



NORWOOD NEWS

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**LOCALS & ELECTEDS: WHAT PUBLIC
ADVOCATE CAN DO FOR THE BRONX | PG. 2**

BRONX BUCCANEERS RECLAIM OVAL PARK

Norwood youth football club nearly booted ahead of season



Photo by Adi Talwar

BRONX BUCCANEERS HEAD COACH Keith Spivey Jr. (c) and team general manager Tasha Harris-Andrews (r), at Oval Park with players in the background.

By MARTIKA ORNELLA

The Bronx Buccaneers youth football team has regained rights to practice on Saturdays this spring at Williamsbridge Oval Park. An official permit was issued in the Bucs' name by the city Parks Department's Bronx office. For the Bucs and the community supporting them, the per-

mit is a welcomed end to their months-long battle to stay at the Oval.

In December, the Buccaneers' coach, Keith Spivey Jr., shared an online petition detailing the Bucs' removal from the Oval by their former vice president, Richard Hernandez, current commissioner to the Corsairs Football League, the

long-time permit holder. The Bucs were to be replaced by the Bronx Jets, an affiliate of the Harlem Jets, a Manhattan-based pee wee team looking to expand into the Bronx. The Jets tried to claim the Bucs' practice rights, since Jets' affiliate Hernandez was the authorized agent for the Oval permit.

The removal of the Bucs

drew ire from nearly 700 supporters of the petition, with many expressing their frustration with a Manhattan football club ousting a local team from a local field. The addition of the Bronx Jets would mean three teams, including the Bucs and the Bronx Knights, would be competing for use of the same

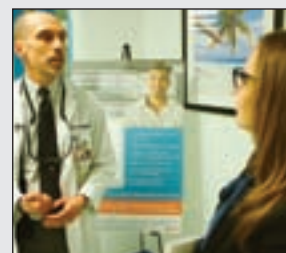
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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

What Locals & Electeds Want From New Public Advocate

By JOSEPH KONIG

The special election for the public advocate ended in victory for Brooklyn City Councilman Jumaane Williams, who will officially take the oath of office the week of March 18.

With Williams set to take office, locals and elected officials hope the new citywide official will focus on matters that impact the Bronx.

"Preserving affordable housing is one of the most important issues in the Bronx," state Sen. Jamaal Bailey wrote in an email to the *Norwood News*. Bailey represents Norwood and large swaths of the Northeast Bronx in Albany. "My office consistently sees constituents with concerns related to increased rent, housing conditions, and finding affordable housing."

Bailey also encouraged Williams to join Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.'s #Not62 campaign to promote a healthier Bronx.

"Health is another issue that deeply affects the Bronx," Bailey wrote. "In 2018, the Bronx was ranked 62 out of the 62 counties in New York in health. Having the public advocate join Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.'s #Not62 campaign, and promoting other increased health initiatives are needed in the borough."

Barbara Stronczer, the president of the Bedford Mosholu Community Association, said she hoped the new public advocate would focus on infrastructure.

"All this building is going on in [Bedford Park], we don't hear anything about improvements in transportation or schools," Stronczer said. "Some of our roadways are in terrible shape. Our underpasses are in bad shape."

Bronx activist Raphael Schweizer,



Photo courtesy Emil Cohen/New York City Council
JUMAANE WILLIAMS (AT PODIUM)

won the seat for New York City Public Advocate in a special election, defeating a crowded field of contenders.

who lives in Allerton and tried to get on the public advocate ballot himself, supported progressive activist Nomiki Konst in the election. Konst's proposal to appoint deputy public advocates for each borough appealed to Schweizer. He also believed the position could be used much more effectively than it has in the past, even within the constraints of its current budget of \$3.6 million.

"The public advocate, to me is a bully pulpit position," Schweizer said. He pointed to Bronx/Queens Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez as an example of someone who uses their platform to bring attention to a lot of issues at once. "It's not hard. We're in the age of email. You email all these news organizations a picture

and a description and they come."

Dan Padernacht, a Kingsbridge lawyer and candidate in the 2021 race for District 11 city council seat, told the *Norwood News* he hoped Williams would live up to the ethos of the position and prove independent of Mayor Bill de Blasio and the city council.

"The public advocate is a check and balance on the mayor and even the city council," Padernacht said. "They are an independent voice for the city when legislation or policy is advanced that is not representative of the needs or wants of the city. For me, what I want the public advocate to be is a leader who will stand up."

Most Bronx officials, including Bailey, backed Assemblyman Michael Blake in the special election on Feb. 26. In the aftermath, Blake was quick to congratulate Williams and bow out of contention in the upcoming June primary for public advocate.

"We congratulate Councilman Williams on his victory and will work with him to ensure that the Bronx is at the forefront of everything that he does as Public Advocate," Blake wrote in a tweet on the night of the election.

Candidate for public advocate and former City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, who represented a sliver of the South Bronx during her time on the council, also pledged her support for Williams and declined to run in the June primary.

"Nope. Not running," Mark-Viverito tweeted on Feb. 28. "Looking forward to supporting @jumaanewilliams as our NYC Public Advocate—it's time progressives come together and back him in June & November. There's work to get done. #LetsGo."

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting on March 26 at the St. James Park Recreation Center, 2530 Jerome Ave. near 192nd Street, 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: Public Safety and Quality of Life Committee on March 14; Health & Human Services Committee on March 19; Executive Committee on March 20; Economic Development & Long-Term Planning Committee on March 27; and Veterans Affairs Committee on March 28. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

The **BUILD THE BLOCK** meeting with the 52nd Precinct's Neighborhood Coordination Officer's Sector D, covering all of Norwood, takes place March 14 at 6:30 p.m. at St. Brendan's School, 268 E. 207th St. For more information, call the 52nd Precinct's Community Affairs Unit at (718) 220-5824.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets March 28 at 7 p.m. at St. James Church, 2500 Jerome Ave. For more information, call the 52nd Precinct's Community Affairs Unit at (718) 220-5824.



Letters To The Editor

Nice Doesn't Pay Bills

Working people have been so oppressed that they often don't demand decent wages, just to be talked to nice. This is evident in the February 28-March 13, 2019 *Norwood News* editorial.

