardens usually takes 10 minutes. For Murray, who gets around using a cane, the walk, she said, will take 20 minutes.

There are some customers who are actually happy to see the chain store go. Tony Carter, a U.S military veteran, and another resident at Serviam Gardens, said he was glad to find out about Rite Aid's closure because of his awful

experience with them. "I've been living here for about nine years and I had a bad experience with them when I first came. I changed to CVS and I have been satisfied with them ever since. I also use Leroy Pharmacy, which is a block away from the Rite Aid," said Carter. Carter said whenever an emergency occurs they send Leroy Pharmacy his prescriptions and they accommodate him very well.

Murray conceded customer service was problematic there. "The workers never showed any care or empathy for seniors, but I stood with them because it was close to me. A few times I would try to get my medication at Leroy because Rite Aid wouldn't really treat me nice," Murray said, adding that while Leroy is more reasonable, "seniors tend to stick to something whenever it is convenient for them."

As Rite Aid employees were busy packing up the rest of the items on its last day on Feb. 5, Jose Ventura, a local resident, stood watching the closure in process.

"Rite Aid is going to be missed in this neighborhood. There is another pharmacy nearby (referring to Leroy Pharmacy), but we would come to this Rite Aid because we had a variety to choose from. We were accustomed to coming here. It has been here for about 20 years," Ventura said. Customers can also try Grace Pharmacy, a block up from Leroy Pharmacy.

William Lopez also stood outside the Rite Aid as its sign came down. "Why are they closing it? The thing is, a lot of people use this Rite Aid, a lot of people in the area. I mean there are other pharmacies but not like this. Leroy is good but they don't have half the stuff like Rite Aid," he said.

Meantime, as the line started to build up at Leroy Pharmacy, employee Feroze Khan said, "We always had a line of customers when Rite Aid was open, but now we have a little bit more. This pharmacy has been here for about 16 years."

Murray hopes that another pharmacy will take over Rite Aid's former location. "You get to go with a shopping cart and walk around. That is good for us. When you go to the store you get to walk around and see things," said Murray.

Additional reporting by Martika Ornela and David Cruz.

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