Kingsbridge National Ice Center developer Kevin Parker is praised for his willingness to talk to the community, as opposed to Amazon owner Jeff Bezo's dealing with politicians behind closed doors. But Parker's Community Benefits Agreement agrees to pay a "living" wage of \$10 an hour

Just where is this wage livable? Just from reading my letter on the same page, readers know that even Amazon warehouse workers get paid better.

Mayor Bill de Blasio maintains good relations with most unions representing city workers despite the fact that the contracts he agrees to do not give raises that keep up with inflation. Union leaders feel it's enough that he's willing to negotiate with them while his predecessor, Michael Bloomberg, was not.

But if we are ever going to have an economy where poverty wages are history and salaries provide what people are supposed to be working for—a living—then more than nice talk is needed.

Richard Warren
Van Cortlandt Village

Parking Pains

In the October 25–November 7, 2018 issue of the *Norwood News* ("Cohen and Norwood Group Scour Streets for Potential Parking Spots"), Christy Rae

Ammons wrote an informative article about the lack of parking spaces in Norwood. Among other potential locations, she listed the "No Standing" zone at the corner of East 210th Street and Bainbridge Avenue. I would like to point out that there is a good reason for the sign at that location. The spot is the cause of major traffic jams every afternoon simply because the *No Standing* law is almost never enforced.

Here's the problem: There is rarely a way for traffic to continue northward at that intersection because the only lane other than the "No Standing" lane is one in which cars are continually turning left to Montefiore Hospital. All other traffic, including buses, ambulances and even fire trucks must wait for these cars to turn before they can proceed northward. The result is a traffic buildup that often extends beyond the Bronx History Museum and curls around for three blocks along the Reservoir West Oval all the way to the Keeper's House.

Recently I witnessed a fire truck stuck behind two blocks of traffic buildup with nowhere to go. The firefighters were walking up and down trying to get the cars to move over to the side, but they had nowhere to go.

I have notified "311" of the problem, but it persists. This zone should not, in my opinion, be designated as parking space. What we need, instead, is a designated left turn arrow on the traffic light, a traffic cop from 3 to 6 p.m., and another officer to enforce the "No Standing" zone.

Janet Norquist-Gonzalez
Norwood

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Bronx, NY 10467

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

INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By **DAVID GREENE**



With New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson proposing the city take control of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), amid the agency's plan to raise weekly and monthly fares, we asked readers if this would make a difference in terms of service.



If they fixed things I would pay a little more. They always say the same thing, but you never see the improvements.

Maria Fermin
Norwood



Yes, I think that would be a good idea. It's always very slow, both the bus and trains and they're always fixing it. The problem is too many people not working together. I've seen the service go down over the last 20 years. They need more money. But no, I don't want them to raise the fare. They need to fix the service, but not raise the fare. I think it could happen.

Manuel Ramon
Norwood



The subway trains are dirty; you see rats everywhere. Two seventy-five to ride the train is still a lot. No, they shouldn't raise the fare, because I feel the trains are always going to be dirty and they're always going to be late. I think they will raise the fare to \$3 and nothing will change.

Marvin Alliman
Bedford Park



I find delays, it's a little annoying sometimes, the smells, the overall dirtiness and different things. Sometimes they clean, but sometimes they don't, and 9 times out of 10, it's not clean. I don't know if the city can do a better job; I hope they can if that's the plan going through right now. I seriously hope that they can. The city is right here, where the state can't see what the city sees.

Lori Nebo
Parkchester



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A Cramped Five-Two Needs An Annex, Says Cohen

By DAVID CRUZ

Space at the 52nd Precinct is busting out at the seams.

Sandwiched between both sides of Mosholu Parkway and Webster Avenue, the North Bronx stationhouse has become increasingly tight given the number of police officers assigned there. It's also evident in the number of cars frequently seen parked along Mosholu Parkway North, drawing ire from residents.

The need for extra digs for one of the city's busiest precincts has been battled around for years. But now Councilman Andrew Cohen, whose district covers the precinct, is attempting to convince NYPD Commissioner James O'Neil to purchase or at the very least lease a nearby property once home to a profitable carpet store.

Cohen, now in his sixth year as the local legislator, said he'll keep putting pressure on One Police Plaza in Lower Manhattan to support the proposal in hopes of improving conditions at the Five-Two. O'Neill is certainly familiar with the stationhouse. He, coincidentally, was a member of the North Bronx precinct in the early part of his career.

The property at 3041 Webster Ave., once home to Sam's Floor Carpeting, has stood vacant for more than a year after talks between the city and owner to convert the space to a controversial homeless shelter failed.

"I think that the diversion or the relocation sort of presented the opportunity. That site is at least empty so I think it's really a time to make sure we don't miss an opportunity to improve the precinct," said Cohen.

The precinct's main base was built in 1905, and inspired by neo-Italian Renaissance style. Originally doubling as

a horse stable, its unique features—a red brick façade, a 21-foot clock tower adorning Webster Avenue, and round arched windows—earned it landmark status in 1973, protecting it from any exterior change.

As demand for more officers grew (more than 200 officers currently occupy the three-story precinct), space inside the precinct is something of a premium these days with officers using every inch of space. It's also spilled out to Mosholu Parkway where cars belonging to police officers can be seen parked on sidewalks with a police placard usually spotted on the dashboard. Cohen, familiar with the practice and the daily complaints he receives via Twitter, hopes a "functional" precinct will extend to creating more spots. It can also usher in even more officers.

"They've outgrown the building," said Brenda Caldwell, president of the 52nd Precinct Community Council, who said the conversation for a roomier precinct goes back at least 15 years.

Cohen's proposal has garnered support from the Bedford Mosholu Community Association (BMCA), which looks to circulate a petition in support of an annex. Sensing a need to put greater pressure on the NYPD, BMCA's president, Barbara Stronczer, is also asking Council Members Ritchie Torres and Fernando Cabrera, whose districts overlap with the Five-Two's borders for help.

"The precinct is definitely overcrowded. There's no place to park cars other than that small lot; Sam's Carpeting has an upstairs parking area. I am sure the many detective squads and operations, they could use another building," said Stronczer at a recent BMCA meeting.

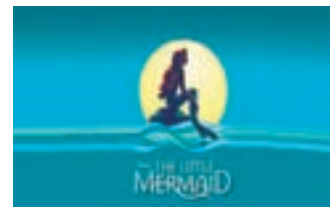


Photo courtesy New York City Council

COUNCILMAN ANDREW COHEN (at podium) wants an overcrowded 52nd Precinct to have some extra space to spread out its officers. He hopes One Police Plaza can consider the idea.



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NEWS BRIEFS

“Trash IT. Don’t Flush It.”

The city Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has launched a new ad campaign dubbed, “Trash IT. Don’t Flush It.” The goal of this campaign is to bring public awareness that sewer backups are the result of disposing grease, wipes, and various other trash, which can be costly. The DEP spends around \$19 million a year to clean clogged sewers. One way New Yorkers can help prevent so-called “fatbergs”—large masses that clog sewers and impair operations—is by flushing down the “four P’s”: Pee, Poop, Puke and toilet Paper.

—Alondra Vasquez

Body Cams for All Cops

The NYPD announced that all 20,000 patrol officers are now equipped with body-worn cameras, making it one of the largest distributions of body cameras in the country. The NYPD shared that body-worn cameras are fundamental to Neighborhood Policing, the strategy of committing more beat officers to each precinct. Officers must activate their body camera when they are investigating and enforcing the law. A federal court judge ruled that video from body cameras are subject to Freedom of Information Law requests.

—Alondra Vasquez

Judge: Install Subways Elevators

The MTA is expected to install more elevators when it makes renovations in subway stations to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, a federal judge ruled recently. The ruling comes as 25 percent of the current MTA subway system is accessible to disabled riders. “This is a major victory for all New Yorkers who need elevators to access the subway, but especially for those in the Bronx where there are even fewer fully accessible stations,” said Brett Eisenberg, executive director of Bronx Independent Living Services.

—Alondra Vasquez

Complaints Grow on Much-Delayed Jerome Avenue Retaining Wall Project

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Walking along Parkview Terrace parallel to Jerome Avenue, there is no shortage of people complaining about the \$15 million construction project that has inconvenienced them since fall 2015. The complaints range from limited crosswalks, to excessive noise, to lost patience in city promises of quickly finishing the project, which began nearly four years ago.

As Kevin Gonzalez walks his Doberman along Parkview Terrace, he points to the orange and white concrete barriers that narrow the space enough for a vehicle to pass through. “I was almost hit by a car right there,” says Gonzalez.

Gonzalez has similar complaints of how the construction work has limited the field of view of drivers along Jerome Avenue. “They aren’t slowing down because of the construction and I think they should put more signs with lights telling drivers to slow down,” Gonzalez says.

The plan to revamp the retaining wall goes back years. In June 2005, AECOM Engineering Co. inspected the retaining wall and ranked it as “poor,” assessing it as being in an “advanced stage of deterioration,” according to Shoshana Khan, a spokesperson for the city Department of Design and Construction (DDC).

Construction work started on the retaining wall in the fall 2015. With a projected cost of \$15 million, the original plan has met with numerous delays.

At the Feb. 27 CB7 General Board Meeting, Maria Centeno, executive director of the office of Community Outreach and notification for the DDC, revealed that Con Edison delayed the construction process because of the re-



Photo by José A. Giralt

CONSTRUCTION OF THE Jerome Avenue retaining wall can be seen through the window of the #4 subway train from its elevated track. The intersection pictured is Parkview Terrace running parallel to the retaining wall and East 196th Street on March 11.

location of a soil processing facility that tested the excavations from the site. She also explained that the Transit Authority became involved in the delays when drilling work for the project got close to the elevated #4 subway train.

As these delays prolong the work, the impact extends beyond annoyance to those who live in the area.

Francisco Mejia, 36, manager of 12 E. Deli Grocery Food, Inc., just feet away from the construction site, says the construction has negatively affected business. “Over the last two years I estimate my business has dropped by at least 20 percent,” says Mejia.

Beyond the direct hit to his business, Mejia notes that some people have moved out of the area and he knows of others that have sold their cars because of the loss of street parking spaces. “I don’t blame them. If I lived here, I would’ve left this neigh-

borhood by now,” Mejia says.

As a quality of life issue, the noise from the construction has also affected residents for a number of years. Dulce Javier, 73, lives at a building on Morris Avenue, but has a bird’s-eye view of the construction work from her fifth-floor apartment. “From the beeping noises trucks make to the loud noises of all the construction equipment, it’s been a terrible experience for me and my grandson. Sometimes he wakes from his afternoon nap all startled because of the noise,” Javier says, speaking in Spanish.

The DDC now anticipates completion of the project by this summer.

Some locals are skeptical of DDC’s projection. Mejia is one of them. “I remember when the project first started it was going to take a year, then two. Now I don’t believe it when it’s just talk. Let’s see if they can finish it this summer,” Mejia says.

Mott Haven Home Prices Jump

Median home sale prices in Bronx neighborhoods surrounding the Grand Concourse have shot up steadily from 2014 to 2018, according to a report by PropertyShark, which tracks home prices. An increased population is the cause of it, according to their report. Mott Haven home prices have increased 124 percent in five years. Since 2014, Concourse Village and Fordham home prices have increased 80 percent. Concourse median prices increased 62 percent. Bedford Park has a median home price of \$185,000 in 2018, which is a 56 percent increase from 2014’s \$118,000.

—Alondra Vasquez

Einstein Confers Degrees

Albert Einstein College of Medicine can now present its own medical and graduate degrees, a first in its 60-year-plus history. Einstein received its academic independence by the Board of Regents of New York State’s Department of Education. They awarded the college an absolute charter, establishing it as an independent educational institution. In the past, students received their degrees from Yeshiva University.

—Alondra Vasquez

BDP Rule Changes

The Bronx Democratic County Rules Committee passed a series

of rules with the goal of making the Bronx Democratic Party more transparent and democratic. The proposed rules included requirements that the committee meet once a year as opposed to every other year, and that notices for party meetings be sent to party members earlier than the current rules allow. The rules committee also approved the formation of a subcommittee on “community engagement.” The rules are not official yet and will have to be approved by a full meeting of the more than 1,500-member county committee. The full committee is expected to meet later this year.

—Joseph Konig

Van Cott Station Reopens, but Stench Remains, Say Customers

By DAVID GREENE

The Van Cott Station post office in Norwood reopened for business on March 4, after being closed for the third time since December over a foul odor that many patrons, and at least one postal employee, claim still linger.

Located at 3102 Decatur Ave., the branch was closed on Feb. 21 due to a “safety and sanitation issue” and “not just a foul odor,” according to spokesman Xavier Hernandez of the United States Postal Service (USPS). He noted that a temporary truck parked directly outside the station during its closure handled some of the station’s regular business.

Margaret Gawley, who gets her copy of the *Norwood News* at the Van Cott Station, sent an email to the *Norwood News*, stating the closure was “so stressful on the community, especially the elderly and handicapped.” Gawley emphasized that the closure forced some residents to use the outside blue mailboxes prone to mailbox fishing, the practice where thieves use rope and glue to fish



Photo by David Greene

CUSTOMERS WAIT IN line inside Van Cott Station in Norwood, which reopened March 11, two weeks after it temporarily closed.

out mail.

Van Cott Station first closed in November at the start of the holiday season, forcing patrons to take their packages to other nearby post offices. In January this year, a busted pipe forced the station to

close for one day.

Both Gawley and Webster Avenue resident Daniel Servones each claimed they were sent to other post offices to pick up packages, only to walk to either Mosholu Post Office at 3464 Jerome Ave. or

the Williamsbridge Station post office at 711 E. Gun Hill Rd. for nothing.

“They said to go to the one on Jerome Avenue, and that the package was there,” Servones recalled. I went to Jerome Avenue and they said it wasn’t there, and told me to go to the one on Gun Hill and it wasn’t there and it’s not the first time.”

On a visit to the Decatur Avenue post office on March 11, one postal employee said, “the smell is still lingering around here.” A customer then offered his bizarre description of the smell, saying, “Yeah, I smelled it when I came in. I thought it was Chinese food or a dead mouse.”

The worker laughed about the coverage given to the closures by the *Norwood News*, adding, “If they see it, they’ll know they have to fix up the place.”

Another customer told a worker behind the counter, “Over a long period of time it will probably affect your breathing and your lungs.” The worker replied, “I also have asthma, so it’s bad for me.”

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BRONX CONNECTIONS: THE HEALTH IMPACT

Part 2 of 5

The Norwood News, WFUV Radio, and BronxNet Television continue their five-part series on health-related struggles affecting residents of the Bronx.

Meeting the Demand for Dental Work in Underserved Communities

By MARINA KOPF of



Dr. Douglas York, CEO of the Union Community Health Center (UHC) in the Belmont section of the Bronx, said the center's waiting rooms for a dental checkup are always packed. They're open six days a week and even some nights, hoping to get as many patients on their dentists' chairs so they can utilize their services sometimes at no cost.

There's a shortage of dentists in the Bronx, with 33 dentists per 100,000 people in the borough, about half the national average, according to data from the ADA and The Center for Health Workforce Studies. Dr. York said this creates problems for some patients.

"There's a provider shortage, which means there's an access issue," he said.

It's common thought that dental care is just cosmetic, or non-essential to the point where it can be ignored. In ignoring dental hygiene, conditions could worsen over time and even present social barriers, such as obtaining a job.

"Someone's ability to get employment is critical often on how they look and how they may be perceived," said Dr. York. "If people don't have the financial resources to maintain oral health, and the cosmetic appearance of it, that could certainly impede their ability to be emotionally satisfied and financially successful."

The dental director of the Montefiore School Health Program, Dr. Debra Sperling, agrees on the social impact of dental care. "It affects self-esteem, how people interact with others and peers, how they present on job interviews, [and] how they present in schools with their teachers," she said.

According to a 2015 study from the New York City Department of Health, 42 percent of Bronx residents hadn't had a preventative dental visit in 2014.



Image still by BronxNet Television

DR. ROBERT MARGOLIN (l) dental site director of Union Community Health Center, speaks with WFUV Radio journalist Marina Kopf on dental services offered at UHC.

Preventative dental visits usually ward off development of even serious medical issues.

Dr. York said that annual cleanings and screenings are integral to keeping up with oral health, but "if you can't get in [for an appointment], you can't start this good preventative care that will prevent you down the road from having something more serious."

For individuals who don't have access to preventative annual dental checkups, the only time they address their oral health is when they end up in the emergency room. Dr. Robert Margolin, the dental site director at UHC, said patients who go to the emergency room for most dental issues won't even receive, but over-the-counter pain medication that's followed by a dentist referral. Follow-up visits could present even greater barriers: traditional Medicare and Medicaid barely cover dental procedures.

Financing a dental visit comes down to whether a patient will sacrifice one expense for another. "Dentistry is not inexpensive and consequently people

don't access the care because I think they rather put food on the table than have a dental visit," said Dr. Joseph McManus, executive director of The Columbia School of Dental Medicine. Private, professional care is available to only those who can afford it.

To bridge the gap between some Bronx residents and their ability to receive adequate dental care, some health centers offer services at little to no cost to families. Many of these programs have developed creative ways to serve the Bronx.

According to Dr. Sperling, the Montefiore School Health Program goes into public schools and sets up clinics to treat children. "So many people in the Bronx are facing issues like transportation, caring for family members, job commitments," said Dr. Sperling. "It's just basically hard sometimes to find the time, so we're committed to finding easily accessible dental care right in the schools where the children are for the better part of their day."

Both the Columbia School of Dental Medicine and the Montefiore School

Health Program, have mobile dental units that service areas of the Bronx. Meantime UHC—which provides patients with more complex dental work regardless of their ability to pay—is slated to open up. They visit community centers and schools to provide underserved areas with services such as dental cleanings, extractions, and screenings.

Dr. York said because of transportation issues and childcare needs, people may be unable to make it into the office. "We have individuals who are in housing units, senior centers, homeless shelters, and it's very important you try and meet them where you can so they can get state-of-the-art dental care as well," he said.

Even though these social safety net programs exist and help many different people, Dr. York said there is still an unmet need.

"Making sure there are funding streams for oral health programs in communities such as where Union serves is critical. It's absolutely critical," he said.

NN/WFUV/BronxNetTV Forum Tackles Recreational Pot Smoke Bill

With New York Governor Andrew Cuomo making the legalization of recreational marijuana one of his top priorities for 2019, lots of questions remain about the specifics of the law and its implications for communities across the state.

It's one reason why the *Norwood News*, in partnership with BronxNet Television and WFUV Public Radio have organized a forum around this topic dubbed, "Bronx Connections: The Impact of Legal Weed," which will be presented and televised live on March 21 at 6:30 p.m.

Concerns still loom over the impact of the bill. Some want to make sure those incarcerated for the sale or possession of marijuana are released and have their records expunged; others are concerned about quality of life

issues, like driving while high and secondhand pot smoke in apartment buildings. Our panel will share their insights on the possible legalization of recreational marijuana, and answer audience questions on what this legislation could mean for the Bronx.

Panelists participating in the forum include state Sen. Jamaal Bailey, chairman of the committee on codes; Dr. Chinazo Cunningham, a doctor with Montefiore Health System; and Joseph A. Thompson, Bronx Community Board 11 member and president of the 49th Precinct Community Council.

The forum is inviting up to 40 members of the public. To RSVP, please send an email to events@wfuvnews.org. Invitations are on a first come, first served, basis.



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Treasures Galore at BMCA Flea Market



Photo by David Cruz

CUSTOMERS BROWSE THROUGH a collection of DVDs at the annual flea market organized by the Bedford Moshulu Community Association, where funds are raised to replenish its operating budget for the year. Residents stopped by St. Mary's Orthodox Church of India during the daylong pop-up market to buy some wares at ridiculously cheap prices.

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Wednesday, March 27th for Non-Member
Classes are 1x week or 2x week for 8 weeks
Prices Starting for Member: \$65

Group Swim Registration Starts:

Registration ends on March 10th
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Member: \$90; Non-Member: \$120

Salsa Registration Starts:

Monday, April 8th for Member
Wednesday, April 10th for Non-Member
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Member: \$96; Non-Member: \$144

Alvin Ailey Dance Registration Starts:

Monday, May 6th for Member
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Contest Looks to Tap Into Bronx's Culinary Talents on Salad Dressing

By DAVID CRUZ

Throw in a dash of community gardens, a pound of culinary imagination, and a cash prize and you have a recipe for a contest seeking the next great salad dressing.

The Bronx Canasta, a contingent of Bronx-based food and social justice groups, has announced a contest that seeks Bronx residents to create their own salad dressing and marinade recipe. Contestants will craft their recipes using ingredients grown at local community gardens grown across the Bronx.

Organizers have taken the pains of prepping a recipe by simply having them submit them online.

The competition has drawn interest from elected officials, including Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., who hopes participants can "bring the flavor of the Bronx to their own special cuisine." Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez hopes the contest can be "emulated and copied by community gardens in other areas throughout the country."

The contest looks to serve the healthcare sector's ongoing efforts

to improve health outcomes in the Bronx, which still ranks the least healthy county in New York State.

Other initiatives that have attempted to encourage healthy eating include the Bronx Salad, a dish cooked up by Chef King Phojanakong, through a collaborative project with SoBro, the Institute for Family Health, and the United Business Cooperative. Other homegrown products utilizing Bronx community gardens include The Bronx Hot Sauce, which organizers say produced \$18,000 in profits that was reinvested into participating gardens.

Funding for the most recent contest was made possible through a grant by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The winner will be announced in May and a \$500 cash prize will be awarded, courtesy of Small Axe Peppers, with the dressing distributed across the Bronx.

Editor's Note: For more information, including contest details, visit www.bronxcanasta.nyc. The contest starts now, with a deadline of April 15.

Rollin' Colon



Photo courtesy J. Torres

IN RECOGNITION OF March Colorectal Cancer Awareness month, Montefiore rolls out the Rollin' Colon to raise awareness. The interactive learning experience kicks off activities that raise awareness of colon cancer education and prevention. Pictured l-r: Dr. Shalom Kalnicki, professor and chair, Radiation Oncology, Montefiore Einstein Center for Cancer Care; Dr. Judy Yee, professor and university chair, Radiology, Montefiore Einstein; and Dr. Thomas Ullman, chief, Gastroenterology, Montefiore, and professor, Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

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Councilman Ritchie Torres Takes Aim at Alleged Con Man at it Again

By ALONDRA VASQUEZ

The alleged con man who exploited the generosity of people following the death of Lesandro “Junior” Guzman-Feliz is at it again, according to Councilman Ritchie Torres.

Torres, at a news conference on March 1, reported that R.A. Gregg swindled \$5,000 out of Larry Winawer over the purchase of a 1976 Cadillac DeVille.

“In December I had saw an advertisement of a vehicle. Mr. Gregg had represented himself as Dr. Gregg and he claimed that he had purchased the vehicle years ago from a relative, a fellow doctor and that he was the rightful owner of the vehicle,” said Winawer, adding that Gregg exchanged contact information and agreed on the transaction.

According to Winawer, both men met in Staten Island and Winawer gave him a cashier’s check for the funds with Gregg giving him receipts and paperwork. “And what he claimed was the title in fact it turned out to be a color photo copy of the title so obviously I could do nothing with that in terms of having a rightful ownership claim,” said Winawer.

Gregg strung Winawer along, claiming the car was getting repairs at an “entity which turns out that it



Photo by Alondra Vasquez

LARRY WINAWER (L) WITH Councilman Ritchie Torres (at podium) at a March 1 news conference. The two stand alongside a photographs showing photographs of R.A. Gregg purporting himself as head of the bogus New York State Community Affairs Bureau, Inc.

doesn’t exist or if does exist it is the same name as his corporation.”

“At this point I demanded a full refund. But he refused to do that which bring us here today,” said Winawer. He is hopeful that the awareness will provide justice so that the public does not

continue to suffer.

Gregg has had a history of swindling people in the Bronx, using nonprofit names that sound virtually the same as established state government departments. Among them is the New York State Community Affairs Bu-

reau. A nonprofit listed under Gregg’s name through the New York State Department of State shows the New York State Community Affairs Bureau, Inc.

Torres said despite a cease and desist letter sent to Gregg back in September, “he has since continued to represent himself as the commissioner of the New York State Community Affairs Bureau.”

According to Torres, Gregg allegedly tried to set up a fake nonprofit organization under Lesandro’s name. Lesandro was stabbed to death in front of a bodega in Belmont allegedly by members of the Trinitarios. “What is distinctive about Mr. Gregg is that he uses government names, badges, business cards, insignia, symbols, to mislead members of the public in hopes of swindling them out of their might,” said Torres.

“So we have reported his conduct to the governor’s office, the attorney general’s office and the New York City Department of Investigation calling on all law enforcement agencies to hold Mr. Gregg accountable for the fraud that he continues to perpetuate against the general public. He has many victims,” said Torres.

Gregg did not return a message seeking comment.

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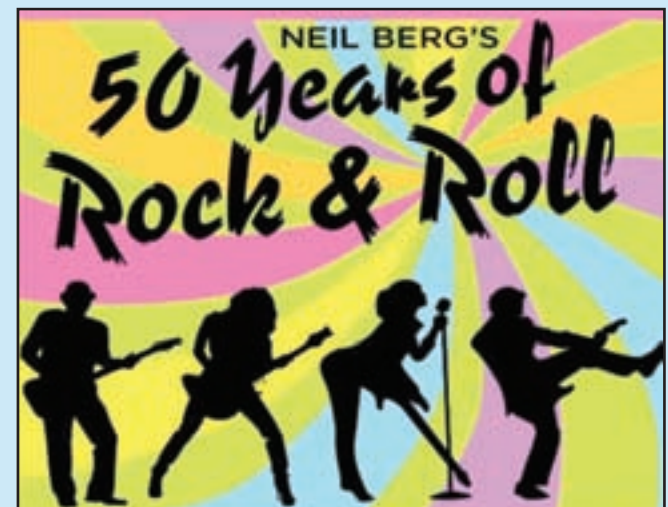
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McDonald's Workers Brawl in Front of Shocked Norwood Customers

By DAVID GREENE

Two employees of the Norwood McDonald's were captured on video in a brawl that shocked customers.

According to the NYPD, the incident took place at the McDonald's at 300 E. 204th St. near Perry Avenue at 4:30 p.m. on Feb. 21. The unidentified 22-year-old victim reported the incident a week later. One detective explained, "She stated she was struck in the face several times by the subject with a closed fist. It's unknown if she went to the hospital, but she suffered minor injuries."

On Feb. 28 police arrested Slade Shania, 18, of 53-05 Queens Blvd., who was charged with assault, harassment in the second degree and unlawful possession of marijuana.

The McDonald's is usually the meeting spot for an event hosted by the 52nd Precinct to discuss teen-related issues.

A source familiar with the incident, reported, "There was a big fight in McDonald's between two workers. The restaurant was freakin' packed and guess what happens? They started fighting in the kitchen, while all the customers were there watching, while they were in their uniforms."

The source continued, "The girl pressed charges and they came and



THIS VIDEO STILL shows two women fighting inside the McDonald's on East 204th Street at Perry Avenue, on Feb. 21. Police arrested Slade Shania and charged her with assault a week later.

got her a week later. The black girl, whose hair went flying was the manager there and they moved her to another place, so I guess the one she was beating up tried to get her fired or something. She went to the precinct and made a complaint and they locked up the other girl, but they let her go. They put handcuffs on her, but I don't know what happened after that."

A 48-second cellphone video of the

fisticuffs shows Shania walking away from the customers at the counter and she pursues her co-worker, before letting go with a barrage of wildly thrown punches, and at one point, lost her wig as shocked customers gasped and laughed as the action unfolded.

From the video it appeared that a couple of customers even stepped behind the counter to assist in restraining Shania, who was immediately

taken out of the restaurant.

Norwood resident Tony Rodriguez watched the video after visiting the restaurant, and stated, "I can't believe it... it was probably over a small, petty disagreement over something stupid. Could she have handled it a different way? She probably should have."

Another customer who was in a hurry, blurted out, "That's the world we live in brother."

Customer John Mayorga said after watching the video, "I've never seen anything like that," adding it was more likely two customers on a long line could come to blows. Mayorga added, "If you're going to start a fight, then you're going to have to face the consequences. I'm just surprised they didn't get fired."

The question of firings was posed to one employee, who responded, "Oh, I don't know anything about that."

Moving up the golden arch's food chain, a manager of the popular restaurant said, "I can't talk about that, they got lawyers and that's about it."

A spokesperson representing the franchisee owner declined to comment.

Editor's Note: A video of the fight can be found on our website, www.norwoodnews.org.

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REPORT: Majority of Kingsbridge Road Merchants Rent Burdened

By EMILY SUZANNE LEVER

Evy Viruet started to think something was up when she kept getting phone calls from business owners on Kingsbridge Road about people coming around and taking pictures.

"We figured they were up to something," said Viruet, a small business organizer for Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC).

Owners of Kingsbridge corridor businesses soon found ads on the real estate listing site Loopnet.com that offered 2 through 12 W. Kingsbridge Rd. and 2647 through 2659 Jerome Ave. up for sale, specifying that "existing tenants are month to month." Many tenants in those buildings also have no commercial leases at all.

To add insult to injury, the ad offered potential buyers a five-year commercial lease.

"When you don't have a lease, they put you out," said Christian Ramos, owner of Tnt Nail & Beauty Supplies on Jerome Avenue, which is one of the properties for sale. "I work here for five, 10 years. I feel like I'm working for nothing."

"My situation is I stay here now," added Ramos, president of the Kingsbridge Road Merchants Association. "I don't even know if I'll be here tomorrow."

Whether they have leases or not, commercial tenants have very few of the legal protections and regulations that are available to residential tenants—no rent stabilization and no day in housing court.

The news comes amid a new report by the Association for Neighborhood Housing and Development (ANHD), which found Kingsbridge Heights merchants experience more difficulties managing their business even compared to merchants in two other business strips sampled. NWBCCC partnered with ANHD in gathering data for the report.

Of the businesses surveyed in Kingsbridge Heights, 89 percent were rent-burdened, meaning they spent 30 percent or more of their income on rent. 46 percent had a too-short lease or no lease at all, and 57 percent experienced harassment from their landlords, the report said. Those numbers compare unfavorably with Jackson Heights in Queens and the Lower East Side and Chinatown in Manhattan, the three other neighborhoods where the survey took place.



Photo by Emily Suzanne Lever

CUSTOMERS WALK ALONG Kingsbridge Road between Jerome and Davidson avenues on March 11. A recently released report showed a majority of merchants established along Kingsbridge Road are rent burdened.

Among other problems small business owners described in the study were lack of access to business loans (difficult to secure without a commercial lease), having to lay off employees to be able to make rent, and harassment based on immigration status.

A law defining and prohibiting commercial tenant harassment was passed by the New York City Council in June 2016. Under the law, landlords cannot use force or threats of force against small business employees or customers, repeatedly shut off utilities like heat or water, or prevent employers or customers from entering the premises, among other forms of harassment.

More recently, Manhattan Councilman Mark Levine on March 11 introduced a bill to grant small business owners free legal representation if they are facing eviction. Nearly 4,000 commercial tenants have been evicted in the city since January 2017, the numbers growing steadily year after year, according to data from the New York City Department of Investigation. In the first two months of 2019, commercial evictions spiked 17 percent compared to the first two months of last year, the data shows.

As it stands, the existing commercial tenant harassment law is still not enforced, according to Viruet.

"We've had small businesses that have had their lights shut off, their locks changed, their gates taken down," Viruet says, "and if they were to call the NYPD, they'd tell them, 'we can't help you.'"

There is no city data that tracks commercial tenant harassment, though it commonly happens when tenants lack leverage, such as a signed year-long or longer lease.

Henry Kessler, the landlord of 2 through 12 W. Kingsbridge Rd. and 2647

through 2659 Jerome Ave., said "everything I own is for sale." When asked why the tenants were unaware the properties were for sale and had to find out through a real estate ad, he declined to answer questions, instead resorting to insulting the reporter who called.

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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.

Fellowships

Applications for the Empire State Fellowship, which prepares professionals for careers in policymaking, are now open until April 1. Eligibility requirements include a commitment to live in Albany for the duration of the fellowship, have five years of professional work experience, and no experience working in the legislative or executive branch of New York State. For more information, go to <https://on.ny.gov/2J7HoOh>.

Free College Fair

The United Federation of Teachers will host a free college fair on March 22 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Bronx UFT Office, 2500 Halsey St (across from the DMV on Commerce Avenue). Topics include understanding the admissions process, financial aid, and college readiness. For more information, contact James F. Rodriguez, the College Goal Coordinator, at (866) 509-5921 or email jrodrig32@schools.nyc.gov.

Biaggi Satellite Office
State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi

has now opened a satellite constituent services office at Community Board 7, 229-A E. 204th St. Services are available the second Thursday of every month by appointment between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. or walk-in visits from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. for residents living within the zip codes of 10458, 10467 or 10468. For more information or to make an appointment, call (718) 822-2049.

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.

Crime Victims Support

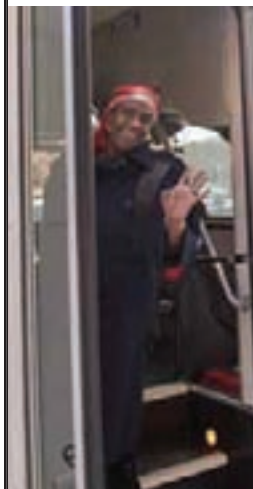
Crime Victims Support Services, a 501(c)3 group at 1138 Neill Ave., offers victims help in navigating the criminal justice system. Free confidential services include claim assistance, case follow-up, crisis counseling, and victim advocacy. The group accepts donations. For more information, call (718) 823-4925.

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 CatholicCharitiesNY-ProBono.org or call (800) 566-7636. If you are interested in volunteering, visit catholic-charitiesny.org.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Live Animals at NYPL

The public is invited to the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., to see *Creatures of the Night*, live owls, mammals, frogs, toads, and insects, March 14 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Onstage

Lehman College's Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **Forever Freestyle 13**, featuring a variety of artists performing Latin music including hip-hop and disco, March 16 at 8 p.m. (tickets \$55 to \$100); **Grupo Niche**, performing Salsa, March 23 at 8 p.m. (tickets \$45 to \$100/VIP); **Murphy's Celtic Legacy**, celebrating St. Patrick's Day featuring traditional Irish dance and live music, March 24 at 4 p.m. (tickets \$25 to \$45; \$10/under age 12); **Ruben Sings Luther**, featuring Ruben Studdard singing Luther Vandross hits, March 30 at 8 p.m. (tickets \$25 to \$75/VIP); and **Swan Lake**, ballet performed by the Russia National Ballet, March 31 at 4 p.m. (tickets \$25 to \$45; \$10/under age 12). VIP tickets include best seats and preconcert wine and hors d'oeuvres at 6:30 p.m. in the Havana Café. For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

Lehman College's Department of Music, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents free: **Faculty Recital**, featuring jazz, Latin and electronic music, March 19 at 3:30 p.m.; and **Lehman Chamber Players Concert**, featuring singer and musicians

performing classical works, March 31 at 2 p.m.; both in the Music Building's Recital Hall on the 3rd floor; and the **21st Annual Day of Percussion**, featuring the Lehman Percussion Ensemble and students from the Royal Irish Academy of Music, March 28 at 2 p.m., in the Music Building's Hearth Room on the 3rd floor. For more information, call (718) 960-8247. Also scheduled is **Life of Galileo**, play with original score, March 27 at 3:30 and March 28 to 30, at 7 p.m., in the Speech and Theatre Building's Studio Theatre (tickets \$10; \$8/with CUNY ID; free/Lehman students with valid ID. For more information, visit lehman.edu/theatredance.

Bronx Arts Ensemble presents **Radio Jarocho Band**, featuring traditional Mexican song and dance, March 16 at 7:30 p.m. at BAAD (Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance), 2474 Westchester Ave. For more information, call (718) 601-7399.

Riverdale Presbyterian Church, 4765 Henry Hudson Pkwy., W. presents **All-Mozart Program**, March 24 at 3 p.m. (\$15; \$10/students/seniors). For more information, call (718) 796-5560.

Events

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center presents the third annual **MMCC**



Photo courtesy MMCC

MOSHOLU MONTEFIORE COMMUNITY CENTER (MMCC) hosts its third annual SpringFest, an open house showcasing the Norwood center's hallmarks (see Events for more information).



Photo courtesy Lehman Center for the Performing Arts

BRONX NATIVE and the "Queen of Freestyle" Judy Torres is among the many headliners performing at Forever Freestyle 13, happening at the Lehman Center for the Performing Arts (see Onstage for details).

SpringFest on March 23 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 3450 DeKalb Ave. The free open house features program demonstrations, a bounce house, face painting, crafts, snacks and fun for the whole family. There will also be an exhibition of an art show.

JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center, 3880 Sedgwick Ave. presents **Birthday Party** with singer and guitarist, March 19 at 1 p.m. preceded by lunch at 12:15 p.m.; and **Celebrate Purim**, featuring songs, story and games, March 27 at 11:15 a.m. followed by lunch at 12:15 p.m. Also scheduled is musical show at 1:10 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-4700.

Lehman College, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents **"Decade of Fire,"** March 21, screening at 12:30 p.m. followed by Q&A discussion at 1:45 p.m., documentary film relating to the tragic history of the South Bronx in the '70s and its revitalization since the late '80s, (free), In the Lovinger Theatre. For more information, call (646) 938-0557 or (718) 960-8680.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Springtime Scrolls, to create a scroll using upcycled materials, March 16 and 17; and Design a Re-Wilding Device, to design a seed sculpture using a mixture of soil, clay and wildflower seeds, March 23 and 24; both in the WH House, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled is **Concert: Arthur Vint & Associates**, 8-piece jazz combo, paying tribute to Ennio Morricone's iconic "Spaghetti Western" themes (\$28/adults, includes grounds admission; 10% discount/WH members; \$12/ages 8 to 18 (info: ext. 251). 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 Documentary Center, St. Mary's Annex, 364 E. 151st St., presents free

Where Love is Illegal, through March 24, featuring stories of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex individuals in locations where this is illegal. For more information and a detailed schedule, visit www.bronxdoc.org.

The Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street), presents **Women's Suffrage and New York City: A Centennial Celebration**, through April 11; and **His Muse: The Women of Edgar Allan Poe's Life**, through April 7. Also scheduled is **A History of the Bronx Latino**, ongoing. Hours: Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

Library Events

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for adults: **films at 2:30 p.m.:** "Logan's Run," March 16; and "Ready Player One," March 23; and **Computer Basics:** March 26 at 2 p.m. Children can enjoy: **film:** (ages to 12 years), March 26 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.:** (ages 5 to 12), crafts, March 15, 22 and 29; and **Toddler Storytime at 11 a.m.:** (ages 18 months to 3 years), interactive stories, action songs, fingerplays, and crafts, March 21 and 28. Adults can enjoy: **film:** "Norm of the North: Keys to the Kingdom," March 22 at 1:30 p.m.; and **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:** March 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 March 18 for the next publication date of March 28.

Bronx Buccaneers Reclaim Oval Park

(continued from page 1)

field and the same youth recruits.

"The community is using the fields that are local to them and that's where the overcrowding comes in," Spivey said. He explained that the alternative of practicing at fields in Van Cortlandt Park or Pelham Bay Park would require families, some without cars, to journey well outside their neighborhood. The Oval, according to Spivey, is the most convenient field for the Bucs, since most of the players live in or around Norwood.

"The Bucs have always been there and we've shared the field," said Bronx Knights' coach Drake Holliday. "There's always been a neighborly relationship."

Holliday supported the reinstatement of the Bucs to their usual 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday practice time at the Oval, a field the Bucs have played at for seven seasons, and the best time to draw recruits. Explaining his support for the Bucs at the Oval, Holliday said, "For one, the park would not be the same without the Bucs there. Two, from my understanding there wasn't a just reason for them to not have the permit."

At a private Jan. 22 meeting held with Parks Department Bronx Borough Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, Spivey and the Bucs' general manager Tasha Harris-Andrews made a case for their team having the Saturday practice time. Harlem Jets president Jamel Wright, Hernandez, Community Board 7's Ischia Bravo and Council Member Andrew Cohen were also in attendance. Cohen represents the 11th Council District, which includes Williamsbridge Oval Park. He also serves on the Council's Parks and Recreation Committee.

At the meeting, Spivey explained that the Bucs had seniority at the Oval, while the Bronx Jets' team had yet to materialize and therefore had no claim over the field. According to Spivey, Rodriguez-Rosa agreed, concluding that Hernandez and Corsairs Football League president Donald Yearwood had no right to the permit without a youth team of their own. The Bucs fall under the umbrella of Empire Football League.

In a statement to the *Norwood News*, the Parks Department confirmed that the Saturday field time was issued to the Buccaneers, adding, "The permit is not a renewal; it is the first issuance of a permit to their league."



Photo by Adi Talwar

RAFAEL CLASS JR. (C), a member of the Bronx Buccaneers, works on his fancy footwork at Williamsbridge Oval Park, where the team was nearly thrown out.

According to the Parks Department's field and court space guidelines, a permit can be revoked if the field is not in use during the reserved time or if it is transferred or shared beyond the permitted league. The Parks Department is reportedly in the process of developing a special task force to deal with permit abuse, particularly in the Bronx, the borough with the most parks in the city.

For Spivey, the permit being issued in the Bucs' name was the right move. "We were the team that made the permit viable," he said. "We've been playing [at the Oval] for seven seasons."

Holliday agrees. Of the Bronx Jets, he said, "There are plenty of other areas in the Bronx and throughout New York City that are in need of programs. The Bucs and the Knights in this park--We're doing a pretty good job of servicing this area. I think a third program would just be oversaturated."

Williamsbridge Oval is one of 16 fields in the Bronx permitted for football use, but like many city fields, it's interchangeably utilized as a soccer field. Youth football participation has declined citywide in recent years, with growing fears among parents of the physical injuries associated with tackle football. Football clubs are competing for fields and other resources with more popular peewee sports like soccer, baseball and basketball.

"I do believe that the Parks Department tries to distribute permits fairly, but right now on these fields, soccer rules everything," Spivey said. "There's very minimal football being played on these fields."

In their fight to regain practice

rights at the Oval, the Bucs reached out to Community Board 7 (CB7), Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval (FOTWO) for support. The group also turned to Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., who, they said, did not respond to their complaints. Cohen was the only lawmaker to respond.

Harris-Andrews said that she drove to Cohen's office on a whim and was

surprised to discover that he was not only already aware of the Bucs' situation, but was also willing to organize the Jan. 22 meeting with the Parks Department. Harris-Andrews said that along with letters of support from CB7, FOTWO, and DeWitt Clinton High School football coach John Applebee, Cohen's support of the Bucs helped them secure the permit. "This really was a community rallying together for what looked like an underdog," Harris-Andrews said. "We absolutely could not have done this by ourselves."

"I think a lot of times people come up with solutions amongst themselves," Cohen said in a statement to the *Norwood News* about the permit misuse in city parks. "I do think probably the Parks Department should do a better job of making sure the person who has the permit, is the person who's actually using it."

Cohen was made an honorary Bucs team member, a reward that was well deserved, according to Spivey. "Many politicians talk a good game," Spivey said. "They talk about community and activism and when you go to them for help, they kind of stonewall you. Well, Andy Cohen didn't."

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